

## Floating Harmony: cutting-apart-back-together – a constellation of ‘becoming with’ in Horse ‘Henry Rainbow’ & Devoted Rider

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### Introduction

There is something quite special about a horse and a rider coming together in significant “otherness” (Haraway, 2003, 16). Their union together has always fascinated me, similarly in the way Leonardo da Vinci was intrigued by anatomy and all its delicate, minute intricacies. Suffice to say I am no artist like the inimitable icon; however, I can try to sketch, draw, doodle and create an image. Ironically I am challenging da Vinci’s painting and idea of the (in)famous Vitruvian Man, that is (hu)man’s being at the centre of the universe. From my own wayfarings and wanderings with image and text, I offer creative and visual imaginings as well as a brief image-text diffractive dalliance (Barad, 2014), with the concept floating harmony. I offer my ‘inefficient mapping’ in a poiesis (bringing into existence materially and visually as a ‘maker’ or ‘artist’) of layered, multiple and flexible sketches and images in tuning in to how bodies are fluid, messy and entwined in the world (Knight, 2021). Knight discusses such generative mapping as a graphic, visual notation of multiplicitous, overlapping, and simultaneous movements as chaosgraphics (Knight, 2021, 44). Using Knight’s mappings idea in situ and Aristotle’s idea of poiesis is helpful to explain the production and making of my drawings in an attempt to animate a moment in time when something moves from one thing to another, as in becoming-with horse in floating harmony.

The experiences of Rod Michalko with his guide dog, Smokie, also suggests that paying attention to the senses and embodied experience can animate the intimacies of how hu/man and dog can be an intimate team, a dyad, a “two-in-one” (Michalko, 1999, 91). He refers to himself and Smokie as “almost literally, extensions of each other” (Michalko, 1999, 5). My chaosgraph of Henry Rainbow and his Devoted Rider is my highlighting of multiple realities where privileging one reality over another is questioned, offering a posthuman perspective of the world which disrupts and challenges ethnocentrism, anthropomorphism, and anthropocentrism.

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**Figure 1.** Equine-human riding assemblage: Horse-rider perspective

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### **Floating harmony and rhythm**

The term ‘floating harmony’ coined by Evans and Franklin (2010, 176) and cited by Edensor (2010) refers to the intimate, kinaesthetic synergy between horse and rider. They point out the valuable contribution of Lefebvre in conceiving of floating harmony through his use of exploring everyday rhythms and the contribution to experience and knowledge this affords (Lefebvre, 2004). The term ‘floating harmony’ dynamically describes how horse and rider *bodies* come together as a constellation of equine-human rhythms. My sketches are a further step in animating this visually to convey this affective, performative ‘dance’ in re-creating and re-enacting as it were; this wonderful attunement of bodies through the rhythms of my sketching strokes (eye-hand-pencil) and “being drawn to see” as put forward by the anthropologist, Andrew Causey (2017). It is a playful trace, in an attempt to animate and open up new avenues of re-imagining the ‘ghostly lines’ of perception and perceived synchronous movement of animal-human bodies, (Derrida, 1982; Ingold, 2016). These lines of movement can become envisioned and animated as animal-human bodies having blurred, porous boundaries where horse and human bodies can be ‘leaky bodies’ which merge together in the moment of ‘floating harmony’ (Manning, 2009). As Game (2001, 11) so aptly states, “in



making animals familiar, we humans find the animals in us.” Game’s (2001) use of the centaur figuration (upper body of a hu/man and lower body and legs of a horse) to convey a similar idea of harmony and ‘rapture’ in the exhilaration of riding also involves imagining of the interconnectedness between horse and rider and cosmos. Game (2001, 3) refers to this as “horse-wave riding” which feels like “effortless airy floating, flying.”

As Hague highlights this kind of visual and photographic ‘evidence’ helps us ‘see and believe’ through its material, multi-sensory performance and process of you the reader (Hague, 2014). Through being in the moment, paying attention to our senses, and noticing the affective detail in these multispecies encounters, where the usual social conventions do not apply, can enable each ‘earthling’ to be at ease, affecting and being affected by one another and reencounter the ‘self’ through the ‘other’. It is hoped that this example can also enliven Barad’s complex, yet profound contribution of the concept ‘agential realism’ in the sense that we only come into ‘being’ through our entanglements with ‘others’ (Barad, 2007). These ‘others’ are importantly often ‘more-than-human’ in that they can be material, matter, or animal (Bennett, 2010). They can be Henry Rainbow and his Devoted Rider.

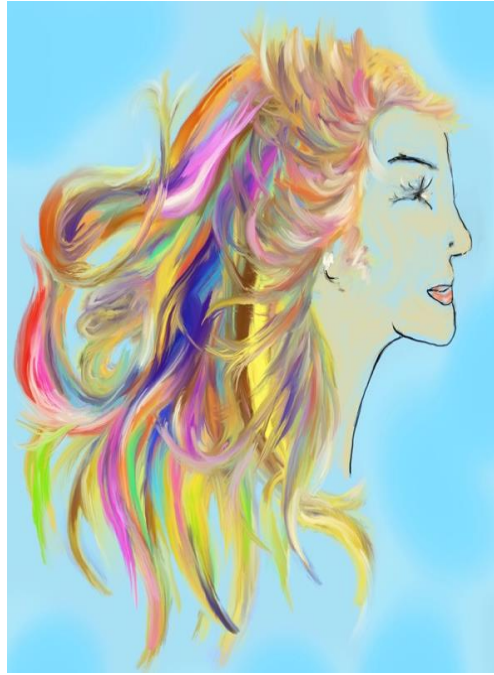
**Figure 2.** Henry Rainbow a ‘more-than-horse’



*Image:* Photograph reproduced by kind permission of Pamela Graham

**Figure 3.** Henry Rainbow

*Image.* Author's sketch

**Figure 4.** Devoted Rider

### Being in synch and sympoiesis

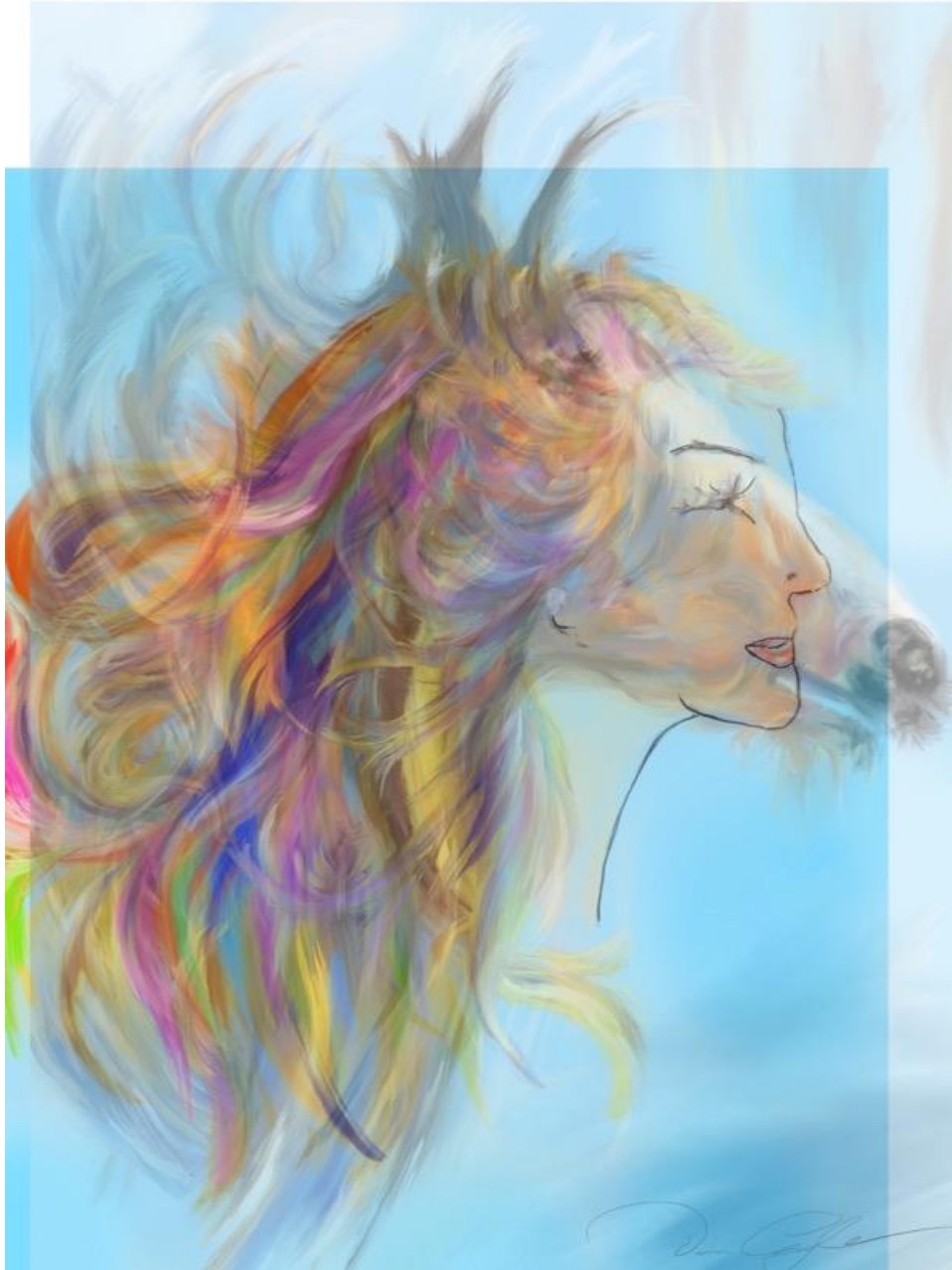
I present my own ‘sensuous’ writings-sketching’s as a means to mapping our own enfolding’s with the material vitalism of our encounters with earthlings; giving a horse as an example of how this matters, see figures 1 & 2. As suggested by Jaques, I share a keenness for actualising possibilities (through creative media such as my playful attempts here) of how we need to embrace and animate posthumanism and ‘post-anthropocentrism’ as resourceful ideas and imaginings into our understanding of what our ‘being-with’ non-human others in the world means (Jaques, 2015, 11). The idea of ‘sympoiesis’, a term coined by Haraway (2016), refers to ‘making with’ and in the situated and dynamic phenomena of ‘floating harmony’ between horse and rider it seems relevant when depicting the shared and synchronous ‘rapture’ of the experience which Game (2001) highlights.

Through an appreciation of Haraway’s notion of *sympoiesis*, I wish to share how it matters what stories tell stories, (Haraway, 2016). I envision and animate this through my own entanglements with art and image. I show a horse (Henry Rainbow) and a Devoted Rider (colleague and friend) as a virtual “fusion of genomes” (Haraway, 2016, 60), see figures 4 & 5. In this sympoiesis, I exemplify how they are ‘in generative friction, or generative enfolding, rather than opposition’ (Haraway, 2016, 61), see figure 4. Such a multispecies becoming-with means we stay with the ‘trouble,’ the interlacing of art and science. Such a betwixt position and “in-betweenness” seen through the horse and rider *event* unsettles and challenges human dominion and power. It questions the boundaries of bodies and the ‘fixity’ of Western ideas of growth and development. By being attentive to the event of ‘floating harmony’ and the relational importance of this phenomena can further illuminate how a posthuman and post



anthropocentric positionality, which disrupts and contests Cartesian ideas and the state logics and discourse of the Enlightenment period, suggests ways with which creativity de-centres humanism in a dynamic, powerful, and provocative way.

**Figure 5.** Using a layering technique to visually denote an affective molecular ‘becoming-with’



*Image:* Author's 'sym/poiesis' imaginings depicted through their sketches combined in FaceFilm app

**Figure 6.** A multispecies ‘muddle’: Visualising a co-constitution and enactive kinaesthetic empathy with one another



*Image.* Author's ‘sym/poiesis’ imaginings depicted through their sketches combined in FaceFilm app

My ‘inefficient mappings’ of horse-rider rhythmic movements and synchrony as purported by Knight, materialises an ‘unseen’ embodied, meaningful experience (Knight, 2021). The visual and ‘chaosgraphic’ depiction enables an ‘unflattening’ of text as exemplified by Sousanis (Sousanis, 2015) as well as affording a wider audience accessibility in terms of those who may prefer and enjoy the greater image-centricity the visual can provide (Stockl, Caple & Pflaeging, 2019; Hague, 2018; McCloud, 1993). I return to Derrida’s, (1982) idea that photographs contain traces (upon traces) which are worthy of our attention and expound upon the differences between the static images, Figures 1-4, and the blended, animated-type images in Figures 5-6. In addition, I amplify Strom’s idea of making ‘high theory’ tangible and practical



(Strom, 2017). I consider these images as provocations in themselves, to invoke posthuman ideas which highlight the integral and dynamic multi-faceted relationality between the human and more-than-human world. Thus, challenging, eroding and reconfiguring what it means to be human in a more-than-human-world in which long-held ineffectual, and trouble-some hierarchical divides between various species is no longer clear-cut. As Fredrick, (2020:7) asserts, arts-based approaches have the capacity to question ‘inequity between embodied and verbal forms of learning.’ Through appreciation that we are all entangled in the world diminishes human exceptionalism. Therefore, my playful poesis and use of a ‘visual vocabulary’ as highlighted by Le Breton (2006/2017) in sensing the world can be significant. Through such arts-based approaches to understanding knowledge production, posthumanism perspectives can be further expounded.

The rhythmic movement and union of horse and rider together, a sym/poesis, is the ‘making’ of an intimate bond and corporeal connection. It is through one another’s fleshy body that they float, no longer equine, no longer human but hybrid. They leak into one another, like a rainbow leaks and fades back into the sky, dispersing it’s vibrant colours, dissolving and entangled with atmospheric matter. Henry Rainbow has been given a very apt suitable name by his Devoted Rider. His non-human charisma folded into the body of his kin and companion. Their pathways are co-produced spaces and lines of flight. They are a material-kinaesthetic-embodied creation. They are two-in-one. Vibrant matter.

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