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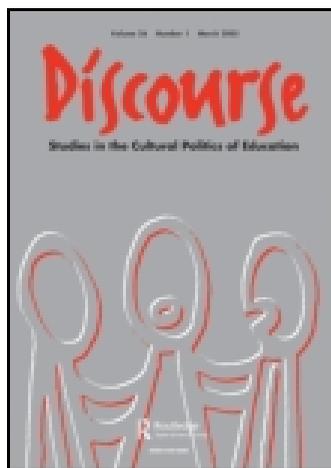
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Horse-girl assemblages: towards a post-human cartography of girls' desire in an ex-mining valleys community

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The paper works with queer and feminist post-human materialist scholarship to understand the way young teen valleys' girls experienced ubiquitous feelings of fear, risk, vulnerability and violence. Longitudinal ethnographic research of girls (aged 12–15) living in an ex-mining semi-rural community suggests how girls are negotiating complex gendered and sexual mores of valleys' life. We draw on Deleuze and Guatarri's concept of 'becomings' emerging in social–material–historical 'assemblages' to map how the gendered and queer legacies of the community's equine past surfaces affectively in girls' talk about horses. Our cartography traces a range of 'transversal flashes' in which girls' lives and their activities with horses resonate with a local history coloured by the harsh conditions of mining as well as liberatory moments of 'pure desire'. We creatively explore Deleuze and Guatarri's provocation to return desire to its polymorphous revolutionary force. Instead of viewing girls as needing to be empowered, transformed or rerouted, we emphasise the potential of what girls already do and feel and the more-than-human assemblages which enable these desires.

Keywords: queer; femininity; Deleuze and Guatarri; violence; becomings; affect

Introduction: pit-lasses, pit-ponies and poverty

The harness, the belt, the chains and the pushing are the heritage of females in British mines. (Rev. T. Eddy, 1854, p. 297)

I canna say that I like the work well for I am obliged to do it: it is horse work. (Agnes Kerr, 15 years old, coal bearer, cited in Bates, 2012, p. 123)

Historically, the landscape of South Wales is renowned for its abundance of coal and iron ore in its valleys. While Welsh coal is known to have been excavated since Roman times, Britain's industrial revolution (1730s–1850s) saw a rapid rise in global coal export, resulting in an exponential increase in population and a violent disfigurement of the natural and agricultural landscape. Despite the grim life at the coalface, thousands were drawn away from working on the land into the precarious work of mining. While representations of mining as male labour dominate, there is a hidden history of women's involvement in mining. Children and women worked alongside men, 12–14 hours a day, underground in cramped and dangerous conditions, doing hard, back-breaking work. Getting the work done and increasing production, rather than the gender of the workers, took priority. Indeed, women's own testimonies point to the regularity of woman doing

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the lifting and heavy work. As Denise Bates' (2012, p. 1099) research into pit-lasses explains, 'women would work for less pay than men required and would accept conditions that no man would tolerate'.

Girls as young as six years regularly descended ladders into the pits to draw up tubs of coal (aka 'basket girls'), and many were routinely harnessed to waggons to haul heavy loads some distance, sometimes several hundred yards as Agnes testifies above. The quote introducing this section powerfully describes the way harnessed pit-girls were a significant part of the 'heritage of British mines' – a heritage that portrays subjugation and strength, and as the following excerpts suggest, an image of female masculinity (Halberstam, 1998) that was decried as unnatural and immoral by the male middle-class commissioners of the time:

One of the most disgusting sites I have ever seen, was that young females, dressed like boys in trowsers [sic], crawling on all fours, with belts and chains. (Testimony of Thomas Pearce, 1854, Cited by Rev. Eddy, 1854, p. 296)

Witnesses agree in testifying as to the demoralizing effects of subterranean labour upon the female sex. When the shrinking delicacy of woman is gone she is unsexed. She becomes the actor of masculine vices, with seldom the virtues of the other sex ... The discipline of the mines crushes it – implants in its place a stolid indifference or wayward recklessness. (Rev. Eddy, 1854, p. 297)

When boys were following girls with torn breeches they could see them all between the legs naked. This was perhaps the most horrific evidence Symond [commissioner] heard. He could only add that any sight more disgustingly indecent or revolting could scarcely be imagined than these girls at work. No brothel could beat it. (Bates, 2012, p. 1217)

These examples gesture towards a queering of the gender order of the day, provoking an abject disgust at girls-becoming-boys, women-becoming-men, if not in-hu-man ('unsexed'). The 'disciplinary' forces of pit-life, 'crushing' 'female purity' and unleashing 'masculine vices' and 'wayward recklessness' mesh with the sexualisation of girls' sartorial and working bodies. Indeed, projections of promiscuous 'half-dressed' and 'naked girls' were decontextualised, sensationalised and eroticised via sketches and photographs in the Victorian printing press (Bates, 2012). Moreover, claims regarding the moral degeneration and sexual impropriety of girls and women as they laboured in mining environments were used as the rationale for preventing women and children under 10 years from working underground. After a number of attempts, the 1842 miners Act effectively shunted women (and their families), who often only knew colliery life, into further poverty. Many women tried to oppose the Act, while others creatively dressed in 'men's clothes' in order to pass as male and 'gain a few days wages for the sake of bare subsistence' (Brown, 1851). Even so, after the 1842 Act the hetero-patriarchal bonds gradually tightened and coal mining became exclusively 'men's work'. In sum, pit-lasses were replaced by pit-ponies (the colliery horse, see Thompson, 2008), and women were called upon to relearn a domesticated, respectable and less 'wild' femininity. Indeed, schools were discussed as sites for the sole purpose of educating girls so that they:

would be raised from their present degraded situation ... (to) become useful members of society, their morals would be preserved in a pure state, their personal appearance would be improved ... they would become virtuous endearing wives ... the improved condition of the females would react on the males ... wean the men from bad habits of every kind. (Brown, 1851)

Fast forward 100 years and the gendered division of labour became imbued with new tensions as traditional mining jobs disappeared, and men were increasingly unemployed in mining areas. From the 1930s to the 1980s, mechanisation allowed coal to be extracted in huge quantities yet for increasingly higher prices, and the UK was unable to compete with cheaper coal extraction in China. Since the deliberate mass closure of the mines initiated by Thatcher's Government in the 1980s, men's bodies were no longer needed to stoically endure hard manual labour and many became long-term unemployed. Today, the only available jobs are predominantly in the service sectors which are widely recognised in these ex-mining locales as 'feminine work' (Walkerdine & Jimenez, 2012). Girls anticipate, and mothers and grandmothers dominate, the caring and service sectors. As for the colliery horses, they are used for agricultural work or have gradually returned to the wilderness. The last working pit-pony died in 1999.

In our longitudinal ethnographic project, 'Young People and Place', we worked with young people in a locale known for its mining heritage at a time when all the mines had finally closed down. For the young teens in our research, a complex set of values and associations surfaced. High levels of multiple deprivations continue to be a signature of the valleys which attract European 'Communities First' funding, along with multiple, often unsuccessful, attempts at regeneration. In contemporary times, anxieties surrounding enforced conditions of human worklessness are infused with strong traditions around heteronormative gender roles rooted in the industrial past. Girls' narratives were infused with tensions that seemed to bear the signs of industrial legacies of what girls and women were expected to do and be. This was most noticeable in their talk of sexual safety and danger, and how they negotiated the affordances of the valleys landscape.

Many girls in the study said they felt unsafe, yet to varying degrees. They spoke of the difficulties often associated with poverty, such as physical and heterosexual violence, illness, accidents and loss (Iverson & Renold, 2013b; Renold, 2013). Moreover, in these newly gendered places, girls were growing up with complex contradictory messages. Post-feminist school-based slogans plastering classroom walls called on girls to aim high, work hard, never give up and be empowered (Ringrose, 2007). In contrast, community messages steeped in a history where generations of strong women have kept families afloat, demand girls stay close and couple up with boyfriends as ways to keep boys safe. In effect these practices help to keep traditional masculinity intact (Walkerdine & Jimenez, 2012). The specific legacies of pre-industrialisation, industrialisation and post-industrialisation mesh together with the gendered history of the place that shape girls' everyday practices and imagined ways forward.

This paper develops our previous work which draws on some of the conceptual moves in queer and feminist post-human materialist scholarship to understand the way young teen valleys' girls alluded to the aliveness of their bodies in ways that ruptured (hetero) normative femininity. We theorise these practices as 'becomings' emerging in social-material-historical 'assemblages' by drawing on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's oeuvre. Previously, we have written about how girls' becomings emerged in entanglements with bikes, skate-boards, and other objects in various terrains and landscapes beyond the school walls (Iverson & Renold, 2013a, 2013b). The focus of this paper is on girls-with-horses and works with Deleuze-Guattarian notions of desire in dynamic affective post-human assemblages. The local-historical affects that we detected in our fieldwork required us to widen our focus beyond educational institutions and to recognise how

becomings emerge through ongoing practices that are entangled with place, history and landscape.

Post-human assemblages and locating ‘becomings’ in history and place

Feminist and queer scholarship on neomaterialism is encouraging social scientists to think with new ontologies of the decentred subject: this is a post-human version of a non-unitary, impersonal and post-identitarian subject that foregrounds the more-than-human (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2002/2005, 2006, 2013; Grosz, 2011; Probyn, 1996). Emphasising non-dualistic understandings of nature–culture interactions, this scholarship pushes us to think critically and creatively about post-anthropocentric relations and the intra-action (Barad, 2007) of more-than-human worlds (e.g. animal worlds, environmental worlds, material worlds, etc.).

Entanglements of intra-acting phenomena are always located in time, history and place. So when we consider the everyday practices that girls are part of and undertake in the valleys, we come to see these as practices that carry affective traces of the past that leap between any number of what Deleuze and Guatarri call, ‘existential territories’; that is, those ‘transversal flashes’ (Guatarri, 1995, p. 93) of affective space, created by experience in assemblages. If we focus on the pit-pony-girl assemblage such as the one alluded to in the opening section, we can recognise the specifically emplaced (i.e. south valleys coalfields) and historical (patriarchal and capitalist) bonds between girls/women, the coalface and the colliery horse. Thus ‘assemblages’ can be made up of all manner of matter: corporeal, technological, mechanical, virtual, discursive and imaginary, that carry affective charges. Agency or what we would theorise as ‘becomings’ (Ivinson & Renold, 2013b) emerge in the intra-action of elements in assemblages. Recognising how traces of place and history become revitalised within acting assemblages can provide some powerful insights into resources and barriers that girls encounter in their everyday lives and how they imagine themselves forward through dreams and aspirations. Thus a multiplicity of possible ‘becomings’ might be enfolded in one girl’s action. Alternatively, because assemblages incessantly form and reform as part of the dynamic movement of life, some material or contextual elements and not others may become salient at specific moments. In sum, being is complex, contradictory and multifaceted and cannot be separated from places, history and corporeality (Walkerdine, 2013).

Our focus on socio–material–historical assemblages demands an exploration of how living beings and matter mesh and ‘become more and other than their histories through their engagement with dynamic environments’ (Grosz, 2011, p. 2). It necessitates a radical post-individual and non-anthropocentric theory of desire and a more complex understanding of how change, the unpredictable and the new are generated. In this paper, we draw attention to the importance of how place affords an entanglement with ‘the wild’ (Bennett, 2010) and specifically with the Welsh (mountain/pit) pony.

Mapping becomings: working diffractively and affectively with data assemblages

The Young People and Place project was methodologically funded research, designed specifically to experiment with different ways of creating research encounters that could capture the more multisensory and affective relations of space and place (see Hughes & Lury, 2013). The research, which began in 2009 (and continues unfunded), has become a multiphased ethnography, organically evolving as opportunities and new connections and

possibilities arise. The first phase involved over 60 semi-structured interviews, using photographs of places in and around the locale with young people aged 13–15 in two local secondary schools. In parallel to this school-based research, we worked ethnographically in a local Youth Centre that we visited every Monday evening for one year. In the second phase, we invited young people to take pictures of places in and around the school, and these were used as the basis for further ethnographic interviews, including mobile methods, such as walking tours (see Ivinson & Renold, 2013a; Ross, Renold, Holland, & Hillman, 2009). In the third phase, we focused on film-making. Six groups of young people worked with a film-maker while performing and talking about out-of-school activities (see Renold & Ivinson, 2013). A fourth (unfunded) phase, we focused on corporeality as we invited girls aged 11–16 years to work with a choreographer as part of a school-based activity week. Our approach might best be described as rhizomatic, whereby we follow analytic trails from previous research encounters and find ways (and funds) to create research assemblages that enable us not only to sustain our research relationships but also capture the thick and affective materiality of young people living in and around a valley town we call Cwm Dyffryn (a fictional name).

The range of creative arts-based ethnographic methods, especially the film-making, walking tours and body-movement workshops has, over time, allowed us to explore affects associated with the micro-intensities of everyday life (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013; Hickey-Moody, 2013; Hollway, 2010; Lury & Wakeford, 2012; Walkerdine, 2010). We have written elsewhere how these methods enable us to explore the multisensory dimensions of place, including our ‘gut reactions’, when young people chose to show us specific artefacts or told us vivid stories that touched us affectively (Ivinson & Renold, 2013a).

In this paper, we draw on Karen Barad’s (2007) diffractive methodology (see also, Taylor & Ivinson, 2013) to explore how talk in seated interviews intra-act with historical archive data and feminist materialist theory in order to trace how the gendered and queer legacies of the valley’s equine past surface affectively in girls’ horse-talk. Working this way allows us to map the affective ‘ontological intensities’ (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1987) of those often imperceptible micro-moments of teen girls’ becomings (see also Coleman, 2009; Gonick & Gannon, *in press*; Juelskjaer, 2013; Renold & Ringrose, 2011; Ringrose, 2012). In sum, we try to locate moments when more expansive becomings come into view and connect to desires that, even if not fully realised, ‘throw us forward into other relations of becoming and belonging’ (Probyn, 1996, p. 59). These are the potentialities for becoming other (Braidotti, 2002; Grosz, 2011), that, if supported, may help young people to move beyond the constraints of the place/history/gendered expectations of where they are growing up.

Horse assemblages and ontological intensities

The landscape of South Wales has many villages backing onto open mountainous scapes that afford the possibility for a rich and physical engagement with the wild. While many young Teen boys talked animatedly about the adventures they had and continued to have with the wild and their local outdoors, girls were generally more hesitant and much less animated in interviews. Many girls talked about how they had given up the physical activities they used to do, such as den-building, biking, hiking and climbing. Some girls made direct links with how their everyday practices of ‘girling’ (e.g. hair, make-up, not ‘getting dirty’ or ‘sweaty’) compromised and disrupted continuing with these outdoor

pursuits. Their narratives betrayed the many different ways they felt their adolescent bodies to be under surveillance. They displayed a ubiquitous fear of ‘constantly being watched’, needing to ‘know where you could run to’, where you ‘could hide’ and how ‘to avoid’ places and people who might ‘take you’, ‘attack you’, ‘kidnap you’ and ‘rape you’. Other girls disclosed specific details of being followed and of physical heterosexual violence (see Kayleigh’s story in Ivinson & Renold, 2013b). While many of these experiences often went no further than their peer group, those that did get disclosed to the police or to the education welfare officers were either not taken seriously or experienced interventions that did nothing to change the situation.

Collectively, the girls’ accounts intimated that like the pit-ponies and pit-lasses, they seemed to experience their bodies as not being entirely their own (Young, 2005). In this paper, we go a step further and focus specifically on affective existential territories that we became aware of as girls spoke about horses and horse riding and which moved us to explore girls’ entanglements with the histories of horses in the valleys. When we researched the history of pit-ponies in industrial and post-industrial Wales, we were struck by contradictory representations. While horses were aligned with freedom and the Welsh Mountain Pony in particular with hardiness as well as exploitation and servitude, other tales also survive. For example, before the Romans, the Welsh Mountain Pony outwitted many masters (Welsh Pony & Cob Society, www.wpcs.uk). Henry VIII established an edict that all horses under 15 hands be destroyed because they were able to hide in places where humans were unable or unwilling to go (Welsh Pony & Cob Society). The Welsh pony seemed to be represented through an interesting combination of beauty, temperament, toughness and endurance.

We found that girls’ interview accounts of horses and horse riding resonated with the motifs of survival and strength associated with the Welsh Mountain Pony and of subordination and exploitation associated with the pit-pony and pit-lasses. It is these ‘transversal flashes’ across historical/contemporary existential territories that we explore creatively below.

Taking the reins, to ‘keep on moving’

Sensationalist media stories of horse neglect and abuse emerge from time to time across the Anglophone world, and Wales is no exception. Rarely, however, do media headlines connect human and animal cruelty (hum/animal) to the exploitation and poverty of living in economically deprived communities. Rarely do we learn about how the abuse of individual horses intra-acts with the historical and trans-generational neglect of pre-industrial and post-industrial communities – communities made up of land, animals and people (see Quinn, 2013). In post-industrial Wales, horses are almost entirely kept for recreational purposes in owned or rented stable complexes, or they are bred from old bloodlines and shown at regional events and performance competitions (see www.wpcs.uk). In Cwm Dyffryn, as in other semi-rural locations across Wales, horses roam wild across mountain and open land that can be viewed from most roads, and, indeed, was the view from the stairwell in one of the local secondary schools. While there were boys in our project who did ride horses (usually, bareback and in the wild, on mountain trails) and boys who wanted to be jockeys and race competitively (Renold, 2013; Ward, 2013), they were by far in the minority and their activities were often kept private from wider peer culture (Ivinson, 2012). Very few boys discussed horses as one of their recreational activities. Caring for horses and horse riding was predominantly perceived as girls’ pursuits.

The four girls in the project who talked most about their relationship with horses, were Cati, Jen, Awen and Nia (all pseudonyms). Unlike representations and fantasies depicted in white middle-class pony-book genres (see Haymonds, 2000), valleys' girls did not usually own an individual horse (see also Ojanen, 2012). As Awen put it, 'we own bits of him'. The communal sharing of horses and the everyday practices of sheltering, grooming, feeding and riding were distributed across a matriarchal line of girls and women. Girls talked about sharing horses with their (girl) friends, with their mothers and their mother's friends. Boys and men tended not to figure in these accounts. Girls talked about rescuing horses from older male farmers who could no longer look after or ride them. Jen talked of sharing a horse but swiftly moved on to tell us of how she will soon be riding her neighbour's horses:

Jen: I'm going to start riding the man next door's horses. He's got, I think he's got twelve, and he can't do it 'cos he's had a new hip replacement so he wants us to start riding.

GI: So he's got twelve horses?

Jen: Yeah.

GI: That's quite a lot to look after. Are they in a field or stables or ...?

Jen: Field and stables. But he said you gotta start riding now 'cos they're getting so fat with all the grass and hay.

Jen's desire to start riding her neighbour's horses could be interpreted through dominant gendered expectations of girls and women as nurturers and carers, both of animals and of men. However, the girls' contradictory comments of how they 'love looking after horses' but hate 'grooming' or 'mucking out', and how 'when we are not riding, we'll be up there and build jumps and logs and all that', complicates this analysis. We speculate that riding itself, rather than what it represents or symbolises, connects to their desires to 'be outside' in 'all weathers', and not 'stuck inside'. Cati, for example, talks about how she dislikes being penned in and forced to undertake domestic drudgery like her 'poor mother' who 'stays in on Saturdays to wash up and clean the house'.

Indeed, girls talked animatedly about riding horses. Some talked about how they 'ride everyday' and how they enjoyed taking off in small groups to 'ride up the mountains'. It is possible to consider this double entanglement of riding-girl/ridden-horse where girls needed to be 'out' and horses needed to be 'ridden' as an assemblage which rescues both pony and girl from a sedentary existence of being penned into a domestic/stable cage. We get a glimpse of this 'transversal flash' of a more life-affirming riding assemblage in the extract below where Jen talks about 'obeying' and questioning rules and regulations. She talks about possessing a thwarted, yet independent spirit, and 'having a mind of her own', just like her horse, Henry:

Jen: Horses have got a mind of their own so when they like don't listen you gotta make them do it. They're very stubborn. You want to them to stop, you like pull the reins ... they keep on going, they like to have their own mind. They're like us really, they like to do what they want, but we gotta obey orders we have, haven't we?

The mixture of will-power ('stubborn'), force ('make them do it'), onward movement ('keep on going'), discipline ('obey orders') and autonomy ('own mind') entangle in ways that perhaps create an affective space that enabled girls to 'keep on going'. Indeed, this horse-girl assemblage didn't seem to be about pure *jouissance* or *délire*, but an assemblage that enabled girls to survive the fear of living in communities where they felt acutely 'rein in'.

While girls such as Cati and Jen loved being outdoors, violence and the fear of violence were part of the perceived social fabric of being 'outside'. For example, in Cati's response to the photographs of different places and spaces, she chose images that represented the fundamental need for humans to survive and grow: food, shelter and education. She talked a lot about the fear of 'being on her own' (as the majority of girls did) and the importance of female togetherness to ensure safety. Her interview was punctuated with numerous descriptions of her body seemingly under attack. She talked about the possibility of being hit by a train, of being run over and killed by a car and of being physically assaulted by 'drunk men' who 'don't know what they're doing'. Her anxiety that 'something might happen' was a ubiquitous fear that seemed to be associated with the local context: 'It's not safe, but it's not safe anywhere really is it?' However, this sense of vulnerability was thrown into relief when Cati told us that she walks on her own to see her horse, suggesting that she also experienced autonomy and strength.

As outlined earlier in the paper, all of the girls spoke at length about the perceived everyday physical and heterosexual violence, and some disclosed that they had witnessed or experienced both in the street and/or at home. They gave us the impression that to enjoy the outdoors, being on horseback was almost a necessity. Just like the Welsh Mountain Ponies that had transported goods across the mountains before industrialisation, girls spoke clearly about 'know(ing) where to go and where not to go'. They seemed to follow the grooves of well-trodden paths and trusted their horses to 'take them anywhere'. Awen talked about how close she was to her horse. Then we asked, 'what more would you want'? She replied. 'I know. No, like nasty people. Rapists and all that'. It seemed that horses were directly associated with sexual protection and sexual safety:

Awen: I feel like a bit safe because if anybody does try, like attack us or sometimes, you know just ride off and like I've got a group of us so nobody like try and attack us.

Being with her horse and physically high up on horse-back, seemed to enable Awen to imagine that she could 'ride off' and escape any potential attacks from hu/man others.

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, horses also featured strongly in girls' imagined futures. Three of the four girls stated emphatically that they wanted to work with animals and specifically horses. They expressed a passion for opening their own stables or horse farm, images that perhaps connect directly to the idea of a queer (non-heteronormative) post-human future in which they could 'keep on moving'.

The connection between corporeality and movement resonated powerfully in Nia's account. At the end of her interview, she revealed that her mother's side of the family suffers from a muscular hereditary disease preventing mobility and movement. Nia's ambition was to set up a horse riding stable for children while working part-time as a health visitor. In contrast, Cati talked about wanting 'a horse farm with loads of horses'. She detailed the strategy she would employ to realise this dream: 'I'm gonna be clever in school, then I'll get the job I want, to get the money I'll need' to buy 'my own farm'. Her fantasy involved moving from the risks and dangers of rural-urban Cwm Dyffryn and further into the wildness of an outlying village, 'because I don't really want my child growing up around this place'. Awen's ambition to become a mounted police officer involved a fantasy of being able to keep the whole community safe. This horse-police-girl assemblage suggests a sense of protection and freedom. She described how she feels 'safe' when the police on their mounted horses are around.

In this section, rescue, repair and nurture mingle in becomings of survival. We see elements of exploitation and inventiveness that we can trace rhizomatically through the history of the place. Girls, horses, being outside and other elements created a cluster of capabilities that perhaps enabled participants to express a sense of how they could 'keep on moving' and survive harsh times and violent pasts and presents. We can see this as a pit-girl-pony assemblage capturing affects that relate to a legacy of servitude as well as a wild-girl-mountain-pony assemblage capturing affects relating to survival, inventiveness and protectiveness.

We detected a desire to 'keep on moving' as a strong affective force in each girl's account. The next section explores intense moments that we suggest signal what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as 'lines of flight'.

YAR! Riding lines of flight

I used to be petrified ... and look at me now ... riding and EVERYTHING! (Nia, age 13)

Scattered throughout girls' accounts of horses and riding were gestures, sighs, throwaway comments and expressions that hinted at feelings of liberation. However, extended and coherent stories of liberation were generally absent. Rather we detected what Maggie MacLure calls data 'hot spots' (MacLure, 2012) or as we have been theorising here, those affective incorporeal 'transversal flashes' that lingered – existential refrains that we wanted to return to again and again. We have tried to trace these affective resonances across the narratives to make visible the often imperceptible moments of what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as drops of 'pure desire'.

There were many such moments in Nia's narrative. Like many girls in the study, an aversion to rubbish on the street animated her talk about the local landscape. The focus on cleanliness seemed to act as an antidote to the widespread neglect and decay of the buildings in many valleys' towns. Many shop windows are boarded up, and grand old buildings have fallen into disrepair and become derelict. In her narrative, talk of decay interweaves with talk of newborn babies and bodily rejuvenation. For example, Nia described her dad's trip to the gym every day to become a competitive body builder and her baby-sitting practices. We focus on the following interview extract because the more literal talk of new life seems to capture Deleuze and Guattari's sense of desire as life force.

Nia had been riding horses and ponies since she was three years old. She related a story about her love of swings and recalled lying on the floor under a moving swing. The account carried a sense of excitement and fear: 'scary it is!' she cried. Just after this exclamation, she introduced Ginger, a Welsh Mountain Pony, with 'a matted tail'. Her mother's friend had given them the pony for free because she could no longer afford to look after it. Nia was so keen to ride that she mounted him bareback:

Nia: I just take him out and do bareback

GI: Really? Is that not hard?

Nia: It's not hard no, it's just getting out there ... then, he just goes then ...

Later, she talked about riding with a saddle and repeatedly falling off and getting back on:

Well, once he galloped on, and I said I never want to get on that horse again, straight after, I got back on him ... Well I didn't trot him, and I fell off and he went to bend down for grass and I fell off. I fell down the head and landed in a bunch of stungies, I fell off cantering and I fell off galloping ... I'm on jumping now ... I used to be petrified of horses and look at me now, and like you know, riding and everything!

Nia provided a coherent narrative about falling off and getting back on, as if horse and girl learned to overcome their fears, negotiating to canter and then eventually galloping together. We sense how gradually girl and horse fuse together as a working unit. In places, she interrupted the flow of the narrative with throwaway yet emphatic statements such as, 'he just goes then' and 'riding and everything'. These interjections gave us a sense of spontaneous liberation or moments of lift-off.

These moments may appear insignificant yet they surfaced in the other girls' talk, as what we suggest can be imagined as moments of 'becoming-horse'. This was most notable in Jen and Awen's interviews which, as we have described earlier, were rife with talk of immanent bodily attack, involving real and imagined physical and sexual violence. Jen, for example, told us about how her older sister witnessed 'the druggies opposite ... smashing his mother's head in' and how her sister 'used to be scared to go outside the door'. Straight after this, she spoke of wanting to be a police woman and a dog handler. Next she started a story (that we outlined above) about her neighbour who needed his horses to be ridden. The affective flow moved from fear to protection, to rescue, and then turned to an account of her mother riding horses when younger:

GI: Your mother had a horse?

Jen: Yeah.

GI: Does she still have it?

Jen: No.

GI: When did she have it then?

Jen: I dunno ... when I was like younger and I used to just jump on her and go wherever!

GI: Oh. That's wonderful!

Here we can see how Gabrielle's response, 'Oh ... That's wonderful!' picked up on the affective charge of Jen's joyous outburst as she, in turn, remembered a powerful sense of freedom when younger. This emergent horse-girl assemblage of 'jumping on' and 'going wherever' resonated for us, not only because of the affective flow of the narrative and stories that precede it but also because it seemed to indicate a line of flight: a moment of remembering being other.

We detected the same kind of liberatory moments in Awen's interview. She started with a narrative of feeling penned in by the institutional regulations of the school and how boring she finds the local boy-dominated skate park. Then she described how every place holds risk and danger. This sequence allowed us to understand why she related a section about how she risks walking alone to get to the horse she rides every day, even amidst overwhelming feelings that 'everywhere is dangerous'.

In the next extract, we can see how Kate (researcher) attempts to re-engage Awen after her talk of 'boredom', which seemed to have flattened her energy. To do this Kate reiterated the activities that Awen had talked about enjoying earlier in the interview:

KM: Well, I suppose it's not energetic enough for you, you have to be off doing lots of interesting stuff. I can't believe you can just go up the mountain, that must be brilliant?

Awen: It is good, yeah.

KM: Do you just feel really free like ...?

Awen: Yeah! It's funny sometimes, when the horses just take off, and just like, YAR!!

We can see how Kate prompts Awen to recall the feelings she had while riding. This leads to Awen's energetic outburst, 'just like, YAR!!' Sound is important here. Awen is very softly spoken and quite monosyllabic throughout her interview. At the moment, 'YAR' is loudly exclaimed, her sonic outburst fills the silent classroom space. Awen also intimated that the unpredictability of 'riding off' had an uncanny quality which she phrased as, 'it's funny sometimes'. In this account, we can perhaps glimpse how girls-with-horses are enabled to go off-track and rupture the sedentary and domestic heteronormative femininity of their maternal forebears, captured by the joyous 'YAR!!'. It seems to signal a 'line of flight' that at least temporarily recalls a feeling of being and becoming other.

Lisa Blackman et al. remind us, how the accounts we give of ourselves can only ever be partial (Blackman, Cromby, Hook, Papadopoulous, & Walkerdine, 2008; Butler, 2004; Henriques, Hollway, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1984). We suspect that underlying these expressions were feelings that could be only partially articulated. Such feelings, if brought to the surface and articulated, are often absorbed into other, dominant discourses and in the interview data we generated, the dominant talk was of risk, danger and vulnerability. These barely articulated feelings of liberation were in danger of being re-territorialised by discourses of fear and so lost to the researcher and to the girls themselves. Identifying these partial articulations goes some way towards recovering affects that are often excluded in the analysis of interview talk. We glimpsed affects that resonated with the wild intensities of the mountain pony when girls' feel the rhythms of unpredictability as they ride bare-back, go off-track, and feel a sense of being high off the ground. Recovering and recognising these as queer affects is for us a pressing ethico-political priority because it allows us to detect potentialities of ways of being otherwise.

Discussion: what (else) can a horse-girl do?

'Little Hans' horse is not representative but affective. It is not a member of a species but an element or individual in a machinic assemblage: draft, horse-omnibus-street ... these affects circulate and are transformed within the assemblage: what a horse 'can do'. (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1987, p. 284)

Across eras, women riders have upset the 'natural' sex/uality/gender order. While there is a vibrant feminist and queer literature on women and horses in the arts and humanities (Hilton, 2013; Weidemeyer, 2006), traditional figurations of the horse as 'impossibly phallic' endure – trapped in a range of 'epistemological belongings' (Probyn, 1996, p. 45, see also Cunningham, 1996). There is very little empirical literature on girls, gender, sexuality and horses in the social, educational and psychological sciences (see Ojanen, 2012). When accounts are found, they tend to portray a normative structure of young female sexuality. For example, take Anna Freud's analysis of how the horse-crazed girl pivots around autoeroticism and phallic and patriarchal lack:

A little girl's horse-craze betrays either her primitive autoerotic desires (if her enjoyment is confined to the rhythmic movement of the horse); or her identification with the care-taking mother (if she enjoys above all looking after the horse, grooming it, etc.; or her penis envy (if she identifies with the big, powerful animal and treats it as an addition to her own body); or

her phallic sublimations (if it is her ambition to master the horse, to perform on it, etc.).
(Cited in Freud 1966/1989, p. 20)

Just as Deleuze and Guatarri free up the oedipal fixing of Freud's interpretation of Little Hans' relation to the horse as a phallic projection and displacement, focusing instead on what a horse-boy-assemblage can do (see also Buchanan, 2013), Probyn liberates the horse-girl from the grip of Freudian oedipalisation. In, *Girls and girls and girls and horses: Queer images of singularity and desire*, Probyn (1993) illustrates just how normative and enduring the teleological narrative of girls' displaced sexual desire is. Girls' transitions into womanhood are marked out in a series of multiple losses: from horse-crazy to best friend crazy, to boy-crazy. In sum, the girl ditches the horse, for the best friend, and then ditches the best friend when she becomes 'girlfriend'. Probyn queers this heteronormative linear sequence in an autobiographical twist claiming how living and growing up in the mid-Wales valleys, she never 'got over' horses or best friends, rather 'we chose each other and our ponies over boys' (1993, p. 24).

For the girls living and growing up in the post-industrial, ex-mining locale of Cwm Dyffryn, being on horseback complicated these teleological accounts of lack-driven, heterosexual desires. In our project, girls riding horses seemed less about connecting to images of male phallic power and more about being physically high up and be able to 'ride off' to escape any potential attacks. Some girls did talk about older girls or girls their own age who had ditched their horses when boys and boyfriends came on the scene:

Nia: My friend used to have one (horse) but she had to sell it because her sister lost interest in riding. Basically, if you have meet a boy then ... she actually had a boyfriend and everything, so she wasn't like taking no notice of the thing.

However, even these tales of girls ditching horses for boyfriends need to be contextualised with the ways in which many girls (and boys) talked about being 'in relationship'. Not far from the surface talk of 'wanting a boyfriend' to create and enhance a normative hetero-femininity, was talk of 'needing a boyfriend' to protect them from physical violence in their community (see Renold, 2013). This was less about eros and erotic desire, than an affective sexuality assemblage (Fox & Alldred, 2013) that afforded girls physical and psychological safety.

We tentatively suggest that this is a way to exercise the 'stolen becomings of the girl-child' (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1987, p. 305), in a long line of stolen becomings from the eroticisation of the pit-lasses and the gendered wages of horse-work to contemporary molar sexual territorialisations of girls' moving bodies. As Probyn (1996) suggests when she tells of how her mother's passion for riding was entangled in a dream of escaping an underground bunker with her horse, 'equine associations vary, and they always implicate other social structures' (p. 51). As we have seen, girls' fantasies of working with horses and riding horses were far from the decontextualised and ahistorical. Moreover, the feelings of liberation are no straightforward romantic becoming one with a horse, or any simple displacement of hetero-sexual desire (Probyn, 1996), but a fleeting moment, a queer becoming, in a dynamic social-material-historical assemblage where 'pivots of unpredictability, elements whose trajectories, connections and future relations remain unpredictable' (Grosz, 1994, p. 174).

Conclusion: retheorising desire as becoming

Recent scholarship on women and horses, particularly in relation to contemporary art, are complicating psychoanalytic tendencies to represent girls' desires for horses and horse riding through lack. Visual artists in particular are exploring the potentialities of becoming-horse in ways that illuminate and simultaneously rupture sedimented and geographically specific gender and sexual historical legacies. Weidemeyer (2006) analyses a range of feminist artists who each take up the horse through installations that rupture the anthropomorphic, patriarchal, capitalist, militaristic and heteronormative representations of horses in art history. Natalie Jeremijenko, for example, connects movement with environmental disasters by creating a robotic horse that viewers can insert money in to 'ride' and experience the ground motion of the 1989 San Francisco earthquake (Trigger, the Loma Prieta Pony, 2002).

It is from the arts and our mapping of the transversal flashes across representations of girls and of women in coal mining histories, that we have become inspired to work creatively and affectively, making explicit those micro-moments of deterritorialisation, when girls and horses come together in dynamic ways to create, if only temporarily, something Other. The post-human cartography we have sketched in this paper, demands that we think again about desire and think critically about how girls' (and women's) moving and working bodies are so swiftly territorialised (pathologised) through molar representations of displaced or active (hetero)sexuality.

Indeed, our wider aim has been to 'put desire to work in lines of flight, lines that scramble the subjective, the sexual, the social' (Probyn, 1996, p. 62). This is a way of thinking about desire not as lack, but as productive; as a way of making connections. This is not a desire that is oriented towards or directed by something (i.e. the imaginary) and does not sit outside the social, in fantasy. Instead, desire is productive, it produces the real (Olkowski, 1999). It still yields to and is captured by something that looks like the phallogocentric oedipal complex, converting the flows, territorialising them and assigning them to molar categories of sexuality, gender, race, religion, and so on (practices we see endure through the history of the eroticisation of the pit-lasses to contemporary representations of girls-on-horses). Nevertheless, Deleuze and Guatarri direct us to the radical potential of desire, where 'no matter how small, (it) is capable of calling into question the established order of a society; not that desire is asocial, on the contrary. But it is explosive' (Deleuze & Guatarri, 1983, p. 138, cited in Olkowski, 1999, p. 106). We have begun to map how, historically, girls and women working in the mines have indeed called the gender and sexual order into question – a cartography that connects with Rosi Braidotti's (2012, p. 149) post-queer wager of *how to radicalise sexuality* and return desire to its polymorphous force as 'becoming other'.

However, this is not some free-flowing desire, but desire in assemblages, and assemblages that are always located in their socio-historical places, such as the coalfields of industrial Wales or the mountainous trails of post-industrial ex-mining landscapes. The ethico-political task of this paper is part of a wider endeavour to identify those moments where particular assemblages emerge to spark the possibility of something new (Negri & Hardt, 2000). As Luciana Parisi (2009, p. 74) writes, it is about mapping becomings 'that are already here acting on a present spanning towards an immediate past-future ... agitating activities ... ready to invent a future in the everyday'.

This paper has taken seriously Negri & Hardt's (2000) suggestion that we return to the potential of *aleatory materiality* as a new basis for social resistance (i.e. a materiality that

is unknown and not already coded by an inscription machine, Haraway, 1991). Recognising the potential for new forms of life is part of the radical political project proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987, p. 197) and which we hope will inform critical pedagogies that move beyond pathologising discourses of girls living in post-industrial places – discourses that emphasise educational lack (skill and aspiration), sexual excess (promiscuity and pregnancy) and parochial gender relations (regressive and myopic femininity). Instead of viewing girls as needing to be empowered, transformed or rerouted, we want to emphasise the potential of what girls already do and feel, and the affective assemblages which enable these desires. The challenge after they have been made visible is how to harness and support girls' desires to produce genuinely new ways of being in the world.

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