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The Deterioration of the Thoroughbred in Late Nineteenth-Century England

Tatsuya Mitsuda

Introduction

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Sir Walter Gilbey, a well-known wine and spirit merchant, weighed in on a topic that had been of major concern since at least the 1870s within the horseracing community: the deterioration of the English thoroughbred.¹ As President of the Royal Agricultural Society, the 74-year old Gilbey was at the pinnacle of his influence, and in reflective mood. ‘Since the old days of four-mile-heat races under heavy weights passed away,’ he frowned, ‘much has been sacrificed to speed over a short distance. The tendency for the past hundred years has been in the direction of shorter races and lighter weights.’² The problem with racing horses over short distances, he argued, was that it left ‘the best qualities of horseflesh untaxed’ and allowed the horse to develop ‘delicacy of constitution.’³ Herein lay the danger for Gilbey who, as a practicing horse breeder, feared the worst from disproportionately favouring one attribute over another. ‘Such has been the consequence of aiming solely at *speed*,’ he concluded anxiously, that ‘other essentials, such as strength and endurance, have been in great measure lost.’⁴

In voicing such concerns, Gilbey was far from alone. Nor was he the most ruthless critic. A few years later, an article in the country journal *The*

Field was even blunter. ‘It can hardly be denied,’ it exclaimed, ‘that the average modern racehorse is a poor creature. Nine out of ten of those which have been before the public of late have neither constitution nor stamina. Speed they certainly have, but there are too many horses who cannot travel an inch further than five or six furlongs, and many more who cannot get beyond a mile.’⁵ Particularly worrying was the tendency to race younger horses, especially two-year-olds, exposing them to great pressures at an early age. The horse trainer, Fred Adye, summed up the problem well when he noted:

The great extension of our modern practice of two-year-old racing, and the introduction of multitudinous sprinting scrambles for large stakes, with the absence of long distance races from the cards of most meetings, have naturally resulted in the development of a flashy, speedy sort of horse, which can fly for five furlongs, but which has no stamina or staying power, and which breaks down through pressure at an age when his predecessor on the Turf was just running into his best form.⁶

To these critics, the perceived shift towards favouring speed over stamina, youth over maturity, and short over long distances, might not have mattered had horseracing stood for little. But observers chose to highlight the predicament of the thoroughbred precisely because its deterioration had wider social and national implications. ‘[W]ere the racehorse a breed entirely apart from all other breeds,’ Gilbey explained, ‘were thoroughbreds used only and exclusively for the purpose of racing and of begetting racehorses, did they play no part whatsoever in the economy of horse-breeding apart from the turf, we might regard this deterioration with less concern.’ But he added with a flourish: ‘as everyone knows, the thoroughbred is used to

“improve” our hunters and saddle-horses.’⁷

The English thoroughbred was no ordinary horse. Recognised as the horse *par excellence*, at the apex of the equine hierarchy, it served an important function in imparting superior blood to general utility horses, namely in the breeding of horses for a wide variety of transportational, agricultural and recreational activities. Similarly, retired thoroughbreds were in great demand in the military since their ‘sagacious,’ ‘noble’ and ‘courageous’ attributes were considered indispensable on the battlefields and therefore critical in maintaining the pre-eminence of the British Empire. Importantly, too, foreign breeders sought the thoroughbred because its high-quality blood could be used to improve domestic stock. To maintain the thoroughbred’s relevance to the economy, society and nation, its quality had to be safeguarded. A disproportionate increase in speed at the expense of endurance and shifts towards shorter lengths spelt disaster since these were qualities of little use in horses outside the racing scene. In short ‘racehorses as racehorses’ were ‘hardly worth considering as an asset.’⁸

Previous research on the history of English horseracing has had very little to say about this perceived crisis in the quality of the thoroughbred.⁹ Nor has the history of animals looked into this episode in detail. But useful questions might be asked about it. Why, for example, were concerns raised at this particular time? Did these fears have a basis in reality? What type of people lamented the decline of the Turf? And what kind of solutions were offered? Why were these people worried? Debates about the causes and solutions, the article will argue, reflected not only a series of social and cultural issues at a time of industrialization but also an imperial dimension, which manifested in calls for the import of the Arabian horse in order to solve the problem of deterioration.

Criticism of the Turf

Before one considers the motivation of the critics, it is legitimate to ask whether the debate about the deterioration of the thoroughbred reflected a discourse that was detached from reality. But critical followers of the Turf such as Gilbey, Adye and writers for *The Field* were not engaging in mere rhetoric. Their concerns were based on a real change that had occurred in horseracing. Some time ago Wray Vamplew demonstrated that the number of two-year-old races increased exponentially during the course of the nineteenth century. As Table 1 shows, by the end of the nineteenth century, over 40 percent of races held during the year were devoted to racing young horses over short distances. By contrast only 20 percent of meetings held in 1849 had involved two-year-olds.

Much of this rise was down to the development of enclosed courses, the first of which was established at Sandown Park, on the outskirts of London, in 1875. Since gate receipts financed these establishments, operators had to entice new spectators, or the urban working class, rather than continue to rely on an upper class clientele to make meetings pay. This was achieved not by offering crowds ‘long distance races in which the best horse might come in well ahead of the field’; but by putting on ‘two-year-races, sprints and handicaps, all of which had a sufficient degree of uncertainty about the result to make for exciting racing.’¹⁰ Long distance races were suited to spectators who had the time to follow their horses either in carriages or on horseback, but they were less suited to those who had neither the time nor the financial and transportational.

Both the background about the increase in two-year-old races and the effort to attract new followers helps to explain why conservatively-minded observers of the Turf chose to voice their disdain at the time they did, and

Table 1: Two-year old racing in England, 1849–1899

Year	Number of two-year-olds raced in season	Total number of horses raced in season	Percentage
1849	256	1,315	20.2
1879	844	2,113	39.9
1899	1,433	3,571	40.3

Source: Wray Vamplew, *The turf: a social and economic history of horse racing* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), p.190.

indicates that their frustrations reflected class anxieties. For at the root of much of the criticism was regret about how the upper classes were losing control over horseracing. ‘So long as racing was indulged in by the noble and wealthy as a sport,’ Abye opined, ‘its effects upon horse-breeding for general purposes seem to have been distinctly advantageous, but now that it has become a business, and often a lucrative one, the Turf as an institution appears to have ceased to be of use in this direction.’¹¹ The implicit message here is that the nobility had the wider interests of the sport at heart and engaged in it from purely unselfish motives. By contrast, now others had joined the fray with motives that were far from honourable, and whose interests focused solely on making money. The fear was that such people were growing in number, while ‘of the former class there are nothing like so many as there used to be.’¹² Charles Richardson, the editor of *The Field*, attributed the changing situation specifically to the number of large studs that were being managed not by ‘great noblemen or landed proprietors’ but by owners and breeders ‘mostly recruited from the world of commerce.’¹³

As a consequence of this shift in power from aristocracy to commerce, the situation of the Turf was bound to go from bad to worse. For example, the practice employed by breeders to produce yearlings from fashionable sires for gross amounts of money was widely criticised for its blatant subservience to the exigencies of the market.¹⁴ Worse, it was ill-informed buyers themselves who were thought to perpetuate this cycle through their blind adherence to what happened to be in fashion at the time. Critics pointed out the vicious circle that would arise if breeding and ownership were to be left to men from the commercial sector who, without sufficient equine knowledge, could only speculate on what buyers had speculated before, hence encouraging the tendency to go after the same kind of horse and repeat the same error. ‘Men go into it [buying certain horses],’ Richardson thus noted, ‘because they hear of a team of yearlings averaging over a thousand guineas, or because the two-year-old winner of a single race has changed hands for ten thousand; thus the whole thing becomes more a commercial speculation than anything else, and the elements of sport are gradually eliminated.’¹⁵

Breeders and buyers were not the only ones singled out. Grandstand proprietors and racing corporations were not spared either. Even the fiercely conservative head of the Jockey Club, Admiral Rous, who represented a small but powerful section of the establishment who were adamant that the English thoroughbred had not deteriorated, weighed in against them. He observed that despite significant increases in revenue from grandstands, auction and gate receipts, stand owners and racing organisers did not channel their profits into increased prizes for the general good of the sport.¹⁶ Rather observers pointed out that organisers and owners stuck to shorter courses with younger horses, since this allowed them a quicker return on their investment. ‘It is to be feared,’ *The Daily Telegraph* typically

admonished, 'that sentiment plays but an infinitesimal part in the whirligig of racing life. The strenuous desire to make the game pay overrides any laudable hope that the highest and best attributes of our thoroughbred may be solidly maintained, and thus it is that the efforts of the Jockey Club to encourage long-distance racing have met with but scant recognition from the majority of owners.'¹⁷ Cynics were not slow then in whipping up warnings of a slippery slope towards excessive betting that might be encouraged from there being too much money poured into, and at stake, in the sport. From this there grew criticism, to almost nauseating proportions, that the majority of men ran their horses merely as 'instruments of gambling,' and as risks ran higher, suspicions mushroomed that seedy arrangements were being made behind the public's back.¹⁸

Most of this, according to the critics, would not have come to pass had the upper class remained in control or, indeed, if they themselves as some no doubt did, had not succumbed to the vice of betting. From the 'purist' point of view, the upstarts were incapable of realising that horse-breeding was, in fact, an art form, which could not be left to those who did not appreciate the wider social and national importance of racing.

The Racehorse as a Living Machine

Of even more concern to purists was the damage that the intrusion of business into horseracing was thought to have upon the constitution of the horse itself. Allowing the market and industry to condition the type of thoroughbred foaled meant that horses would only 'exhibit one pace, viz. to gallop; the wack, the trot, etc not being a qualification demanded from racing stock.'¹⁹ On numerous occasions techniques of 'mass production' were held up to account for the uniformity of appearance and performance that 'horses of today' gave at courses across the country. One critic, by referring to it as a

‘living machine,’ denied the thoroughbred membership of the animal world, implying that it belonged more to the industrial one.²⁰ Therefore it is not surprising that within a more industrialized environment critics contended that modern day horse breeding had increasingly alienated the horse from its natural purpose and environment. Criticism mounted about the fact that the thoroughbred lived in an artificial environment: it was confined in boxes or stalls, put to fast, coerced into undergoing strenuous exercise and fed a special diet designed to enhance its performance rather than its health.²¹

The conditions to which young horses were subjected drew particular comment. ‘Young thoroughbreds in many studs,’ *The Field* thundered, ‘are bottled up too much, and treated as if they were exotic plants. Their liberty is very often curtailed, and as soon as they can take them, all sorts of additional foods are given. They are forced, in fact, and the forcing is continued throughout their yearling days, more especially if they were to be sent up for sale ... looking as if they had been prepared for cattle show rather than for a sale of young thoroughbreds.’²² The schooling of two-year-olds, who had to gallop excessively every day at a time when they were still growing, was even compared to ‘putting boys of thirteen or fourteen years of age into vigorous training.’²³ To the author of the article this state-of-affairs represented nothing short of exploitation, a total disregard of the natural development of the horse; indeed it was a miracle that the deterioration of the thoroughbred had not gone further.

The move towards artificial or industrial-style horse breeding seemed to symbolise the widening rift between society and nature in general, and between Englishmen and the thoroughbred in particular. In fact, the sense of loss in the communicative relationship between man and nature was a facet of an increasingly industrializing world that had grown decreasingly reliant on horsepower. Towards the end of the nineteenth-century, Thomas

de Quincey, for example, referred to this phenomenon when he noted the change in the perception of speed caused by the advent of mechanized transport. In the past, when men travelled on horseback, he reflected: ‘we heard our speed, we saw it, we felt it as thrilling; and this speed was not the product of blind insensate agencies, that had no sympathy to give, but was incarnate in the fiery eyeballs of the noblest among brutes, in his dilated nostrils, spasmodic muscles and thunder-beating hoofs.’²⁴ By contrast, the mode of travel that was fast superseding the horse, steam-powered locomotives, was cold and emotionless, without speech or sign, and required no voices of encouragement from the traveller. ‘It is not so with a horse or horses,’ another equine fan boasted nostalgically, ‘the driver and owner can love them or feel proud of them; they step with grace, and can vary their form and movements in a thousand ways. They are creatures of individual impulses.’²⁵ Within an industrializing world such a sentiment was seen to be increasingly on the wane even among horse breeders and owners. Indeed, the new class of breeders and owners, hailing as they did from the urban-industrial world, were thought to bring a distinct commercial sensibility to the practice of horseracing that prevented them from conversing directly with the horse – unlike the aristocracy with their roots in the countryside.

The Problem of the Betting Urban Masses

But it was among the betting urban masses that the ‘de-animalization’ of the thoroughbred was believed to reach its most complete form. In contrast to the upper classes, working class followers of racing, being low-income inhabitants of towns and cities, were limited in the number of meetings they could physically attend and in their chances to come into close contact with thoroughbreds. As a result, they had little choice but to rely on the press. Yet to critics, the growth of the print media further underlined the distancing

of the pursuit of horseracing from the horse itself.²⁶ ‘How many persons,’ Adye wondered, ‘now concern themselves with this sport without the least knowledge of an acquaintance with its noble subject! The Englishman, we are assured, always loves a good horse, and no doubt he generally does when he knows him; but as a rule he picks his fancy out of a printed list, and often fails to recognise the animal which “carries his money” when he is able to go and see him run.’²⁷ Thus, betting on horses mediated by the press came to stand, in the words of Adye, for the ‘systematic backing of the unknown horses of unknown owners by post and wire.’²⁸ The chance encounter of a trainer with a lower class supporter of racehorses did little to change Adye’s mind:

A porter came up and asked the trainer what he had there. ‘Sally Brass II’ was the reply. ‘What! Good old Sally? Let’s have a squint at her, young man. She’ve won me many a quid, but I’ve never set eyes on her yet! ... Well, one likes the interest the honest fellow took in his selected favourite; but can it be a very wholesome interest, that purely monetary one, which a man in his position takes in a horse trained so far away, and which, but for this casual glimpse of her in a railway box, he would probably never have seen at all?’²⁹

Such an incident – the degree of innocence here was not an issue – only helped to confirm Adye’s suspicions, namely that the working man very rarely came to see and inspect his favourite racehorse. If anything, the fact that the porter knew this filly was something of a miracle given the very short racing careers young thoroughbreds enjoyed. The turnovers had become so fast, it was claimed, that the public were likely to lose sight of a good horse almost as soon as they had got to know him.³⁰ From this it further followed

that the masses, knowing nothing much about the horse, came ‘ostensibly to see a horserace but came for no such thing; they are simply and solely to rage and chaffer and scramble over money.’³¹ Betting activities in which the majority of the working class followers of racing indulged, were not bets on the horse at all but, in fact, ‘on the honour of a series of persons connected with horse-racing – bookmaker, owner, training, jockey, and the very stableboys included – among many of whom honour is a commodity which is strictly wanting.’³² To be able to know the horse was nigh hopeless for the urban-dweller, because his knowledge was at best second hand and at worst purely financial.

As a form of backlash, critics such as Adye harked back to a time when humans had a more direct relationship with the horse, one uncontaminated by commercial distractions. And it was in the countryside – indeed where he himself lived – that Adye saw the only possibility for humans to come into direct contact with nature. His major disappointment upon visiting Aintree during the Grand National, for example, was precisely because he considered the course to be an artificial one. ‘But somehow or another,’ he complained, ‘I had pictured to myself for years a very fine *natural course*, with Beecher’s and Valentine’s brooks like the Langton brook or the Whissendine, to which the grand thoroughbreds engaged would come down and cover some sixteen to twenty feet of water in their stride. As a matter of fact, it being a very dry spring, there was not a drop of water in either; and both, moreover, were nothing but small ditches, and so overhung by the outward slant of the fence that any horse which cleared the latter must clear the ditch too.’³³

Consequently, Adye saw in the set-up at Aintree the abandonment of the ‘old-fashioned natural course,’ equipped with a variety of jumps, for a course with no distinguishing characteristics, the only difference from other courses being the size and height of the ‘artificial fences.’³⁴ Moreover, he

saw in the urban racecourse design a restriction of freedom for both man and horse, as the practice of putting up enclosures, grandstands, barriers and not least of all money only helped to extend the distance between man and horse. Adye was keen to stress ‘how far more enjoyable, and more genuinely “sporting” as well, the glorious old pastime seems to be on those open spaces, where everyone who loves to see a good horse gallop may do so free and unfettered, than when looped up in crowded stands and enclosures, while the horses run round a “soup-plate” course for gamblers to bet on...’³⁵

Return to Nature, Return to the Past

As the example of Adye amply illustrates, dissatisfaction with the present state of the Turf, and its representative, the English thoroughbred, could easily slide into a glorification of the past, when races were thought to have belonged to a rural – and hence more natural – world. In much the same vein, critics were quick to point out that, unlike their modern-day descendants, racehorses in the past had ‘bone and substance’; in effect that horses had previously possessed greater staying power and an ability to carry more weight for longer distances.³⁶ As Walter Gilbey put it: ‘Time was when the thoroughbred ran four-mile heats under 11 or 12 stone, and ran such heats twice or three times on the same day; when, in a word, his Arab character had not been bred out of him to develop higher speed, he was admirably qualified to get [=breed] hunters that would gallop and stay, saddle horses that would carry weight, and troop-horses that could endure the hardship of campaigning on scanty fare. The misfortune is that the deserved reputation of the old-time thoroughbred has descended to the modern thoroughbred, which is a very different animal in size, make, shape, stamina, and constitution.’³⁷ All of this was to Gilbey not only a confirmation of the deterioration in the present-day racehorse, but also a blueprint for

what could be done in the future, by returning to the past.

Not all were inclined to agree. Samuel Sidney, the horse-loving priest, for example, contended that the past practice of carrying weights in races lasting four to five miles in heats one after another was not, in fact, evidence of the superiority of past horses but a ‘barbarity’ which, he added somewhat mischievously, ‘are [sic!] still continued in America and France.’³⁸ Neither did Charles Richardson who, while agreeing that the quality of the English thoroughbred had worsened, expressed reservations about going back to ‘the old system, which overdid the thing altogether, and was almost cruel in its severity.’³⁹ A return to old ways was thus construed as a backward step for humanity. Ever keen to snub any suggestion that the thoroughbred of his day needed improving, Admiral Rous made the point that, while in the past races were run over longer distances, many over four miles, moves to shorten races had actually arisen from a realization that these lengths were ‘cruel distances’ and that measures had to be taken which ‘corresponded with the civilization of the country.’⁴⁰ ‘In these enlightened days,’ he thus challenged the reformists, ‘when cruelty to animals is at a discount, no man with the common feelings of humanity would propose to revive our ancient barbarism.’⁴¹

Of course, Rous was assuming that modern-day horseracing was kinder to the horse. This opinion was contested by those who argued that modern-day thoroughbreds were subjected to high levels of stress and pressure, forced as they were to work and travel long hours and distances in order to win stakes and bets all over the country.⁴² To some, then, present day horseracing was just as barbaric, if not more so as in the past. To advocate a re-introduction of long races under these circumstances could be seen as almost counterproductive, as it would just add more strain and stress to an already overtaxed and exhausted animal.

Regardless of whether present-day horseracing was 'barbaric' or 'civilised,' it would be plausible to argue that the moral climate of the time militated against a return to the old practice of longer races with greater weights. Why? During the mid-nineteenth century humanitarian reforms took place. Society was growing increasingly concerned about cruelty to animals. By contrast to the pre-modern period, human attitudes towards nature and animals had changed from antagonism to empathy, engendering more compassion and lowering the boundaries between man and beast. Man was coming to see in the animal a reflection of himself; it became no longer acceptable for man to dominate and alter animals and the environment in ways it had been possible to do in the past.⁴³ By implication, the way in which a civilization treated its own natural environment was considered to be linked to its level of development, because man's benevolent behaviour towards it formed the basis for society's claims to live within a higher form of culture.

If this analysis is correct, one could argue that the self-regulating mechanism of modern human compassion for animals effectively prevented the view from gaining credence in the direction of longer races and heavier weights. In this moral climate, moves towards the improvement of the English thoroughbred by returning to past practice could never really make headway. Yet underlying the debate surrounding the condition of the English thoroughbred was precisely this longing for past practice. This feeling came to inform the basis of the solution offered to counteract the deterioration of the thoroughbred, to which problem the article now turns.

From England to Arabia

If the English thoroughbred could not be improved at home in the present circumstances, it made sense not only to look back but also to

look abroad. Accordingly, many critics sought refuge in the legend of the Arabian horse which – if the annals of horseracing are to be believed – was the ancestor of the modern thoroughbred as a result of the import of three Eastern sires, the Godolphin Barb, Darley Arabian and Byerly Turk at the beginnings of the eighteenth century. The consensus until the beginning of the nineteenth century held that the Arab horse was vastly superior to the European one. During the military encounters of the Thirty Years War, Seven Years War and Napoleonic Wars army officers were agreed that it was nearly always the Arabian or the Oriental horse – the distinction between them was never really clear – that managed to stand the hardship of battle best.⁴⁴

While the Arabian horse retained its reputation, the development of the English thoroughbred in the decades that followed led to a feeling of greater self-confidence in the capabilities of the domestically-bred horse.⁴⁵ By the middle of the nineteenth century, Admiral Rous was expressing a widely-held sentiment, when he proudly proclaimed that: ‘We have now arrived at the 13th and 14th generations from the imported Barbs and Arabians; there is nothing to be compared to them for speed, high courage, and stability, [sic!] with a great object in view for 200 years, we have attained a marvellous success by adhering to one system – always seeking the best stallions, and by confining the breed to the pure blood of the son of the desert.’⁴⁶

His emphasis on the first person is important: while conceding that the present-day thoroughbred owed its existence to Arabian ancestors, he believed that English breeding techniques had brought it to a far superior state, so that any advantage the Arab may have had in the past was no more. In the opinion of one anti-Arabian horse expert, Samuel Sidney, the Arab had become an immeasurably inferior animal in almost every department, save endurance, and now had very little to offer:

Do I like Arabs? No. In my opinion they have not one point to recommend them for use in England in which they are not excelled by our own thoroughbreds. They are, with very rare exceptions, very bad hacks; they cannot walk without stumbling – in fact, they are always stumbling; they have no true action in either trot or canter; they are slow in their gallop, as compared with any well-bred English blood-horse. They are too small for hunting, or for first class harness; and cannot race with common English platers.⁴⁷

Another prominent horse trainer agreed when he quipped: ‘for the practical purpose of bettering the thoroughbred the Arab is dead as a Dodo.’⁴⁸ Indeed, any suggestion that the English thoroughbred might have lost its edge was shot down by reference to occasions when the thoroughbred had been raced against horses of “eastern extraction” – over long distances for good measure – and won.⁴⁹ So when, in 1880, the traveller and politician Wilfred Blunt called for a return to Arabian blood by proposing weight-for-age races exclusively for Arabians, his suggestion encountered much ridicule. Blunt admitted as much when he noted that ‘to the sportsmen of the modern school ... the notion of a return to Eastern blood, in their search for the ideal of the Turf which all who breed pursue, will be looked on as reactionary, perhaps by some as childish.’⁵⁰ Reactions to his proposal when he first presented it at Newmarket, the spiritual headquarters of the Turf, were disparaging. One joke he received went so far as to allege that if the Arab horse ‘had any merit at all, he had got it from certain thoroughbred sires imported to Arabia by Newmarket sportsmen at the time of the Crusades.’⁵¹

To many who advocated the import of Arab horses to improve the English thoroughbred, this sounded like complacency and arrogant denial of any Arabian legacy in the thoroughbred’s present constitution. ‘If we

were to listen to some of the bookmakers and racing men,' fumed James Boucaut, a staunch Australia-based advocate of the Arab, 'we should almost be led to suppose that the English thoroughbred is the only respectable horse in the world, and that the Arab horse does not exist at all.'⁵² Similarly, as Blunt was at pains to point out, the fact that second-rate English racers could convincingly triumph over the best Arabian did not necessarily mean, as thoroughbred worshippers suggested, that 'from a racing point of view, the latter must be now regarded as a merely worthless brute.'⁵³ On the contrary, Arab enthusiasts argued that 'among the highest class of our racers are to be found horses which approach nearer to the true Arabian in character and form than any other kind of horse.'⁵⁴ The qualification here being, of course, that superior characteristics were not present in all thoroughbreds, and that the characteristics originated from a select group of Arabs.

The core agenda of the Arab horse enthusiasts, however, did not lie in the mere restoration of the reputation of their horse. Their aim was more radical. For advocates of the Arab criticised the very foundations of claims about the superiority of the English thoroughbred: its purity. For the normal criterion for deciding whether the thoroughbred was pure enough, whether indeed it was 'thoroughly-bred,' was by reference to its ancestors. For example, expressions such as 'As thorough-bred as Eclipse' (a legendary Arabian racehorse) were usual guarantees given about a horse's pure breeding.⁵⁵ But this practice, to the critics, was precisely what was wrong, since it shut down all critical faculties before any query could be entered into the purity of the ancestors themselves.

Closer inspection revealed that the three famed racehorses – Herod, Matchem and Eclipse – from which virtually all modern horses had descended were, in fact, merely half-breeds. It was pointed out, firstly, that breeding practices conducted after the arrival of the three foundation

sires – the Godolphin Barb, Darley Arabian and Byerly Turk – had given little attention to the purity of the mare, the assumption being that it was the sire that had the definitive impact upon the hereditary constitution of the offspring. As a result, breeders had resorted to native mares. Since these were of mixed and untraceable blood, none of the descendants of the foundation sires could be of pure Arabian stock. Secondly, it was maintained that even imported sires and mares allegedly brought over from Arabia were far from the genuine article, especially after trading ceased with the Bedouins in the Syrian desert (where the pure Arabs were thought to reside). The situation was hampered by the protracted war with France, which made transport across the Mediterranean difficult. The result was the same: a further reduction in purity of bloodstock.

These assertions severely undermined the English thoroughbred's claim to purity. 'The thoroughbred,' Boucaut announced, 'is really a mongrel, and he can never be anything else, because he is a mongrel on both sides; both sires and dams are of mixed breed.' In fact, the conclusions that were drawn effectively destroyed the theory that the English racer was entirely of Arabian or pure blood – 'the true son of the Arabian Desert.'⁵⁶ For observers who accepted this analysis, it was not difficult then to link the deterioration of the English thoroughbred to an error in failing to import the right kind of Arabian horse. The answer to this seemed all too evident: bring home the pure Arab.

The Promise of Arabian Rural Society

Of all the advocates favouring the re-introduction of the Arab to English soil, James Boucaut was the most fervent in his conviction that the Arab could rescue the English thoroughbred from social and national oblivion. Like many of his contemporaries, Boucaut condemned the tendency towards

speed over stamina and short over long-distance racing. As a training ground for the creation of useful horses that could contribute to the welfare of the British Empire, he viewed the Turf as worthless. His two books on the Arab horse appeared in 1905 and 1912, when enough indignation at the pitiful performance of the military during the Boer Wars remained to provide him with a willing audience for his suggestion that the poor performance of army thoroughbreds was partly responsible. Highlighting the lack of stamina and strength, Boucaut assessed that the deterioration was attributable to industrialization and urbanization, which he believed had taken the thoroughbred away from its natural surroundings. To him, the thoroughbred, although fast, was nothing more than a factory product that had received ‘long training, much coddling in warm stables, abundance of physic, often with blinkers, always with rugs, and frequently with tubes down their throats...’⁵⁷ Such a ‘pampered’ horse ‘whose aggregate of all his races after all his nursing was twelve and a half miles’ stood no comparison, he maintained, with ‘the work of an Arab horse in his own country, who often lives for over twenty years, and is from time to time ridden 100 miles, or even more at a stretch, without being dismounted, and short of water!’⁵⁸ ‘The Arab horse,’ he further admired, ‘has a rider on his back often all day long, and not infrequently all night, too, in terrible country, short of feed and water, constantly on the gallop, and always ready to gallop, in extremes of heat and cold, and this life lasts for very many years.’⁵⁹

In the eyes of Boucaut it was the rough and toughness of the desert environment that had made the Arab supreme. Notably, he felt even able to suggest the superiority of nature over nurture. This implied that the seemingly undeveloped and primitive natural world of the Arab desert had succeeded in creating a higher-performing horse – while developed and civilized England had failed. In so doing, Boucaut almost glorified the taxing

rural conditions to which the Arab was exposed. Yet in England, any similar attempt to subject horses to extreme conditions (100 miles at a stretch, little food or water, no allowance to hot or cold weather) would have encountered criticisms of cruelty and barbarism. Evidently Boucaut felt he could bypass such concerns, because he was proposing to import foreign horses for whose breeding Englishmen were not ultimately responsible. In his quest to prove the suitability of the Arab for use in England, Boucaut was effectively calling upon the “barbaric” and “dangerous” world of nature to do the convincing. Concealed in a veil of Arab superiority, the “barbaric” nature of the practices that had presumably brought about the Arabian horse remained hidden away. By advocating the import of the Arab, then, it became possible to revert back to past practice without having to face criticisms of uncivilized behaviour.

Perhaps less forthright than Boucaut was Roger Upton, who closely resembled Wilfred Blunt in advocating the import of the Kehilan Anezeh as the only Arabian horse worthy of the name.⁶⁰ Unlike Boucaut, who drew his assertions about the Arab from newspaper clippings and did not leave the comfort of his ranch in South Australia, both Upton and Blunt were Middle-Eastern specialists. The latter was even a convert to Islam who had direct experience of the relevant territories and the horses that roamed around in them. The basic problem as Upton saw it was the common but erroneous assumption that ‘you have only to step within the borders of the country [Arabia] to find horses on every side.’⁶¹ For although the Arab horse did belong to Arabia, it did not follow that all horses in Arabia were of pure breed. On the contrary, Upton believed that the Arabian horse belonged to certain families of the desert, not to the country at large. Therefore, it was particularly worrying that traders sought horses in towns. As Upton pointed out, the fundamental mistake English travellers made was to consider the Desert Arabs to be unusable because of their closeness to the wilderness. ‘I

find it is very generally believed,' he thus observed, 'that horses are wild in the deserts of Arabia, and that they roam about or are reared in sandy waters, where, in fact, no life of a high organization could possibly exist.'⁶² He concluded 'that [it was because] the genuine Arabian has not been sought for in the desert that we have never known the full value of his blood, nor have been able to appreciate him.'⁶³

Of course, it was possible and more convenient for English traders to search urban commercial districts such as those of Damascus, Beirut, Gaza and Hamah. But Upton advised against this. For even if an Arab were to be found at market, he said, 'it can only have been obtained second hand, [and] they might have been Town-bred horses.'⁶⁴ In fact, he was shocked to discover the ignorance displayed by urbanites, especially in Syria. They knew little about Arab horses and were very careless about their blood. Upton quoted an Anezeh Sheik in order to argue 'many people think the Damascus horses handsomer than the desert Arabian, but I would not give five pound for any of them ... if the Damascenes had the best blood of the desert they would spoil it!'⁶⁵ Worse, he considered the urbanites to be chiefly responsible for the practice of mixing blood as a way of obtaining profits.⁶⁶ Even in the case of a mare of pure blood, if it did not have the right looks, townsmen were allegedly prepared to stitch its ears together in order to make it look more authentically Arab. So it was a relief to find in the Bedouin desert a tribe far removed from the conniving habits of the profit-driven and deceifful tradesmen. 'The Anezeh have no occasion,' he noted, 'nor any incentive to practise such tricks; they are not dealers, they do not make a traffic of their horses, nor do they ever take a horse for sale.'⁶⁷

To Upton and other Arab enthusiasts, it was precisely this steadfast refusal to engage in *any* commercial activity down the years that had kept the Kehilan Arabian pure ever since domestication. From this there inevitably

arose the belief that the tribe lived almost in a timeless vacuum, untainted by modern civilization. This had made it perfect for the breeding of pure horses ‘for many – probably thousands – of years.’⁶⁸ It was in the deserts of Arabia, among the tribe of Anezeh, that ‘the only true thoroughbred horse of the world lived in where our fathers had found him a hundred and fifty years ago, neither better nor worse than what he then was, and as capable as ever of breeding Childers and Eclipses to those who might have looked for and secured him.’⁶⁹

Using logic similar to that employed by Boucaut, Upton and Blunt saw in the Arab the potential for turning back the clock. The attraction of importing the Kehilan Arabian lay in the connection with a past untainted by towns and commerce. So great was their desire to re-introduce Arab “purity” to the Turf that they failed to recognise that by trading with the Anezeh they were destroying the supposed purity of the tribes’ customs; that is, the very practices that led them to wish to trade in the first place. It is likely that their effusive praise of the Middle-Eastern horse was caused by English anxieties and hopes. Advocates of the importation of Arab stock hoped that it would cure the malaise that was threatening not only English horses but the nation as a whole by acting as a source free of the ills that accompanied industrialization. However, there was a fundamental contradiction at work, since in looking outside to the Arab for solutions inside affecting the English thoroughbred, English supporters of the Arab unwittingly carried with them prejudices and agendas which, having been conceived at home, accompanied them wherever they went.⁷⁰

Primitiveness as a Virtue

To be sure, not all advocates of the Arab were driven by the same motives as Upton and Blunt. For example William Tweedie, a British army

general stationed in Baghdad, objected to what he saw as the domestic political agendas behind much of the English discourse surrounding the Arabian. In fact, he took the position that it was futile to compare the English thoroughbred and the Desert Arabian, since opposing camps took from the horse whatever they wanted to see. To those who felt the thoroughbred to be artificial, the Arab represented nature; to those who felt the thoroughbred to be superior, the Arab represented a relic of an outmoded age. For his part, Tweedie was much more interested in understanding the Arab on its own terms, a task, he boasted, easily facilitated due to his direct acquaintance with it. He argued, moreover, that for all its 'evenness of temper, gentleness and willingness,' it was the way in which the Arab was treated that should form the centre of his countrymen's concerns:

The creation of a new equestrian class in the British Isles has formed a great commercial feature of this century; but it may be doubted whether the increase in the number of horses and horsemen has, on the whole, been attended with improvement in the horse's status. The use of such a term as status in this connection may excite a smile in those whose thoughts about their horses always work round to money. But there are others of our countrymen who will perhaps concur in the opinion, that the more considerate we are of our horses' happiness and feelings, the less reason we shall have to draw unfortunate comparisons between them and those of the Bedouin Arabs.⁷¹

In placing his interests not in the improvement of blood but in the status of the horse, Tweedie perhaps deserves to be differentiated from his contemporaries. Inherent in his analysis was an intense dislike of the commercialism, which he believed coloured the opinions of those who

sought comparisons with the Arab and which, more significantly, left little room for any consideration of the welfare of the horse. If left to the forces of commercialism, he maintained, the danger was that European civilization would eventually envelop the Arabian desert and render extinct the Arab breed as he had known it.⁷² Yet his fear was less that European commercialism would take away the Arab horse from its present environment than that it would infiltrate, and eventually destroy, the very communities that helped to maintain it to such a high standard. For while Tweedie was careful to disassociate himself from both detractors and worshippers of the Arab, his admiration for the desert communities that took care of it knew no bounds:

In respect of sagacity, and of the courage which is derived from it, the desert breed has kept pace, within its own limits, with the intelligence of the people who have made it – and that is all. It may be that the Arabs are behind several other Asiatic peoples as teachers of young horses; but their quiet and rational way of managing them goes far to make up for this. They take to their four-footed servants as if they were human beings. They lead their flocks and herds, more than they drive them. Even their laden camels are left free to march in droves, instead of being tied.⁷³

Clearly what was commendable was the closeness of the community's relationship with the horse. In a further illustration of the mutual compassion they had for each other, Tweedie was at pains to point out the way in which mares, foals and stallions would stand all day and night waiting obediently for their master; the way in which an injured mare, or a motherless foal would be taken into the tent to be nursed; and the way in which in the

villages, the mare's shed was close to the family dwelling place. 'The result is,' he thus triumphed, 'that food and fellowship are among the first ideas which are associated in the minds of Arab horses with the human figure... It is thus that "nature" forms itself.'⁷⁴ Beyond doubt, the picture put forward here was one of absolute harmony.

In his portrayal, Tweedie subtly intimated that the social life of the Arab desert community represented the relationship between man and horse in its purest incarnation. This was far from an objective and candid assessment of the Arab. It seems that Tweedie also had an 'agenda' insofar as his observations were closely tied to calls for a gentler and kinder attitude towards the horse – an attitude that he believed had been lost in England as a result of increased commercialism. Thus, while on the one hand he protested vehemently against the export of the Arab as a means of improving the English thoroughbred, on the other he proposed the export of the idea of human compassion, that he thought was most intensely demonstrated in the desert community. This attitude, he considered, was vital in maintaining the quality of the horse. True, Tweedie objected to the practice of comparing horses, and using the Arab to further political agendas back home. But, in fact, he was merely replacing a comparison of horses with a comparison of societies – or rather a contrast of two societies' attitudes towards the horse; one based on ideas of commercialism and the other based on ideas of compassion. And there was little doubt which he preferred.

Despite all that divided them, virtually all the Arab enthusiasts were united in their failure to appreciate the complexities of the history, politics and environment of both the horse and the various communities that took care of it. Most glaring of all was the almost universal assumption that the Arabian horse and the Oriental desert world were unchanging. R.F. Meysey-Thompson was expressing a widely held sentiment when he conjectured:

‘whether the Arabian horse of that epoch [when the three foundation sires were introduced to England] was identical with the animal of today, it is impossible to know for certain; but in all probability it was similar in all important respects, for the Eastern world changes very slowly, and the habits of the desert are now akin to the customs described in the Old Testament.’⁷⁵ Not even Upton, Blunt and Tweedie, all of whom entertained close links to the Arab world and who regarded themselves as area specialists, were immune from this presupposition.

Therefore, it is all the more astonishing that one English female observer was able to avoid such pitfalls with considerable success. In her two volume work on the Bedouin tribes, Lady Anne Blunt, the wife of Wilfred Blunt and only granddaughter of Lord Byron, offered an extraordinary erudite and penetrating analysis of the Arab world and its famous horses. She was not afraid to provide a complex, and at times contradictory, picture of the practices she saw being conducted in the desert and ended with a complex verdict on the Arab that neither created myths nor passed judgment.⁷⁶ Like Tweedie, she opposed comparisons of the Arab with the English thoroughbred, especially with regard to such fuzzy notions as speed. This was not because she thought, like Tweedie, that the exercise distracted attention from the community’s treatment of the horse, but because there were so many variables to consider:

Of the speed of the animal, though much is talked of it, it is seldom that anything accurate is known. The Bedouins have no set races by which they can judge this ... Even in war it is rather a question of endurance, than speed, which is the better animal; and, where a real flight and a real pursuit takes place, the course is so seldom a straight one, that it is as often that the best trained or the best ridden mare gets the advantage, as

the one which really has the speed... The Bedouin have, moreover, no idea, even if they had the intention, of riding their horses so as to give them advantage of their stride.⁷⁷

Furthermore, while she agreed with her husband's admiration for the horses kept by tribes such as the Anezeh, she disagreed with his belief in the existence of the pure Arab, citing the political circumstances of tribal rivalries and internal divisions that had led to the reckless discarding of many good horses.⁷⁸ Moreover, she pointed out that political concerns had dictated the choice of certain strains over other, better, bloodlines.⁷⁹ More important still were her references to the historical changes that had led to the deterioration of stock, explaining that the abandonment of the traditional lance in favour of firearms meant that horses were less necessary, and were consequently being sold off.⁸⁰ As a result, her evaluation of the much-vaunted breeding practices of the tribes was markedly sober, particularly in comparison with her husband's. 'In all ages and in all parts of Arabia,' she concluded, 'an unpractical system of breeding has prevailed, due in part to prejudice, and in part to peculiarities of climate and soil.'⁸¹ It left her in no doubt that the Arab was neither supreme nor degenerate.

Instead of the usual myths, both positive and negative, created by observers of the Arab, Lady Blunt thus refused to sacrifice the subtle shades of reality in order to obtain a clear-cut picture. For in presenting the mistakes made by tribal groups in the breeding of the Arab, she managed to reduce the distance that separated the Arabians and the Occidental reader by showing them for what they were – fellow human beings equally fallible in their pursuits and conditioned by the historical, political and environmental universes that they inhabited.⁸² She revealed that the Arab horse and the Bedouin tribes were neither exotic creatures nor barbaric savages. In so

doing, she did not look to the past for solutions to contemporary problems or search frantically for solutions to domestic woes. Her analyses serve to underline the tendentiousness of the arguments of many of her male compatriots, including her husband, and also shows that occidental observers of the Orient could sometimes break free from popular binary ideas of exoticism and barbarism, or primitiveness and civility.

Empire and Orientalists

Looking to primitive societies for cures to perceived domestic ailments was a common practice during the imperial period. Britain's position as the foremost imperial power meant her citizens were particularly affected by this tendency. Compliments about rural Arabian society were therefore the reverse side of a mindset that blithely passed judgments on the rest of the world that were based on perceived levels of 'civilization'. As C.J. Wee has remarked, the paradox was that, as Britain developed as an Empire and industrial powerhouse during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the possibility that anything "Other" might be highly civilized disappeared. Consequently '[a] desire for dynamic, primitive innocence becomes important, a desire detectable even under scathing denunciations of "savage societies".'⁸³

Several decades before the eruption of debate about the deterioration of the English thoroughbred, English national culture and imperial discourse began to interact to create a mindset in which 'imperial primitivity' would be conferred to 'native subjects encountered at the imperial periphery and thought to be lost in England.'⁸⁴ This focus on the primitive nature of peoples from the imperial periphery led, Wee observes, to a 'cultural nationalism that was already looking back to an organic England.'⁸⁵ Many of the Orientalists who have appeared in this article showed characteristics of

this way of thinking. Embodied in their views about the domestic causes of the problem and its overseas solution, was the idea, as David Cannadine has succinctly remarked, that ‘society overseas was ... actually *better* – purer, more stable, more paternal, less corrupted. As the metropolis became ever more urbanized, industrialized and democratized, and as its social fabric correspondingly decayed, these faraway societies, with their traditional hierarchies still intact, not only became more appealing, they also needed protecting from the very same forces of modernity that were destroying traditional Britain.’⁸⁶

Moreover, romantics who adopted this mindset tended to reject ideas of free trade and mercantile imperialism being propounded at home, casting doubt on the overly-rationalizing tendencies of those at the centre of Empire. Since the romantics had actually observed the peripheries of the Empire, they were confident that the progress of “civilization” would have a negative rather than positive effect on territories that had not yet come under imperial influence. Like many Orientalists, Wilfred Blunt believed Europe had cast a nefarious influence in the Middle East. If only Arabians could be left alone so they could return to the original principles of the Muslim religion and practice political precepts laid down in the Quran, everything would return to ‘calm, order and beauty in their Empire.’⁸⁷ As Blunt himself declared:

In Nejd alone of all the countries of the world I have visited, either East or West, the three great blessings of which we in Europe make our boast, though we do not in truth possess them, are a living reality: “Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood”, names only, even in France, where they are written upon every wall, but here practically enjoyed by every free man. Here was a community living as our idealists have dreamed, without taxes, without police, without conscription of any kind, whose only law

was public opinion, and whose only order a principle of honour.⁸⁸

What is particularly striking about the pro-Arab school is that the territories with which it dealt, apart from some urban areas open to western trading such as Syria, were relatively free of British influence at this time. Prior to the discovery of oil, the Middle East – itself a term created in 1902 to differentiate between the Near and Far East – was a virtual non-entity in British political circles, and it was within this context that discourses about the Arab horse were conducted. For policymakers the region merely represented ‘arid land, highly-populated riverbanks and coastlines, and ancient Islamic beliefs that conditioned the region’s societies and governments’ and offered little of use to the Empire.⁸⁹ In this situation proponents of the Arab horse, who were often Middle East specialists, were able to make their case about purity on the grounds that the communities which bred the Arab had not yet been exposed to detrimental English commercial influences.

Conclusion

Concerns expressed about the condition of the jewel in English horse breeding, the thoroughbred, this article has argued, took on a wide social and national importance. Those who believed that deterioration was taking place were in fact harking back to the past, in which the upper classes had held the reins over the direction of the Turf. The fact these reactionaries made their feelings known at the time they did was no coincidence. Frustrations erupted at a time when industrialization was altering the way in which horseracing was operated. Bowing to the tastes of the working classes was especially unpalatable, since it meant that the Turf had to be subjected to the vagaries of the market, which, according to the critics, was by nature uninterested in

the high ideals of horse breeding.

Solutions to the problem, however, were difficult to implement in England. Not only was this because the racing establishment was unconvinced about deterioration, but it was also because proposals to re-introduce long-distance races, among others, constituted a return to the “barbaric” and “inhumane” practices of the past. Since England had undergone a change in sensibilities about nature and animals during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the pessimists could no longer look for solutions which could be construed as “barbaric” in England. That might account for why the critics sought solutions not at home but abroad, and in the case of the thoroughbred that solution was found in Arabia.

But, as this article has illustrated, the views pro-Arabians had about their favourite horse were often just as coloured as their judgements about the thoroughbred. Enthusiasm about locating the correct sort of horse, which could endure long distances and which was designed for horsemen, could brim over into a glorification of both the Arab and the societies that took care of it. Shifting political realities and social changes were brushed aside so that an exalted view of the Arab could be presented back in England. More broadly, the pro-Arabian school found it difficult to escape from an Orientalist narrative that thought of societies in terms of their levels of civilization.

That concerns about the perceived deterioration of the thoroughbred could reach such proportions was also a reflection of how important the horse was to the functioning of industrial society at the time. Before its replacement through the automobile after the First World War, the horse, it bears pointing out, was for centuries the main means of traction. Living as we do in the ‘post-equine period,’⁹⁰ however, it is difficult to imagine that changes in the nature of the thoroughbred could have implications beyond

the immediate realm of sport, gambling or leisure. Given the horse's role in agriculture, freight, transport and the military, to name just a few sectors of the economy that depended on horsepower, however, it would be foolish to assume that the breeding of the thoroughbred did not have an impact on these sectors through the practice of cross-breeding. Even today, part of Formula 1 racing's rationale, from the point of view of the automobile manufacturers, is that technical innovations generated through competition in races could filter down to find application in even the modest family car. In much the same way, horseracing during the "equine period", it might be ventured, was part of a wider equine economy that witnessed, though breeding, the imparting of superior blood to a wide range of everyday horses.

Notes

- 1) Wray Vamplew, *The turf: a social and economic history of horse racing* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), p. 101.
- 2) 'Preface' in James Penn Boucaut, *The Arab: the horse of the future* (London: Gay & Bird, 1905), p. xiv.
- 3) Quoted in James Penn Boucaut, *The Arab horse, the thoroughbred, and the Turf* (London: Vinton, 1912), p. v.
- 4) Walter Gilbey, *Horse-breeding in England and India, and Army horses abroad* (London, 1901), p. 14.
- 5) *The Field* (February 10, 1912), p. 265.
- 6) Fred Adye, *Horse-breeding and management* (London: R.A. Everett, 1903), pp. 29–30
- 7) 'Preface' in Boucaut, *Future*, pp. xiv–xv.
- 8) Boucaut, *Future*, p. 48.
- 9) There are only two English history books, written almost 25 years apart, that focus on horseracing. Mike Huggins, *Flat racing and British society, 1790–1914: a social and economic history* (London, 2000) and Vamplew, *The Turf*.
- 10) Vamplew, *The turf*, p. 43.

- 11) Adye, *Horse-breeding*, pp. 30–1.
- 12) Charles Richardson, *The English Turf: a record of horses and courses* (London: Methuen, 1901), p. 22.
- 13) *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- 14) Cf. *The Field*, (February 10 1912), p. 266.
- 15) Richardson, *Turf*, pp. 22–3.
- 16) Henry John Rous, *On the laws and the practice of horse-racing* (London: A.H. Bailey, 1866), p. 5.
- 17) *Daily Telegraph*, (February 24 1904).
- 18) L.H. Curzon, *Blue ribbon of the Turf* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1890), p. vi.
- 19) Lupton, *The horse*, p. 6.
- 20) Samuel Sidney, *The book of the horse* (London: Cassell, 1873), p. 184.
- 21) Adye, *Horse-breeding*, p. 14.
- 22) *The Field*, (February 10 1912), p. 266
- 23) *Ibid.*
- 24) Quoted in Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The railway journey: the industrialization and perception of time and space in the 19th century* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1986), p. 15.
- 25) *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- 26) Cf. T.W.H. Crosland, *Who goes racing?* (London: Collier, 1907), p. 109.
- 27) Adye, *Horse-breeding*, p. 275.
- 28) *Ibid.*, p. 277.
- 29) *Ibid.*, p. 276.
- 30) *Ibid.*, p. 282.
- 31) *Badminton magazine of sports and pastimes* (January 1905), p. 45.
- 32) Crosland, *Why?*, p. 44.
- 33) Adye, *Horse-breeding*, p. 295.
- 34) *Ibid.*, p. 294.
- 35) *Ibid.*, p. 278.
- 36) Gilbey, *Abroad*, p. 13.
- 37) Gilbey in Boucaut, *Future*, p. xv.
- 38) Sidney, *Book of the horse*, p. 184.

- 39) Richardson, *Turf*, p. 284.
- 40) Quoted in Sidney, *Book of the horse*, p. 179.
- 41) Rous, *Laws*, p. xvi.
- 42) *Quarterly Review* (January 1904), 144; *Sporting Review* (November 1855).
- 43) Cf. Keith Thomas, *Man and the natural world: changing attitudes in England, 1500–1800* (London: Allen Lane, 1983); Harriet Ritvo, *The animal estate: the English and other creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987).
- 44) Erika Schiele, *The Arab horse in Europe: history and present breeding* (London: Harrap, 1970), pp. 17–8.
- 45) William Osmer, *A dissertation on horses: wherein it is demonstrated, ... that innate qualities do not exist, and that the excellence of this animal is ... mechanical and not in blood* (London: N.A., 1756), p. 8.
- 46) Rous, *Laws*, pp. xii–xiii.
- 47) Sidney, *Book of the horse*, p. 145.
- 48) William Day quoted in Boucaut, *Arab*, p. 2.
- 49) *Sporting Review* (November 1855).
- 50) Wilfred Scawen Blunt, ‘The thoroughbred horse – English and Arabian’, *Nineteenth century* 8 (1880), pp. 411–23, p. 411.
- 51) Quoted in William Tweedie, *The Arabian horse, his country and people* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1894), p. 169.
- 52) Boucaut, *Future*, p. 3.
- 53) Blunt, ‘English and Arabian’, p. 411.
- 54) Roger D. Upton, *Newmarket and Arabia: an examination of the descent of racers and coursers* (London: N.A., 1873), p. 399.
- 55) Cf. Upton, *Newmarket*, p. 103.
- 56) *Ibid.*
- 57) Boucaut, *Arab*, p. 137.
- 58) *Ibid.*, p. 138.
- 59) *Ibid.*, pp. 137–8.
- 60) Cf. Blunt, ‘English and Arabian’, p. 414.
- 61) Roger D. Upton, ‘Arabian horses, studied in their native country in 1874–75’,

Fraser's magazine 14 (1876), pp. 375–402, p. 379.

- 62) *Ibid.*, p. 376.
- 63) *Ibid.*, p. 383.
- 64) *Ibid.*, p. 377.
- 65) *Ibid.*, p. 379.
- 66) *Ibid.*, p. 389.
- 67) *Ibid.*, p. 399.
- 68) R.F. Meysey-Thompson, *The horse: its origin and development, combined with stable practice* (London: N.A., 1911), 11; Blunt, 'English and Arabian', p. 423.
- 69) Blunt, 'English and Arabian', p. 415.
- 70) Cf. David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2001).
- 71) Tweedie, *The Arabian horse*, pp. 221–2.
- 72) *Ibid.*, p. 205.
- 73) *Ibid.*, p. 196.
- 74) *Ibid.*, pp. 189–90.
- 75) Meysey-Thompson, *The horse*, p. 11.
- 76) Lady Anne Blunt, *Bedouin tribes of the Euphrates* (Two volumes, London: John Murray, 1879). For a demonstration of her approach, see especially volume II, chapter 28.
- 77) *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 260.
- 78) *Ibid.*, p. 255.
- 79) *Ibid.*, p. 258.
- 80) *Ibid.*, p. 255.
- 81) *Ibid.*, p. 259.
- 82) Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Press, 1978).
- 83) C.J. Wee, *Culture, empire, and the question of being modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. x.
- 84) *Ibid.*, p.xi.
- 85) *Ibid.*, p. xii.
- 86) Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, p. 67.
- 87) Elie Kedourie, *England and the Middle East. The destruction of the Ottoman*

- Empire, 1914–1921* (Boulder: Westview (1956) 1987), p. 26.
- 88) W.S. Blunt, *Secret history of the English occupation of Egypt* (New edition, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1924), p. 44.
- 89) Roger Adelson, *London and the invention of the Middle East: Money, power, and war, 1902–1922* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 5.
- 90) Reinhart Koselleck, ‘Das Ende des Pferdezeitalters’, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (25 September, 2003), p. 18.