

Chapter 9

HORSES AND HORSEMANSHIP IN THE LIFE OF WILLIAM CAVENDISH, DUKE OF NEWCASTLE

Elaine Walker

AMONG THE EUROPEAN nobility of the seventeenth century, mastery in the art of horsemanship was a mark of grace and accomplishment. As with swordsmanship, there were practical roots in battle, but in the covered riding house, or *manège*, the riding skills of the battlefield and the natural display movements of the stallion were refined for performance before an audience.¹

Along with music and dancing, with which terms such as *capriole* and *corvetta* were shared, horsemanship demonstrated a cultured taste and background. Most importantly, the ability to control a mettlesome horse—always a stallion—revealed leadership skills vital in a man destined for military and court life. An appreciation of these skills crossed cultural and geographical boundaries, creating a common language and a community of horsemen. The iconography of the nobleman on horseback became, therefore, a physical and psychological thread woven through court culture.

For the 1st Duke of Newcastle, horsemanship went beyond a nobly defining pastime, providing the perfect model for the self-presentation he believed necessary for maintaining the royalist social order. As part of a lifetime in which horses were central, he wrote two horsemanship manuals, in 1658 and 1667.² These influential texts mark his place as a hugely significant figure in the Classical Riding tradition, which laid the foundations of modern dressage. They also establish him as the only English horseman to have made a seminal contribution to that tradition to the present day.³

While Newcastle's manuals are fully practical as training guides, which sets them apart from several others in the genre, they also have a unique subtext that encompasses his philosophy. He was a prolific writer, and the manuals are part of a large body of material in which horses and horsemanship offer an insight into his way of approaching the world. Horses also inevitably feature in many of the key moments in Newcastle's career discussed elsewhere in this collection. Therefore, this chapter will focus primarily on

1 The terms "riding house" and "*manège*" or "mannage" are used by Newcastle for the building in which "*manège*" is practised. He also uses the term to encompass the training area, the practice, and the surrounding philosophy. This chapter refers to William Cavendish as "Newcastle" throughout.

2 William Cavendish, *La méthode nouvelle et invention extraordinaire de dresser les chevaux* (Antwerp: van Meurs, 1658); *A New Method, and Extraordinary Invention, to Dress Horses* (London: Milbourn, 1667), 13–14; subsequently referred to by date of publication.

3 Concerns over the standard of English riders were expressed by many authors over a long period of time, including both those in note 5 to this chapter.

the evidence in his own words that reveals horsemanship as a central philosophy that offered stability throughout the turbulent events of his life.

The foundation of his interest was laid by his birth, background, and upbringing. Unlike a friend who had put his money into land, Newcastle bought “a singing-boy for 50 l, a horse for 50 l and a dog for 2 l” with a boyhood windfall. His father was pleased, believing that the friend’s desire for property before the age of 20 indicated covetousness. This was perhaps a formative opinion. While Newcastle grew up to have a great love for the fine properties that defined his family, devoting a great deal of energy to the buildings for keeping and riding horses, his generosity suggests that he always avoided covetousness.⁴

A boyhood love of horses and fascination with the art of the riding house was not in itself unusual. A belief in the importance of the art had been spreading across Europe since the mid-1500s and was well established by the time Newcastle trained alongside the ill-fated Prince Henry. Their riding master was Monsieur St. Antoine, whose own training in the lineage of Giovanni Battista Pignatelli placed him at the centre of a flourishing courtly pursuit. Prince Henry’s love of horses was well known and they outnumbered all other types of gifts presented to him by foreign royalty and courtly visitors, while several books on horsemanship were dedicated to him.⁵

Roy Strong argues that Prince Henry’s premature death at the age of 18 ended a renaissance period for England.⁶ A hankering for this style of life, with all the tradition and grace it entailed, is evident throughout Newcastle’s career. The importance of horsemanship as “fit and proper for a person of quality” to develop a “noble and heroic nature” was thus established very early in his development.⁷

With the arrival of St. Antoine, the art of horsemanship aspired to new heights in England, and Prince Henry erected the first ever purpose-built riding house between 1607 and 1609. Twelve years later, Newcastle built his own riding house at Welbeck, modelled on the prince’s building.⁸ Like Prince Henry, Newcastle was interested not only in riding but also in the physical conformation and the bloodlines of fine horses. They shared a love of the Barbary horse, and Newcastle later wrote, “Quant aux Barbes, il faut que je confesse qu’ils song mes favoris.”⁹ They were also knighted together in 1610, and Newcastle’s career might well have been very different had the young prince survived. Much of his later life was spent attempting to secure a long-term basis at court, perhaps

⁴ Margaret Cavendish, *The Life of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle*, ed. C. H. Firth (London: Nimmo, 1886), 21.

⁵ For example, Gervase Markham’s *Cavalrice: or the English horseman* (1607) and Nicholas Morgan’s *The Perfection of Horse-manship* (1609).

⁶ Roy Strong, *Henry: Prince of Wales and England’s Lost Renaissance* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1986), 3.

⁷ Cavendish, *Life*, 196.

⁸ Mark Girouard, *Robert Smythson and the Elizabethan Country House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 251–53.

⁹ 1658, 16; “With regard to Barbary horses, I freely confess they are my favourites” (1743, 21).

in the hope of regaining lost ground. His belief that he had been repeatedly “cut down by Lady Fortune” and that “the wisest way for man was to have as little faith as he could in this world and as much as he could for the next world” was perhaps founded when the promise of the young prince was curtailed by his premature death.¹⁰

Newcastle received an academic education also, but he was not an enthusiastic scholar and left St. John’s College, Cambridge without graduating, having spent his time “taking more delight in sports than learning.”¹¹ However, the period of foreign travel considered essential to cultivate a refined young man would have been to his taste, especially de rigueur lessons at one of the continental riding academies.

When Newcastle undertook the European tour in 1612 with Sir Henry Wotton, horses were given as gifts for the Duke Charles Emmanuel of Savoy from King James. Newcastle also received a horse himself as a gift from the duke, who wished to keep him in Savoy to give him experience of court life and war. The giving and receiving of horses as gifts reflected their prestige among the nobility and remained a consistent feature of Newcastle’s generosity. The elegant and skillful handling necessary to enhance their beauty was therefore a highly valued measure of a man’s own grace.

Even without his great love of this art, a man such as Newcastle would consider himself incomplete without some appropriate skills. Horsemanship was quite different to racing, a sport growing in popularity throughout Newcastle’s life. While he took part, even setting up his own track,¹² racing is the subject of a bitter little verse written in his later years, which considers that, “Theye that keepe horse for race are mutch to blame” for promoting an activity “worthless of Honor.”¹³ Hunting was traditionally popular among the nobility, but Newcastle was not greatly enthusiastic and Margaret Cavendish does not include hunting or racing among his interests. His secretary, John Rolleston, offers the astute comment that “for other delights, as those of running horses, hawking, hunting, &c, his Grace used them merely for society’s sake ... to please others.”¹⁴

Suitable skills for a gentleman had long been discussed in humanist writings, including those of Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Thomas Elyot. Sidney was taught that “no earthly thing bred such wonder to a Prince as to be a good horseman.”¹⁵ A gentleman’s education was to be well rounded so that academic and practical skills advanced together, enhancing one another. In *The Boke Named the Governour*, Sir Thomas Elyot advises: “continuell studie without some maner of exercise, shortly exhausteth the spirites vitall, and hyndereth naturall decoction and digestion, wherby mannes body is

¹⁰ Cavendish, *Life*, 253–54.

¹¹ Cavendish, *Life*, 194.

¹² *Being Commanded by [...] to publish the following articles for his new course* (Oxford, 1662); Epistle to the Duchess of Newcastle, in Cavendish, *Life*, line 10, 372.

¹³ University of Nottingham, Department of Manuscripts and Special Collections, Portland Manuscripts: PwV 25, fol. 138.

¹⁴ Cavendish, *Life*, 208, lxvii.

¹⁵ Philip Sidney, *Defence of Poesie, Astrophil and Stella and Other Writings*, ed. Elizabeth Porges-Watson (London: Everyman, 1997), 83.

the soner corrupted and brought in to diuers sickenesis, and finallye the life is therby made shorter.”¹⁶

This belief in the value of physical exercise as well as study was one Newcastle seems to have embraced. He refers often to the wellbeing gained from riding, and his handwritten manuscript on horsemanship includes a list of the ages of notable horsemen as evidence of the art’s value in maintaining health.¹⁷ Elyot suggests exercise to improve physical strength and hand-to-eye coordination, including skill at arms, but adds that “the most honorable exercise, in myne opinion, and that besemeth the astate of euery noble persone, is to ryde suerly and clene on a great horse and a roughe.”¹⁸

As an active, intelligent, but not academic man, fully aware of his own role as an aristocrat, Newcastle’s personal interest in horses provided the motivation to turn this useful exercise into a source of lifelong pleasure. While often criticized as a diletante, his attitude towards horsemanship provides an illustration of his capacity for dedication and focused attention. He had no patience with those who approached the art without due respect: “they would be the Finest men in the world, for All things, though they will take Pains for Nothing; and because, forsooth, they cannot Ride by Inspiration, without taking pains, therefore it is worth Nothing ... The next thing is, That they think it is a disgrace for a Gentleman to do any thing Well. What! Be a Rider. Why not? Many Kings and Princes think themselves Graced with being good Horsemen.”¹⁹ This devotion to the skill of horsemanship goes far beyond aristocratic affectation.

Newcastle’s personal dedication and expertise surfaces repeatedly in anecdotal and historical evidence, across the genres of his own writing and most pointedly in the writing of Margaret Cavendish, as well as many later and less partial commentators. These included François de la Guérinière, perhaps the most influential of the classical horsemanship authors, who declared that Newcastle was “the greatest expert of his age” and that this would be the “unanimous sentiment of all connoisseurs.”²⁰

The importance of self-presentation and noble display had become a key feature of aristocratic life in the context of the European courts, with horsemanship, horses, and images of horses forming a central part of this theatricality. The presentation of the horse in art offered, therefore, both a pleasure and an assertion of the status of the owner able to command and afford such beauty in flesh and on canvas. Newcastle’s manuals, as

16 Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour* (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, n.d.), bk. 16; Elyot’s original 1531 text went through seven further editions in the sixteenth century.

17 University of Nottingham, Department of Manuscripts and Special Collections, Portland Manuscripts, PwV 21, fols. 83v–84.

18 Elyot, *The Boke Named the Governour*, bk. 17.

19 1667, 7.

20 François Robichon de la Guérinière, *School of Horsemanship*, trans. Tracey Boucher (London: Allen, 1994), 87. Recent examples include Jean and Lily Froissard, *The Horseman’s International Book of Reference* (London: Paul, 1980); and Michael J. Stevens, *A Classical Riding Notebook* (Buckingham: Kenilworth, 1994).

records of art and works of art in themselves, fix his experience, status of ownership, and expertise in a way that would have had meaning among his peers.

Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton examine large tapestries as a readily portable “aspect of the ostentatious occasions on which men and women of distinction visited one another” to be “unpacked and displayed prominently at crucial moments of diplomatic negotiation and dynastic alliance-formation.”²¹ Newcastle had tapestries made of several of the plates from his 1658 manual, including those in which he appears himself, and he also had several life-size portraits made of his horses. His awareness of and engagement with European modes of self-expression illustrate the centrality of court culture in his life. The plates of himself on horseback in the 1658 manual locate him in the context of aristocratic display both publicly and privately.

The cultural importance of noble display upon horseback also provided a potential occupation for his long years away from home after the collapse of all that he believed in, heralded by personally humiliating defeat at Marston Moor. During his exile from England, Newcastle missed his home greatly and felt, as he often did in his relations with the monarchy, undervalued and overlooked. Repeated attempts to assist in the plans for the return of his monarch to the throne as Charles II were frustrated, largely because Newcastle was outspoken in delicate situations. He settled in Antwerp, where he had found suitable and affordable accommodation for a long exile in the former home of the artist Rubens. Although happy in his second marriage, the burdens of maintaining his household and his inability to help his monarch led him to write, “My acquaintances hide themselves from me, and my friends and kindred stand afar off.”²²

He turned to his great love, horsemanship, to occupy and establish himself as an aristocrat holding his head high although “banished his native country.”²³ This was an important statement of his ability to maintain his standards in a recognizably noble manner, particularly in the continental context of his exile. His riding house attracted a great many distinguished visitors from the continental nobility, and while he describes it as “my own private riding-house,”²⁴ it is likely that by some gentlemanly arrangement his financial situation was eased through the training of horses and riders.²⁵

Newcastle’s dedication to his horses, appreciation of their beauty, and reluctance to part with them, even when in great financial difficulties, demonstrate his character as clearly as any of his artistic or philosophical enthusiasms. His wife, Margaret Cavendish, recalls that during his exile, “though he was then in distress for money, yet he would sooner have tried all other ways than parted with any of them; for I have

²¹ Lisa Jardine and Jerry Brotton, *Global Interests: Renaissance Art between East and West* (London: Reaktion, 2000), 132–33.

²² University of Nottingham, Department of Manuscripts and Special Collections, Portland Manuscripts: PwI, fol. 537, October 30, 1649.

²³ Cavendish, *Life*, 123.

²⁴ 1667, sig. Bv.

²⁵ See 1658, 117 (1743, 67).

heard him say, that good horses are so rare, as not to be valued for money, and that he who would buy him out of his pleasure (meaning his horses), must pay dear for it." She was ideally positioned to bear witness to the high value placed on him by his horses, who "had a particular love for My Lord; for they seemed to rejoice whensoever he came into the stables, by their trampling action, and the noise they made."²⁶ In emblem books the horse is "one who does not know how to flatter." As such loyalty could not be feigned, this seemingly incidental observation is laden with meaning about his value.²⁷

Having established himself as an expert, it was de rigueur that Newcastle should write one of the manuals that had become a defining feature of a master horseman's work. Therefore, alongside the displays of his art, he also recorded his expertise in the form of his first published instruction manual. To a man as hungry for public and royal recognition as Newcastle, the power of an individual contribution to history was a necessity. Therefore, in writing his book, he set out to establish a new standard in an art that served as a beautiful parallel to all that noble birth entailed.

This art had begun to develop in Renaissance Italy. In 1550, Federico Grisone published *Gli Ordini di cavalcare*, the first important horsemanship manual aimed primarily at the elite, rather than the military, horseman. Many of his readers would, of course, have been both. He also set the precedent for the riding manual itself as a feature of a master's work, and a huge array of manuals followed. Many were derivative or adapted translations of Grisone's work, so locating ownership of the material becomes difficult, especially as not all who were influential published their methods. Pignatelli trained under Cesare Fiaschi, then joined Grisone's academy in Naples to become the most celebrated instructor of his time, but he did not publish his own manual.²⁸ His influence, then, could only be interpreted through oral tradition, constantly filtered through the experience of those who followed him.

Newcastle, however, asserts repeatedly that his manuals represent his own method, "For which I have Left all Others,"²⁹ and are therefore entirely original. This is an arguable point, as he is part of a lineage of riders. However, his work makes many wholly individual contributions and moves the art forward in subtlety and refinement.³⁰

²⁶ Cavendish, *Life*, 100, 101.

²⁷ Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum liber*, Emblem 35; Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems* (1586) Alciato Project, www.mun.ca/alciato/desc.html (accessed March 3, 2018); Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books* (New York: Octagon, 1978), 56–61.

²⁸ Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly discusses an unpublished manuscript by Pignatelli in *Triumphall Shews: Tournaments at German-Speaking Courts in Their European Context, 1650–1730* (Berlin: Mann, 1992), 76, but it is evident that Newcastle was not aware of this.

²⁹ 1667, 42.

³⁰ For further discussion of the originality of Newcastle's work and his contribution to the art, see Elaine Walker, *To Amaze the People with Pleasure and Delight: The Horsemanship manuals of William, Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle* (Virginia: Xenophon, 2015), 69–90, 167.

The first of Newcastle's horsemanship manuals, setting out his personal method of training, was written in English but published in French in 1658.³¹ This is a lavish folio edition with forty-two very fine engraved plates after Abraham van Diepenbeeck. A more modest second manual in English followed in 1667 and was later translated into French, but the first manual was not published in English until 1743, surpassing the original in quality of production. It was this translation that made Newcastle's original manual widely accessible in his own country, half a century after his death and almost a full century after it first appeared. Such was its success that it was reprinted in 1748. Further editions in German and also Spanish were published before the end of the eighteenth century, and there were a number of adaptations and derivatives published, testifying to Newcastle's lasting influence more than the success of the original manuals themselves.

The history of the manuals can be confusing, especially as the titles differ only in detail. However, they are two separate, but related, texts, and Newcastle advises his reader that while each stands alone, to read "both together will questionless do best."³² In 1743 John Brindley decided he would "oblige the Lovers of Horsemanship if I procured a Translation" of Newcastle's 1658 manual into English. However, he omitted some of the prefatory material while adding "several ornamental prints," an index, and a glossary. He then included the book in an anthology as "the First Volume of *A Complete System of Horsemanship*."³³ This has led to confusion over the title and provenance of Newcastle's manuals and their relationships with the second volume of Brindley's series, a translation of a French veterinary text, *La parfaite connoissance des chevaux*, by Gaspard de Saunier.³⁴

Brindley's fine translation and largely faithful reproduction of Newcastle's original text has been reissued as a facsimile several times since the 1970s under the title *A General System of Horsemanship*.³⁵ However, this does not honour Newcastle's emphatic claim to have created a "méthode nouvelle et invention extraordinaire." The original title offers an immediate insight into the author whose reaction to the renaming of his definitive work as "general" can be imagined.

The moral purpose of horsemanship was in contention from the Renaissance onwards, and Newcastle bluntly states that those who misunderstand the value of these horses reveal that they "ne sont bons eux mesmes à quoy que ce soit"; "are good for nothing themselves."³⁶ He goes on in characteristically emphatic style in his second manual with a chapter entitled "That it is a very Impertinent Error, and of Great prejudice, to think the Mannage Useless." He comments resignedly also that "There are great

³¹ R. S. Toole-Stott suggests that early copies lacking the engraved title (detailing the translation from the author's English into French) may have been in circulation in 1657 in *Circus and the Allied Arts: A World Bibliography* (Derby: Harper, 1960), 84.

³² 1667, sigs. b–b2v.

³³ 1743, sig. A.

³⁴ La Haye: Moetjens, 1734.

³⁵ First issued by Allen, 1970.

³⁶ 1658, Avant-Propos; 1743, 14.

Disputes amongst Cavaliers about this Business” when it comes to choosing the best horse “Either for the War, or for Single-Combat, or for Any Thing Else.”³⁷

A tension is apparent as riding moves from the battlefield to the riding house, largely, it seems, due to attempts, as made by Newcastle himself, to retain the links between the two. However, he does not suggest that the airs of the riding house are transferable to the battlefield but that “s’ils avoient quelques duëls, ou s’ils alloient à la guerre, ils reconnoïtroient leur faute; car ces chevaux là vont aussy bien à la soldade & à passades comme par haut, & les longues journées leur sont bien tost perdre tous les airs qui ne sont proprement que pour le plaisir. Qui plus est, ils en sont beaucoup plus propres à galoper, trotter, tourner, ou autre chose de cette nature, qui est pour l’usage.”³⁸

The true value of the riding-house horse in war is his excellent and solid training, which makes him so skillful and responsive that “I will run him on Fire, Water, or Sword, and he shall Obey me.”³⁹ His ability to perform a capriole may be a bonus if the theory may be put into practice, but his swift obedience and dexterity makes him invaluable. It has become a popular idea today that the “airs-above-the-ground,” highly advanced leaps where all four of the horse’s hooves leave the ground at once, were originally intended for the battlefield. However, alongside Newcastle, other primary sources from the time also suggest otherwise, including Sir Thomas Blundeville and Antoine de Pluvinel.⁴⁰

Newcastle’s horsemanship manuals are part of a considerable canon of writing, much of it published or intended for publication. There is also private correspondence and poetry, his book of advice to the future Charles II,⁴¹ and two undated handwritten manuscripts of notes on horsemanship, in Newcastle’s own and a scribal hand.⁴² His horsemanship manuals, however, offer the clearest insight into his motivation because they encompass so many aspects of personal philosophy reflected elsewhere. They are the only texts combining all the elements of his writing, being written for the public but with a deeply personal agenda, including a strong theatricality and the elevation of technique to art.

³⁷ 1667, 5, 36.

³⁸ 1658, Avant-Propos; “If those gentlemen were to fight a duel or go to the wars, they would find their error; for these horses perform a journey, as well as they do the high airs; and the long marches occasionally make them soon forget those airs, which are calculated merely for pleasure; moreover, they are much fitter for galloping, trotting, wheeling, or anything else which is necessary” (1743, 14).

³⁹ 1667, 6.

⁴⁰ Thomas Blundeville, *A newe booke, containing the Arte of Ryding and breaking greate Horses* (London: Seres, 1560, Preface); Antoine de Pluvinel, *Le Maneige Royal*, trans. Hilda Nelson (Virginia: Xenophon, 2010 [London: Allen, 1989]), 89–90.

⁴¹ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Clarendon 109; subsequent references from the transcript included in S. Arthur Strong, ed., *A Catalogue of Letters [...] at Welbeck Abbey* (London: Murray, 1903), Appendix 1, 173–236, abbreviated to *Letters*. Unpublished material may be found in the Portland Collection, University of Nottingham, PwV 23–26 and the British Library Additional MSS 70499.

⁴² University of Nottingham, Department of Manuscripts and Special Collections, Portland Manuscripts: PvW and PvW 22.

The key to their success as technical guides, however, is Newcastle's talent for putting the essentially practical into an accessible personal style recognizable from his many extant letters and other handwritten documents, as mentioned above. The strong impression of his own voice links them to his book of advice to the future Charles II. Like the horsemanship manuscripts, the "little book" is handwritten with erratic punctuation, digressions, and a sense of a lively face-to-face discussion in which the listener could actively take part if only the speaker would pause for breath.

His conversational style and strong opinions result in texts which are, while undoubtedly arrogant, full of a dynamic enthusiasm. The 1667 manual devotes nine pages to an energetic rebuttal of the "much Deceived" people who think "the Mannage is nothing but Tricks and Dancing." At the end, Newcastle declares: "Thus it is Proved, That there is nothing of more Use than A Horse of Mannage." His proof is usually that he believes it and his peers agree, including the king, the Duke of York, the Duke of "Mommorancy," the Prince of Condé, and the King of Spain.⁴³ Noble birth and sound judgement, for Newcastle, go hand in hand.

However, his expertise as displayed in the technical aspects of the manuals justifies such confidence. Newcastle approaches highly complicated exercises with great precision, so that when teaching the reader how to develop suppleness in the horse, he says: "Pull the inward Cavezone's Reyn Cross his Neck, not too High, your Knuckles towards his Neck, and Help him, with the outside Legg, and Reyn contrary."⁴⁴

To the thinking rider for whom he writes, a subtle movement is being described with precision. Any inability to understand can reflect poorly only on the reader. All Newcastle's exercises are described in such refined detail, illustrating his ability as a writer in the difficult task of transferring practical skills to paper instructions. He also makes it clear that his method and opinions are not presented for discussion or consideration but as what he believes to be best, based on his long skill and experience.

Stephen Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning focuses on the sixteenth rather than the seventeenth century, yet many of the features he identifies apply to Newcastle. As a committed royalist, keenly aware of his own heritage, he found himself in a situation of exile while the locus of his self-definition, the monarchy, was in disarray. His emotional survival depended upon maintaining as much of that self-definition as possible. The riding house paralleled "the cultural system of meanings that creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment." Therefore, the horsemanship manuals function as "a manifestation of the concrete behavior" of their author, "the expression of the codes by which behavior is shaped and as a reflection upon those codes."⁴⁵

The writing style of the second manual has more focus on self-presentation in the context of Newcastle's exile and addresses directly issues which are implicit in

⁴³ 1667, 5–14.

⁴⁴ 1667, 233.

⁴⁵ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 8–9.

the first manual with regard to his status while in Antwerp. Eight pages describe “the Honour I have receivd there,” and he claims that it would “fill a Volume, to repeat all the Commendations that were given to *Horses*, and to *Horse-manship* ... in my own private *Riding-House*.” He reveals himself as cultured and urbane in his courteous references to Antwerp’s inhabitants as “deservedly Famous, for their extraordinary Civilities to Strangers.” His graceful appreciation for the honour of the lords who came to see him ride or invited him to wait upon them offers the opportunity for some impressive name-dropping. During his exile he consistently represented all that nobility stood for and so attracted exalted company.⁴⁶

An important feature of each manual is that it illustrates a previous era of his life. The 1658 manual, published in French for his continental peers, illustrates his family holdings, then lost to him but still “ma maison”⁴⁷ in his own eyes. His second manual, published in English “for the benefit of my countrymen”⁴⁸ after his return home, reminded his readers of the honour with which he was received during his exile.

Alongside his own writing, horses and horsemanship in Newcastle’s life are also evidenced in the writing of his second wife, Margaret Cavendish. In both manuals and in his play *The Witts Triumvate, or The Philosopher*, Newcastle parodies those who disparage the trained horse, and Cavendish uses her own work to add support.

In *Poems, and Fancies* (1653), she includes detailed references to horsemanship in the incongruous setting of “A Battel between King Oberon and the Pygmees.” In a poem of 278 lines, Cavendish devotes 53 to the value of trained horses in battle. She declares, “some think for War, it is an Aire unfit,” adding that “Many doe think [such horses] are only fit for pleasure,” or, even worse, of use to a coward who “by leaping high themselves can save.” She goes on to display her knowledge of Newcastle’s art: “Besides, all Airts in Warre are very fit, / As Curvets, Dimivoltoes, and Perwieet: / In going back, and forward, turning round, / Sideways, both high and low upon the ground.” She adds that without these skills, horses “May march strait forth, or in one place may stay,” which dangers she believes are overcome by training and courage in their rider.⁴⁹ Her enthusiasm and eagerness illustrate that both the terminology and the tensions surrounding riding were familiar to her. This offers an intriguing insight into the discussion of horsemanship in the everyday life of the Newcastle household, even though her elaborate defence of “horses of manage” takes her away from her own fairy characters, who ride not horses but grasshoppers. Somewhat ironically, it is also at odds with Newcastle’s assertion that the airts are not intended for war. However, her points about training establishing the leadership of the rider and the exercises creating a supple horse for use in battle are exactly in line with both manuals. Her desire to support him is indisputable.

Cross-references between their writings in relation to horses imply not only an interested and supportive wife but also a cross-pollination of ideas. Newcastle’s list of names

⁴⁶ 1667, sigs. A2b–Bv.

⁴⁷ 1658/1743, Plate 30.

⁴⁸ 1667, sig. B.

⁴⁹ Margaret Cavendish, *Poems, and Fancies* (Menston: Scolar, 1972), 182–84.

for “Horses of Mannage” in the 1667 manual largely refer to temperament. Two that do not, however, are Bell in Campo and Sans Pareil, but these have an additional interest. In Margaret Cavendish’s first collection of plays (1662), *Bell in Campo* is the title of one, while Lady Sanspareille is the heroine of another.

Lady Victoria, the heroine of *Bell in Campo*, admires the horses chosen by the General of the Kingdom of Reformation, because “such horses ... are usefull in War ... as have been made subject to the hand and heel, that have been taught to Trot on the Hanches, to change, to Gallop, to stop,” all recognizably attributes that Newcastle desires in his horses.⁵⁰

A prime example of the interweaving of writing practice is found in *The Life of the Duke* and the second horsemanship manual, both published in 1667. Several passages are so similar in both texts as to suggest that they were written in close relationship to one another, and both accounts of the days when Newcastle was feted by the continental nobility and Charles II rode in his riding house share almost all the material.⁵¹ From the everyday to the fantastic, in small details and bold statements, links may be found between Newcastle, Cavendish, writing, and the art of *manège*.

None, though, is as wistful as may be found in Cavendish’s strange fantasy, *A Description of a New World, called the Blazing World*. In his poem to his wife on this elaborate work, published a year before his second horsemanship manual, Newcastle praises her ability to “make a World of Nothing, but pure Wit,” the creation of worlds in her head and on paper being undoubtedly a large feature of her writing. Newcastle and his riding house at Welbeck enjoy a touching cameo appearance in *The Blazing World*, when the Empress of the Blazing World is brought in spirit form by her friend and mentor, the Duchess of Newcastle, to watch the duke train his horses.

Being a woman of great perception, the Empress “was much pleased” with the art of *manège* and “commended it as a noble pastime, and an exercise fit and proper for noble and heroic persons.” Indeed, the Empress is so impressed that she reports back to her husband, who at once “built stables and riding-houses, and desired to have horses of manage, such as ... the Duke of Newcastle had.”⁵²

It is notable that upon a single report the Emperor of the Blazing World accepts Newcastle as an expert, unlike those who were managing a new court for King Charles II without his assistance. Small wonder, perhaps, that Newcastle admires his wife’s ability to create from wit alone, considering the enormous amount of rebuilding he had to do after the Restoration in terms of property and reputation. This bitter irony is reinforced when the Emperor of the Blazing World asks “the form and structure of her lord and husband’s stables and riding house.” The Duchess sorrowfully replies that

⁵⁰ Margaret Cavendish, *Playes Written by the Thrice Noble, Illustrious and Excellent Princess, the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle* (London: Martin, Allestrye, & Dicas, 1662); Lady Sanspareille appears in “Youth’s Glory and Death’s Banquet.”

⁵¹ Cavendish, *Life*: 114–20; 1667, sigs. b–Bv.

⁵² Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World and other Writings*, ed. Kate Lilley (London: Penguin, 1994), 121, 194, 219.

"they were but plain and ordinary" but "had my lord wealth, I am sure he would not spare it, in rendering his buildings as noble as could be made." Unencumbered by financial constraints, the Emperor shows the Duchess his own stables, "which were most stately and magnificent," richly bedecked with "several sorts of precious materials," with "the walls lined with cornelian," an amber floor, mother-of-pearl mangers, and crystal pillars, while the riding house "was lined with sapphires, topazes and the like." Even the floor "was all of golden sand, so finely sifted, that it was extremely soft, and not in the least hurtful to the horses' feet." This little detail within the sumptuous fantastical creation is one of numerous touches which demonstrate that Cavendish has real understanding, as coarse sand is abrasive and potentially damaging to the hoof. Contingencies for avoiding this would be very likely to come up for discussion when Newcastle was maintaining his own riding houses. The practical details Newcastle considers so important find their way into Cavendish's fantasy. This is both valuable to the study of horses in their lives and their writing practice and touching as an insight into their marriage. When she relates to her husband the luxury of this other-world riding house he has inspired and the "fine horses of the Blazing World," she wishes "you should not only have some of those horses, but such materials, as the Emperor has, to build your stables and riding-houses withal." Characteristically, Newcastle replies that, "he was sorry there was no passage between those two worlds; but said he, I have always found an obstruction to my good fortune."⁵³

Further significant personal values and attitudes are reflected in the horsemanship writing, and some most interesting comparisons may be made with the "little book ... concerning the government of his dominions,"⁵⁴ written for Charles II.⁵⁵ This builds upon the advice written when Newcastle held the official guardian role of governor to Charles when he was still a small boy⁵⁶ and states: "Ther Is no oratorye In Itt, or anye thinge stolen out off Bookes, for I seldome or Ever reade anye, Butt these discourses are oute off my longe Experience,—to presente your Majestie with truthes which great monarkes seldom heares."⁵⁷

In the 1667 manual, Newcastle claims similarly that "I have set down, as clearly as I could, without the Help of any other Logick, but what Nature hath taught me, all the Observations about Horses and Horsemanship."⁵⁸ His own life experience is always the basis of his expertise. In horsemanship, long years of studious application to the traditions of the art were disappointing until he began to work on his own method, "For which I have Left all others." As in his advice to the future king, he considers the method conceived and devised from his personal explorations rather than received ideas to be

53 Cavendish, *Blazing World*, 219–21.

54 Cavendish, *Life*, 186.

55 *A Catalogue of Letters*, 173–236.

56 Printed in Cavendish, *Life*, Appendix, 326–30.

57 *A Catalogue of Letters*, 173.

58 1667, sig. Bv.

“as True, as it is New.”⁵⁹ This conviction as to the unique truth of his ideas is reinforced repeatedly throughout the manuals, and a similar need to be seen as an indispensable authority is echoed in the “little book.”

Newcastle sees a direct parallel between the horse and rider relationship and that of king and subjects. He offers the same advice to his monarch publicly in the dedication of the 1658 manual, using parallels of horses to subjects: “un Roy, etant bon Cavalier, scaura beaucoup mieux comme il faudra gouverner ses peuples, quand il faudra les recompenser, ou les châtier; quand il faudra leur tenir la main serree, ou quand la relacher; quand il faudra les aider doucement, ou en quel temps il sera convenable des les eperonner.”⁶⁰

His belief in this parallel illuminates much of Newcastle’s urgency and frustration with those who do not understand the almost metaphysical undercurrent he sees in the semiotic value of the riding house. This is further illustrated by his view that “seremoneye though Itt Is nothinge In Itt selfe yett Itt doth Everyethinge—For what Is a king more than a Subjecte butt for seremony.” He thus advises the king to “shew your selfe Gloriouslye to your People Like a God,”⁶¹ recalling the dedication “Au Roy” in the 1658 manual, which enthuses that “un Prince nest jamais accompagne de tant de majesté, mesmement sur son throne, comme ill est sur un beau cheval.”⁶²

This phrase is prefigured in the letter written to Charles in his childhood, explaining to him that nothing “preserves you Kings more than ceremony” including “rich furniture for horses” and reminding him that “in all triumphs whatsoever or public showing of yourself, you cannot put upon you too much king.”⁶³ This echo of Shakespeare’s *Henry V* is repeated with only slight variations in both manuals as well as in the advice book.⁶⁴

In a mood of poignant nostalgia, he advises Charles to keep such spectacle alive, “which I assure your Majestie Is the moste Glorious sighte that Can bee seene & the moste manlieste.” Clearly the king should also reinforce this glorious and manly image in his private diversions, so Newcastle advises “your Majestie to Ride your Horses off Manege twice a weeke which will Incourage Noble men to doe the like.”⁶⁵ However, Newcastle probably exposed his own weakness in this longing for the old days. Charles does not

⁵⁹ 1667, 42.

⁶⁰ 1658, “Au Roy”; “a King, being a good Cavalier, will know so much better how he will govern his people, when he should recompense them or chastise them; when he should keep them under a tight rein or when he should give them more freedom; when he should aid them gently or when it would be appropriate to spur them on” (Walker, *To Amaze the People*, 173; transcriptions and translations of all the prefatory material and verses from the 1658 manual are included in the Appendix, 169–85).

⁶¹ *A Catalogue of Letters*, 210.

⁶² “[A] Prince is never accompanied by so much majesty, even when on his throne, as he is when mounted on a beautiful horse” (Walker, *To Amaze the People*, 173).

⁶³ Cavendish, *Life*, 329.

⁶⁴ William Shakespeare, *King Henry V*, ed. T. W. Craik (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2002), 4.1.235–36.

⁶⁵ *A Catalogue of Letters*, 223–24.

seem to have paid much attention to his advice, and it is a sad irony that the “little book” simply reveals Newcastle to be, though shrewd and worldly, also an anachronism.

After his return home, he dedicated his energies to rebuilding his devastated estates and preferred quiet retirement over court life, even though he knew that “many believe I am disappointed.”⁶⁶ His homes at Bolsover and at Welbeck both remained dedicated to horsemanship. Visitors reported that his horses “exercise their gifts in his magnificent Riding House” and were “more extraordinary than are to be seen in Europe.”⁶⁷ For the staff at Welbeck, daily routine meant that “the horses were a Riding and we present as usual.”⁶⁸ Amid a life of upheaval, keeping and training horses required and provided consistency. Maintaining that training at a level to impress peers and guests could demonstrate Newcastle’s often overlooked abilities and perhaps also offer reassurance he needed himself.

Newcastle’s last great building project was at Nottingham Castle, which he managed to buy in a ruined condition when he was 83, only two years before his death. Although he did not survive to see the project completed, his plans were ambitious and show no lessening over time of his belief in noble display. Over the entrance to the castle, the remains of a statue of Newcastle on horseback may still be seen today.

Alongside historical events, solid evidence of the importance of horses and horsemanship in providing a paradigm for life exists in Newcastle’s own words, those of his wife, and the legacy of his building projects. His two manuals, however, offer the most direct contact with his wit and knowledge in a way untouched by time or opinion.

His own essential enjoyment of his art offers the most compelling evidence:

I beseech my Readers, to take in good part, That I have set down, as clearly as I could, without the Help of any other Logick, but what Nature hath taught me, all the Observations about Horses and Horsemanship; which I have made, by a long, and chargeable, though I must needs say, very pleasant, and satisfactory, Experience.⁶⁹

Through all the events of his long life, any attempt to understand Newcastle’s motivation can only be successful when he is considered, above all else, as a horseman.

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⁶⁶ Cavendish, *Life*, 131.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Katie Whitaker, *Mad Madge: Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, Royalist, Writer and Romantic* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2003) 342.

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Elaine Walker is a writer and consultant on the horse in cultural history. Her books include *Horse* (Reaktion Books' "Animal" series), which was chosen for translation by the Kalima Project, and *"To Amaze the People with Pleasure and Delight": The Horsemanship Manuals of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle* (Xenophon), which began life as her PhD thesis. She has worked on projects for the Royal Historic Palaces Commission, the Royal Armouries, English Heritage, and Royal Mail, among others. She is currently working on a new book on the horses of the inland waterways, *In Search of the Boat Horse*, forthcoming in 2020.
