

Article

# Literary Autozoographies: Contextualizing Species Life in German Animal Autobiography

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Academic Editor: Joela Jacobs

Received: 31 January 2017; Accepted: 6 April 2017; Published: 13 April 2017

**Abstract:** What does it mean to take animal autobiography seriously and how can we account for the representation of life-narrating animals? The article investigates animal autobiographies as ‘literary autozoographies’, drawing attention to both the generic contexts and the epistemological premises of these texts. Adopting a double-bind approach stemming from autobiographical research as well as cultural animal studies, the article focuses on early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies from the German-speaking tradition. These texts are discussed exemplarily in relation to the parameters of fictional autobiographies, before they are contextualized with historical discourses regarding horses in natural history and so-called ‘horse-science’. Due to the fact that the poetics and aesthetics of the genre are modeled on the templates of factual autobiographies, the article argues that literary autozoographies can be read as fictional autobiographies as well as meta-auto/biographical discourse undermining autobiographical conventions. Furthermore, it shows that literary autozoography and zoology share a common historical and ideological epistemology accounting for the representation of animals in both fields. Literary autozoographies thus participate in the negotiation and production of species-specific knowledge. Reading *Life of the Mecklenburg Mare Amante* (1804), *Life of a Job Horse* (1807) and *Life of a Worn-Out Hack* (1819) alongside equine-centric discourses around 1800, the article demonstrates in what ways these texts can be regarded as part of a regime of knowledge attributing emotions and cognitive capacities to horses, while simultaneously arguing for humane treatment on the basis of interspecies homologies.

**Keywords:** animal autobiography; fictional autobiography; meta-autobiography; life writing; contextualist narratology; cultural and literary animal studies; poetics of knowledge; zoology; natural history; equine autozoography; horse-science

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## 1. Introduction

Drawing on forms and models ranging from animal<sup>1</sup> satire, parables, epics and fables to picaresque novels and factual auto/biographies<sup>2</sup>, life-narrating animals have been part of Western literary history for at least two hundred years ([2], pp. 1–2). While critics have traditionally read these texts as social satires and parodies, recent scholarship has probed the historical and discursive contexts [3–9] as well as the theoretical, narratological and ethical implications [10–13] of how and

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<sup>1</sup> Since the article focuses on texts written at a time when terms such as ‘nonhuman animals’ and ‘human animals’ were hardly ever used, I will here be using ‘animals’ and ‘humans’ respectively to underscore the historical meaning of this (anthropological and anthropocentric) differentiation.

<sup>2</sup> “*Auto/biography, or a/b*. This acronym signals the interrelatedness of autobiographical narrative and biography.” It “also designates a mode of the autobiographical that inserts biography/ies within an autobiography, or the converse, a personal narrative within a biography” ([1], p. 184, emphasis in the original).

why animals have been and are still given narrative voice and authority.<sup>3</sup> This article first discusses early nineteenth-century German equine autobiographies with a focus on their affiliations with and parallels to the aesthetics of (factual and fictional) autobiographies.<sup>4</sup> Second, it approaches these texts with a cultural-historical perspective interested in the history and “poetology of knowledge” [17],<sup>5</sup> in this case, the history and poetics of zoological and literary discourse. Instead of a contextual reading which applies the “disappearing animal trick” ([18], p. 24) and transforms animals into stand-ins or mouthpieces for satirical ends or human (minority) concerns, the article examines the epistemological and discursive contexts framing and constructing a specific species (here: the horse) and, as a consequence, the animal-autobiographical act. In this regard, the article encourages further research into animal autobiographical writing from non-English traditions, furthering the perspective of contextualist (animal studies) narratology. Animal autobiographies, I argue, not only gain momentum and draw inspiration from the tradition of autobiography, but also reflect and engage with specific (historical) zoological discourses.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, animal autobiography actively partakes in the production of species-specific knowledge.<sup>7</sup> Underscoring the interrelatedness of animal autobiographies, conventional autobiographies, and zoology, my research addresses the animal-autobiographical genre as ‘literary autozoographies’, a term denoting literary texts which (1) make use of a homodiegetic or (pseudo-)autodiegetic animal narrator (first-person point of view; animal narrator = animal protagonist; most often, these animals are domestic animals, such as dogs, cats, and horses);<sup>8</sup> (2) present an animal protagonist who, intradiegetically, neither metamorphoses nor speaks to human protagonists in human tongues (in contrast to the tradition of fables, parables and fairy tales); (3) retrospectively (and comprehensively) narrate an animal’s life (up until its anticipated death); therefore, (4) adopt, assimilate, transform (and inevitably undermine) the poetics and aesthetics of conventional autobiography; and (5) interact with zoological discourses and thus participate in the construction of (popular) zoological knowledge of animal species.

Literary autozoographies are ‘literary’ insofar as they—to various degrees—exhibit “stylistic or narrative variations defamiliariz[ing] conventionally understood referents and prompt reinterpretive transformations of a conventional feeling or concept” ([24], p. 123). Read as fictional accounts

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of recent work on animal autobiographical writing, see ([11], pp. 2–4). Tess Cosslett provides an excellent introduction into the discursive and structural elements of British animal autobiographical writing up until 1914 ([9], pp. 63–92). Margo DeMello’s volume gives insight into historical as well as contemporary means and functions of speaking for and on behalf of animals [14].

<sup>4</sup> In the following, I use ‘conventional’ and ‘factual’ autobiographies/autobiographical discourse interchangeably for (human) autobiographies which traditionally claim “to be non-fictional (factual)” [15]. This, however, is not to say that the propositions made in conventional autobiographies can be considered inherently factual. According to Philippe Lejeune’s influential definition, factual autobiographies are “[r]etrospective prose narrative[s] written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality” ([16], p. 4). Similarly, the terms ‘pseudo-/quasi-autobiography’ and ‘fictional autobiography’ are used interchangeably in this article.

<sup>5</sup> All following translations from the German (and, in part four, the French) are mine. For the sake of brevity, I only provide the translated, not the original quotes.

<sup>6</sup> In the following discussion, the term ‘zoological discourse(s)’ denotes general and species-specific statements in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century natural history accounts as well as in popular zoology and specialist literature (‘horse-science’). While zoology was only institutionalized as a German academic discipline at the turn of the eighteenth century, the term ‘zoology’ was used in the fields of medicine, theology and natural history at least since the seventeenth century (in fact, Aristotle in his *Historia animalum* already paved the way for a systematic engagement with forms of (animal) life in the 4th century) with the definition “animal science” or “the study of animals” ([19], p. 506). In this article, I use several descriptions of horses from natural history and horse-science published around 1800.

<sup>7</sup> Beckoning to a Foucauldian concept of discourse analysis, the term ‘discourse’ here refers to a “system of thinking and arguing which is abstracted from a text [...] and which is characterized, first, by an *object of speech*, second, by *regularities of speech*, third, by *interdiscursive relations* to other discourses” ([20], p. 406, emphasis in the original).

<sup>8</sup> Although I am not categorically differentiating between literary autozoographies referring to ‘real’, extratextual domestic/companion animals, and those without a ‘real’ counterpart, inquiring into the material, biographical side of autozoographical animals can give insights into a text’s commemorative function and zoopoetical foundation [8,21,22]. Moreover, those texts narrating the lives of ‘real’ animals represent what Frank Zipfel calls narratology’s “borderline cases”, i.e., “texts in which actual events are narrated with the help of fictional narration” ([23], p. 168). For David Herman’s distinction between “nonfictional animal autobiography” and “fictional animal autobiography”, see ([11], pp. 7–14). Early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies as discussed in this article belong to the latter category.

simulating autodiegetic discourse, literary autozoographies may unsettle conventional (anthropocentric) perceptions of socio-cultural practices and world views. Insofar as these texts feature an animal narrator, literary autozoographies clearly indicate their fictional status ([25]; [26], p. 108), yet simultaneously insist on their factuality. This productive tension implicitly challenges and questions the generic ideal of an ‘autobiographical truth’, while it may also illuminate the inherent anthropocentrism (in the history) of auto/biography.

At the same time, literary autozoographies interrelate with species-specific discourses and thus play an important role in the production of zoological knowledge. The representation of life-narrating animals, I argue, is deeply entrenched in the epistemological field of Western culture and specific historical periods. A literary animal in general, an autobiographical animal in particular never stands apart from its contexts ([27], pp. 228–32). For Foucault, an “epistemological field, the *episteme* in which knowledge, envisaged apart from all criteria having reference to its rational value or to its objective forms, grounds its positivity and thereby manifests a history which is not that of its growing perfection, but rather that of its conditions of possibility” ([28], p. x, emphasis in the original). It turns out, as I will show in part four of my analysis, that natural history and literary autozoographies depart from the same epistemological premises, enabling both genres to speak about and for domestic animals in surprisingly liberal ways. Zoological and autozoographical discourses turn out to be two sides of one and the same coin. The neologism ‘literary autozoography’ thus emphasizes the fact that the poetics of animal autobiography and its representation of animal narrator-protagonists engage in a complex dialogue with *autobiographical* as well as *zoographical* genres.<sup>9</sup>

The term ‘autozoography’<sup>10</sup> acknowledges the distinction between “bare life/political existence, *zoē/bios*, exclusion/inclusion” ([32], p. 8), as outlined by Giorgio Agamben, yet is more interested in how humans (as a self-declared *zoon logon echon*) speak about and try to construct animals as those without *logos* (*zoon alogon*). It proposes to focus on the epistemological grounds of ascribing lives and selves to animals in pseudo-autobiographical narrations by investigating their links to and relations with *zoo(n)logical* discourses in and beyond natural history and zoology. Thus, the neologism tries to highlight the fact that the narrated *bios*, i.e., the events and subjective experiences presented in animal life writing, is based on epistemologically and culturally contingent assessments of animals and what might be considered their selves (*autos*).<sup>11</sup> The texts discussed as ‘literary autozoographies’ in this article present animal narrator-protagonists as self-aware beings able to distinguish themselves from (non)human others. However, these ascriptions of the self continuously oscillate between the poles of agency vs. submission, anthropomorphism vs. realism/naturalism, defamiliarizing vs. confirmative perspective etc. In this, as David Herman observes, they are part of “a multiplicity of discourse practices that involve speaking in behalf of another being who is assumed, inferred, or hypothesized to have a perspective on and interest in situations and events” ([11], p. 6). Like any literary text featuring animals, literary autozoographies are steeped in knowledge, socio-cultural practices and discursive currents of the time in which they have been and still are composed and published ([27]).<sup>12</sup> However, in the context of German literary autozoographies, here exemplified by early nineteenth-century narratives,<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The term ‘zoography’ was less common but used interchangeably with ‘zoology’ or ‘natural history’ in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works dedicated to the description of animal species (cp., e.g., [29,30]).

<sup>10</sup> For a philosophical and rhetorical approach to autozoographies via Derrida, see [31].

<sup>11</sup> Moreover, autobiographical research has developed a number of new genre concepts substituting *bios* for terms suitable to the authors of and subjects constructed in particular autobiographies. Domna C. Stanton, for example, discusses women’s autobiographies as “autogynographies” ([33], see also ([1], pp. 185–89)).

<sup>12</sup> Since literary autozoographies have not been part of German literary canons, many of these texts have been either left unnoticed in archives, dismissed as trivial from the academic syllabus, or filed as ‘mere’ children’s literature. My research corpus stretching from 1799 up until 2016 encompasses approximately forty texts meeting the definition criteria of literary autozoographies given above. Most of these texts are not addressed to children and offer insight into (historical) assumptions about and modes of fictional constructions of animals still awaiting critical investigation.

<sup>13</sup> Due to the spatial limitations of this article I cannot elaborate on the transformations the genre has undergone since the nineteenth century. Suffice it to say, that most German contemporary literary autozoographies still rely on factual, non-experimental autobiographies as role models. Yet the enforcement of an autobiographical illusion (and, in turn, critique)

paradigmatic patterns with regard to formal and thematic characteristics can be deduced. Drawing on Martin Löschnigg's work on British fictional autobiographies [37–40], and Ansgar Nünning's concept of meta-autobiographies ([41], see also [42]), part two and three of the article discuss German equine autozoographies [43–46], published at the beginning of the nineteenth century, with regard to the parameters of (pseudo-)autobiographies as well as to their affiliations with meta-autobiographical discourse. I argue that German literary autozoography responds to, integrates, and adapts conventional autobiographical discourse in order to frame and authenticate autozoographical accounts. In doing so, however, it simultaneously subverts generic categories of factual autobiography which “advances *claims* of referential truthfulness” ([47], emphasis in the original). Depicting animals as the narrators of their lives undermines traditional concepts, such as ‘autobiographical truth’, referentiality, identity, and a congruent, representational relation between life and life-writing. In this regard, literary autozoographies draw the readers' attention to the fact that autobiography “does not mean a life that is de-scribed but a life that is *scripted*” ([48], p. 17), emphasis in the original). Autobiographical selves, be they human or nonhuman, are constructed entities, the architecture of which can never be exchanged for the ‘real’ former self. Hence, “[t]he autobiographical act is never merely a repetition of the past; it is always a repetition with a difference” ([49], p. 73). Fact and fiction are not mutually exclusive when it comes to autobiography but rather interdependent.<sup>14</sup> Reading literary autozoographies thus offers insights not only into per- and receptions as well as fictional transformations of factual autobiographies, but also into the poetics of a fictional genre commenting on the ‘all too human’ status of conventional autobiography and its generic shortcomings.

The fourth part of the article shows how a cultural animal studies approach [50] which contextualizes and historicizes ([27], pp. 229–32) literary autozoographies helps to pin these texts down into the situated, species-specific knowledge of their respective times. In this regard, autozoographical research contributes to a “context-sensitive cultural narratology” ([51], p. 363). Taking early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies, and particularly *Life of a Job Horse (Lebensgeschichte eines Miethpferdes)* [43] (1807), as cases in point, I analyze how natural history, ‘horse-science and equine autozoographies configured, popularized and, in the case of equine autozoographies, fictionalized assumed equine emotions and minds. As a consequence, German equine autozoographies materialize as mediums participating in an ‘equine epistemology’ around 1800.

## 2. Literary Autozoographies and/as Fictional Autobiographies

Texts such as *Life of the Mecklenburg Mare Amante (Lebensgeschichte der Mecklenburgischen Stute Amante)* [44,45] (1804), *Life of a Job Horse (Lebensgeschichte eines Miethpferdes)* [43] (1807) or *Life of a Worn-Out Hack (Lebensgeschichte eines ausgedienten Fiacker-Pferdes)* [46] (1819) neither appear *ex nihilo* nor do they produce entirely new literary forms.<sup>15</sup> In fact, German animal autobiographical writing did (and still does) not only emulate the aesthetics of factual autobiographies, as will be shown below, but also emerged at a time of growing demand for and popularity of life narratives. In the foreword to his *Biographies of Remarkable Beings from the Animal Kingdom (Biographien merkwürdiger Geschöpfe aus dem Tierreiche)*, published in 1787, the author, Johann Jacob Ebert, professor of mathematics and natural philosophy in Wittenberg, notes that “it has become fashionable for quite a while [...] to print life stories, or: biographies, to use the language of the new authors, of remarkable and unremarkable persons. [...] Yet since people have delivered biographies of all kinds of human beings ad nauseam, and with the result

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has been dropped for a discourse mocking the *conditio humana*, putting emphasis on the mode of defamiliarization and, first and foremost, giving (implicit) advice on proper treatment of the autozoographical species in question (cp., e.g., [34,35]). In this respect, German literary autozoographies have become part of and contributors to “the field of advice manuals” ([36], p. 110).

<sup>14</sup> In this regard, literary autozoography, as David Herman observes, “piggybacks on the hybrid generic status of autobiography itself” ([11], p. 7).

<sup>15</sup> These texts also respond and contribute to the post-Sternian tradition of imitators of *The Life and Adventures of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759–67). Due to the focus of this article, however, I will not elaborate on this or any other intertextual generic and aesthetic influence apart from that of factual autobiographies.

that authors intending to write biographies have a hard time finding any subject matter at all, I came up with the idea to foray into the wide, densely populated animal kingdom to search for new heroes of my biographical endeavors" ([52], pp. 3–4). With the choice of his "remarkable" subjects, among them the (literary) donkey Rothfuß [53], and the nameless sheep chosen to be one of the first travelers in the hot-air balloon of the brothers Montgolfier ([54], p. 461), Ebert mocks his contemporaries' craze for life narratives, but also takes a stance in the controversy between assimilationist and differentialist views ([55], pp. 1–11). While differentialists assume that mankind is different from (other) animals in all possible ways, assimilationists emphasize the (morphological, physiological, and, since the mid-nineteenth century, evolutionary) similarities observable in humans and animals. Ebert delineates his animal protagonists as emotional and rational beings and seeks to redefine knowledge of and human approaches to specific animals.<sup>16</sup> During the second half of the eighteenth century, German-speaking countries witnessed a "secularization and anthropologization" ([56], p. 55); see also [57–59]) of the autobiographical genre. Considered remarkable and instructive were spiritual and edifying confessions as well as instructive autobiographies written by (white, privileged, and influential) men. Hence, Johann Gottfried Herder could already differentiate between "devotional" and "human philosophical confessions" ([60], p. xxii) like Augustine's and Rousseau's *Confessions* respectively, and "biographies which remarkable persons [...] write about themselves for others" ([60], p. xxx). Yet autobiography did not only secularize and, at least partly, democratize its (writing) subjects, but like other popular, established factual genres, also brought forth fictional counterparts—literary autozoography, as I argue, being one of them.

Martin Löschnigg asserts that novels and fictional narratives left their mark on autobiographies and vice versa ([37], p. 317–18). The relation between factual and fictional autobiographies, Löschnigg argues, "is in fact one of mutual influence rather than of one-sided influence or mere co-existence" ([38], p. 403). Löschnigg demonstrates how texts like Daniel Defoe's *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (1722) and Charles Dickens' *The Personal History of David Copperfield* (1849/50) work "on the basis of the parameters of 'realistic' autodiegetic narratives" ([37], p. 315). To be able to make readers believe that they are confronted with an autobiographical account, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century pseudo-autobiographical poetics imitate factual, 'authentic' autobiographies.

Löschnigg extracts three parameters characteristic of these fictional autobiographies or quasi-autobiographical first-person novels. First, these texts stage "the specific experientiality of quasi-autobiographical narratives" ([37], p. 4). In her concept of a "natural narratology", Monika Fludernik defines experientiality as the key element constituting narrativity. As "the quasi-mimetic evocation of 'real-life experience'" ([61], p. 98), experientiality in fictional autobiographies is suggested by explicit descriptions of the feelings, thoughts and subjective states of the experiencing character rendered by the fictive autobiographer. As Löschnigg points out, Defoe, for example, delivers a high degree of quasi-autobiographical experientiality by "a continuity of individual experience and eventful narration as well as by underscoring the specificity of experience" ([37], p. 5).

Second, fictional autobiographies enforce the "illusion of autobiographical authenticity" ([37], p. 4) and use what Löschnigg calls "'formal mimesis'" ([37], p. 4) or "'autobiographical modelling'" ([37], p. 57). Imitating the linear narrative progression characteristic of conventional autobiographies, underscoring biographical cornerstones of the protagonist's life, and justifying the origin, composition, and function of the narrative in forewords or metatextual references, nineteenth-century fictional autobiographies seek to give the impression of an authentic autobiographical account. Furthermore, fictional autobiographies use "discursive elements" suggesting autobiographical authenticity by "anthropomorphizing, or rather, 'biographically modeling' the narrator, by foregrounding the experiential limitations of the narrator, and by emphasizing the medial situation of the act of narration" ([37], p. 91).

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<sup>16</sup> For Ebert's (and the Count du Buffon's) exemplary re-assessment of the donkey, see ([52], pp. 8–14).

Third, pseudo-autobiographical texts exhibit a “rhetoric of memory” ([37], p. 124). Through the interplay between narrating and experiencing self and “the emphasis on memory as the constitutive moment of the discourse”, fictional autobiographies “create an illusion of reference” ([37], p. 4). Fictional autobiographies mimic how factual autobiographies relate the first-person narrator to its former, narrated self by integrating the narrator’s perspective into the course of events and commenting on the process and the quality of remembering and reproducing the past.

In German-speaking equine autozoographies published in the early nineteenth century, the three parameters Löschnigg identifies for fictional autobiographies appear as constitutive elements of the narratives. Equine autozoographies published around 1800<sup>17</sup> imitate factual autobiographies by presenting in a chronological order the short but tragic lives of the horses as a retrospective first-person narrative. The chapters progress from the horses’ birth, their positive childhood memories, the start of their training and (mostly negative) experiences of being schooled and (ab)used by humans, to decisive learning stages, illnesses, changes of locations and owners. These changes follow a negative teleological pattern. With the progression of the narrative, the horses descend in social rank and lose their spirit as well as their economic value. The texts close with the merging of the narrator and the protagonist; the old, weary horses anticipate and welcome death, the alleged approach of which had instigated their narration in the first place.

To be sure, the defamiliarizing perspectives of the horses are imbued by satirical concerns. Digressions on human affairs, and episodes (re)producing human dialogues in the dramatic, showing mode [65] make evident what Herman calls a speaking-for act of “butting in” in which “a speaker voices an utterance of which he or she is not only author but also the principal” ([11], p. 2). “Butting in” often means “engaging in a violation of negative politeness requirements [...] whereby one fails to respect another’s desire not to be intruded upon, threatening solidarity” ([11], p. 5). In *Life of a Worn-Out Hack* (1819), for example, the (human) editor tries to invoke the character of “this horse the story of which you have in front of you” ([46], foreword), but also alludes to his concern for “really comical scenes” which the horse was able to witness and narrate, likening the story to a “*chronique scandaleuse*” ([46], foreword, emphasis in the original). As an omnipresent and ineluctable participant in everyday life around 1800, the equine point of view could be staged as a privileged perspective for varied, rare and, most importantly, secret information. This ‘omniscient’ point of view motivates the autobiographical fiction in *Life of a Worn-Out Hack* as it presents the equine narrator Abälard<sup>18</sup> able to overhear and oversee confidential, piquant conversations and scenes which he addresses as “rich anecdotes [...] which would make the psychologist envious in many respects as there was hardly an hour in which I lacked food for thought” ([46], p. 84). These renditions of conversations and confidentialities, however, have no impact on the life and experiences of Abälard but rather serve as a means to “amuse” ([46], foreword) the reader, as the editor announces.

Similarly, in *Life of the Mecklenburg Mare Amante*<sup>19</sup>, the author Christian Ehrenfried von Tennecker (1770–1839), senior horse veterinarian of the Kingdom of Saxony, already strains the metadiegetic frame

<sup>17</sup> It seems worth noting that equine autozoographies concerned with speaking for horses to ensure better treatment seem not to have been written in Germany between 1819 and 1919 even though Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty* (1877) was promoted by German animal welfare associations around 1900 [62]. It might be assumed that the plight of horses became less of an issue with the establishment of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals in mid-nineteenth century Germany. Laws against animal cruelty had been issued and discussed ever since, yet the situation for horses became increasingly troubling with the start of WWI which is when Gustav Rau published *Altgold* [63], the literary autozoography of a horse witnessing the battles of WWI, see also [64].

<sup>18</sup> It remains unclear whether Abälard’s name was given to him by the human character Héloïse (!) because he was made a gelding, or due to the fact that the texts want to playfully re-enact the historical narrative of the scholastic philosopher Peter Abelard (1079–1142), reconfigured in Rousseau’s *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761).

<sup>19</sup> Much could be said about the nationalist tendencies of German equine autozoographies, implicitly arguing for the maintenance of national breeds (such as “the real Mecklenburg race” ([44], p. 5) promoted by Amante) and against the crossbreeding with English thoroughbreds. Suffice it to say at this point that around 1800 the degeneration of German horses was linked to an “anglomania” producing “bad progeny” unfit for tasks “our German horses” had to fulfill ([66], pp. 20, 21). For a similar discussion on the Finnhorse and national identity, see [67].

by casting (dead) Valentin Trichter (1685–1750), stable foreman at the University of Göttingen and author of equine medical-anatomic treatises, as the editor of Amante’s story “narrated by herself” ([44], front page). Moreover, the horse’s discourse is riddled with lampooning digressions on inexperienced but theoretically overambitious veterinarians and horse trainers (e.g., ([44], pp. 123–26; [45], pp. 55–57)), passages discrediting the professors of the Berlin veterinary school ([44], pp. 110–15, 121–22), and forays into the proper medical treatment of and advice literature on horses ([45], pp. 123–25). In this respect, the author of the book clearly makes himself heard as the horse’s “butting-in” ventriloquist, not least when he is himself cited as an expert on horsemanship by the equine narrator ([44], p. 39; [45], p. 125), or when he makes an appearance in the story as the proprietor of an all but successful “humane horse trade” ([45], p. 83).

### 2.1. *Experientiality*

Despite these ‘all-too-human’ passages beckoning to the traditions of picaresque novels and it-narratives ([3], p. 739; [6]), experientiality, narrative strategies enforcing “autobiographical authenticity”, and a “rhetoric of memory” serve as guidelines for the autozoographical genre. Experientiality is a key narrative feature of the texts. They present animals as feeling, reasoning (and critical) subjects whose individual experiences hardly differ from those known to and intersubjectively shared by humans.<sup>20</sup> This is why literary autozoography “taps into readers’ familiarity with experience through [...] the embodiment of cognitive faculties, the understanding of intentional action, the perception of temporality, and the emotional evaluation of experience” [68]. It appears that reading literary autozoographies as ‘real’ renditions of an animal’s thoughts and feelings, or finding some accounts more ‘realistic’ than others, means finding oneself entrapped by a cognitive illusion ([13], p. 488).<sup>21</sup> There is no such thing as *knowing* animal (and, admittedly, also human) minds and feelings, nor is there any chance to evade anthropomorphizing animals, if they are made narrating (or even writing)<sup>22</sup> subjects of their lives, be it in German, English or, in fact, any other language. Rendering animal consciousness and feelings in linguistic terms is always subject to an *epistemological* anthropocentrism ([71]; see also ([72], p. 178)). Our grasp and perception of the world (and the world of others) will remain socio-culturally and, first and foremost, anthropologically determined. Yet, beyond an *ontological* anthropocentrism which privileges humans to animals for religious, moral, or biological reasons, a number of literary autozoographies attempt to provide a means for the reader to *imagine* (no matter how inadequately) what it might be like to observe and assess the world from a “more-than-human” [73] perspective. Besides, granting animals subjective states as well as cognitive and emotional lives akin to humans serves as a foundation to enable empathy in the first place.

Experientiality in fictional autobiographies suggests autobiographical truth supposedly able to account for more than just the bare facts of life—it thus points to an autobiographical narrator capable of relating specific events as experienced ‘first-hand’, i.e., in all their subjectively perceived facets. As we learn from the equine narrator in *Life of the Mecklenburg Mare Amante*: “I left my childhood home sadly and, despondently, I passed the boundary stone” ([44], p. 26). In an attempt to verify the narrative as an accurate, truthful portrayal, the text makes sure to highlight the subjective state of the character in relation to the events described. As a means to underscore the relation between animal narrator and animal protagonist as ‘autobiographical truth’, and in order to allow for the reader’s empathy with the horses, experientiality in equine autozoographies is visible especially in those

<sup>20</sup> See part four of this article for a discussion on the historical contexts in which these emotional and cognitive attributions became valid in the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

<sup>21</sup> Marco Caracciolo weighs Thomas Nagel’s dictum of animal minds as inconceivable against J.M. Coetzee’s Elisabeth Costello’s contention of imagination as a means to transgress species boundaries, and finds Costello lacking the means of verifying her claims ([13], p. 490). However, he considers animal first-person narratives as important ways to make readers aware of humans’ incapability “to grasp—to fully grasp, at least—nonhuman consciousness and its many instantiations across the animal world” ([13], pp. 500–1), resulting in a respect for animals as being different, not like us.

<sup>22</sup> Cp., for example E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *Life of the Tomcat Murr* (1819/21) [69] or Emmerich Ranzoni’s *Zoddell* (1879) [70].

passages describing negative formative experiences. As Suzanne Keen has pointed out “*empathetic responses to fictional characters and situations occur more readily for negative feeling states, whether or not a match in details of experience exists*” ([74], p. 71), emphasis in the original). Thus, Amante recounts the “heavy inflammation of her hooves” resulting in “an opening of the sole cutting off the entire horn capsule” ([44], p. 131). She adds that “it is indescribable to relate the pain I suffered” ([44], p. 136), referencing the ‘topos of the unspeakable’ while also negotiating the fact that horses indeed most often suffer in silence [75]. The text thus intertwines ‘subjective’ experiences with ‘objective’ presentations of attested equine behavior to both render the story as credible as possible and make it suitable for empathetic responses.

In a similar vein, chapter eighteen of *Life of a Worn-Out Hack*, entitled “Horrible Tortures Rejuvenate and Beautify Me” ([46], p. 154) combines the description of what is done to Abälard with an indication of how the gruesome procedures—Abälard calls them “tortures” ([46], p. 155)—affected the horse-protagonist at the time it happened: “First, [...] my tail [...] was cut off and notched most painfully[...].—O gracious Nature! I sighed more than once during the agonizing operation [...]; then my ears were mutilated, the dental crowns were filed sharp, some were even torn off, [...] and finally the cavities above my eyes indicating my advanced age were pierced with an awl and then blown up with a quill” ([46], pp. 154–55). The telling mode [62] delineating the surgical intervention is interrupted by an exclamatory interjection of the sighing equine protagonist. This exclamation serves to render the horse’s experiences as vividly as possible, while it also gives the impression of the narrator’s specific knowledge of the protagonist’s subjective experience represented here as ‘direct speech’, a beseeching sigh expressing anguish and despair. The narrator thus equates his identity with that of the protagonist and at the same time underscores ‘truth’ and ‘reliability’ of the pseudo-autobiographical discourse. A similar account of these ‘equine facelifts’ which were common practice throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth-century [76,77] can be found in *Life of the Mecklenburg Mare Amante* ([44], pp. 35–39).<sup>23</sup> Historically speaking, the representation of these practices and their impact on the horses serves both as a means to disparage these procedures and present them as an offense against Nature, as well as to distribute knowledge about the various ways in which horse dealers tried to deceive potential purchasers ([44], p. 37). Finally, it also enables readers to feel *for* (sympathy) and *with* (empathy) [79] the animals as victimized individuals sharing corporeality and the capacity to suffer with human beings.

## 2.2. Formal Mimesis and the Illusion of Autobiographical Authenticity

As an emulation of factual autobiographical discourse which encourages “the illusion of the referentiality of a narrator’s discourse to an extratextual person and his/her life” ([37], p. 89), ‘formal mimesis’, is a crucial characteristic of nineteenth-century literary autozoographies.<sup>24</sup> In fact, many of these texts not only mimic life (and traditional autobiographies) by adhering to a linear-chronological order of events, but even mirror the shortness of the narrated time, i.e., the animals’ life span, by compiling a rather brief text with a short narrating time.

Similar to fictional autobiographies, paratexts are decisive for the strategic illusion of an ‘autozoographical authenticity’. In this respect, front covers, forewords, dedications, and epilogues are key discursive elements. Early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies label themselves analogous to fictional and factual life narratives (cp., e.g., [80,81]) and also “suggest authenticity by means of a fictive editor” ([37], p. 58). As Philippe Lejeune has noted, the basis of an “autobiographical pact” between the autobiographer and the reader, giving credence to the narrative as a truthful account,

<sup>23</sup> Cp. also *Memoirs of Dick, the Little Poney* ([78], p. 31).

<sup>24</sup> As Löschnigg points out, the suggestion of autobiographical authenticity is prevalent in fictional autobiographies until the end of the nineteenth century ([37], p. 57). I have made similar observations with regard to German literary autozoographies. In twentieth and twenty-first century texts, for example, most authors no longer use paratexts in order to apostrophize the texts as factual narratives. Rather, they openly admit to the fictional status of the texts and comment on the function of the narratives as social critique, guidebook, or a means to commemorate a dead companion animal.



is the congruency between author, narrator, and protagonist often already indicated on the cover of the book ([16], p. 12). In order to present literary autozoographies as ‘real’ autobiographical narratives originally told by the horses, book covers of early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies try to suggest an ‘autozoographical pact’. Since “the onomastic difference between a fictive narrator and an empirical author signals fictionality” ([37], p. 90), *Life of a Job Horse*, for example, stages itself as the story of an equine life “Re-Narrated by Ambrosius Speckmann, Famous Horse Lender of Göttingen” ([43], front page, my emphasis). *Life of a Job Horse* and *Life of the Mecklenburg Mare Amante* even try to re-enforce an “autozoographical pact” by providing etchings of the animals’ full-body portraits (cp., [43–45], front page).

In the foreword, the fictive editors of nineteenth-century literary autozoographies address at least two questions: (1) How did the editor meet the animal in question or how did he or she obtain or record the narrative? (2) Why should readers take an interest in the story of an animal’s life? Thus, these forewords, dedications and introductions comment on the origin, the form and the intended function(s) of the texts. In *Life of a Job Horse*, the editor and horse lender Ambrosius Speckmann uses the peritextual dedication to “my former very much appreciated patrons and clients” ([43], dedication) to conjure up the “golden times when the dear gentlemen still came running to me, asking whether the English horse was still available” ([43], dedication). It is only later in the narrative that the reader finds out that this “English horse” is identical with the eponymous (chestnut) horse.<sup>25</sup> Speckmann also makes sure to comment on the function of the text and to allude to the circumstances of how he got the story ‘straight from the horse’s mouth’. He bemoans that his clients have abandoned the English horse who used to be everybody’s favorite but now “had to pay tribute to Nature”; today, Speckmann complains, “no one asks for him anymore, no one thinks of him” ([43], dedication). Speckmann thus takes the (fictive) clients of the story as warrantors for the existence of the horse whose character he finds legendary: “Since, as you know, you cannot easily find as good a horse as this” ([43], dedication).

Addressing the patrons and clients as acquaintances of the horse,<sup>26</sup> Speckmann tries to give the text an air of authenticity and hold other (fictive) people accountable for the veracity of the horse’s life. According to the editor, the “complete and true biography of the beloved horse” ([43], dedication) has two trajectories. First, the text is meant to “make up the injustice he [the horse, F.M.] had to endure, and which was afflicted on him—alas! by me as well” ([43], dedication). Speckmann claims to have realized that he might have treated the horse not “as befitted his merits” ([43], dedication). Hence, he considers his book a compensation for his misdeeds, stylizing the text as “a memorial” ([32], dedication) meant to keep the virtues of the horse alive. Second, Speckmann claims that the text represents the horse’s “wishes which he had expressed in the last days” ([43], dedication). It remains unclear whether, in the logic of the story, the horse was given human language just before his death,<sup>27</sup> or whether the horse is still alive and has (in some way or other) expressed the wish to be commemorated in a first-person biography. The latter seems more likely since in the last chapter of the text, the horse declares himself to

<sup>25</sup> The English chestnut horse does not get an individual name throughout the entire story—in fact, it remains unclear whether the horse is male or female; the terms “the chestnut (horse)” (German: *der Fuchs*), “English (horse)” (German: *der Engländer*) as well as Speckmann’s use of the personal pronoun “he”, however, suggest the horse is male. Anonymity is rather unusual for autozoographical animals, yet here it highlights the fact that the text presents this horse, first and foremost, as a representative of its species, referring the reader to all the other horses observing similar events and experiencing similar exploitation. This tension between animal individuality and its portrayal as a representative can be considered an inherent characteristic of literary autozoographies (see also ([9], pp. 39, 87)) but also indicates the dilemma experienced by many a human autobiographer trying to excel his or her contemporaries but ultimately unable to venture beyond anthropological premises.

<sup>26</sup> The address to the reader is a common feature of German literary autozoographies, suggesting ‘autozoographical authenticity’ on the one hand, and a species-specific reading audience on the other. In contrast to *Life of a Job Horse*, most autozoographical animals address a young readership belonging to the animals’ own species.

<sup>27</sup> In the introduction to *Life of a Worn-Out Hack*, the editor explains that he could write down the horse’s story because the dying animal became endowed with human speech, asking him “to become my biographer” ([46], p. 6). Within the diegesis, however, the horse protagonist remains mute.

be “sick”, “old and stiff” ([43], p. 143) but still alive, looking forward to death as a welcoming prospect “after all those hardships” ([43], p. 143).

Moreover, the text presses for authenticity of the horse’s story by separating the original narrative from the written work the author-editor Speckmann now presents to the public: The text “might be written in a bad style—because this is my fault”, Speckmann explains, finding himself “an old chatty philistine who might have said more than is appropriate in printed books” ([43], dedication). Speckmann denounces his writing as amateurish and excessive and thereby differentiates between what has been reported to him by the horse and what he has actually delivered in the written account of this report. Yet Speckmann’s presence is not limited to the peritext. As a character of the story, he reappears at the end of the text verifying his connection to the horse and accounting for his personal integrity. Therefore, the equine narrator affirms Speckmann’s editorial statements: “Mr. Speckmann—he should not blush when he re-narrates what I am compelled to tell as a matter of truth—was a clever man who knew how to obtain an advantage” ([43], p. 107). The narrative discursively recalls the ‘conversation’ between Speckmann and the horse to give narrative credence to the editorial assertions in the foreword. The text does not present itself as Sewellian “Translation from the Original Equine” ([82], front page) but as a transcript literally ‘straight from the horse’s mouth’.

### 2.3. Rhetoric of Memory

The third parameter Löschnigg identifies as characteristic of (fictional) autodiegetic discourse is the thematization and/or problematization of the process of remembering. Furthermore, these accounts typically endeavor to provide a balanced alteration between the extradiegetic narrator and the focalizer, i.e., the (internal) perspective of the experiencing character (cp., [37], pp. 128–32). In the course of the narrative, both perspectives gradually converge but the process of mediating between the two remains a structural feature of fictional autobiographies trying to suggest autobiographical authenticity. Early nineteenth-century German-speaking equine autozoographies simulate this (quasi-)autobiographical emphasis not only by making memory and remembering the subject of discussion, but also by foreshadowing future events (*prolepsis*) and foregrounding the act of narration.

The equine narrator Abälard, for example, remembers the carefree days of his childhood, explicates the act of remembering and simultaneously links the memory to a yet untold future: “[T]he years of my youth passed innocently [...]. O, ye golden days of youth! the memory of you exacerbated all the agonies which fate would be imposing on me by degrading conditions” ([46], p. 7). The text makes sure to present the chestnut as a remembering, narrating self, distinct from the youthful character of the story. As it correlates the narrating and the experiencing character, the text emulates traditional autobiographical discourse. Similarly, in *Life of a Job Horse*, the equine narrator begins his story by remarking “how pleasurable and at the same time bitter the memory of happy times [is]” ([43], p. 2). After a life of hardships, the equine narrator both relates himself to his young counterpart living a joyous and yet unburdened life and also comments on the ambivalent effects of memory in general.

*Life of a Worn-Out Hack* also anticipates potential reservations of its readers and tries to contextualize and explain what might otherwise appear as an unrealistic ‘omniscient’ account. Before the equine narrator relates a story which, in the logic of the narrated events, he could not have witnessed, Abälard remarks: “I had no idea about that which would happen now, didn’t know anything about it at that time. What I have told my readers in the last two chapters, I have only learned a couple of months later in Vienna, as I will be mentioning in due time. I just didn’t want to cut off the continuous thread of the story” ([46], p. 30). As Löschnigg notes, this “rhetoric of memory” has to be regarded as an “essential feature of (quasi-)autobiographical first-person narrations *per se*” ([37], p. 320). Literary autozoographies mimic the autobiographical alternation between narrating and experiencing self by foregrounding the process of remembering and narrating.

In terms of this rhetoric of memory as well as in matters of experientiality, formal mimesis and the illusion of autobiographical authenticity, literary autozoographies rely on structures and tropes of conventional autobiographical discourse. As a means to authenticate the narration, however, this

mimetic copying of forms and contents cannot help but challenge autobiography and the pitfalls of its generic conventions.

### 3. Literary Autozoographies and/as Meta-Autobiographical Discourse

As the discussion above has shown, literary autozoographies can be read as and along the lines of fictional autobiographies. Insofar as it assimilates and imitates autobiographical conventions, the autozoographical genre reflects but also contests the poetics of autobiography. In this respect, literary autozoographies can be regarded as meta-auto/biographical discourse. According to Ansgar Nünning, meta-autobiographies “not only picture the problems of autobiographical form but also critically reflect its epistemological premises” ([41], p. 29), see also [83]. Reflecting and foregrounding ‘autos’, ‘bios’ and ‘graphein’ alike, “the literary knowledge of meta-autobiographies can be found in that they expose the conventions of traditional autobiographies, uncover their aporias, and question the referentiality-based knowledge of this allegedly non-fictional genre” ([41], p. 29). While Nünning regards the genre as a contemporary phenomenon,<sup>28</sup> I would suggest that autozoographical discourse in its reliance on and reference to factual autobiographies can be seen as meta-auto/biographical discourse *per se*. These texts do not only replicate common (and, with regard to the nineteenth century, rarely publicly discussed and questioned) means of invoking autobiographical authenticity but, in doing so, simultaneously belittle those attempts. Insisting on the authenticity of an obviously fictive autozoographical discourse, the texts expose and dismiss conventional demands of factual auto/biographies as possible frauds and self-deceptions. When *Life of a Job Horse*, for example, promises to deliver “the complete and true biography” ([43], dedication) of the chestnut horse, it invokes conventional demands of factual auto/biographies for an objective and truthful account of a life—a demand which can hardly be fulfilled in the autobiographical account of a horse.<sup>29</sup> Hence, by implication, literary autozoographies underscore that auto/biographies can never live up to their own (and their readers’) idealistic expectations: the totality of autobiography is impeded by the limitations set by memory; the authenticity of the texts can be distorted by subjective, obscure self-perceptions and is also impossible to be gauged and verified by the reader. Likewise, total extensiveness of a life in biographies is unattainable due to the biographer’s incomplete access to the protagonist’s every moment and experience. Moreover, biographies can hardly be impartial and objective; biographers inscribe themselves aesthetically and (un)intentionally into the narrative, depending on their stance towards the protagonist and his or her accomplishments: “There is no such thing as biographical objectivity” ([84], p. 290), as Wolfgang Hildesheimer, author of the biography *Mozart* (1977), put it. Biographers, Hildesheimer acknowledges, invest themselves in the lives and the stories they tell—even if they pledge not to do so.

In their blatant fictionality and simultaneous insistence on truth and reliability, literary autozoographies question and deride claims of referentiality, factuality and authenticity in conventional auto/biographies. Even though literary autozoographies can be conceived as “unnatural narratives” [25], insofar as they give narrative voice to animals, they mimic traditional autobiographical forms and themes, and, consequently, remind us of the absurdity and unattainability of a ‘truthful’, un-fictional, un-inventive account of life narratives. Autobiographies and autobiographical selves are constructed, discursively conceived—sometimes in even euphemizing or contorted ways. Despite the fact that autobiographies can be classified as factual narratives [15], they can dispense neither with their debts to and the influence of fiction nor with the literary, ‘world-making’ elements they share with fictional

<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, Nünning acknowledges, for example, Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* as a “pioneer of self-reflexive, metafictional and meta-autobiographical writing” ([41], p. 33).

<sup>29</sup> Even granted that the horse, in the logic of the text, is able to relate his life to editor-protagonist Speckmann, it becomes apparent that Speckmann cannot give ‘first-hand’ evidence concerning the horse’s life before the chestnut comes into his possession. Thus, he has to rely on what he is related to him about that time by the horse. Whether this subjective account is ‘true’ is impossible to judge for both Speckmann and the readers.

narratives ([37], p. 317–18; [38], p. 403)—just as the autobiographical discourse of a horse, a dog, or a cat—albeit the fact that some of these animals have actually lived—remains, as a “possible world” [85], in the realm of fiction, i.e., a world which is formed and contrived (Latin:  *fingere* ) by language.

Furthermore, the discourse of literary autozoographies illuminates that factual can hardly be separated from fictional autobiographies or first-person novels in semantic, syntactical or pragmatic terms ([11], pp. 3–4; [37], p. 13). The same tropes and rhetorics are constitutive for both genres, yet only come to light in noticeably fictional discourses like literary autozoographies. Literary autozoography thus foregrounds the mechanics and artifice of life narratives at work when recreating and verifying a ‘real’ life. From a historical perspective then, nineteenth-century literary autozoographies appropriate and reflect conventional autobiographical forms and rhetorics but also expose its factual counterpart’s confidence in and reliance on ‘autobiographical truth’ as rather presumptuous and naïve. In this respect, they may be seen as “memory and critique of the autobiographical genre” ([41], p. 32).

#### 4. Literary Autozoographies and/as Zoology

As a response to the “cultural turn” in literary studies, scholars have come to examine the discursive and epistemological role of literature in socio-cultural systems, sharing the assumption that “literary texts can articulate a collectively experienced reality, restructure this reality paradigmatically and exert a significant influence on a culture’s symbolic meanings” ([86], p. 80). Interested in the cultural and epistemological dimensions of literary poetics, and literature more generally, some of these approaches explore not only “in what ways literary texts pick up, reflect, modify and re-conceptualize scientific and cultural knowledge” ([87], p. 2), but also how literature and science regulate, produce, and poeticize systems of knowledge [17,88,89]. Drawing on a broad set of theoretical–methodical tools ranging from discourse analysis and ‘the history of epistemology’ to deconstruction, and actor-network-theory, cultural and literary animal studies investigate ‘what animals mean’ in literature by historically contextualizing animal representations with the *episteme* and the (species-specific) discourse at the time of their textual emergence [27,50,90,91]. Literature can represent, negotiate, and (re)define knowledge on animals. An analysis of the epistemological, discursive co(n)texts of literary animals thus means consulting writings ranging from philosophy and zoology to popular science, encyclopedias and weeklies ([27], p. 229; [92], p. 94; [93], p. 41).

In the following, I link the aforementioned equine autozoographies, *Life of a Job Horse* (1807) in particular, to the epistemological discourse on horses in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Germany. It will become apparent that the literary representation of the horse as both a narrating as well as an experiencing agent can only be grasped in its entire historical complexity when considering how natural history and the emergent ‘horse-science’ spoke about and imagined horses. In this respect, *Life of a Job Horse* becomes palpable as an endorsement and extension of zoology’s discursive framing and construction of horses as feeling, reasoning, articulate subjects, who therefore require human compassion and empathy. At the same time, the text presents itself as a medium not only unsettling anthropological difference, but also foregrounding the limits of human knowledge.

##### 4.1. A Kingdom for a Horse. Representing Horses in Zoology and Equine Autozoographies

As Lubomír Doležel notes “fiction has been extremely liberal in the way it has constructed animals” with the result that “in the worlds of animal stories, fairytales, fables, and so on, they become full-fledged agents, on their own or alongside persons” ([94], pp. 58–59). Did the emergence of equine autozoographies at the beginning of the nineteenth century then only boil down to a new fictional genre simply more liberal than others insofar as it granted voice, identity and (e)quality of life to animals?

Pascal Eitler maintains that life-narrating animal stories which present “animals as persons” ([36], p. 107) were part of a “physiologization and psychologization” ([92], p. 113) of animals, resulting in an “emotionalization and moralization of human-animal relationships” ([36], p. 103), a process which began at the end of the eighteenth and gained momentum in the course of the nineteenth century. Amidst growing suspicion towards Cartesian dogmas of animals as automatons, not at least in

the light of findings in physiological research and comparative anatomy, it became increasingly difficult, at times impossible to differentiate between human *feelings* on the one hand, and animal *sentiments* on the other. While reason was still considered humankind's ultimate dominion, feelings seemed to be prevalent and observable in both humans and animals. Supported by animal protection movements,<sup>30</sup> (literary) animals were propagated not only as narrators and defenders of their lives but also as feeling, suffering, and willful subjects. As such, literary autozoographies were part of what Eitler describes as a "regime of feelings" ([96], p. 212) enforced during the second half of the nineteenth century; a regime attributing not merely sentiments but distinct emotional lives to animals, while, in turn, demanding humans to treat animals in acknowledgment of and with respect toward these feelings. With their realistic accounts of cruelty towards animals, these narratives could "develop and deepen empathy and compassion for an animal as a person and the feelings it was supposed to have" ([36], p. 109). In early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies, however, the animals do not only possess a broad scope of emotional capacities, but also exhibit different sorts of cognitive capabilities. They remember their lives dating back to their births; they are astonished ([44], p. 44), they believe ([44], p. 47), think ([45], p. 53), extrapolate ([44], p. 20), learn ([43], p. 110), are convinced ([43], p. 4) demonstrate insight ([46], p. 75), make a point ([46], p. 85) etc.

In her article on animal autobiography in general, and on Charlotte Tucker's *Rambles of a Rat* (1857) in particular, Julie A. Smith argues that "[a]nimal autobiography sought to represent animal minds as established at least in part by scientific fact" ([3], p. 729) in order to demand humane treatment. Looking at how nineteenth-century natural history constructed animal minds, Smith discovers that "literary authors transformed the animals of natural history into fictional characters, adopt[ing] its foundational assumption that animals had cognitive capacities as well as lives, that is, coherent existence through time" ([3], p. 740). Popularization of natural history, Smith claims, enabled authors to find out about and be influenced by 'scientific' representations of animal consciousness ([3], p. 725–7). Nonetheless, it has to be kept in mind, as Simon Flynn rightfully concedes, "that natural history itself does not present the 'truth' of a particular animal, but is merely another discursive framework with its own force, history and regulations" ([97], p. 430). In fact, I would argue that the discursive parallels in literary autozoographies and natural history are indeed so striking *because* they have emanated from and simultaneously catered to a commonly shared epistemological field which made possible and regulated the unfolding of a web of interdependencies and dialogues between what was being promoted as 'fact' (historical writing and 'science') and what was considered as 'fiction' (literature). Smith focuses on general discourses on animal minds in natural history and animal autobiography respectively, and regards the anecdote (e.g., of animal 'sagacity') as most pertinent to animal representation in and the aesthetics of animal autobiographies ([3], pp. 738–41). While it is true that anecdotal form and knowledge is not uncommon in German nineteenth-century literary autozoographies (compare, e.g., ([43], pp. 63–64) to ([98], pp. 278–79, 281)), I would argue that these texts predominantly rely on and share natural history's mode of description and characterization with regard to a particular species (not of animals or rather "the animal", as Derrida reminds us ([99], pp. 415–16), in general).

If one considers the emotional and cognitive attributes of horses in equine autozoographies around 1800, it might be tempting to dismiss these representations as mere anthropomorphism for satirical ends. When compared to historical zoological discourses, however, equine representations in literary autozoographies become tangible as figurations conceived analogous to zoological theses about the capabilities of horses. In natural history and so called 'horse-science' around 1800, horses are presented as special in various sorts of ways. They feel, think, remember, 'speak', and thus deserve proper treatment and respect (see also [100]). By creating possible worlds of equine perceptions,

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<sup>30</sup> The first German society for the prevention of cruelty to animals was founded in Stuttgart in 1837. Dresden followed suit in 1839, Hamburg in 1841, Berlin in 1841, Munich in 1842, Vienna in 1846 [95].

emotions and minds, equine autozoographies thus contributed to discourses on horses as discussed in natural history and horse-science and therefore partook in the construction of an ‘equine epistemology’.

#### 4.1.1. Feeling Like a Horse. De-/Ascribing Equine Emotions in Zoology and Literary Autozoographies

In late eighteenth-century Germany, the horse had become essential to and omnipresent in everyday (working) life [101,102]. As the anonymous author of the book *Horse Pleasure (Die Pferdelust)* wrote in 1792: “How suitable, useful and necessary is this wonderful animal for all classes and estates of mankind” ([103], p. 13). Realizing the need for well-behaved, efficient ‘horse power’, writers flooded the German book-market with guidelines and manuals on how to best deal with and train horses, giving shape to what they called “horse-science” (*Pferdewissenschaft*) (cp., [104–108]). This so-called ‘science’ comprised “a bundle of literary and practical knowledge” ([102], p. 210) which catered to and was also popularized by vets, stud managers, riding instructors and self-declared horse-lovers (cp., [109–111]). In his *Handbook of Horse-Science (Handbuch der Pferdewissenschaft)* (1775), stable and stud farm master Johann Gottfried Prizelius proclaimed that horse-science consists of “an exact knowledge of horses, the necessary information on breeding as well as the acquaintance with the means of determining and training the aged foals for work befitting their proportions and strength” ([104], p. 13). To sum up, Prizelius writes, a good horse scientist knows “how to do everything that is necessary to sustain and accommodate a horse up until its death” ([104], p. 13). Similar to equine autozoographies around 1800 then, a number of writings in horse-science followed the life of a (representative, fictive) horse from birth to death, commenting on how to provide the best care and training according to the horse’s specific use in human societies. Yet while equine autozoographies exemplified how mistreatment, inexperience and abuse of the horse result in the untimely demise of the animals, writers of horse-science gave advice on ideal treatment horses in order to gain most profit from them. Therefore, literary autozoographies, I suggest, can themselves be regarded as guidebooks *ex negativo*, describing how *not* to treat and work with horses in order to sustain them. In this regard, the texts complement the overall ideological agenda of horse-science.

Yet it was not only the economic value of the horse which led the influential *Krünitz Encyclopedia* to publish an 800-page volume on the horse, but also its superlative status as “one of the most distinguished domestic animals” ([112], p. 1). The superior rank of the horse was an undisputed fact in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century natural history, horse-science and encyclopedic literature. Hence, in the chronology of natural history accounts delivered by the anti-classifying “describers” ([3], p. 234; [113]), the report on ‘the horse’ usually came first in the order of domestic animals to be portrayed. The horse, George-Louis Leclerc de Buffon says in the translation of his widely read *Histoire naturelle*, is “[t]he noblest conquest ever made by man over the brute creation” ([114], p. 93)<sup>31</sup>. According to Buffon, the horse distinguishes itself, first and foremost, by its courage and spiritedness which he considered not inferior, but similar to that of the human warrior: “Equally intrepid as his master, the horse sees danger, and encounters death with bravery; inspired at the clash of arms, he loves it, and pursues the enemy with the same ardour and resolution” ([114], pp. 93–94). Apart from the fact that Buffon naturalizes the use of the horse in warfare as the horse’s ‘inherent’ proclivity to combat, he is far from hesitant to describe horses as having and exhibiting positive emotions: The horse *loves* the sounds of warfare, and it “feels pleasure also in the chace [*sic*], and in tournaments” ([114], p. 94).

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s naturalist friend, the philosopher Eduard d’Alton, was convinced that horses can feel both love and hatred. In his *Natural History of the Horse (Naturgeschichte des Pferdes)* (1810), he remarks: “Horses remain true to themselves in their love and in their hatred” ([117], p. 28). This is why, according to d’Alton, humans should take care not to offend a horse. To those who treat

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<sup>31</sup> The German translation of the first volume was published in 1750 by Albrecht von Haller. A second (critical) translation was issued in 1785. For Buffon’s influence and popularization see ([115], pp. 139–41; [116], pp. 63–65).

them well—be it humans or conspecifics—horses are “gentle and compliant” ([117], p. 29), yet they “are capable of bloody vengeance” ([117], p. 28) directed towards those who mistreat them. In a similar vein, the *Dictionary for Horse-Lovers, Horse Dealers, Horse Trainers and Farriers (Dikzionnär für Pferdeliebhaber, Pferdehändler, Bereiter, Kur- und Hufschmiede)* (1806) argues that “there are various characters among these animals with some of them prone to virtues and some to vices, just like humans” ([118], p. 114)<sup>32</sup>. The observation of horses and their interactions with humans and conspecifics led natural historians to grasp ‘equine semiotics’ analogous to human conduct and emotionality. The behavior of horses could be construed and interpreted along the lines of what was observable in humans and human societies, calling for a comparative vocabulary. Friedrich Georg Sebald, senior horse veterinarian of the Bavarian army, thus considered the horse as individual as any human being. Every horse, Sebald maintains in his *Complete Natural History of the Horse (Vollständige Naturgeschichte des Pferdes)* (1815), has “something idiosyncratic about it and distinguishes itself from other horses; this is a horse’s individual character” ([98], p. 272). Those willing to pay attention to these characters, Sebald suggests, can find out that horses feel as diverse and subjectively as humans. He writes: “Observing horses, one finds they have joy, sadness, fear, happiness, glumness, wrath, love and so on and so forth” ([98], 254).

As should have become apparent, natural historians around 1800 were convinced that horses possessed a complex emotional life which was similar to, rather than different from human experiences. Knowing about the emotional states, the vices and the virtues of horses, how to be able to discern them, and how to deal with them in accordance with their individual character, was considered key to an efficient upbringing and training. As Sebald proclaims: “It is certain that upbringing exerts a great influence on the characters of horses. A loving education, kindness, leniency and patience will make them affectionate, gentle, docile and obedient. Rigor, violence and maltreatment will make them stubborn, insidious, wicked” ([98], p. 294). Thus, ascribing (human) emotions to horses went hand in hand with the production of (readers’) feelings of sympathy and compassion as well as the request for a considerate, caring upbringing and training of horses.

Comparing these findings in zoology to *Life of a Job Horse*, exemplary of emotionality in equine autozoographies around 1800, the text presents itself as an epistemological echo of zoological assumptions. The equine protagonist feels “love for” but also “fear of” ([43], p. 13) his second master, Lord Tormington, and as a result intervenes as soon as he finds Tormington in danger. When Tormington, a little later in the narrative, forces the horse to gallop so hard that he stumbles and crashes into a ditch, it is again “fear for” his master but also “fear of punishment” ([43], p. 24) which guides his experiences. Yet instead of taking revenge for the thrashing he receives after the fall, as might be presumed with regard to d’Alton’s conviction quoted above, the chestnut horse “counters the rage [...] and the relentless beatings” of his master “with patience” ([43], p. 24). The submission and selfless obedience of the horse to human demands was common sense in natural history. Buffon considered the horse “a creature which renounces his very being for the service of man [...]: he [the horse, F.M.] gives himself up without reserve, refuses nothing, exerts himself beyond his strength, and often dies sooner than disobey” ([114], p. 94). Since he conceives horses as a self-less species, able to relinquish themselves to a (non)human other, Buffon implicitly admits to the self-awareness of horses. Active self-renunciation is only feasible if an individual can be considered conscious and aware of his or her self to start with. Simultaneously, according to natural history, horses cannot help but obey; they are forced to do as told no matter what the task. That this is nothing but a form of slavery is commonly acknowledged: “The slavery of the horse”, Buffon writes, “is [...] universal” ([114], p. 94).

In sum, natural history and equine autozoographies delineated horses as feeling, self-aware agents of a life and simultaneously tried to evoke empathy with and better treatment of horses. As the animals never seriously oppose human force, it is up to human consideration (and reason) to take

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<sup>32</sup> The four volumes of the book were translated into German between 1797 and 1806. They had originally been published in French as *Dictionnaire raisonné d’hippiatrique, cavalerie, manège, et maréchallerie* (1775) by the veterinarian and anatomist Philippe-Etienne Lafosse.

responsibility for a horse and its well-being. To take good care of and not overwork horses was seen as crucial to this responsibility. Equine autozoographies presented the animal protagonists as suffering characters, but also articulated these sufferings as experiences very much alike those of humans. In this respect, the texts tried to make readers aware of the implications of handling horses incorrectly and inflicting violence on them. Commenting on the crash due to Tormington's relentless gallop, the English chestnut declares: "I suffered badly from the crash—since a horse, dear reading gentlemen, has feelings, too" ([43], pp. 23–34). The chestnut addresses readers (and riders) as potential (ab)users of horses, and thus affirms his sensibility but also implicitly asks for a consideration of these equine experiences more generally.<sup>33</sup> Equine autozoographies thus participated in the epistemological construction of horses by fictionalizing and promoting supposed equine feelings and demands in analogy to the characterization of horses in zoological discourses. Apparently, the classical episteme in early nineteenth-century German-speaking countries allowed for horses, as a considerably sensible species, to emerge as feeling individuals with dynamic emotional lives. Compared to the accounts of natural history, however, equine autozoographies used their 'licence' to fictionalize as a means to expand and enrich zoological discourses on horses, transforming equine objects of knowledge into subjective protagonists, plots and life narratives (cp., [3], pp. 739–41). *Life of a Job Horse*, for example, reflects and rephrases the notion of horses as patient, obedient servants by representing a horse which is subservient (and thus exploited) but also more compassionate, indeed, more *humane* than his owners and (ab)users. When the English chestnut is lent to a drunken student trying to make his way home, the horse presents itself as naturally endowed with a compassionate character "feeling pity for the poor person" ([43], p. 116) swaying on his back. Therefore, the horse "proceeded as carefully and cautiously as possible so that he [the student, F.M.] would not fall down" (ibid.). The horse's feeling even goes beyond mere pity for his intoxicated rider. When the young man eventually falls down despite the horse's efforts and remains stuck in the stirrup, the horse reconfirms his loyalty and sympathy: "If I had been insidious or only less compassionate, I could have walked away, dragging him behind me. Yet I was too considerate for that. I stayed put and waited for someone to come by to help us out even though it was very late. My drunken rider fell asleep and I, out of pure boredom, chewed on some grass which I could reach from where I was standing. We remained in this position until the break of dawn" ([43], pp. 116–17).<sup>34</sup> Despite the ill-treatment he already had to endure from humans, the horse does not abandon its benign, patient disposition but rather lavishes its kindness even on those who are strangers to him or treat him as a mere means of transport. *Life of a Job Horse* thus potentiates the analogy between human and equine feelings discussed in natural history by representing the horse as an exemplary feeling and sympathetic character and thus invites human sympathy with the equine protagonist. Furthermore, the unrebelling and indulgent composure of the horse is also contextualized with his benign upbringing and training. Referring to his youth and education, the chestnut portrays his keeper Wilson "under whose care I grew up and welcomed the saddle" ([43], p. 2) as an exemplary horse- and stableman. Wilson provided "the best food", "cleaned and adorned" (ibid.) the horse, and, according to the equine narrator, can also be considered a role model for a humane' training of horses: "To let powers and abilities develop themselves on their own terms; to only give

<sup>33</sup> The high degree of sensibility in horses was acknowledged in both natural history and horse-science, demanding, for example, the rider to handle the bridle and the spurs accordingly (cp., e.g., ([114], p. 105; [119], p. 151)).

<sup>34</sup> A similar anecdote referenced as "The Horse Which Took Care of His Drunken Master" (*Das für seinen betrunkenen Herrn besorgte Pferd*) was published in *Touching Stories from the Animal Kingdom (Rührende Erzählungen aus der Thierwelt)* in 1796 ([120], pp. 103–4). The heterodiegetically narrated anecdote, however, features a drunken farmer who—stuck in the stirrup—is rescued by his horse grabbing, after several unsuccessful trials, the farmer's coat and pulling him up so high that he can free himself. The farmer then cherishes and keeps the horse up until his/her death. Hence, not only the rescue operation but also the end of the story differs when compared to the chestnut's life narrative (not to speak of the narrative point of view). *Life of a Job Horse* seems to be interested in rendering the story more plausible with the horse waiting for help to arrive instead of helping out himself. Moreover, it demonstrates what happens to a horse whose service is not appreciated by the lessees feeling irresponsible for the well-being and fate of the animal. While the anecdote, similar to horse-science and "animal psychology" (*Thierseelenkunde*), spells out how horses should be treated in acknowledgement of their deeds and feats, *Life of a Job Horse* gives advice *ex negativo*, foregrounding the unjustified suffering the horse has to endure.



a little help if needed, to encourage here, tame the wild fire there—that was his art which he applied and the principle he followed and which I recommend to any educator as good and useful” ([43], p. 7). The horse’s advice here mirrors Sebald’s statement concerning the implications of a benign upbringing assuring that the horse turns out “affectionate, gentle, docile and obedient” ([98], p. 294). The fact that the chestnut, even in his late years and after all his bad experiences is not “insidious” but truly “compassionate” ([43], pp. 116) is thus rendered plausible by his beneficent upbringing. Analogous to the instructions in horse-science, the text thus argues for a reasonable, benevolent nurturing and training of horses, and, again, exhibits its shared epistemological base with zoological discourses.

That the representation of equine feelings in *Life of a Job Horse* is part of a “regime of feelings” also becomes evident at the end of the narrative. Looking ahead to its death “calmly and with serenity”, ([43], p. 143), the equine narrator turns to the reader one last time: “Farewell, dear reader! Extend your compassion to me at least when leafing through this story” ([43], p. 143). The exit of the narrator is combined with a specific appeal for the readers’ emotional investment. As both a subservient and useful, a feeling and compassionate being, the horse in turn asks for an empathetic reading of, or rather post-reading reflection on, his life narrative and the sufferings he had to endure. By implication, the story thus makes a case for a kinder and more benevolent treatment. As is well known, Kant had warned of a form of human brutalization (*Verrohung*) in the process of inflicting violence on animals. Harming animals would thus “weaken a natural endowment which is very useful for the morality in relation to other human beings” ([121], p. 443). *Life of a Job Horse* rather seems to argue for a reasonable treatment of horses not least for the sake of the horses themselves. It represents the horse as an exemplary servant and emotional being feeling and, first and foremost, working even better, if treated with consideration and compassion. Ultimately, and historically speaking, the representation of equine emotions in natural history and equine autozoographies thus sought to revise and ameliorate but also to substantiate and optimize human access to and use of horses. In early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies and natural history then, feelings allegedly located in horses and those to be evoked in humans were firmly intertwined. By means of observation and analogy, natural history was certain that horses and humans feel in similar ways and therefore deserve similar treatment. Equine autozoographies popularized and enforced this paradigm by developing emboldened forms of equine emotionality. In addition, as will be shown in the following, the texts also catered to natural history’s stance on the cognitive capacities of the species.

#### 4.1.2. Thinking Like a Horse. De-/Ascribing Equine Minds in Zoology and Literary Autozoographies

How come horses always find their way back home? Why do they seem to ‘know’ when something bad is about to happen? Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century natural history usually had two answers for these questions. While a number of authors believed that God had endowed animals with mental hindsight, others, as Julie A. Smith writes, argued “that mental states apparently identical in animals and humans were really very different. One was the operation of instinct, the other of reason” ([3], p. 735). The horse, however, posed problems to these simple distinctions and matter-of-fact explanations. Given its behavior and impressive capabilities, some of its conduct appeared too clever to be merely instinct-driven—it seemed intelligent. In his *Dictionnaire raisonné d’équitation* (1833) the influential stable master François Baucher declared: “The horse has perceptions as well as sensations; it can compare and remember—it, therefore, has *intelligence*” ([122], p. 178), emphasis in the original, emphasis in the original).<sup>35</sup> Based on this assessment, Baucher developed a training method seeking to avoid aversive stimuli obstructing the learning process of the horse, while endorsing positive experiences in training ([124], pp. x–xi).

Georg Friedrich Sebald, aforementioned horse veterinarian, prefigured Baucher’s views. In his *Complete Natural History of the Horse*, he praises the species as evincing “imagination, attention, memory,

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<sup>35</sup> For Baucher’s influence on contemporary horsemanship, see [123].

willpower and judgement" ([98], p. 241). Giving a number of anecdotal proofs for his hypotheses, Sebald concludes that "horses, and animals in general, cannot be mere machines, as Descartes would have it"; rather, "one can often find equine behavior that is very much like the conduct of clever human beings" ([98], p. 268). Buffon considered the horse a conscious being insofar as it "knows how to check his natural fiery temper" ([114], p. 94, my emphasis). He also regarded the neighing of horses as a communicative act, since he could differentiate "five kinds of neighing relative to different passions" ([114], p. 164) in horses. Christian Ehrenfried von Tennecker agreed since he believed the facial expressions, body posture, and conduct of horses to be "a language which is very well comprehensible for horse experts and vets" ([125], p. 297). The *Dictionary for Horse-Lovers, Horse Dealers, Horse Trainers and Farriers* describes horses as "very clever and easy to teach in comparison to other domestic animals" but admits that "among the various individuals of this species, there are so many differences in mental capacities because some horses are as stupid among their own kind as some humans among other humans" ([119], p. 77). Similar to the emotions ascribed to horses discussed in the former section of this article, human beings and their mental capacities served as templates of and points of reference for the discursive construction of equine minds in zoological discourse. As the behavior of some horses could be interpreted along the lines of an intelligent human being and in analogy to a form of language, it logically followed that the horse had to be endowed with similar cognitive and communicative abilities.

In its statement, the *Dictionary*, however, dwells on and reaffirms the differentialist conception of animals and humans, helping many a natural historian to resurrect the dividing line between equine and human intelligence. While some horses were seen as clever and could even be called rational, e.g., insofar as they seemed to be able to subdue their instincts when influenced and improved upon by human training,<sup>36</sup> humans, it seemed, could act not only *rationally* (allegedly without exterior influence) but also *reasonably*. Reason, yet again, represented the crossroads of equine and human homologies. Horses could be clever and 'teachable'; they might even show behavior which could be called rational. Reason, however, was reserved for mankind. Still, rationality, was apparently no longer considered an anthropological prerogative. This is why Sebald can assert that "due to their capacity to judge, horses can observe all conditions of an object, compare them and draw certain conclusions from it" ([98], p. 254). Sebald calls this sense of judgement "rationality which haughty humankind usually denies to animals" and is convinced that "horses, to a certain extent, have this rationality, too" ([98], p. 254). Even though some natural historians thus acknowledged the mental faculties of horses and were even willing to concede a degree of rationality to them, the line got drawn with the knockout argument of reason. It comes as no surprise that even Sebald adheres to this dogma, confirming that "instinct in animals is what is called reason in man" ([98], p. 269).

Yet the line between rationality and reason, between what was considered animal instinct on the one hand and human reason on the other hand could become obscure at times. As Julie A. Smith has shown, British nineteenth-century accounts in natural history tried to keep the categories of animal instincts and human rationality apart, but often "entail[ed] slippage" with literary autozoographies "blur[ring] the difference" ([3], p. 736) even further. Similarly, natural history's accounts of equine mental capacities found it hard to make a distinction. In its entry on "Horse", the *Dictionary for Horse-Lovers, Horse Dealers, Horse Trainers and Farriers* concedes that "[t]he analogue of human reason, instinct, generally seems to work here in accordance with more limited principles, but the line can hardly ever be determined" ([118], p. 114). Sebald confirms this and adds "that instincts in some animals seem to surpass human reason" ([98], p. 229). Again, human and equine mental capacities are weighed against each other, with Sebald trying to draw a 'reasonable' line between the two. Yet, ultimately, the comparison exposes a lack of sufficient evidence for making a clear distinction by means of observation. German equine autozoographies undermine the supposed gulf between

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<sup>36</sup> Buffon, for example, believed that human "art" has improved the "talents and natural qualities" ([114], p. 94) of domestic horses.

human and animal cognition even more considerably. They represent horses as a species not only with extraordinary memories but also with the capacity to communicate, reflect, judge and act according to these judgments.

Memory in equine autozoographies even tends to encompass the animals' own births. The English chestnut knows how much his keeper was annoyed by the fact that the horse's mother did not give birth at the assumed hour, making the keeper wait until "finally, on the day after the third night I was born at noon" ([43], pp. 4–5). Of course, this information could have been conveyed to the horse by someone else; however, the narrative suggests that the horse has no difficulties in conjuring up those long-ago events from direct memory. Mecklenburg Mare Amante also finds it easy to recall her birth: "My birth happened without any veterinary help [...] My mother licked me, my ward ushered me to the udder, rich with milk [...] Do I have to say more to prove I was happy?" ([44], pp. 3–4). Not only does Amante remember the event of her birth, but also the sensations she experienced during the following minutes and hours. This extraordinary memory is echoed by horse-science admiring "the memory, and, first and foremost, the spatial memory" ([126], p. 13) of horses. Old, dulled job horses, the *Dictionary for Horse-Lovers, Horse Dealers, Horse Trainers and Farriers* advises, should be handled with precision so that "the horse might remember his youth when he was treated much better" ([118], p. 21). Maltreatment of the horse, in turn, would "leave deep impressions in his memory" ([127], p. 68). The emphasis put on processes of memory in equine autozoographies is clearly reminiscent of the texts' attempt to render the "illusion of autobiographical authenticity" ([37], p. 4), as indicated in part two of this article; yet at the same time it serves to promote the belief in what was considered horses' astonishing power to remember.

Mulling over certain observations and even themselves is a common activity for horses in equine autozoographies. Amante, for example, is forced to think about her appearance after she had been given a negative assessment first, a positive one shortly after: "I started doubting myself and wanted to investigate and be acquainted with myself in order to be convinced of what there was to be found about me" ([44], p. 28). This introspection, this "reflecting upon" ([44], p. 29) herself, leads her to the conclusion that her vices might result in her being "misjudged and despised" ([44], p. 33). As aforementioned, natural history was equally liberal in granting horses the ability to judge and draw conclusions.

The fact that literary autozoographies represent horses as self-conscious, proud, and, at times, even vain creatures falls in line with the accounts of natural history as well. Buffon had already described the horse as a "spirited and haughty animal" ([114], p. 93). Sebald went even further: "Horses love cleanliness, ornaments, finery and such things. The horse is certainly one of the neatest animals. It stays put and finds itself agreeable when being washed and cleaned; it even invites his keeper to do it" ([98], p. 289). Horses, according to Sebald, can judge, reflect on, and compare themselves to others as well as to their former selves; they also examine and cherish themselves. It comes as no surprise then that the chestnut horse indulges in "self-praise" ([43], p. 6) or that Amante thinks her hooves "outstanding", her propositions "agreeable", while she rejects being called unduly "vain" ([44], p. 21). Equine autozoographies and natural history articulated and disseminated the alleged mental abilities of horses and, hence, at times, undermined the dividing line between human superiority justified by reason and a higher degree of rationality on the one hand, as opposed to animal instincts and their inferior rationality or cleverness on the other hand. As an example for this, the following passage in *Life of a Job Horse* not only unsettles and subverts the distinctiveness of these categories but also represents equine agency in opposition to human (in)disposition. The passage presents the horse and Lord Tormington on their way from London to Tormington's country estate, when they are ambushed by robbers trying to force Tormington to hand over his purse. Tormington finds himself "so shocked" ([43], p. 12) that the horse can feel the rider shake on his back; Tormington then instantly draws his purse. Meanwhile, the chestnut conceives of "the best means" to intervene and rescue Tormington "with [...] cleverness" ([43], p. 13): "During the preparations for the handover, I moved a little towards one of the robbers, although the other had got hold of my reins. [...] And now, calculating the space and the distance precisely, I kicked out and hit the second robber so hard

against the right leg that he cried out loud and fell from the horse on the left-hand side [...]. Now it was time to finish what I had started by making an escape. I was already preparing for this when I felt the whip and the spurs of my master which he applied either by instinct or by virtue of returning consideration" ([43], p. 13).

Since his master seems to have "lost his head", trembling and apparently abandoning any "consideration" (read: rational faculty and reason), the horse initiates and executes a counter-attack. In this instance, the text depicts the chestnut as capable of intentionality, planning and spatial imagination; the horse appears as the prime rational agent in this human-animal constellation. Furthermore, the horse muses whether it was the return of Tormington's rational powers or rather his "instinct" that made him set spurs to the horse. The text exposes this human-made distinction as arbitrary and aporetic by turning the conventional categories of animal instincts and human reason upside down. For the observer, it is impossible to tell whether human or animal (nonverbal) behavior is the consequence of either so-called instinct, supposedly devoid of reflection and reasoning, or of so-called rationality and reason, supposedly devoid of affects and reflexes. Equine autozoographies like *Life of a Job Horse* thus advocate equine intelligence and rationality, while simultaneously (and most likely inadvertently) foregrounding the ultimate impossibility of humans to distinguish between reason and instinct on the basis of nonverbal behavior. Ultimate access to and insights about other (nonhuman) minds is epistemologically limited, if not unavailable.

## 5. Conclusions

This article has investigated the affiliations between literary autozoographies, fictional autobiographies and zoological discourse. Akin to fictional (human) autobiographies, early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies rely on narrative strategies mimicking autodiegetic discourse in order to pass as authentic life narratives. Copying factual autobiographies, the fictional texts can be read as meta-auto/biographical discourse uncovering autobiography's tropes and rhetorics and exposing its claims of factuality and truthfulness as limited and questionable.

The comparison between zoology's discursive engagements with equine minds and feelings and the representations in equine autozoographies has shown that the ascription of emotional and cognitive capabilities to horses is a shared representational phenomenon linked to what the early nineteenth century regarded as interspecies homology. As a result of this comparative contextualization, life-narrating horses can be recognized as reflections and imaginative, interpretative negotiations of the epistemological field shared with zoology's descriptive, matter-of-fact discourse. While zoology tried to promote the capabilities of horses objectively from a third-person perspective, equine autozoographies made (and encouraged) an imaginative leap to present and acknowledge the perception and experiences of horses 'first-hand'. Creating equine feelings and minds 'in their own image', authors of natural history, horse-science and equine autozoographies (unintentionally) subverted the conventional lines between what were considered exclusively human spheres (reason, language) and the supposedly inferior animal kingdom (instinct, speechlessness), finding horses not different from, but very similar to human beings.

As the discussion has shown, early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies were part of an episteme around 1800 in which it had become feasible in and beyond zoology to grant individuality, agency and emotional and mental capabilities to horses. The texts reflect, negotiate and popularize epistemological (and ideological) discourses on 'the' horse, participating in a broader discussion about what horses can and cannot do, what horses should be endowed with and how they should be dealt with. Reading animal narratives and literary autozoographies alongside zoological discourses thus allows fresh perspectives not only on the poetics and aesthetics of a literary text but also on how much zoology and 'scientific' texts rely on literary devices and narrative forms ([27], pp. 231–32). In this respect, historical research on literary autozoographies is meant to encourage animal studies scholarship to think about the role of literature in the epistemology, aesthetics and poetics of zoology in general, of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century natural history in particular. Ever since

the Enlightenment, natural historians set out to follow but in fact did not practice the Aristotelian division between history and poetry, description and invention, the ‘real’ and the ‘possible’ [113,128]. Despite its rhetorical insistence on what Foucault described as a “purification” ([28], p. 131) during the classical age—an effort to get rid of what was considered the excessive, fabulous “whole of animal semantics” ([28], p. 129)—natural history relied on narrative techniques, anecdotal evidence, literary styles, and creative practices. Thus, animal descriptions in natural history cannot be severed from literary animals in general, literary autozoographies in particular, and vice versa. The narration and creation of ‘The Lives (and Characters) of Animals’ was part of both natural history *and* literary autozoographies.<sup>37</sup> As I hope this article has shown, a comparative approach to literary autozoographies from the perspective afforded both by scholarship on autobiography and by cultural animal studies may open innovative ways of (re)discovering and (re)examining life-narrating animals, literary and natural history alike.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

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<sup>37</sup> It is no co-incidence that some nineteenth-century natural history books and articles entitled themselves analogous to literary autozoographies (cp., for the German-speaking tradition, e.g., [129–133]). Natural history and literary autozoographies were both interested in a “holistic approach to animal lives” ([3], p. 734), insofar as they—albeit in different ways—tried to describe the habits, needs, and supposed capabilities of a species in a most comprehensive way. Both genres thus acknowledged that animals were experiencing and appreciating their lives; lives which could best be understood if carefully observed and portrayed.

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