

EQUUS IN THE MOON: A RE-MEMBERING OF THE HORSE-HUMAN
RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Equus in the Moon: A Re-membering of the Horse-Human Relationship

by

Ashley E. Thompson

The relationship between horse and human has been one of mystery and deep fascination for ages, inspiring countless myths, works of art, dreams, and an entire other world of equine obsessed humans who center their lives around their horses. This research explores, through imaginal, embodied, narrative, and intuitive inquiry methods, the complexities of this trans-species relationship. The purpose of this embodied autoethnographic inquiry is to inspire a different way of imagining the individuation process as it occurs in the context of the horse-human relationship. Through this transformative process the authentic Self has the opportunity to evolve to a more integrated state of consciousness that is informed by the immersion in a trans-species engagement, which challenges human bias and anthropocentric psychological theory.

Questioning and re-imagining our ways of relating across species lines, the ego becomes the apprentice of an in-between realm that is created when horse and human engage. The integration of such trans-species experiences between horse and human challenges psychological constructs that are centered around individualism and anthropocentrism. A re-visioning of the psychological concept of dream animals, their purpose, symbolism, and autonomy are explored through a discussion of accounts of dreaming with horses, creating an interinforming reality between dreaming and waking worlds, and apprenticing the ego through dreaming experiences. Through the interfaces

of horse and human, the body is awakened to a new way of being in the world and the deeply imbedded construct of dualistic modes of experiencing is challenged through the dismemberment of old ways of being. From this place of dismemberment, a new imagining of riding through an exploration of archetypal image and the deconstruction of popular assumption is reached, with careful consideration on behalf of Equus. Taking into consideration the fact that our lives are intricately interwoven with other than human species, this research calls for the integration of a trans-species ethic within depth psychology with the hope of re-conceptualizing the ultimate importance of a more harmonious human-animal relationship.

Dedication

To Salto de Fe, my leap of faith

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Chapter 1 Introduction



Figure 1. Moon. Photo by the author.

And now, for me, it never stops . . . the voice of Equus out of the cave.

—Peter Shaffer, *Equus*, 1973

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this autoethnographic inquiry is to inspire a different way of imagining the individuation process that includes a reconnection to nature, external and internal, via the archetypal and mundane experiences of being with Equus¹. Through this transformative process, which was approached through imaginal inquiry, embodied inquiry, and intuitive inquiry, the authentic Self has the opportunity to evolve to a more integrated state of consciousness that is informed by the immersion in a trans-species engagement, which challenges human bias. Through the expression of this trans-species

¹ The term *Equus*, as I intend to use it, is meant to embody the individual horse and the archetypal horse, suggesting that the two are inextricably relational. Expanding this term beyond its common scientific usage, I wish to hint at the archetypal experience of being with horses. This term will be discussed in further detail under “Definition of Terms.”

interaction, I aspire to conjure a re-membering of an embodied way of knowing and being that holds the potential to shift ego-centric consciousness. As Romanyshyn (2007) coined the term *re-member*, it is meant to indicate a process in which there is a “transformation of a wound into a work . . . a descent into the abyss, where the loss could be re-membered” (p. 68). It was the gap between horse and human, the shared loss that I wished to re-member. Kohanov (2001) reminds us “the collective memories of horses and humans . . . intersect in intimate and highly emotional ways, even if contemporary human thought patterns and lifestyles strive to separate people from the rhythms of the natural world and its creatures” (p. 69).

Although there have been dramatic shifts in the biculture of horses and humans, trans-species psychology remains mostly a no-man’s land. The arrival of what is known as “natural horsemanship” has called attention and awareness to outdated brutal and even lethal training methods and has offered a dramatically gentler approach to horsemanship (Kohanov, 2001, p. 178). Natural horsemanship is a method of training, riding, and interacting horses through less physically, mentally, and spiritually intrusive means. Rather than “breaking” a horse, which can be extremely abusive, the human learns to work with the more natural behaviors of horses to build relationship and training methods. But even in the paradigm of natural horsemanship there remains the shadow of a dualistic mentality that supports a hierarchical relationship of power in which the human is still holding all of the cards. Since my immersion in this biculture, I have already come across trainers and other horse people who express suspicion towards natural horsemanship methods despite its overwhelming popularity. Its name alone points to an unconsciousness around the fact that its methods are used almost entirely for

domesticated horses, who are in the end being trained to modify their natural behavior to fit the needs of humans. It was a constant effort for me to get behind, or underneath, this way of relating to the horses and to continually evaluate the paradigm that I was working under.

Through a deep exploration of the horse-human interaction, the engagement of this trans-species relationship deepens our understanding of other than human experiences and communications. Entering the horse-human relationship with deep curiosity reveals the ways in which we participate not only with other species but also with images of psyche, as ethical questions considering the use of animal images in our psyche as a means to explain human character arise in the process. Interweaving the experiences of the archetype of the horse-human relationship and the flesh and blood horse, on the many nuanced layers of interaction, egocentric consciousness is challenged and the assumed boundary between conscious and unconscious becomes a fluid and inextricably intertwined, permeable phenomena.

The concept of two worlds, separate yet inseparable, one dark and one light, one asleep and one awake, has become the reason for my relentlessness and my obsession with another idea, an idea that lives in the moment just before the sun breaks the horizon, it happens in the place where the dream just barely touches this waking world, it is an idea, a way of being and understanding, that exists in-between and thus dissolves opposites. It is a liminal space, the twilight of being. It is a way of knowing that has been left behind and sacrificed in the hungry pursuit of linear progress.

But in this liminal space, the animal soul still resides. It is in this space, place, time, and dimension that I direct my inquiries, where I first met my animal friends, the

horses. During my second fieldwork study as a graduate student, I felt I had finally found my place in the world amongst the small herd of the three horses I was caring for in exchange for riding lessons. This dissertation is a continuation and deepening of a process that began nearly four years ago and continues to unfold into dimensions that have shifted and transformed my realities, my way of life, my understanding of love, and my relationships to everything and everyone within and without.

Through the delicate process of cultivating a trans-species relationship, boundaries and borders are put into perspective and are finally able to be evaluated under a new psychic light. The inner and outer relationships I hold with Equus have allowed for a space to be carved out from which I can see through the eyes of the other into the possibilities of human potential. Equus knows the way to this inner realm, this hidden path beyond the limits of human consciousness. All I had to do was let go and allow. (Thompson, 2009, p. 14).

This letting go became a practice, a desired state of being that I wished to be able to enter into. Once I realized that the horses could show me the way, I felt like we had a secret together. On the back of Equus, they would carry me to the forest of inner silence, where time melted into the smell of pine and the rustling sound of dry leaves. In this place, everything ceased to be what it had always been. Through the continued development of my relationships with horses, I was forced to confront some of my most valued philosophical foundations.

It has been in my participation within this trans-species relationship that I was able to feel most intimately, and most profoundly, a sense of coming closer to something. Laurens van der Post (1975) described, in the language of depth psychology, this

magnetic pull, in which “the ego, without loss of value and with immense enrichment of meaning, was enabled by a symbol grown from within to surrender itself to the greatest individual archetype of all, the self,” which van der Post imagined was “in every person like the morning star mediating between the night and day in man” (p. 261). It became most difficult for me however, to find room for my experiences with nonhumans, and specifically horses, in Jung’s model of individuation. Nowhere in my readings on individuation was there the single mention of what I felt to be a necessity of psychological development to engage with animals and other nonhuman life, aside from their being referenced as psychological projection and symbol.²

I began to see the cracks, as it were, in one of depth psychology’s most coveted ideas. I wondered what it would look like to re-vision or re-member a different way through the individuation process; a trans-species inspired and informed process of individuation. While this work is informed by trans-species psychology, amongst other theoretical approaches, it is not entrenched in Critical Animal Studies and Critical Psychology as their focus is geared towards more practical and ethical implications. The loyalties of this work lay within the world of the dream. Hillman (1997b) articulated this problem of human bias for Western psychology when he so aptly explained that “to read an animal, to hear it, requires an aesthetic perception for which psychology has yet to train its senses. It has yet to find modes of observation beyond laboratory language and

² In my own languaging of the horses that I make reference to in this work it must be noted that the English language presents challenges and limitations. To refer to individual horses as *she* or *he* implies gendered subjectivities to the horses. Gender is a human construct that is misleading when applying such pronouns to nonhuman animals. Although on several occasions I may refer to the horses with these pronouns, I would like for it to be noted that I am not implying a gendered construct. I will also be using *their*, a nongendered plural pronoun, to try and get part-way around an inadvertent objectification of animals.

the humanoid parallels in the reports of fieldwork” (p. 16). I realized that depth psychology still had much to learn from the in-between that manifests when human and animal engage.

In a very detailed discussion of the process of individuation, Welch (1982) described the second phase, in which “often about mid-life, the psyche spontaneously seeks equilibrium. As certain poles of personality are developed in consciousness, their opposites slowly become energized and they seek expression in the personality.” He went on to claim “the intensity of the energy in the unconscious begins to disrupt the apparently settled conscious life. The persona is shaken and the ego is decentered” (p. 95). What would it look like if there were no mid-life crisis, if the decentering of the ego was not so abrupt and unsettling? What would this mean for the industry of therapy? And why have we come to think of this mid-life crisis as a natural part of our maturation? Maybe if as humans, we were more involved in the lives of our nonhuman cohabitants and the natural world in a non-oppressive manner, our egos would not have the opportunity to inflate so dramatically and thus have a sudden earth shattering shock of deflation. After all “the individuation process is not a narcissistic trip. It is actually a journey into community” (Welch, 1982, p. 105). But what if a community that was not limited to the idealized sphere of human-to-human relationships was in place from the start? The intersection of depth psychology and trans-species psychology leaves much to consider.

Organization of the Study

I have organized this study by connecting the literature review with the themes of my findings. After analyzing, condensing, and interpreting the research, I structured my

findings in chapters that align and interweave themselves with their resonating themes of the literature. The findings that may be incongruent with the literature are also discussed in their relative chapters with suggestions or interpretations as to why there may be discord and how the literature may be furthered by this incongruence.

I have ten chapters with subsections in each. The first four chapters are the introduction, literature review, research problem and question, and methodology and procedures. The following six chapters are the representation of the interpreted data interwoven with and shaped by the literature, closed with my discussion for the implications of the study and the possibilities of future research.

Interest in the Topic

The relationship between horse and human has been one of mystery and deep fascination for ages. “Horses have been enveloped in human dreams, myths, ambitions, and sentiment for so long that the story we have come to think of as theirs is often but a distorted reflection of our own desires” (Budiansky, 1997, p. 1). The bicultural³ history between horse and human is so deeply interwoven that for the most part humans largely take for granted the participation of horses in our lives and in our history. “Still they carry us, as Broncos and Pintos, Mustangs, Pacers, and Colts, and as the power hidden under the hood. Even driving across the lawn and the golf course, we’re still riding horses” (Hillman, 2008, p. 81). As humans we have maintained this relationship through considerable brutal force against countless individual horses and horse culture as a whole. As Budiansky (1997) resonated,

³ Bicultural is a term used in trans-species psychology to denote the intersecting cultures of humans and domesticated animals; both taking on and learning customs of the other’s culture.

When cultures meet, they usually clash. The culture of horses and the culture of men were no exception, especially when the men in question were superstitious, anthropomorphic, warlike, and intensely status conscious. (Some might argue that nothing much has changed in the several thousand years since the cultures of man and horse first met.)

Equine society and human society had enough in common to make domestication possible—a common “language” of dominance and submission that was intuitively and mutually intelligible . . . a common social fabric built upon both subordination to authority and trust. (p. 51)



Figure 1. Curiosity. Photo by the author.

Yet, I believe, something else remains that binds horse and human together in relationship, there is also a curiosity. It is this mutual curiosity between horse and human that draws me in and moves me towards a desire for a better understanding of what lay between the two. Being witness to moments when horse and human come

together in displays of what I can only intuitively describe as mutual curiosity, gives me hope that at its core, the relationship of horse and human has more to do with moments of being rather than dynamics of power. Kohanov (2001) reminds us that there has been significant evidence that “mankind didn’t intentionally domesticate the horse; rather, the species may have chosen to associate with members of early agricultural settlements and eventually lured some of these people into a nomadic lifestyle influenced as much by horse behavior as human behavior” (p. xxii).

Budiānsky (1997) supported this theory when he explained that,

it was animals who discovered the mutual compatibility of our species, and it was they who chose to act upon this discovery . . . archaeological and animal behavior studies strongly support the idea that domestication was not the human invention it was long supposed to have been, but rather a long, slow process of mutual adaptation, of “coevolution,” in which those animals that began to hang around the first permanent human settlements gained more than they lost⁴ . . . In other words, the first step toward domestication was one that nature took millions of years before we even arrived on the scene. (pp. 8-9)

This coevolution, while easily understood from an archeological perspective, also implies a coevolution of psyche. After all, how could human and horse, in all forms and manifestations of their relationships, not impact the being of each other on a most intimate level?

I have experienced this curiosity, this magnetic energy between individual horses and myself. Watching a horse separate herself from the herd to slowly approach me, to stand shoulder to shoulder with me in the pasture, nuzzling my back while the other herd members look on in a more distance curiosity. As Bradshaw (2008) claimed, “Animals have emotions and passions, too, and are motivated by something other than instinct or the food bowl in front of them” (p. 31). It is in times like these that my heart knows there is a larger story to tell, maybe a new story, about this particular trans-species connection. “Even after 6,000 years of domestication the horse still has its own story to tell. It is a story worth knowing for its own sake” (Budiānsky, 1997, pp. 1-2). I find myself in a most interesting juncture between the story of depth psychology and the story of Equus.

For me, the serendipitous opportunity to be an apprentice to the way of the horse, and to explore the complex initiation into this alluring trans-species relationship, proved

⁴ Budiānsky is implying, based upon archeological evidence, that animals such as horses avoided extinction by allowing themselves to become domesticated.

to be much more intoxicating than expected. My initiation into the world of Equus began in the realm of the dream. It was nearly four years ago that my dream world was suddenly flooded with images and stories of Equus. Every night they would come to me in the dream and we would ride deeper and deeper into moonlit woods, snowy mountains, or even across rivers. The horses called to me through the language of the dream; inviting me in, beckoning me into my soul's calling.

I set out with the burning intention to answer their call and engage them as fully as I could, through every level of awareness. So, I met them in the day world. I found a little green barn nestled amongst moss-draped oaks and pines that graciously offered me a place to engage their three beautiful horses (Moon, Saltos, and Levi) in exchange for my mucking stalls, grooming, feeding, and caring for the small herd. That little green barn and those three horses very quickly braided themselves into the fabric of my deepest sense of self and pulled at a remembering of something long forgotten, yet so close. Romanyshyn (2007) reminded us that “the struggle to recover what has been lost and found again is the struggle in the gap between what is said and what wants and needs to be spoken” (p. 4). I continue to be addressed from this place, this gap between Equus and myself.

Bernstein (2005) spoke to a parallel realm that he called transrational reality and what he described as experiences of borderland consciousness. He explained transrational reality to be “objective nonpersonal, nonrational phenomena occurring in the natural universe, information and experience that does not readily fit into standard cause and effect logical structure” (p. 22). Through my previous fieldwork, I experienced several instances of predictive or communicative dreams with the horses. I would dream of a

certain situation a particular horse was in, only to find out several days later that that exact circumstance had in fact occurred.

One example of this phenomenon was when I dreamt of Moon, the big beautiful thoroughbred mare, being attacked by a farrier. In the dream the farrier was trimming her front hoof too short and causing her pain. Several days later, when I went to see the horses, Moon was limping due to the farrier cutting her too short. When I had the dream, I had no foreknowledge of the farrier even coming to trim the horses' feet, had never met the farrier, nor did the horses have a regular scheduled visit from the farrier. It began to seem after several similar occurrences that I was receiving communication or had tapped into some deeper or in between level of shared awareness from the horses via my dreams.

The closer our relationships became, the more I could feel myself shifting into a different way of being. This way of being was increasingly aware of the rhythms of my body as they flowed, or resisted, the rhythms of nature. To taste the bitter sweetness in a blade of grass, to feel a crisp wind brush against your cheek, and to breathe in the musty smell of a horse's neck—this was to feel the wisdom of nature. "Our relationship to nature is more one of *being* than *having*. We *are* nature; we do not *have* nature" (Harper, 1995, p. 186). A hand reaches for the long stretch of the horse's back, fingers twist into the coarse, wavy mane, and eyes search the bewildering beauty of the body of Equus. "It is this beauty of the phenomenal and its everlasting return of the same that the animals reveal, as if they revel in their own fantasy. . . . It is as if they say: Respect us - re-
spect, which means, 'look again'" (Hillman, 1997a, p. 8). The almost compulsive desire to look again and again shifted my nervousness into curiosity, curiosity moved aside for relationship, and relationship began to form meaning. The gaps narrowed, bringing horse

and human closer, wrapping around each other in an archetypal configuration that drew me into the depths of psyche and into an trans-species inspired process of individuation.

Transference to the Topic

Elliott (2002) explained that “the phenomenon of transference is a fundamental dimension of human experience: we people our world, according to Freud, with emotions and fantasies drawn from the past, but projected onto current experience” (p. 17). There is no escaping my own transference, or any researcher’s transference, into their work. It is the best I can do as a researcher to make a practice of persistently examining and critiquing my personal biases, agendas, and cultural assumptions.

Because I have been researching my topic for the past couple of years, I was afforded a bit of insight into my transferences to the work. On a very personal level, I believe that my psyche has been called to this particular work in order to regain my own trust in the world and in myself as a woman. For reasons too numerous to mention here, working with horses very directly brings attention and awareness to complexes revolving around one’s sense of physical trust and safety in the world. Kohanov (2001) showed that

a few of the more adventurous experiments exploring the therapeutic effects of equine encounters suggest that horses are so effective in this context because they act on multiple levels, relaxing and supporting the rider in such a way as to create a wider opening for healing to take place. Just brushing one of these animals, for instance, has been shown to significantly lower blood pressure. Such studies are beginning to legitimize the powerful influence that horses can have on persons with physical, mental, and emotional disabilities—as well on supposedly healthy, well-adjusted individuals. (p. 211)⁵

⁵ Although this citation provides insight into the therapeutic qualities of working with horses, there are deeper ethical issues embedded in the practices of animal assisted therapy and equine therapy, which I will briefly address in the ethics portion of this work.

Working with the horses has proven to be soul work to say the least in helping me become conscious of my own complexes around body image, sexuality, boundaries, and basic trust.

Expanding my vision beyond the personal, I have also become aware of a familial transference that still remains quite paradoxical to me. It was only recently that my mother disclosed to me that she used to ride with her ex-husband. From the few things that she said about her riding days, I gather that she was a rather experienced horsewoman, and I can only imagine the things that she is not saying, and how curious it is that I have stumbled upon this work without consciously knowing that my own mother was once a cowgirl. The roots of this family connection, this motherly silence around the thing that I am trying to give voice to, troubles me indeed. If I said otherwise, I would be fooling myself. I will carry this curious little paradox (that takes the form of an image of Pandora's box) with me throughout the research.

I am reminded of Romanyshyn's (2007) idea of the unfinished business of the research. As I imagine my mother on horseback, I also imagine the horses that she may have loved or the moments when she may have felt most free in their presence. I imagine the ancestral river of humans and horses than flows beneath and beyond me. "The ancestors that are silent, greater family that stretches down the centuries" (Romanyshyn, 2007, p. 85). Where are their voices? Where is the voice of this woman who used to ride? And where have her horses gone? Romanyshyn suggested that "they are the weight of history that lingers as a shadow in the margins of our individual and collective thoughts and dreams, the weight of unanswered questions that wait to be addressed" (p. 85).

Reaching beyond the personal and the family transferences, I also consider that I am in a Western culture that shrouds the horse-human relationship with a cloak of dominance, progress, and extreme projection. “For 6,000 years the horse was a creature of man’s enthusiasm for warfare, his ever growing demand for motive and tractive power, and his anthropomorphic and romantic imaginings; for all three the horse has suffered misunderstanding, drudgery, and worse” (Budiansky, 1997, p. 217). I question every move I make with the horses wondering if I am operating out this paradigm of subjugation. I wish I could say that I have the ability to sever myself completely from it, but that would be an illusion as well. Every day I hold this paradigm gently in my hands, turning it over, feeling its edges, knowing the weight and history that it holds in me, raising awareness through insightful, intuitive inquiry, and I wonder how deep its roots take hold.

According to Martin (1999), these roots reach all the way back to the advent of time, “put more bluntly, with the advent of the Neolithic, plants and animals were stripped of their will and permission and forced to submit to a schedule that suited one mathematical mammal’s sense of thrift” (p. 8). With the shift from hunter gatherer societies to agricultural societies came organized religion. “There is now a growing consensus that religion as we know it was invented to legitimate the presumption of the cultivated field and barnyard and shepherd’s flock—for did anyone think to ask the permission of these creatures to be so domesticated” (p. 9)? The horse became a most essential tool in the construction of this new paradigm. It became clear that the story, the paradox of domestication in all of its contradictions, projections, and imaginings, was a story all on its own, and simultaneously it was the path through which I was able to be in

relationship to the horses on the physical plane. Being aware of this contradiction and the ethical implications of riding horses, my practices were always compassionate and utilized the dream and the imaginal world instead of power to relate to the horses.

To further compound the cultural and historical transferences to the work, the element of religion in the horse-human relationship that Martin touches upon was perhaps more deeply imbedded in the story of horse and human than I wished to admit.

Budiansky (1997) confirmed, “deification is the ultimate distorting mirror that man has held up to the horse in the course of our shared history . . . it is . . . a reflection of the intense emotions that the horse was—and still is—capable of evoking” (p. 62). Although I do not consider myself a religious person, I am a person who has been raised in a cultural story, an attitude of religion. However, the more recent religious story that surrounded me was that of the southern Baptists, who believe that animals, and anything nonhuman, are soulless, much less god-like.

Rather than considering these seemingly conflictual transferences as obstacles to be overcome in my work, I would dare to suggest that they were indeed paths into deepening my work with the purpose of developing a genuine and caring relationship with the animal world, a relationship that aimed to re-member a way of being with horses that was not driven by a sense of economy. I do not wish to resist them, but to invite them in, to let them speak. I tend to agree with Hillman (1976) in that “awareness that, as there are many complexes in our conflicts, there are many Gods imaged in our souls, shifts an issue from a matter of choice to that of sacrifice, where sacrifice means remembrance of one because there are many” (p. 140). I imagine that as I continue this work through my life there will certainly be many other conflicts, biases, complexes, transferences, and

voices from the past that I will have to be vigilant in tending to. But I greet them with a gentle curiosity and not with trepidation.

After all, “the psyche seems more interested in the movement of its ideas than in the resolution of problems. Therefore no classical psychological problem can ever be solved, nor can it be made, by any means to disappear from the scene” (Hillman, 1976 p. 148). As I deepened into the field of transference, I deepened into the human-animal soul work. I kept my night light burning, peering into the darkness; by reflecting through writing, caring for and interacting with the horses, meditating, and dreaming into those voices that wished to have a say through my own self as well as my complexes and transferences. In approaching my transferences with an attitude of tenderness and patience, it became a process of deepening into the purpose and true nature of this work of relating to and understanding Equus in its everyday manifestation as well as its archetypal emergence and awareness.

Relevance of the Topic for Depth Psychology

Jung (2002) wrote, “it is the wisdom of nature which is nature itself, and if nature were conscious of itself, it would be a superior being of extraordinary knowledge and understanding” (p. 84). To engage with nature, with the extraordinary knowledge and understanding that lie beneath its surface, with the simple intention of deep listening, is a task in the service of soul. Depth psychology summons us to enter into the mystery at hand, to ask questions, to listen, and to remain open for the endless possibilities of what lies just beyond our human limitations.

With so much emphasis within depth psychology on the human unconscious and the process of human individuation, I fear that Western Cartesian ideas of duality still

have our psyche in the clutches of binary opposites that cast the human and animal so far apart, that the animal most often becomes nothing more than a symbol for our intrapsychic processes or an object to be exploited and consumed. There is a re-visioning, a re-membering at hand. The newly budding field of trans-species psychology has taken on the momentous task of infusing depth psychology with animal sensibility, or to put it in the way of the Sioux Indians, we must “make friends” with the animals. Deloria (2009) elaborated that “the Sioux saw in animals personality traits that they saw in themselves. . . . They came away believing that these creatures had the same capabilities as we do . . . and thereafter sought animal aid in the chores and hazards of everyday life” (p. 116).

In my own contribution to this re-visioning, I hope to inspire a remembrance of the animal soul, of the body that knows her own wildness, and the heart that dreams the world forward when it hears her calling. My work attempts to weave the dream into the waking world, creating a place of in-between where opposites fade into the twilight of a new way of being and becoming. Challenging the very ideas of conscious and unconscious, as defined and conceptualized through an anthropocentric worldview, which lead us to specific ways of experiencing and defining the world, can be attempted through the deep engagement of a trans-species relationship. Meeting the flesh and blood animal in everyday life as well as in dream and avoiding psychology’s tendency to quickly reduce this interaction to symbol requires a reconsideration of how we practice our humanity.

The Research Problem

I see beyond all this as well,
to a time when we will not be hunted or adored,
because their fear exhausts itself,
even as our progress inexorably strips us of attendants.

And there, like a leap of thought or matter
 toward the other's grace, we are transformed, merged across species—
 female and male, myth and human,
 beast, bird, leaf, fruit, flower,
 music and blood and visions
 all facets of one jewel, faultless.

—Robin Morgan, 1955

Jung (2002) emphasized, “in the last analysis, most of our difficulties come from losing contact with our instincts, the age-old forgotten wisdom stored up in us” (p. 98). As a culture obsessed with conquest, individuality, and heroic idealism, this lost connection has become something that we may only remember in our dreams. Even then, when we are visited by Equus in the night world, when we wake the stallion is twisted into a fantasy of what our sex drive or instinct is trying to tell us. The horse in the dream becomes a representation of Me, not an autonomous being; separate from the dreamer, safe from human projections.

The horse is not just my personal soul image that demands attention. The horse carries great cultural significance, embedding itself at the cultural level of the collective unconscious. The horse has played a central role in enabling humanity to accomplish grand visions of expansionism and development,⁶ carrying our heroic egos and upright bodies across unreachable territories. “But all this about horses is the easy part. This is the symbolism and the history of the horse. What of its mystery, the horse that asks to be relieved of carrying the hero on its back?” (Hillman, 2008, p. 81). I believe the horse, as hero-carrier deserves recognition and healing. But it is the horse without the hero on its back and what happens after we climb down and walk alongside that interests me on a much deeper level.

⁶ These grand visions of expansionism and development were hand in hand with acts of colonization of other lands occupied by other humans and nonhuman species.

This mystery is one that I believe holds great potential for a healing reconnection back to the unknown, back to the animal body, and back to the wilderness within. Snyder (1990) expressed that “to speak of wilderness is to speak of wholeness. Human beings came out of that wholeness, and to consider the possibility of reactivating membership in the Assembly of All Beings is in no way regressive” (p. 12). It is the mystery that I wish to come closer to, to re-member and reactivate, and to let this mystery live through me with the simple intention of allowing its representation through my work to inspire movement, reflection, wonder, and most importantly, doubt.

The Research Question

More than a question that seeks an answer, I had fascinations to be explored. I have always been mesmerized with the ability of the horse-human interaction to bring about meditative and altered states of consciousness, creating a space of inner silence from which perspective can be altered. I was deeply curious about what this work meant from the perspectives of the horses that I worked with and from the standpoint of the horse images/voices/ancestors in my dreams. I also wished to explore in what ways I could more fully and authentically incorporate the voices of the horses that I considered participants in the research. Other inquiries that I explored included the following:

- How can the archetypal relationship to Equus, through body, dreams, and fantasies, help us to remember and embody our animal nature? In what ways can this relationship serve as a pathway that reconnects us back to the wilderness and to the wild terrain of the unconscious? How would such a reconfiguration affect horse-human relationships and interaction on a practical level?
- What is searching for voice in the calling of Equus in my own psyche? How might this calling speak to and merge with collective ecological, spiritual, and cultural issues?
- Does Equus have anything to teach about love? Are the human feelings of love towards their horses purely a human projection or is the feeling mutual

and if so how can we perceive the horses' expressions of love towards humans?

- How can the re-membering and re-visioning of the horse-human relationship create a more eco-centric way of being in the world, thus bringing more awareness around ecopsychological ways of being with the environment?

Definition of Terms

It has been my subjective experience that when the essence of the horse-human relationship is approached, a shift occurs in which the interaction between horse and human has the potential to take on an archetypal shape: Hence the use of *Equus* to contain the subtle realm beyond our ordinary understanding of "horse." *Equus* encompasses not just the horse but also the entire ancestral line from which the horse evolved, beginning with the emergence of *Equus caballus* from about one million years ago (Edwards, 1993, p. 10). *Equus* also includes members of the horse family like the Zebra, Ass, Mule, and Donkey. While the term *Equus* is zoological in its definition, I am intending to expand the term and direct the imagination to the ancestral soul, the collective consciousness of this species.

In using both terms, *horse* and *Equus*, my aim is to both differentiate between the interaction of the flesh and blood horses that I will be working with, or what I may also refer to as the natural horse, and the archetypal *Equus* of some dreaming and waking experiences, and to simultaneously suggest that the two are inextricably intertwined and ultimately may not have such distinct boundaries. I understand this differentiation to be complex, with consequences reaching into every aspect of this study. Therefore I have to reserve further expression of this problem for the writing ahead and trust that the previous description will serve as a most general understanding of these terms.

In my use of the term *re-membering*, it is my intention to draw awareness to the embodied component of the horse-human interaction and the body's (horse and human bodies) central role as conduit between the two. Moreover, this term, as coined by Romanyshyn (2007), brings attention to the in-betweenness of being. As Romanyshyn reminded us, "our psychologies are complex cultural-historical monuments, erected in the gap between mind and matter"; "as such," he explained, "they have become problematic, relieving us of the work of re-membering the soul's abysmal existence and thus also giving us the task of mourning what we have forgotten" (p. 15). Simultaneously, the term suggests a reconnection and inclusion to an ancestral way of knowing and a re-embodiment of being that is awakened through this trans-species interaction. Being with *Equus* defies the Cartesian ideas of duality and offers lessons of how to be with one's own body and other nonhuman bodies. Merleau-Ponty (1945) eloquently suggested, "the union of soul and body is not an amalgamation between two mutually external terms, subject and object, brought about by arbitrary decree. It is enacted at every instant in the movement of existence" (p. 102).

The enactment of this re-membering contributes to a new model of individuation that includes, and is supported by, a trans-species ethic. I use the term *re-membering* to allude to an imaginal act in which one's perspective of something that may be dis-membered has the possibility of being re-membered. Although this term does have an element of time attached to its meaning, it is also meant to include a sense of timelessness. As Martin (1999) articulated, it is not until "we reconceive ourselves as actors not of history but of the earth" that we might begin to solve "our environmental and other collective miseries" (p. 13).

On a fundamental level, I understand the idea of trans-species individuation as a process of individuation that occurs in context of, and is facilitated by, a relationship between human and animal, and abandons the idea of individuation as it might only serve the psychological needs of the human. Bradshaw (2010b) confirmed, “new relational modes of knowledge, based on felt existence and experience, suggest that consciousness is not produced by the machinery inside our heads, but rather through the matrix of relationships in which we are immersed” (p. 28). The idea of the development of consciousness of the animal within the relationship is one of great interest as well and deserves equal attention, as not to view the animal as an “individuation tool” for the ever conscious and aspiring human.

Because of my experiences with Equus and the way these encounters have dramatically changed my way of being in the world, it was impossible for me to ignore the alchemical potential of working with horses. “Giving full credence to subjective reality means valuing our participation with the world. Participation implies inserting one’s consciousness into the space between ourselves and the Other” (Sewall, 1995, p. 209). I view my theory as a Jungian perspective of individuation, merged with my evolving ideas of trans-species individuation, and an alchemical image of stepping off the horse’s back and into her belly.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Compiling a body of literature relevant to the study of a realm that is predominantly nonverbal was a curious task indeed. It proved to be a process that required not just academic dexterity but also an intuitive sense of where my work wished to find expression. However, I found that I was pleasantly surprised by the readings that held deep resonances with my work.

In my review of the literature that supported, surrounded, and expanded my topic into new directions, I found many friends among depth psychologists, horse people, and even philosophers. My review begins with a careful consideration of Hillman's work on the dream and the presence of animals in dreams. Because I found the interface between *natural animal* and *dreaming animal* to be significant to my work, I gave great attention to Hillman's writing on these matters.

Fleshing out the philosophical pillars of my ideas, I rested upon the poetic concepts of Merleau-Ponty that concern how we experience the world through the fleshy medium of our bodies. Using his ideas to support a trans-species ethic, I understand it to be necessary that I first explain the basic ideas of body and being. Dismembering binary modes of thinking about and experiencing the body, I call on the writing of Avens and Todres for a succinct image of philosophy of being, in the hopes of re-membering a way of life before dualistic mentalities.

Abram, Buzzel, and Jung open my work up into the realm of ecopsychology, placing the work of the horse-human relationship into the context of an eco-centric way of entering into and understanding experience. It is my argument that a trans-species connection has the great potential to turn the ego on its head, shifting one's perspective so

the center of psychic gravity spreads out, and is shared, and co-created with the Other, in this case, the horses.

As a blossoming field, trans-species psychology has yet to interpenetrate fully the frameworks of traditional Western psychologies. Gay Bradshaw is a leading pioneer on the project of developing a trans-species psychology that has the capacity and experience to do so. Complementing Bradshaw's work with a more mystical approach, Kohanov being one of the beginning inspirations of my work, inspired me to expand into this burgeoning field. Balancing out her numinous yet incredibly thorough approach to understanding the horse-human bond, I reach to the opposite end of the spectrum where the scientific expertise of Budiansky lent me authority in the world of the natural horse.

I would also like to take a moment to draw attention to what I am not including in my review of the literature. As a researcher in the field of depth psychology, I find that it is almost expected that I speak to the realm of mythology, and understandably so. There are countless myths that have grown from the mystery of the bond between horse and human. Delving into these timeless stories would certainly support my work in giving it a mythological backdrop upon which I could develop theories about the connecting fibers of horse-human relationships. However, this work has already been done, and done very well. So although I might be moved to call upon an image from mythology to connect a relevant experience to an archetypal rooting, I found that my inquiries lay outside of the myths.

Literature Relevant to the Topic

Hillman and the dream animal. Hillman's work within depth psychology has always challenged and sometimes even irritated my ways of thinking, like a horse that

you cannot quite figure out and have to learn new ways of engaging with. Over the years, however, I have grown to have much respect for Hillman and his approach to the dream. Seeing as how it is the dream that drew me into this work and continues to inform the direction and form it takes, I am ultimately deeply indebted and transfixed by its mystery.

It has never been my desire to tear apart my dream images, or anyone else's, to get at some finite meaning supposedly hidden in its obscure layers. I appreciate Hillman's reverence for the dream as something that holds its own ground, its own reality beyond our interpretation of it. When it comes to animal presences in dreams, Hillman (2008) specifically has advised against turning the animal into an interpretation of some unconscious quality meant to say something about our personal, human, subjective stance. Instead, he invites the dreamer to recognize the animal as a real presence, whole in her own right, before human interpretation or analysis.

In his compilation of essays on animals, *Animal Presences*, Hillman (2008) specifically addressed horses in one of the chapters. In just a few short paragraphs he beautifully expounded upon the relationship between horses and humans as one that holds great alchemical potential. "Instead of free-ranging conquest, you on top of the horse with reins of control in hand, you climb down and stay inside your animal drive, enveloped and cooked by its heat" (p. 83). Bringing to the forefront the concept of climbing off of the horse's back and into its belly as a symbol of alchemical fermentation and transformation, Hillman turned the idea of horsemanship inside out. He spoke directly to the relationship between horse and human symbolically in this way, offering an image to ponder for not just personal but also cultural transformation, shifting from the symbolic to the practical and ethical.

In speaking to this deeply symbolic way of experiencing Equus, Hillman delicately balanced the ambiguity between the natural horse and the dream horse, between the alchemical horse and the hero's mount. This way of imagining the horse-human relationship provided such great support for my own work and the way in which I was able to articulate this trans-species connection. Spring boarding from his example, I have expounded upon this fine line that Hillman hinted at, between dream animal and natural animal, creating a world of in-between that exists on its own terms before any theoretical interpretation of its conditions. In this in-between of the hero's horse, that has long defined the way in which we relate to horses, and the dream horse, that seems to beckon from some time and place before we were heroes, "lies the delicacy, something internal and so invisible that only dreams seem able to recall" (Hillman, 2008, p. 81). The mystery of the in-between calls us to re-member another way of being with Equus.

It would be much easier to separate the dream horse and the natural horse, providing two categories of experience that could neatly be held separate from each other: One being wholly "inside" as the dream image and the other quite simply "outside" as the natural horse; safely containing the way in which we experience our inner and outer realities and the value or non-value we attribute to each. It is in my opinion a brave and incredibly difficult stance to hold when these containers are understood to be only illusion, keeping us from an uncomfortable insight that our perceived "inner" and "outer" lives may be much more porous, permeable, and entangled than we could ever imagine, putting us into the illusion of the tension of supposed opposites.

It has been my experiences with horses that have forced me into such an in-between state of being, and it is in Hillman's work that I have found encouragement in

holding this slippery footing in the gap. Staying true to form in his book *Dream Animals*, Hillman (1997b) attempted to take on the perspective of the animal and implored psychology to do the same. Considering his reader to be in the field of psychology he artfully advised that “psychology needs words that are not mere allegorical moralisms or metaphors. . . . Instead, it needs to rediscover the animal eye of the caveman facing the cave wall, that aesthetic perception which responds to the significance and power of the displayed form” (p. 16). It is my intention that this work will excite the animal eye and bring the reader into the tension of their own elusive, perceived realities.

Though Hillman provided so many beautiful insights into how we can re-vision our relationship to animals, one other idea that I have rooted my efforts in was his reclamation of anthropomorphism as a way out of our narcissistic subjectivity. “Anthropomorphism recognizes that humans and animals participate in a common world of signification. We can and do understand each other despite the arrogant philosophies that would preserve consciousness as an exclusively human property” (1997b, p. 22). In attempting to understand the horses’ perspectives, it became necessary to project and imagine in a way that was not only reactionary or responsive, but also driven by a curiosity that sought to understand and to become linked to. Otherwise we have no way of knowing a horse unless we in fact were a horse: which is always a possibility as well. And who is to say that we are not simultaneously being projected upon? It is common practice for horse people to emulate equine social behavior, allowing horses to project their own expectations upon the human, in order to cultivate understanding between species.

“Horses begin reading your body language the instant they see you” (Hill, 2006, p. 123). It is common practice for me when greeting a new horse, to approach slowly and gently, and when I am close enough to press my nose against the horse’s nostrils and then I snuff and smell them, as they would do when greeting another horse. In return they do the same to me. The well-known and respected horse trainer Mark Rashid (1996) said simply that “the whole idea behind working with horses should come down to a few simple things. As horse people we should try to take our horse’s perspective into consideration each and every time we work with them” (p. 182). Adapting to the perspective of the horse means changing your behavior in a way that is more conducive to clear communication.

Another example of this is understanding where you fall in the social order of the herd that you are working with. One way that horses maintain this social order, which is linked to survival, is through what we, as humans would understand as “personal space.” If you graze in the pasture with a herd for long enough, the head mare or stallion (typically a gelding in domestic horses) will eventually make their way over into your personal space and try to move you out of it. As a horse, you would either move, confirming your assumed lower status in the social totem pole, or resist and push back, thus elevating your status.

Hillman (1997b) encouraged that “the understanding we have of animals is not clear and distinct, and certainly not complete, but the information is afforded by them when we tune in. One kind of tuning in is to the dream” (p. 22). As I previously stated, it is the dream that has brought me into this work and to which I feel deeply indebted. But what do I mean when I say “the dream?” It is in *The Dream and the Underworld* that my

philosophy of dream life finds resonance and rooting. More and more I have come to agree with Hillman (1979) in that “the entire procedure of dream interpretation aiming at more consciousness about living is radically wrong . . . harmful, twisted, deceptive, inadequate, mistaken, and exegetically insulting to its material, the dream” (p. 2). Although this may seem a radical position to take within the field of psychology, I find it simply necessary, particularly when it comes to understanding animal dreams. I relied upon the horse dreams that revealed themselves to me, to tell me something about the life of the horse and its species as a whole, not about some nuanced personality trait that would serve to further solidify my individual humanness.

The more experience I have with classical, clinical psychological dream interpretation, the more I intuit that it is a social/cultural structure within which our ego may hide from what may be the harsh realities of an overwhelming truth. Hillman’s (1979) *The Dream and the Underworld*, moved closer to a philosophy of dream life that has no sugar coating for our ego to indulge in and no hero that might defend us from the shadows of the night-world. Entering into engagement with horses, it is not always sparkles and unicorns and rainbows—riding beyond the sunset, into the desert, the horse may carry you into a darkness that does not belong to this world.

Body and being. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945), in his book *Phenomenology of Perception*, provided me with the language to clarify the phenomenology of *being* and *body* within the context of the trans-species interaction. Through the illumination of body and being, as Merleau-Ponty expanded these notions, I propose to clarify how the horse-human interaction inspires a reflection of one’s own human way of being in the world. In deepening into the horse-human interaction through the lens of embodiment, and what it

means to *Be* an embodied being, ego-centric consciousness seems to lose its center of gravity, spreading its weight back into the body, and the presence of the Other. In paralleling Merleau-Ponty's work around body with the phenomenological experiences between horse and human, his language assisted me in describing what for the most part is typically deemed "mysterious" and "unknowable" about the effects of a horse-human relationship, considered from both ends.

In the marrow of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy I found sustenance in challenging dualistic ideas of mind/body and the concept of "soul encased in body"; ideas that are simultaneously but many times unconsciously challenged on the physical level of interacting with horses. Merleau-Ponty (1945) advised that "the psycho-physical event can no longer be conceived after the model of Cartesian physiology and as the juxtaposition of a process in itself and a *cogitation*" (p. 102). I sensed vital importance in this fleshing out of our experience of body and soul, of animal body and human body, and of the psyche shared between the two, as we tend to think of them separately. Remembering, re-figuring, a dismembered, disembodied, and disengaged way of being in the world, the interaction between horse and human becomes a practice in which ways of thinking about body and soul may become reformulated. "The union of body and soul is not an amalgamation between two mutually external terms, subject and object, brought about by arbitrary decree. It is enacted at every instant in the movement of existence" (p. 102). Shaping a new philosophy of being in the world through trans-species engagement, my work grew deep roots into this philosophic tradition.

Because so much of the horse-human interaction involves the body, it would have been naïve to take for granted the influence of the body, of horse and human, on

experience and interpretation of meaning. Calling into question this particular bodily influence in the relationship, it was my desire to contribute to new ways of thinking about how we experience and participate in our worlds as embodied beings. Merleau-Ponty blazed the trail upon which I ventured in seeking to clarify what is it about the interaction of the horse's body and the human's body that invokes a long forgotten way of being. At bottom, "the body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body is, for a living creature, to be involved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and be continually committed to them" (1945, p. 94).

It was to my great surprise that I found my work to have such substantial philosophical underpinnings. I devoured the poetic and obscure language of Merleau-Ponty, Hillman, and Heidegger like soul food. Although it was not my aim to create a work of pure philosophy, I find it essential to explain the thought behind concepts such as being, body, and essence as they apply to my work. *The New Gnosis*, writings of psychological philosophy by Avens (1984), provided me with a succinct language for articulating the philosophical ground on which my work flourished. Through dialoging the ideas of Heidegger and Hillman, Avens gave me a way into the basic philosophy of my ideas around the horse-human relationship and its effects upon one's way of being in the world.

Avens (1984) reminded us that sadly, "most of the time, however, we are not in-the-world. We prefer to busy ourselves in asserting our identity against the world without realizing that this self-assertion, this search for identity, is nothing more glorious than a futile attempt to remain the same (*idem*) from moment to moment, day in, day out" (p. 19). In understanding the connections, disconnections, and assumed opposites between

horse and human, image and dream, soul and body, I simultaneously speak to a bigger truth which Avens emphasized at the interface between Heidegger and Hillman, which is that “we fail to see that we do not belong to ourselves but to being, the world, the Soul and that our truth is in “being-in-the-soul” (p. 19). To replace the assertion of identity onto the other with the intention of *noticing* our being in *relation* to the other is not only a philosophical or ethical consideration, but also quite possibly, a complete reconfiguration of perception. Avens’ work of bringing together the ideas of Heidegger and Hillman acts like a springboard between philosophy and psychology, allowing me to gather knowledge from each and weave from them an in-between philosophy of being in the world that intimately involves the dynamics of trans-species relations.

In particular, the philosophy of Heidegger, as fleshed out by writers like Avens and Todres, informed my developing vision of this in-between place in which a trans-species process of individuation may happen. Along with the idea of individuation naturally came the concept of the Self and the imagined experience of wholeness that accompanies this illusive state of being human. In our quest towards a realization of this Self, we ironically become self-asserting. In an attempt to image this inner ghost, we assert our “particular identity” upon the world, thus blinding ourselves to the possibilities of the world. As Todres (2007) gently reminds us, “the wholeness at the source of human identity is, however, always already there, obscured by the relentlessness of the quest to become something-in-particular. Tragically, we seek wholeness somewhere else, in the particularity of objectifying self and other” (p. 132).

For this reason, I have found that horses in particular are quite good at opening up this space where human self-assertion is forced to move aside for a different experience

of wholeness that is something more akin to emptiness. Because of their prey nature, horses are incredibly sensitive to the energetic field in which they live, picking up on the subtlest shifts in emotion, smell, light, reflections, temperature, and anything that may pose a potential threat to their life. Because of this incredible capability of horses, their human companions, if they seek a relationship of cooperation, must constantly keep their self-assertions in check, lest they want to be perceived as a possible threat. Sadly, it is always easier to self-assert than to move aside and participate in true relationship.

To participate in an authentic trans-species relationship, as humans we can no longer hold an objectified, specialized self as the goal. In the horse world, this is all too often the goal that can be so clearly observed lurking under fancy tack and a new pair of boots. Todres (2007) provided an alternative to this self seeking when he suggested that “in being discontinuous with the motive for self-finding, we are continuous with, or available to, a world which can show faces of interconnections that are new and not merely the specialized-world-for-a-specialized-self.” He went on to say that “in allowing our nothingness to be, we provide the space in which the world can show its open-endedness, its freedom” (p. 131). Shifting into this void, we are given the opportunity to reconfigure and re-member.

Ecopsychology. When such a shift in consciousness occurs, there is no turning back to the old way of being. As Abram (2010) so eloquently explained, “transformations are endemic to a reality that exists only in depth, a reality that discloses itself to us only by holding some part of itself in the uncertain distance” (p. 89). It is in this tension that we feel our egocentric modes of being dissolve into a wider perception of what Abram has termed an *earthly cosmology*.

It is in this place that we can no longer ignore our entanglement with nature and our own wildness. In the humbling presence of Equus, nature seems to creep in through the back door and suddenly we find ourselves living in a world ruled by the senses and seasons, the whispers of the wind, and the shadows cast by a full moon. We may find ourselves in nature, remembering what it is to live in our animal body. The breathing body, this ferociously attentive animal, still remembers.

The foot, as it feels the ground pressing up against it, remembers. The skin of the face remembers, turning to meet the myriad facets, or faces, of the world. The tips of the fingers remember well that each sensible surface is also, in its own way, sensitive. The ears, listening, know that all things speak; they wander and browse in the intimate conversation of the world, and sometimes they prompt the tongue to reply.

Even the eyes know this, that *everything* lives . . . that the colors they drink or dive into have been longing to swallow them and to taste of their hazel, their bright hints of green.

Our chest, rising and falling, knows that the strange verb “to be” means more simply “to breathe”. . . . The lungs know this secret as well as any can know it; that the inward and outward depths partake of the same mystery. (Abram, 2010, p. 39)

Abram very powerfully portrayed not only what it means to be a human animal but what it means to draw closer to the living world and feel our elemental kinship. Abram has written for ecologists, naturalists, psychologists, and it seems anyone that is interested in re-shaping what it means to be involved in our natural world. My work also aspires to reawaken the human animal that Abram described and recall its connection to the earth. There are many ways that this remembering can happen, and I hope to give an ecopsychological account of a re-remembering through connection with Equus. After all, to interact with horses, you must also involve yourself with nature in a most intimate way. What I find most relevant about Abram’s work in relation to my own is the simple reverence for what is and how this is presented in an embodied way through language.

But an appreciation for the state of things as they are is not always how humans relate to the world. As DeMayo (2009) explained, “the relationship we humans have with the world around us is predicated on rearranging the environment to fit our needs and desires. Horses, by contrast, survive by continually adapting and readapting to fit into their setting” (cited in Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009, p. 152). Such a concept may seem not only foreign, but also rather bothersome, and incredibly difficult for humans to learn and appreciate. DeMayo linked together the facts that “because horses by their evolutionary heritage claim only the ground where they stand, their relationship to the world around them is very different from ours” (p. 152). Horses have a lot to say when it comes to ecopsychology if we are willing to listen and to let go of the hubristic idea that consciousness is a uniquely human enterprise.

The book *Ecotherapy: Healing with Nature in Mind* (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009), draws upon a plentitude of ways to approach nature with the intention of healing our disconnect to our own innate wisdom and the natural world. Situating itself in the project of ecopsychology, the collaboration of voices in the book speak to the need within psychology to incorporate a theory and praxis that involves a larger story of self as it is immersed in nature, as nature. Such stories of deep transformation and healing provide a different way of understanding the cause of our suffering. But as Edwards and Buzzel warned, such understanding is not without great cost, because “once we’re awake, the problem is full-blown in our consciousness. It’s right in our face. We truly understand that we cannot escape the reality of our individual and collective situation” (cited in Buzzel & Chalquist, 2009, p. 125). Stepping down from the hero’s mount, we can finally see the great cost of our heroic individualism. The combined work involved in this book

speaks directly to the culture of psychologists who see the direct correlation between suffering and the ways in which we relate to, experience, and think about nature. The relevance of this book to my work lies in its articulation of symptoms that have emerged and continue to worsen from our neglect to include nature and animals in the practice of psychology.

Reaching back further to a time when the psychic and physical distance between animal and human was essentially nonexistent, Calvin Luther Martin (1992) mused in his book *In the Spirit of the Earth*, that “the animal connection—or disconnection, as it now more truthfully is—may hold a key to understanding my own vague, perhaps distinctively male, sense of dissociation from the natural world” (p. 9). Martin provided a compelling and incredibly thorough overview of the complicated web of events that he claims may have led to this disconnection. As a historian, his work fills in the gaps of other ecopsychological writings in the places where a more comprehensive view of our past serves to better situate us in this present ecopsychological conundrum.

Martin exposed the often assumed attribution of the separation between humans and nature not as being solely Cartesian, Western, or Christian. Martin (1992) claimed, “the intellectual and ideological contours of Western civilization were derived mainly from these several Mediterranean traditions, the Judeo-Christian-Moslem and the Greco-Roman.” He determined that “each of these traditions has taken pains to disarticulate, in all senses of the word, the animal and plant realms, along with a substantial portion of the human race” (pp. 31-32). From the vantage point of a more comprehensive framework of a historical ecopsychology, I was more prepared to avoid a common misfortune of

simplifying and playing a blame game of a specific time, place, people, or culture where our disconnect to nature, and essentially to ourselves, was born.

His ideas support some of the foundational philosophies of my own, in the way that he worked through the issues of human separation from nature not by means of a call to arms for action, but by a calling for imagination to remember a truer history in which nature is a part. “All other stories—unpossessed by place, including not having been, literally, taught by place—are on the one hand a theft and on the other epistemological, ontological, and phenomenological nonsense” (Martin, 1992, p. 116). The roots of knowledge that are grown from place, reach deep into the earth, to a place where the silence opens up for the voices of the ancestors to be heard.

But before there was ecotherapy, ecopsychology, equine therapy, or wilderness therapy as it is termed today . . . there was Jung. I imagine if he were still alive, it may seem a sad state of affairs to him that we feel we need such practices within psychology for a way of life that should come naturally. How odd it is that ecopsychology has the task of working out what it might be that has gone so awry between humans and nature in the Western world and that we have even come to think of ourselves separately. Then again, maybe Jung would not be surprised at psychology’s attempts to articulate what he already felt the weight of during his life on this earth. Jung (2002) indeed admonished us that “we need more psychology. We need more understanding of human nature, because the only real danger that exists is man himself. He is the great danger, and we are pitifully unaware of it” (p. 174).

The Earth has a Soul: The Nature Writings of C. G. Jung (Jung, 2002) were where I first fell in love with the idea of ecopsychology. I was comforted to find that Jung

was concerned with such things as our natural world and that his mind wandered beyond psychotherapy and mandalas and into his back yard. What was so illuminating about this work is that it provided me with a linkage between the experience of the horse-human interaction within nature, how this relates to our inner nature, and the way the two intermingle and co-create experience. It is clear in this selection of Jung's writing the ultimate importance he places on an actual engagement with our natural world. In this way, my work is supported in its parallel claim of urgency in remembering our connection to nature through the engagement of a trans-species relationship.

These writings were a constant reminder that my work is important. There is a particular passage in this book, which after I read it for the first time, immediately imbued my work, my life, with a new profounder meaning than I had before experienced. The words of Jung came booming off the page as if he wrote them for me, and spoke so truthfully to the beginnings of my life, and the purpose of my work. This passage continues to carry me through the mysteries of my experiences with Equus:

She has looked into the eyes of the animal, and so the animal soul has gone into her. She has been united with the animal, with the deepest part of the collective unconscious, and that is an unforgettable experience which will cling to her and which will cause inevitably a tremendous conflict in her life. This, you will probably say, is a most deplorable effect, but if you don't suffer from such a conflict, it is that you are unconscious of it; for whether you have experienced it consciously or not, it is there. . . . After such an experience, you know what you are up against. You know that you feel the animal in yourself just as much as the cultural man, you know the conflict comes from the fact that you want to be an animal just as much as a spiritual being. And then you have nobody to blame when you are in such a predicament. (Jung, 2002, p. 173)

This conflict that Jung spoke to is precisely where I entered into the horse-human relationship. The work of coming closer to Equus became the work of coming closer to the conflict, to the collective unconscious, and to the place from which the seeds of a

soulful life wait in the dark and moistened soil of psyche. Jung's nature writings seem to make evident his investment in understanding psychic life in the broader context of the natural world. His work nourished the direction of my own, as I wished to amplify this conflict that he spoke to and give voice to the woman in whom the animal soul has entered.

In the Sioux tradition, "men and women who had received special consideration from the birds and animals were called 'dreamers,' which meant that they could call upon these animals for assistance" (Deloria, 2009, p. 126). The relationships between humans and animals in the Sioux tradition were taken very seriously. I found validation of my own dreaming experiences in Deloria's description that for the Sioux, "a good bit of the animal relationship . . . originated in dreams in which the human was expected to obey the messages they received" (p. 126). How different would our Western psychology be if we treated our trans-species relationships and animal dreams in this way? If we shifted the paradigm towards a more reciprocal consideration when it came to our animal friends, in the dream and waking worlds, imagine how we might be able to change our ecological situation.

Although Deloria's (2009) book *C.G. Jung and the Sioux Traditions* does not hold itself to be specifically an ecopsychological work, the comparisons made between Jung's writings and the traditions of the Sioux have major ecopsychological implications. Deloria did a masterful job of weaving together the two belief systems and by doing so shed a light on both the downfalls and saving graces of Jung's psychology. Some of the most stimulating writing in the book revolved around nature, dreaming and visions, and relationship to animals. What I found particularly useful about this work was the

intersecting and departing points so clearly sketched out between Jungian psychology and Sioux Indian traditions, that is the contrasts and contours between Western and non-Western ways of relating with the natural and the animal world.

It is thus in the places of disparity that my attention was called to my own ignorance towards indigenous cultures, thus forcing me to grapple with my own cultural biases. In the spaces of convergence between Jung's psychology and the Sioux way of life, I found ideas that long for a new language. Unlike myself, and Western culture in a general sense, the Sioux traditions and beliefs were grown from a life lived wholly in the natural world, devoid of technology. As much as we sometimes may long to simply borrow the beliefs of indigenous people who seemed to have it perfectly figured out and balanced, we would only be doing ourselves, and our environment, a massive disservice. Because the truth is, that is not our world, no matter how much we might imagine into it or lust after it. This romanticizing and idealizing of indigenous cultures is not immune to our illusions. We might imagine that indigenous peoples have always maintained harmonious and egalitarian relationships with animals while in fact their cultures are no more immune to the horrific acts against animals that speciesism breeds. We need our own language, our own experiential understandings of how to achieve the balance that we imagine might be possible.

When Jung used the word *primitive*, it was in reference to other than Western cultures. Deloria showed the conflicting uses of the word by Jung to describe positive and negative states of psychological being. In its negative context, the word served to degrade indigenous people and serve as an example of a psychological state that was imbedded in an undifferentiated chaos. Deloria (2009) clarified that from this perspective and use of

the word, “the primitive’s mind is variously described as the condition from which mankind emerged or as the psychological disaster into which the patient is possibly falling.” Furthermore, “in certain instances, the primitive psyche can even be regarded as the beginning of some psychological problem” (p. 33).

Jung’s writings about “primitives” certainly fell in line with the beliefs of his time, but not entirely. In fact, his intuition seemed often to get the better of him, bringing forth ideas that he himself did not even seem so sure about. What is important, I think, was that he allowed his intuition to consider that there was a meeting ground, an in-between, a balance to be struck between the existence that he knew, and that of the primitive. I pick up on some of Jung’s intuitions towards what he would call primitive life with the optimism of being able to articulate a language for those of us who yearn for a more primitive life as it involves the natural world, but must simultaneously and unavoidably confront the realities and illusions in which we find ourselves.

Trans-species psychology. “The model of the trans-species psyche explicitly names the interpenetration of human and animal domains in parity absent the assumption of ascendance” (Bradshaw & Watkins, 2006, pp. 3-4). Within this trans-species model of psychology lives layers upon layers of unanswered questions about how our current psychological models operate under a much larger structure of oppression. The ethical considerations that come along with this often times painful understanding, are what Gay Bradshaw has committed herself to confronting through her work as an ecologist and psychologist.

Bradshaw and Watkins (2006) made clear that the “intent is to articulate a trans-species psychology—a theory and praxis—in which the interdependence and well-being

of humans and animals can be understood in parity, in the language, concepts, and practice of psychology” (p. 3). Although it sounds a clear enough task, the gravity and difficulty of such a commitment cannot be underestimated. Through Bradshaw’s many writings on the subject, it is apparent that the project of trans-species psychology cannot be taken on without simultaneously realizing the bigger story of a trans-species liberation psychology. “Humanity is challenged to re-think almost every aspect of modern culture. We are charged with a re-creation of ethics and reasons and ways of knowledge-making that reflects our understanding that animals are fully sentient beings” (Bradshaw & Watkins, 2010, p. 1).

It was within my own research that I strove to contribute to the bigger story, the story that re-members a way of being human that is intrinsically linked to the lives and well being of every species. Although my work may one day evolve into a more explicit trans-species liberation psychology, I feel that I must first be able to fully recognize the story that I am currently living with the horses. Sadly enough, many organizations that believe that they are contributing to the cause of animal rights and protection may in fact be doing just the opposite. Without first being able to fully understand the intricate and fragile interconnections, we may unknowingly do more harm than good. I have experienced, and participated in, this unfortunate contradiction first hand when I worked for a brief period at an equine therapy facility aimed at providing therapeutic encounters for mostly autistic children and adults. Although the program claimed to run their operations from the foundational belief that the well being of their 20 horses was their first priority, this was far from the everyday reality of the lives of these animals.

My reason for giving this example next to the articulation of Bradshaw's work is that it took me several months to start seeing the neglect and abuse that were right in front of my eyes from the very beginning. It is deeply unnerving to realize our capacity to be blind to the things that we wish not to see, because when we see, then we have responsibility. Bradshaw (2010a) saw powerful potential in the ways in which "psychology, and in particular those schools of thought such as depth psychology that are implicitly philosophical and existential, provide a synoptic, bird's eye view to examine our past projections—what we thought animals were—and deconstruct them" (p. 1). Bradshaw's work provided insight into the deeper ethical implications that come along with working with animals, and particularly working with animals from a psychological perspective. Her explicit languaging that braids depth psychology into a new trans-species psychology expanded the meanings and impact of the research into areas beyond psychological import.

Linda Kohanov's (2001) book, *The Tao of Equus*, written for horse-people and equine therapists, communicated the experiences of horse and human in a poetic and yet very accessible way. In a language that braids itself through psychological metaphor, dream images, trans-species-communications, intuitions, and an embodied voice of experiential happenings, Kohanov allowed for the representation of the mystery of the horse-human interaction to unfold in a spontaneous, yet grounded way. She positioned her work within a depth psychological structure (whether this is intentional or not she did not say) that inherently expands and challenges egocentric modes of relating to and being in the horse-human interaction.

Contributing to a very deep understanding of trans-species relationships, Kohanov (2001) drew upon not only her personal story but also the stories and experiences of other horse-human relationships and writings that support these experiences. For my particular purposes, her writing was a foundation from which I could understand the inner workings of the trans-species relationship between horse and human specifically. As other trans-species psychology and communication writings may speak very broadly to *any* trans-species relationship, Kohanov focused and deepened into the horse-human dynamic and its incredibly beautiful and unique ways of expression. Intensifying her ideas of the horse-human interaction with the depth of more explicit psychological understanding and a much more developed sense of ethical responsibility when it comes to giving voice to horses, seemed to be a fitting complement to the ongoing project of trans-species psychology.

Like Kohanov (2001), it was also my experience that “over time, these four-legged sages led me into a nonverbal realm so far off the beaten track that my most basic assumptions about the nature of reality were called into question” (p. 39). Like being bucked off the back of a bronco, the painful realization of certain illusions that were once thought to be unmovable realities, sends a jolt of shock up the spine and straight to the center of one’s being. In the same moment a gift is being given and an initiation begins. Kohanov illustrated through her own experiences, what it means to cross this threshold into the mysterious world of Equus.

In formulating for myself what it means to be a horsewoman and an ecopsychologist, I often found myself getting carried away in the poetic language of authors like Kohanov and Abram. Stretching my wings like Pegasus, the horse spirit in

me pours “through an electric darkness that sparkles with promises of many colors, plunging into a great womb of emptiness that dreams the universe” (Kohanov, 2001, p. 261). I constantly reminded myself of the danger that lay in romanticizing the horse-human relationship and the projection of a perfect Garden of Eden onto nature. Allowing my work to be braided within the fibers of the dream, the origins of this earthly realm, and the airy intellect of such an exercise as writing a dissertation, was no simple task. The temptation to relieve myself of the responsibility of walking this fragile line that seems to be ever shifting and return to nature in a Rousseauian manner was ever present. How guileless it would be to perpetually live in unity with my animal soul, to ponder the endless beauty of nature, to head for the hills with nothing but poetry and blissful wonder!

The tension held. I deepened into my work with the horses, the dreams, and the sense of this animal soul living through me and through the eyes of everyone I meet. My place within the work, within the world, shifted to a space of in-between as my subtle body grew with that of the work. My sense of vocation as a depth psychologist and a horsewoman deepened its roots, stretching down into the earth, drinking from a wellspring of long forgotten wisdom. I felt the expansion of this new awareness, this reconnection to my animal soul within my body; my rib cage spreading out, my breath slowing, my skin electrified, my toes grabbing at the earth, and my palms opening to the sky. “This in-between primal matter is both embodied intelligence and physical body, partaking of both inspired metaphor and physical anatomy . . . soul stretched painfully between eternal abstraction and decaying flesh” (Bosnak, 2007, p. 76).

This attempt on the part of soul to simultaneously be in the realm of spirit and of flesh is precisely the nature of Hempfling's (2010) work. Being introduced to his work for the first time was something akin to what I imagine finding a guru would be like. His writing and demonstrations beautifully portrayed what can happen between horse and human, when humans are willing to be honest with themselves and approach the world of Equus with soulful intention on behalf of not just the horse and human involved, but on behalf of the state of the world. Hempfling did an astounding job of connecting the state of the biculture of horses and humans to the state of the world. His work supported my own in its desire to offer humans another way to relate to horses and thus everything and everyone else in their environment.

He challenged horse people to turn their concerns and inquiries on themselves instead of their horses, calling for the necessity of psychological clarity in the pursuit of a meaningful, safe, and honest relationship with horses. For me, Hempfling's work is the epitome of what horsemanship should aspire to. I relied heavily on his practical application of a spiritual approach to horsemanship. The linchpin of Hempfling's work is an awareness of one's psychological, spiritual, and bodily state. He supported the notion that if you do not know yourself first, you can never have a meaningful relationship with horses.

I drew upon works like that of Budiansky (1997) to ground my romanticism in a more cultural-historical and scientific understanding of horses. Reaching entirely outside the circle of depth psychology, his book *The Nature of Horses: Their Evolution, Intelligence and Behaviour* provided a grounding perspective to my spiritual approach. This work afforded me some authority to write an interdisciplinary work that can make

connections between the world of horse biology and the horse-human culture from a historical perspective and depth psychological perspective. In order to know my subject, I had to be able to approach it from many different angles and be able to draw upon the knowledge of more scientific works such as this one. Although this single work by Budiansky does not lend me complete authority in the sphere of horse physiology, history, and behavior, it assisted in rounding out and complementing my psychological perspective with a thorough understanding of basic equine biology and history.

Budiansky also provided insight into the makings of the horse-human culture as we know it today. Reaching back to the beginnings of the domestication of the horse around 6,000 years ago, Budiansky painted the picture of how and why humans and horses came to be involved in domestic relationship.

Raising animals in captivity was something that people did in desperation, not triumph; it was the response of people living on the fringes of ancient society, in the most resource-poor areas. . . .

Likewise, it was in the remote, resource-poor reaches of an animal's natural range that it was most likely to be forced into intimate contact with humans. Herds that could no longer make a living in the familiar niche that millions of years of evolution had adapted them to exploit began to seek out a new niche. . . . This niche may also have exploited the natural care-giving instincts of humans toward animals that exhibit what animal behaviorists call care-soliciting behavior. (1997, p. 38)

He gave evidence to the theory that horses were “snatched from the jaws of extinction by a single act of human daring and inspiration in a remote corner of a barely civilized world” (p. 36). This remote corner was the region north of the Black Sea in what is today the Ukraine (pp. 38-39). Giving context to the tamed and domesticated horses of our present day is ethically necessary to a complete understanding this particular trans-species relationship.

Literature Relevant to the Researcher's Theoretical Approach

Phenomenology. The theoretical umbrella under which my numerous research approaches huddle is phenomenology. Merleau-Ponty (1945) and his extensive writings on phenomenology support the overall intention of my work to hint at essences rather than explain them away. To describe experience is to invite, to allow for possibility, and to remain open for imagination. Phenomenology, as explained by Merleau-Ponty, beautifully combines theory, philosophy, and practice as a way of entering into experience through differing levels of awareness. Phenomenology is “the search for a philosophy which shall be a ‘rigorous science’, but it also offers an account of space, time and the world as we ‘live’ them” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. vii.). My work is sustained by this philosophical understanding of experience as lived by a subjective perspective. As with many of my other theoretical approaches, I expanded the applications of phenomenology into the context of a trans-species inspired process of psychological transformation, in which the intersubjective experiences could be approached through the gentility of phenomenological inquiry.

Imaginal inquiry. I found that Romanyshyn’s book, *The Wounded Researcher* (2007), skillfully formulated a way of approaching research through imaginal inquiry that infuses soulfulness into every aspect of depth psychological research. In allowing soul to take precedence in our work, we cannot help but be transformed. This way of engaging research turns the process into one of equal involvement and creation. The researcher is no longer the only one asking questions and making inquiries. Romanyshyn (2007) suggested that “perhaps we are, as researchers, here just for saying what the work wants

to be said. Possibly we are, as researchers, called to be spokespersons for the unfinished business of the ancestors in the work” (p. 230).

This way of approaching my work held great significance because of the nature of the horse-human relationship. Throughout the work I was consistently required to remain open to what the horses were trying to say, a most difficult task indeed, that required a humble heart and a quiet, patient mind. Through an imaginal approach, as described by Romanyshyn, I was able to step into the space between horse and human, a place that requires a different way of being, a way of being that is able to imagine into possibilities rather than finding ways to rationalize experience. Imaginal inquiry funded my efforts to use creativity in various forms as a way of understanding and communication.

Embodied inquiry. In the act of re-membering the horse-human relationship, an embodied theoretical structure became the bones of the work. I relied on the work of Bosnak (2007) and Todres (2007) in creating an embodied approach to my work, grounding me in a way of researching and knowing through the embodied interactions between the horses and myself. Expanding the ideas of these two authors into the realm of trans-species research was simultaneously exhilarating and complex.

I appreciate Bosnak’s approach to embodied work specifically for the way in which he was able to articulate the bridge between body, image, imagination, and dream; something that I also attempted to accomplish in the research. Like Bosnak (2007), I “take *dreaming, not waking, as my paradigm for creative imagination*” (p. 9). He shifted our centralized ideas of intelligence back into the body, reviving a lost perspective. In doing so, he brought the body into the research process as a valid way of knowing and experiencing the world. Although he did not speak specifically to the role of embodiment

in the context of trans-species research, his theoretical approach lends deep understanding to the importance of the inclusion of embodiment and embodied imagination in depth psychological work.

Similarly, Todres placed great importance on the role of embodied practices in qualitative research. He approached his methodological structure through the ideas of phenomenology, infusing embodied ideas with those of phenomenological tenants. What I also very much value about Todres' work are his intersections of embodiment, spirituality, and freedom. The idea of freedom in the context of embodiment, as complex and as relative as it may be, holds a peculiar place in my work. With the encouragement of Todres' I was able to draw connections in spaces that desperately need a new way of languaging. Todres (2007) said "in granting things their free possibilities, we find a freedom at the foundation of our own identity; a freedom that is not merely the freedom to choose or decide but the ontological freedom that provides space around our premature self-definition" (p. 131). This theoretical approach to the research reminded me to remain open to possibilities that are not attached to the ways in which I perceive myself, and consequently bridged my ideas of embodiment beyond the flesh and into an understanding of true freedom.

Autoethnography and narrative inquiry. Nevertheless, our self-perception and unavoidable subjectivity will always be a part of the research process. In creating an autoethnographic piece of work, I intended not only to claim my subjectivity as part of the research process but also to use my narrative approaches to contextualize a subject that is far from objective in its nature. Ellis (as cited in Autoethnography, 2008) very clearly gave voice to what autoethnography entails as a methodological approach to

research. Providing me with the basic structure of an autoethnographic methodology, Ellis left room for creativity and varied expressions of autoethnographic approaches, including the intersections of poetic and narrative approaches. Autoethnographic texts are therefore not limited to written story but include poetry, image, embodied descriptions, and dream text. As autoethnography implies, the ethnos of this work is that of the culture of horses and humans in the context of a shared Western history. It is from this history that current day horsemanship has developed, and it is from within the boundaries of this story that I navigate and attempt to step out of. As we experience the world through a multitude of lenses, autoethnography logically welcomes a colorful array of perspective.

My greatest ambition for this work was, in the end, to convey the essences, the felt experiences, the vibrations of kinship, and the beauty of the mystery. For this reason, the way in which I present my work became a philosophical deliberation in itself. My theoretical approach extends beyond how I went about the research and into the thoughtful ways in which it is presented, as experience and not conclusion. If the moonlit web of meaning that I am spinning disappears in the sunlight of stark language, then all is lost. If I wished to express to my reader the silken threads that bring my work together, it had to be in a way that paralleled my approach to the topic.

As a form of autoethnography, narrative inquiry becomes relevant in its focus on the importance of representation of the narratives of the research participants. As I continually try to hone my skills at communicating with horses, narrative inquiry reminded me of the ethical importance of self-reflection in the process of compiling narratives beyond my own experiences. Narrative inquiry has reshaped qualitative research with its “close attention to experience as a narrative phenomenon and its

emphasis on relational engagement that places relational ethics at the heart of inquiry” (Narrative Inquiry, 2008, p. 541). Complementing and deepening the approach of autoethnography, narrative inquiry makes room for multiple voices and stories. In the field of the horse-human relationship, the ethical considerations underpinning narrative inquiry have never been needed so badly.

Intuitive inquiry. Anderson’s (2004) writing on intuitive inquiry as a methodological approach brought a sense of trust in letting the work come to me, as opposed to encroaching on the work through scientific paradigms. Intertwining an articulation of heart knowing and intuition, Anderson encouraged research that is intersubjective in nature, falling somewhere between the researcher and their topic. This sense of in between that Anderson points to found its parallel with the aim of my inquiries into the space between Equus and myself. Anderson explained, “for both the artist and the intuitive researcher, expression of art and science is found in the ‘in between’—not me, or it, but between my inspiration and the data and research participants” (p. 308). A theoretical approach to the research that locates itself in between is one that proves useful in a field that requires courage to step off the trodden path.

Chapter 3 Methods and Approaches

Research Approach

The array of research approaches used in this study situates themselves against the background of a more encompassing philosophy of phenomenological inquiry. Relying on several directions from which I could approach my subject allowed for a process of convergence and crystallization of the data. Collectively, the research approaches aimed to describe and articulate, not explain or rationalize. This common thread that weaves them together is described most aptly as phenomenological inquiry, in which the intention is to describe experiences and approach essences, rather than naively to claim complete knowledge and mastery of an ultimately unknowable reality. Because even if we were able to determine such a thing as the essence of the horse-human relationship, “it would be from that moment arrayed before us and stripped of its mystery. It would cease to exist as a thing at the very moment when we thought to possess it” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 271). Therefore the research approaches honor the ultimately mysterious nature of my topic.

Merleau-Ponty (1945) supposed that “reflection does not withdraw from the world towards the unity of consciousness as the world’s basis; it steps back to watch the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire” (p. xv). It is this way of reflecting, not scientific objectivity, that Merleau-Ponty suggested “slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice; it alone is consciousness of the world because it reveals that world as strange and paradoxical” (p. xv). And in the strange and paradoxical there are no certain answers, no definitions, no expectations;

Being then becomes a moment-to-moment experience in which essences may be sensed but not completely grasped.

To approach the research through imaginal inquiry, as articulated by Romanyshyn (2007), was to direct my curiosities to the in-between realm that connects horse and human in the many nuanced ways in which this relationship chooses to express itself. “The term imaginal was coined by Henri Corbin to differentiate a region of reality that is intermediate between sense and intellect and that mediates between them” (p. 81), Romanyshyn explains. Through imaginal inquiry, I was able to sink further into this in-between. Romanyshyn conveyed that this in-between is “the world of soul, which has its own ontological status as a domain of reality between the domains of matter and mind. It can be accessed through the imagination, as the imagination is understood to be ‘an organ of understanding’ ” (p. 81).

Imaginal inquiry as an approach to the research required a shift in egocentric modes of understanding and being. Imaginal inquiry runs a parallel course with the purpose of this study, aligning itself with the overall goal of my work for a necessary shift or decentering of the ego. “An imaginal approach is a shift from an ego perspective on research to the soul’s perspective. Within this approach to research, a researcher is in service to something other than himself or herself” (Romanyshyn, 2007, p. 82). Self-assertion is replaced with a deep listening, and the ego shifts into a role of service to a larger story beyond the human self. It is in this process of expansion that a re-remembering begins to surface.

As the ego and the isolated intellect remember ways of relating and knowing that involve imagination, body, soul, seasons, senses, and animal, the means of approach

organically shift as well. Along with the imagination, the body re-awakens to the world, electrified with the freedom to once again participate outside of its prescribed postures and habits. Developing the research through embodied inquiry, as first expressed and fleshed out by Merleau-Ponty (1945), the body is re-membered as “the ‘place’ where intimate understanding of both experience and language happen” (as cited in Todres, 2007, p. 5). As discussed previously, the bodies of horse and human necessarily become a central way of communicating and understanding across species, thus an embodied approach was not only logical but also indispensable in building relationships.

Embodied inquiry not only directed the way in which I approached the research but also bleeds over into how I present my experiences. Todres (2007) contextualized this approach as a “tradition [that] would ask for a way of communicating our psychological descriptions that can retain their concrete and embodied occasions” He continued to explain that this embodied approach also “wishes to return texture to structure, and this involves readers in forms of understanding that cannot be separated from aesthetic participation” (p. 9). In keeping with my intention to inspire my reader to question their own ways of being in this more than human world, embodied inquiry allows the research to demonstrate another possibility of how to be human.

In the expansion of the imagining of a new way of being and becoming more human, intuition is also vital. Without it, all of our other senses become dull and eventually begin to deaden. Intuitive inquiry as another interwoven approach to my work reawakened a sense of basic trust in a kind of knowing that happens in the moment of experience, rather than in the afterthought of intellectualization. Anderson (2004) reminded his readers that “deep listening and witnessing to intuition in research has the

capacity to unfold into new ways of theorizing and envisioning that are closer to lived experience than do the rationalistic styles that dominate much of world culture and scientific discourse” (p. 335).

In a world that has become too predictable, intuition as a way of knowing has simultaneously become less valuable, and sadly it has also come to be seen as less valid and reliable. Reinvesting trust in my intuitive sense was a difficult yet necessary practice in the realization of this research process. An intuitive approach strengthens and validates not only the meanings we make of our experiences but also serves to re-member a more complete image of being human in the world.

My work in the end is the story of my experiences with the horses as they present themselves through the varying realities and layers of psyche. Through narrative inquiry I accept and embrace the idea of my subjective experiences as valid ways of knowing. Weaving autoethnography and cultural poesis together as my narrative approach, I invite my reader into the story, into the mystery that I wish to evoke. As Ellis (as cited in Autoethnography, 2008) reminded, autoethnographic narrative “longs to be used rather than analyzed, to be told and retold rather than theorized and settled, to offer lessons for further conversation rather than undebatable conclusions, and to substitute the companionship of intimate detail for the loneliness of abstracted facts” (p. 50). Through language I conjure the human animal, the animal soul within that has the capacity to navigate between realms. When speaking of the human animal and the way we display ourselves Hillman (1997a) claimed, “speech is our body, speech is our beauty, speech is our shape. . . . the return to the animal is a return to the poetic urge” (p. 12).

Research Methodology

The methods that germinated from the research approaches proved to be very subtle, unimposing, and spontaneous to the evolving interactions between myself, the horses, and the research process in general. Because of the organic and gentle nature of the methods, they also proved to be incredibly revealing. Using a multitude of various methods was like being able to tune into differing vibrational waves of psyche. After all, “the psyche’s method is typically more labyrinthine. At the very least, the psyche will continue to invite people to crawl beneath their certainties and view the work from an underworld perspective” (Coppin & Nelson, 2005, p. 92). The methods became a means to be in service to the work, not to control it.

Using photography and images from dreams as imaginal methods allowed for a space where the intellect could melt into the imagination. I use photography to invite the readers into their own imagining of the meanings of this trans-species engagement. Photography and image are used as tools to encourage the imagination to approach the essence of the horse-human relationship, to call forth the archetypal configuration of Equus within the psyche, and to make image the connecting bridge between the research and the representation. Within or behind the image, whether in photography or in the dream, is an archetypal figure or pattern that brings us closer to the phenomena and further away from scientific objectification. Images allow a deepening into archetypal patterns that can enrich the understanding of innate ties to Equus and nature.

My aim in using photography was not to illustrate any specific point made in the text, but to use the images to supplement my writing, allowing them to speak for themselves and infuse the work with a sense of silent repose from theoretical

interpretation. Speaking to photography as it can be used in research, Leavy (2009) suggested that the images can be used “for accessing subjugated voices long prohibited from participation in collective historical representation” (p. 219). In this way, photography actually allowed for the voices of the horses to infuse this work on yet another level of representation. As much as I could in a one-dimensional text, I wanted the photographs to embody the research, literally bringing the bodies of the horses into the work. What became incredibly interesting was the experience of taking the photos. It was increasingly obvious that the horses determined when and where they would allow me to capture their image, thus communicating to me through the *act* of my applying this method. This became apparent to me in instances when I wanted to photograph them, but they made it clear that they did not want to be photographed by backing into me, running off, pinning their ears, and being overall nonconsensual. The times when they did allow me to capture their image, it seemed I was invited in by their calmness, their receptivity to my close presence and their seemingly intentional displays, which I believe can be sensed through the photographs.

Turning to the image for representation, I am reminded that it is believed that animals communicate with humans through images. Williams (2003) provided countless stories of receiving intuitive communication from animals through mental pictures or images sent from the animal that she was working with. Although the mental image or picture is not the only way that animals and humans can intuitively communicate, it is indeed a very potent example of the power of images to serve as connecting fibers in a trans-species engagement. Grandin and Johnson (2009) also instructed that “to understand animals you need to get away from language and think in pictures, sounds,

touch sensations, smells, and tastes” (p. 123). The more I began to embody image, the more I saw myself reflected in image, the more I re-membered myself as a part of nature and not apart from it.

To conjure a dream image through language is a precarious task indeed and one that requires a certain gentility of the imagination, especially when it comes to dream animals. As another method of my imaginal approach, dream images in my work serve as a silky connective web that draws everything else in. Like the natural horse, my dream horses can also spook easily at the slightest sense of possible threat to their being. As a method, the work with my dream images became a practice, a means through which I was able to draw nearer to my natural waking world horses and instantaneously to the connective fibers between worlds. Hillman (1997b) reminded that dream animals “belong to both nature and imagination at the same time” (p. 8). In this way the dream provides insight into the in-between.

There are so many ways in which the body, of horse and human, dreaming and waking and in-between, can be used as a means of communication and clear understanding. The embodied methods applied in my work were inspired by general horsemanship methods but deepened and more consciously noted through the practices of depth psychology. Taking my already developed sense and understanding of the importance of body language between horse and human, I turned to Klaus Ferdinand Hempfling to strengthen and fine-tune my embodied methods. Hempfling (2010) poetically described the interplay of body between horse and human when answering the question of ‘what is body language?’:

What does a bird know about the size of the world
when he flies?

What does a horse know about his strength
when the wind plays in his mane?

When the soul dances with my body
there is no 'why', 'what for' and 'where to?'
All of the answers can be found immediately
in the movements themselves.

I don't do, I experience.

I don't try, I perceive.

I don't worry, I'm astounded.

That is how the invisible shapes the visible,
moves, renews and changes it.

The body becomes the authentic and
diverse instrument of the self-aware person;
a sensitive way of expressing their individual personality.

That is my understanding of body language. (p. 44)

The embodied methods of my study included paying close attention to the bodily reactions of the horses as a reflection of my own bodily movements and vice versa. With horses, something as subtle as the twitch of an ear can hold an abundance of meaning and can speak directly to the situation at hand. This type of nonverbal communication through the bodies of horse and human is the primary way in which relationship is developed and can also be damaged. I took careful note of my embodied reactions, some instant and some lingering throughout the rest of my day, to gain insight into the intersubjective field between Equus and myself.

It is also important to note that my embodied methods were also employed in my dreaming world. Many times through my dreams I would gain experience and understanding as to how better to use my body as a means of communication with the horses, thus creating a connection between my waking and dreaming body. This interplay between dreaming body and waking body dropped me into a much deeper relationship with the work. Hillman (1979) understood that "this is not to call the dream a bridge, but it is to say that there is an operation, which we call dreaming, that makes the heroic ego a

more subtle body, enabling it to become a free soul” (p. 107). Indeed, it is through the freedom of the dreaming body that the waking body becomes infused with imagination and fluid movement.

As my inquiries reached into the night world of the dream and the unconscious, my intuitive approach lent me insight into the invisible. Through the methods of dream work, deep engagement with the unconscious, and amplification of material gleaned from this in-between, the work took on a new and more fluid motion that dissolved illusory boundaries between what psychology commonly languages as compartmentalized psychic states. “Intuition is bewildering. Intuition is a way of getting lost, a way of stepping off the path that thinking has made for the work. . . . so that we might be surprised. . . by what seduces our intuition from the margins of the work” (Romanyshyn, 2007, p. 295). It is certainly in the margins of the material that readily presents itself that psyche lies in wait, as in the old saying that nature loves to hide.

Certainly it is obvious, even at this early juncture that the work with the more elusive layers of psyche in my study is of ultimate importance, as they should be in any psychological endeavor. The emphasis I place on dreaming as a method of research cannot be underestimated. I take Romanyshyn’s (2007) advice to “dream alongside the work” (p. 233.) To dream as a method, as a way into the work, is to acknowledge and step into the autonomy of the work. In fact some of the best guiding advice I have received as to how to go about the research was accessed through a transference dialogue⁷ directed at the purposes of my study. In this imagining I was told by a young

⁷ Transference dialogues will be discussed under “Research Methods.”

Indian man, as I laid my head on a sleeping horse's neck, "you must dream with the horse." This proved to be the most paradoxical yet simple wisdom for my work.

Owning and embracing the autonomy through which I ultimately filter all of my experiences, autoethnography, field notes, and the process of writing are methods through which I merged with the work. Ellis (as cited in *Autoethnography*, 2008) perceived that the reflexive ethnographer "ideally use(s) all of their senses, bodies, moments, feelings, and whole being; they use the self to learn about the other" (p. 50). The reflexive experiences of the self become a primary research tool. Approaching the relationship between horse and human in this way, the illusion of ultimate objectivity is willingly left in the dust of thundering hooves. It was within the personal experience that I sought vibrations of the impersonal, the collective, and the transcendent. Corbett (2007) remarked that it is precisely "in such moments, the world and the personal self seem to flow into each other, both part of a greater unity, with no sense of separation or personal identity" (p. 25). Within this greater unity, consciousness can be created and shared.

The individualized perspective merged with this greater unity can be heard through the medium of poetry. Stewart (2005) described the method of cultural poesis:

The writing gropes toward embodied affective experience . . . The writing is also a set of provocations in that it tries to cull attention to moments of legibility and emergence, to moments of impact (instead of to stable subjects), to models of agency that are far from simple or straightforward, to the vitality or animus of cultural poesis in the jump or surge of affect (rather than on the plane of finished representations), and to the still life—the moment when things resonate with potential and threat. (Stewart, 2008, p. 1027)

In this way poetry has the unique ability to blend together the mundane and the mystical, the realm between the gods and the flesh, shining a hazing light onto a middle path. Cultural poesis as a method in the research allowed me to expand my vision beyond

theoretical trappings and structural discourse. Opening my imagination to a different voice that can flow through me, such as the voice of the horses, I pay homage to the mystery at hand. Through cultural poesis, the points of contact between the horses and myself could be explored through poetic insight rather than assumed meanings. This method allowed for the creativity in ordinary experiences to come into focus.

Furthermore, it was through cultural poesis that I was able to explore the horse-human relationship through a cultural lens, giving cognizance to the shared history between the two. As I related to the horses in what at times felt to be a moment of pure being, I had to remember that there was a multitude of cultural layers that contextualized every interaction. Cultural poesis allowed me to approach these layers with a certain grace that only poetry can offer. Navigating through the cultural structures of Western horsemanship, the horse-human relationship within the 21st century, and the bicultural microcosm that was created between the horses and myself, poesis offered me an entry point into the emergence of the possibility of a new story between horse and human.

Participants

As the practice of horsemanship is imbedded in an economically goal oriented mind set, the buying and selling of horses makes it difficult to maintain continuous relationships with individual horses, and needless to say it makes it exceedingly difficult for horses to rely on having lifetime herd mates. This implies much more than the difficulty it caused in determining which horses I could include in the study, but these deeper issues will be explored further in my study.

With that being said, the individual horses that I observed and attempted to build relationships with made up a fluctuating herd of 15-20 horses, and myself. Although I

developed closer relationships with specific horses, as herd animals horses can really only be understood in the context of their herd family. Since I first involved myself in horse culture through my previous fieldwork in 2009, I have come to know many horses on many different levels and through some of the most unexpected circumstances. In autoethnographic style, I include much of my own subjective, embodied, and imaginal experience as ways of understanding and triangulation of collected data.

Although I did not conduct formal interviews with other people, I do include informal conversation as a part of the research. The woman who owns⁸ or rather takes care of many of the horses that I worked with has many years of experience with horses in a variety of contexts. She taught me much about domestic horse care, equine behavior, riding, wild horse culture, contemporary horse culture as it is socio-historically situated, and training methods in which patience is always her number one solution. Our conversations around horses occurred as a noticing of what was happening in the moment with the horse that we were working with. They are always conversations that are directed at the purpose of a better understanding of the horse's perspective so that our time spent with the horses is one of gentle collaboration and a developing empathy rather than self-assertion and coercion. Of all of the horse people that I have met, she is by far the most knowledgeable, gentle, and perceptive. Alongside these collaborative conversations, I also include the perspectives of three other people who have had shared with me their valuable experiences with horses.

⁸ Using the term "own" in this specific context is meant only to refer to the woman as caretaker of some of the horses I worked with. Although this word implies a power dynamic in horse-human relationships, and humans and animals in general, I wish to draw attention to this way of speaking about human animal relationships and simultaneously begin a questioning of this way of viewing our nonhuman relationships.

Research Procedures

Procedures for gathering data. The gathering and interpretation of the data spanned over a period of eight months. Throughout these months I spent at least five days a week, for several hours a day, with the horses. I participated with the herd and with individual horses through riding, ground exercises, general horse care, intuitive communication techniques, pasture meditation, and observation. I recorded the majority of my field notes immediately after my time spent with the horses. I have found from my previous research that taking field notes during a physical engagement with horses can actually be unsafe due to the distraction it causes and can take my attention away from a stance of a listening and observing participant.

In general, these forms of interacting with the horses carried the intention of coming closer to an articulation of a trans-species psyche and an eco-centric way of being. As it may be taken for granted, it is worth stating that all of these ways of being with the horses happened outside, in a more natural setting where I was able to attune my senses to feeling the direction of the wind, the temperature of the sun, the mood of the season, and the spirit of place. Basso (1996) linked this embodied sense of place with sense of self when he gathered that “for the self-conscious experience of place is inevitably a product and expression of the self whose experience it is, and therefore, unavoidably, the nature of that experience.” He went on to explain that “(its intentional thrust, its substantive content, its affective tones and colorings) is shaped at every turn by the personal and social biographies of those who sustain it” (p. 107). This is where the hinge between Jung’s ideas of individuation swings open into a new imagining of the process, which includes participation in a trans-species relationship in the context of the

natural world. Understanding my experiences with the horses in the pasture became revealing and reflective of the self, or my sense of self, that was experiencing it.

Acting as yet another filter through which we make meaning, “the body is intimately implicated in what things mean in that we live meanings through bodily participation in the world” (Todres, 2007, p. 33). When physically engaging with and attempting to meet on common ground with horses, the participation of the lived body is vital to understanding and communicating across species. The level of bodily awareness required in trans-species work goes beyond “thinking about your body.” I found that in order to receive the messages being given by the horses, it was important that I first take care of my body and have a consistent body practice, which for me is yoga. Over the years yoga has helped keep me connected with the being of my living, breathing, thinking, dreaming, flesh and bone body. Although my yoga has for a long time been a personal practice, its mention here I feel is necessary in order to grasp the fullness of what it means to have an embodied approach to research. I believe that it has to be more than an intellectual understanding of how to use embodied methods in research, but should rather be a way of everyday life. When I am aligned in this way, I can more readily use my body as a conduit of animal communication and understanding. Todres explained, “such an intimate, responsive knowing is felt as a whole and serves as a meaningful reference for words” (p. 33).

As mentioned before, the research was not confined to just the physical interactions with horses. The data was also saturated with the material of my dreams with horses. After nearly three years of being in deep relationship to this work, I am still amazed and humbled every morning that I wake with images of my dream horses. At this

point, I have probably had upwards of a thousand horse dreams, and horses do not seem to be leaving my dream realm anytime soon. On a collective level, Bernstein (2005) attributed the noticeable emergence of animals in the dreams of psychotherapy patients as evidence that the “Western psyche is being reconnected to nature, and that nature themes in general, and animal themes in particular, reflect what (he has) called ‘Borderland Consciousness’” (p. 22). This way of framing dreams outside of the usual “personal commentary” on the dreamers personality, is in my opinion a long awaited shift not only the practice of psychotherapy but for the general expansion of an awareness beyond the isolated individual, into a more inclusive being of interconnectedness.

“The dream-work cooks life events into psychic substance by means of imaginative modes. . . . This work takes matters out of life and makes them into soul, at the same time feeding soul each night with new material” (Hillman, 1979, p. 96). Using imaginative and intuitive methods to delve deeper into the meanings of my dreams and what felt to be a guiding purpose or principle throughout the work became progressively foundational. The imaginative methods that I used to work with my dreams was a combination of active imaginations, amplifications, free writing, confirmations of the communications, and intuitive insights I sometimes would receive through my dreams from the horses. I found my work with the dream material to be vital to understanding my relationships with the horses in my waking world.

In this realm of in between, of borderland consciousness, I struggled to create a new framework, or re-member a framework, of ways of knowing that supported such nonrational, nonlinear, and nondualist modes of experience. I researched ways to nurture this particular sensibility towards trans-species communication. One way in which I

attempted to more fully include the horses' perspectives through the development of a trans-species communication was through what Marta Williams (2003) called intuitive communication. Through the development and nurturing of intuition, lines of communication between horse and human can be re-discovered, strengthened, and validated. Williams encouraged us to realize that "even though we no longer freely communicate with other life forms, as did our indigenous ancestors, the door to intuitive communication is still open to us" (p. 26). In an attempt to eliminate the guesswork and drastically reduce human projection, I incorporated the practice of intuitive inquiry as a means to gather data that included the perspective of the horses. I found that rather than follow step-by-step guidelines as to how to communicate intuitively across species, it was more useful and important to nurture and trust the intuitive capacities that I had for a long time learned to distrust and ignore.

Linking itself back to the embodied practices mentioned earlier, I believe the necessary openness for this type of communication through intuition grows from a perceptive, meditative, and quieted research approach. The embodied modes of being on the physical plane interpenetrate with the receptiveness of the dreaming body and vice versa. When I was with the horses on the embodied physical plane, it very much felt that "it is a work that parallels what the dream is already doing" (Hillman, 1979, p. 96). When the conscious and unconscious began to communicate more effectively, the possibilities of such interinforming experiences became more available and expansive in their nature, weaving themselves into a more continuous reality.

In a conscious move to shift from data collection into analyzing and writing, I took a two-week reflection period in which I did not engage in data collection but rather

in contemplation and letting intuition, imagination, and the engagement with the unconscious flow at its own pace through what Romanyshyn (2007) referred to as transference dialogues. Transference dialogues, he explained, “are modeled on Jung’s notion of active imagination” and they create a practice in which “the researcher steps out of his or her ego position in relation to the work and steps with it into an imaginal landscape” (p. 137). The key intention here being that the ego loosens its hold on the imagination in order for the unconscious to flow into the waking world. In the practicing of transference dialogues the researcher may for example address a question to the work, or focus on a particular image and allow for the voice of the work to answer. This intentional letting go of the work supported the purpose of allowing it to come back to me in a different way than maybe I had expected it to. I wanted to allow a space, a gap, to encourage the feeling quality of the work to reconfigure and express itself, and for any remaining expectations to fall away. Romanyshyn (2007) explained that “as a value, then feelings can be a very subtle indication of a researcher’s evaluation of his or her work, a deeper and different response from his or her critical thinking response” (p. 283).

Procedures for analyzing data. The importance of intuition when working with horses cannot be emphasized enough. I believe the same may be said when working with dreams. Von Franz and Hillman (1971) believed that “intuition needs to look at things from afar or vaguely in order to function, so as to get a certain hunch from the unconscious, to half shut the eyes and not look at facts too closely” (p. 30). Aligning the research processes with the way in which I naturally interact with horses, with or without the purpose of a research project, was, for me, ethically important. It was vital to me that the ways in which I went about the research would resemble, as closely as possible, the

ways in which I approached my relationship with Equus without any predetermined objectives.

It was this solid conviction that motivated me to borrow from the method of intuitive inquiry in the analyzing of the data. Finding its overlaps with the approaches, intuitive inquiry encouraged imaginal processes and creative expression. Although I used intuitive inquiry specifically for the analysis of the data, I found its parallels as a method, with the story of how I began on this topic.

The impulse to conduct an intuitive inquiry begins like a spark in the dark of winter because this impulse to explore a topic claims the researcher's imagination, often in an unconscious and uncanny ways. She cannot stop thinking about the topic. Almost everything seems to remind her of the topic in some way. A yearning begins to understand the topic fully. This yearning to understand is Eros, love in pure form, because the intuitive inquirer wants to know her beloved topic fully. (Wertz, Charmaz, McCullen, Josselson, Anderson & McSpadden, 2011, p. 244)

Intuitive inquiry as a method for analysis allowed the continued voice of the research to flow throughout the entire research process, as opposed to halting in the face of a compartmentalized process of dry interpretation that has the sure potential to alienate research from representation. "Throughout intuitive inquiry, the most important feature of interpreting data is intuitive breakthroughs, the illuminating moments when the data begin to shape themselves with each fresh set of information" (Anderson, 2004, p. 322). One such breakthrough in the analysis process was the realization of the ultimate centrality of creating and honoring a sense of the in-between while working with the data.

More than a theme to be followed throughout the data, this idea was very loud in its insistence that it be a foundational premise throughout the entire work. Threading the dream work and imaginal/creative material with the field notes and literature became an obvious and necessary task towards achieving a sense of in between and a way to evoke a

re-membering which was indeed a major goal at the outset of this work. The dream material especially became vital. As Romanyshyn (2007) reminded us, “the dream in research is a way of doing research, a path that can be followed” (p. 335).

There is no set way or labeled process that intuitive inquiry holds fast to when interpreting data. The researcher is allowed the freedom to *intuitively* enter into the process of interpretation in a way that holds true to the voice of the work and the embodied intuition of the researcher. In past research, it was indeed my intuition that served as the main tool for interpreting data, just as my intuition is the main tool when communicating and developing a relationship with a horse. When analyzing data using intuitive inquiry, the process shifted and changed its direction and flow, depending upon the guidance of intuitive insight and breakthrough. The process was led by a sort of visual intuition that was guided by creative inspiration from the photographs and dream images that linked themselves to certain stories in my field notes, or common themes that I found running through my dream-work. Often times I would find connections that would bleed into synchronistic events, allowing me to unravel the connective meaning. Using the images of my photography and dreams, I was inspired to listen in for the underlying voices that would connect themselves to other material in the data.

Limitations and Delimitations

As in every research project, there are conscious decisions around what has been included and what has been excluded. The delimitations of this work ultimately shape the outcome through these inclusions and exclusions. It was my obvious intention to include horses and not humans as my main participants. Although this is an autoethnography and

I am clearly a participant, for the most part the opinions, ideas, and voices of the horses were the guiding factors in this study.

I worked with domesticated horses, subsequently predetermining the ways in which I was able to develop relationship with them. However, this is not to imply that domesticated horses are more available to relationship than wild horses, as sometimes the opposite may be true, depending on their history with humans. I also deliberately chose to work only with horses that were under the best human care when it came to the way they were treated physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and socially. Even still, the behavior of domesticated horses is very much a combination of their natural ways of behaving and the ways that are expected of them through human training. Sorting between the two is difficult and what is natural and what results from training is imperceptible at times, contributing to an understanding of horses that may not hold true to wild horse companions.

A huge limiting factor in this study was the nonverbal nature of its orientation. Because of this, I was not always able to be completely certain of the information I received from the horses, and thus I took the risk of misinterpreting or misunderstanding communications. But this is not to suggest that my findings and communications are not valid. Although the scientific community has long warned us of the dangers of anthropomorphism, as if it is a crime against our animal friends, its connective and empathetic attributes have been overlooked for the sake of scientific objectification. On the contrary, “anthropomorphism recognizes that humans and animals participate in a common world of significations,” and more importantly, it helps us to realize that “we can and do understand each other despite the arrogant philosophies that would preserve

consciousness as an exclusively human property” (Hillman, 1997b, p. 22). To anthropomorphize with consciousness and humility breathes life back into the human-animal relationship.

Bringing to this study a depth psychological lens of a trans-species inspired process of individuation, I gave precedence to a human way of understanding relationships and psychological processes. It was my intention to inform, shift, expand, and question this human way through the ways of the horses, but I am still limited in many ways through language itself because of the nature of the task at hand, which is in its final form created with verbal language. Because of this limitation and “language barrier,” I may have unintentionally and unknowingly imposed my interpretation and meaning onto the lives of the horses in a way that may not completely honor their reality. Yet, we must begin somewhere.

Ethical Considerations

Hillman (1997b) pointed to the foundational ethical issue that must be confronted when turning our inquiries towards animals when he begged that we must “turn to the animals for our own sake. Civilized humans . . . seem unable to avoid our cultural shadow, which bedevils the animals and keeps us arrogantly not only on top of the food chain,” he went on to clarify, “but morally and psychologically superior, too—therefore blind to the shadow that deforms our vision of them” (p. 21). When working in the realm of trans-species borders, it is far too easy to allow unconscious projections upon the animal to go unchecked. I cannot count how many times I have heard humans lay blame on their horse for a human conundrum they cannot see themselves caught in. The horse then becomes stupid, stubborn, mean, retarded, lazy, and even evil. To allow any such

unconscious projections from myself to go unnoticed and unclaimed would have been an ethical misfortune to the greatest degree. In order to track my own shadow-driven projections, that is, those that emerged out of repressed conflicts and complexes, I employed imaginal practices such as transference dialogues to uncover any unconscious projection that was blurring my vision.

In committing myself to a trans-species study, “there is a conscious embrace of psychological theory and praxis that is trans-species and understands animals as individuals deserving empathy, respect, and concern” (Bradshaw & Watkins, 2006, p. 4). The ethical implications implicit in this type of work became increasingly clear to me. It was my full intention that my work would contribute to the overall well-being of the individual horses, to inspire other animal people, and in particular horse people, to see their nonhuman companions in a different light. After all, as Loew (1997) informed us, “today . . . there are more horses (perhaps seven million) in the United States than at any time since the U.S. Cavalry ceased being an effective fighting force between the two world wars” (cited in Budiansky, 1997, p. xi). It goes without saying that along with the explosion of domestic horse population comes real responsibility for their quality of life.

The Cambridge Declaration of Consciousness⁹ (Low, Edelman, & Koch, 2012), although it recognizes consciousness in species previously thought to be “without,” is still making distinctions about what has consciousness and what does not. Although this

⁹ The Cambridge Declaration of Consciousness: “The absence of a neocortex does not appear to preclude an organism from experiencing affective states. Convergent evidence indicates that nonhuman animals have the neuroanatomical, neurochemical, and neurophysiological substrates of conscious states along with the capacity to exhibit intentional behaviors. Consequently, the weight of evidence indicates that humans are not unique in possessing the neurological substrates that generate consciousness. Nonhuman animals, including all mammals and birds, and many other creatures, including octopuses, also possess these neurological substrates.”

is a good step out of the box we have been in with regard to the ways in which we perceive and therefore create relationships with nonhuman animals, it is making a hierarchical distinction that by nature is still exclusionary. In an attempt to step outside of this structure, the perspective through which I was in relationship with the horses was one in which everything has consciousness. This perspective draws from a trans-species definition of consciousness but does not limit it to mammals, birds, reptiles, and invertebrates. Necessarily, a broader definition of consciousness must be imagined beyond the confines of a scientific definition.

As mentioned earlier in the introduction, the ethical conflict of riding vs. not riding, domestication vs. letting the horses free without the human hand of domestication, was a constant consideration, and one that I did not hold lightly. The distractions provided by practices in the name of “natural horsemanship” could not offer a simple answer to the contradictions of domestication. I consciously held this ethical paradox close to my heart, carrying it with me every step of the way. Everything I did with the horses was with compassionate reverence for their being with the consciousness that without domestication, I may not have had the opportunity to be in relationship with them.

I believe another ethical consideration that also has to do with the phenomenon of projecting is in the romanticizing of “The Animal” and “Nature,” in which there develops an image of the Garden of Eden to which “we” must return. The impulse towards complete abandon into Dionysian aestheticism and becoming drunk with the wild beauty and horror that is nature and the animal, is always a great temptation indeed, and one I know myself to be vulnerable to. In order to avoid this risk and balance my Dionysian

aestheticism with the task of scholarly dissemination, I had to acknowledge this romanticizing tendency, which had the ability to cloud authentic trans-species communication.

I made every effort to comply with ethical standards for conducting research with any of my horse and human subjects and I gained approval from Pacifica's Ethics Committee before collecting data from participants. I have ensured participant confidentiality and explained that no harm would come to them if they chose to participate in this research (Pacifica Graduate Institute, 2010-2011, p. 60).

Chapter 4
Beyond the Fence Line: Integrating Trans-species Experience



Figure 3. The Intertwining. Photo by the author.

I went to find them in the night.
To touch their bodies,
to smell their necks.

To tell them
that I dreamt of their colors,
and round bellies, and tangled manes.

I went to find them on this night,
to tell them I love them.
To sing to them.

(Author's poem, 2013)

Equus in Love

I am in the center. I am surrounded by tall, green bushes that form a circle around me. But I can see that there is a small opening in the greenness to my left. Two horses leap in through the opening and into the circle with me. They are running fast around the perimeter, as if we are in a round pen together. One of the horses is Saltos. The other, a white horse I do not know. Saltos slips out through the opening just as quickly as he came in and leaves me alone with the unknown white horse. I get the feeling that he planned for me to meet this other horse in this exact way.

I study her agile body moving gracefully around me, and wonder about what I should do with her. I think maybe I should work her, train her using the shrubbery as an enclosure as I would metal gates.

No. That is not what I want to do. That is not what this horse needs.

She comes towards me and stands in the center of the circle with me, breathing heavy through her flared wet nostrils. I softly start to sing to her, some melody that I keep repeating. Slowly I reach out my hand to her nose. Her breathing slows as I lull her into my song. She starts to lower her body to the ground until she is completely lying down in the center of our secret garden. I lie down with her, my belly pressed to her spine, my hand stroking her beautiful white neck. I keep singing my melody to this beautiful horse. This was what she wanted. This was what she needed, to be sung to.

I try to listen, to read their movements, the twitches of muscle under hair and skin, the tones of their exhales, the twists of their ears. I have never studied anything so closely with such intent focus in my life. I am seized, constantly caught up in the paradox of their being. I am always waiting until the next time I can meet them in the field, until I can be

in that moment when I first see them on a new day, excited about how they will look against the colors of changing skies and shifting seasons. Huddled under the trees I look upon them and relish the way they reveal themselves in the rain as the sky flashes around their drenched and glossy coats. I am as a person in love who wants to know and feel everything about their other.

With my belly against the white horse's spine, I sense she is a part of me and I am not only singing to her, but to my own soul as well. We have already been connected in some way that I do not yet fully understand. "The creature I have become is contained in the creature I was, and a double strand of longing has been braided into one" (Pierson, 2000, p. 247). I surrender my old ways of knowing, judging, and explaining in order to understand something outside of what my mind alone is capable of configuring into some sort of logical, linear sense. I cannot think my way into true relationship. So from the center of my garden, from my beginning, from the place where my belly meets her spine, I rest my weary mind and open my longing heart. This is a work that is rarely easy. It requires vulnerability, humility, and steady patience. To approach the horse in an unassuming way, to listen for their needs, and to be in service, is to come closer to something outside of normal perception. To step into a mystery rather than shy from it, is to live and it is the heart that gives the courage to do so, to take a leap of faith.

It is as Sardello (1995) so wisely explained, "the heart interiorizes the world. This interiorizing is the heart's action of recollection, of remembering the world" (p. 149). And it was when I was with the horses that I remembered the most. And mostly, I remembered what it was like to be me. I remembered that I always had a love for horses. I remembered waiting outside my piano instructor's house for my lesson but only really

being concerned about how to convince her neighbor's horse to come close enough to the fence so I could reach through and pet its nose. I remembered getting rug burns on my little knees from being a horse all day. The more I remembered about my love for horses, the more it seemed a possibility that this story had already been written and that all I've been doing is just putting the pieces back together.

Yet, even in my attempt to do so, to delve into such a great mystery as the horse-human relationship through my own experience of it, I can with certainty only say that the mystery has just spiraled itself deeper in an autonomous display of its essential quality of perpetual indefiniteness. As Pierson (2000) wrote "the truest, most seductive mysteries are those that are never solved, never completely laid to rest. They remain forever alive, animated by the frictive energy of the paradoxes they enclose. And by the great, impossible dreams they realize" (p. 247). Impossible dreams indeed.

This work carries itself with the surefootedness of a bond that cannot be broken. Behind the words of human explanation, behind the practice of horsemanship, and behind attempts to communicate trans-species, live true moments of contact with other. These moments exist through the act of love. Surprisingly enough, I was not able to fully see the dynamic interplay of love between the horses and myself for what it was, the only way to truly connect. It was not until I read through all of my dreams and field notes that I recognized the overpowering voice of love infusing the work and binding it together into something that held deep and lasting meaning.

The relationships between the horses and myself became a humble and subtle initiation into love through the breaking down of exacerbated human paradigms of control and subjugation. Navigating the customs and culture of Western horsemanship

felt like walking through a funhouse of mirrors at a broken down county fair. The distortion of thinking behind how horse-people are expected to relate to their horses within these paradigms is more than revealing of how we operate within our own human-to-human relationships and our relationships to ourselves. With so much assumption on part of the human, the horse becomes nothing more than a blank slate for our oppression and projections.

But there is always hope. As in many relationships, projection has its time and place. Eventually, usually sooner than we would like, we begin the painful awakening to the fact that our object of desire is most disturbingly not what we thought it was. In this place of transition we are offered a most precious opportunity. It is an opportunity to participate in true relationship. “Then, instead of enacting a fantasy, the more challenging relationship begins in earnest and all one’s craft and wisdom must be called into action” (Estés, 1992, p. 148). To truly love is to be confronted.

Alone with the white horse, I am faced with this rare opportunity: The opportunity to doubt, to question, to look again, and to remember another way. I can push the horse away from me, as prescribed by Western horsemanship, or I can invite her in and sing to her. I can resist, or I can allow. If we are lucky enough to recognize when this moment presents itself, we may be lucky enough to experience the power of Eros to build bridges. Jeni (personal conversation, 2012) explained to me how in her day-to-day dealings with the world, she has integrated a way of thinking into her decision making processes that carefully considers how each of her horses might respond in a similar situation. From this information she is then able to affect behavior that is most appropriate in the resolution of the situation.

To be initiated into the horse-human relationship through love and not power requires a break, a severance with worn-out ways of thinking and being. “In love, psychically, everything becomes picked apart, everything. The ego does not want it to be so” (Estés, 1992, p. 148). The alchemical dismemberment of psychic, emotional, spiritual, and bodily states crumbles like a skyscraper collapsing level by level until you are rubble on the ground. The temptation to flee, to resist, and to abandon a process that requires full honesty, as true love always does, is real. As Estés (1992) clarified, it is “because love always causes a descent into the Death nature, we can see why it takes abundant self-power and soulfulness to make that commitment” (p. 148). The initiation is happening on multiple levels and even in different times. In such a process, like the continued commitment to love, the past can somehow eerily become the present, the future can be seen through past memories, and time becomes a sort of trickster testing your footing on this new sacred ground. Slowly you learn to really feel your weight pressing against the earth, sinking down to somewhere below, sometime before.

This work, as it continues on into the future and reaches back into my past, is a testament to this process. There were many places where I stumbled and fell back into old unconscious patterns and many times when I felt like jumping ship in order to save what I genuinely felt could literally be my life. Riding along the edge of the sword, I pressed forward, determined to see it through, as I will be for the rest of my life. I used to think that it was me who sought out Equus; now I know it was just written in the stars, as the best love stories are.

The In-between and In-between

In the moment when things change, right before something happens, there is an interlude, a place where everything comes together only for the purposes of separating again. I sense this coming on, this transition between what I know and what I have yet to be known as. It used to terrify me. It is a place of nondifferentiation and of ultimate uncertainty. In this space, the intermingling of realities can be disorienting, to say the least. When one does not know whether one is dreaming or awake, the possibility of insanity seems a valid idea. Before my work with the horses, before I could sense this approaching threshold, I could exist in this altered state for days, weeks and sometimes several months on end. Then without warning it would spit me out, just as abruptly as it sucked me in, back into a world where things were discernable, where time followed a linear path from a beginning to an end, and my ego could once again regain its footing.

Over the years, I began to feel that there was a reason why I sometimes dipped into this reality that seemingly lived outside of ordinary perception. Although it was frightening and isolating, and I never knew how long these periods would last, I oddly enough started to thirst for them. Something in these experiences fed me, and I believed that I could figure out a way to navigate this in-between, that I could learn from it, and that I could possibly even shape-shift in a way. I felt that with these experiences came a deepening into a more soulful life. But along with the desire to re-enter something so unknown, so autonomous in its nature, came a foreboding sense of something akin to waking a dragon.

Bernstein (2005) spoke to this foreboding feeling and of people who have found themselves at the threshold who come to realize that “when, once again, they have

survived the transrational terror of that threshold at the edge of chaos and are graced with entry into sacred space, most often, but not always, terror transforms into the most humbling and peaceful awe” (p. 53). The desire to consciously experience this space became a pressing priority for my life. To catch even a glimpse of another world, an underlying parallel reality from which everything else is born, was to become intoxicated with magic.

It was a symptom of something much larger than myself. It was a calling into soul and what depth psychology commonly refers to as soul-work. As Plotkin (2003) avowed, “each of us is born with a treasure, an essence, a seed of quiescent potential, secreted for safekeeping in the center of our being” (p. 39). In order to realize, or come closer to our own essence is to surrender to a process of transformation that takes place between how we consciously experience the world and ourselves in the world, and everything else that is yet to be realized. As vague as the idea of everything else may be, it truly is everything else because of the unconscious and unlimited quality of its nature. The interplay between the two reveals the possibility of a third reality, an in-between that has yet to be realized by Western consciousness. It is from this third place that I was beginning to be addressed.

Martin (1999) referred to this third realm, this place behind and between, as “deep reality,” to which we have developed a metaphysical blindness to (p. 87). “Here, in this strange, fantastic universe . . . we approach the reality spoken of in the myths” (p. 89). To deny it as a reality is to deny ourselves of mystery, to suffocate our imagination, and to cripple the condition of soul in ourselves and in the world. This deep reality, as Martin calls it, is the sacred space in which my relationship with Equus has its beginnings.

And so it began almost four years ago since the time of writing this, one morning as I lay sound in my bed . . . I slowly began to awake. It was here, in this in-between, where the horses first called for me. Right before the moment when my eyes fluttered at the sun coming through my window, I knew. I knew that I had to find my horses. What I did not know was that they were the teachers I was seeking. They were the ones who would show me how to navigate the realities of how I consciously experienced the world and *everything else*. I certainly would not be the first, as horses have long been believed to be messengers between worlds, traversing an invisible bridge between our human world and the spirit world. Many cultures that lived closely with horses sensed their lightness of spirit and simultaneous surefootedness in their being, making them the perfect emissaries of myth.

They traverse worlds with ease because they experience no break, no compartmentalized version of time and space. They are steady in the way they go about life, unconcerned with human conceptions of opposing worlds. In the practice of being present with them, boundaries dissolve, time creates new spaces, silence washes over the constant internal babble, and the dream seeps into the day. More and more I found myself in this sacred space of in-between, deepening into another reality, carried on the backs of spirit guides.

The air thickens with this familiar feeling. I know it's coming on now and I reach down to grab hold of Diva's wavy mane. I let her take the lead. I am content only to learn the movement of her legs, the curve of her neck, and the width of her ribcage between my knees. She takes us over to the other grazing horses, hardly seeming to realize that I am on her back. I am moving with her into this invisible landscape, the one that lies behind



Figure 4. Diva in the Clouds. Photo by author.

what my eyes can manage.
 She carries me past the
 verge, and it starts to rain.
 The sun still shining makes
 the rain almost hot as it
 bleeds down my arms,
 through my fingers and into
 her hair. My legs hang
 lower now and even more
 relaxed as my stomach
 releases. Diva lets out a
 long snort into the grass
 and I feel her back

stretching out beneath me.

I sense each step she takes as if it were my own, sending vibrations up into my hipbones. I look at the rest of the herd and wonder what the point is in always being in a hurry. The depth of their content in this endless moment of sun and rain is infectious, and I feel my eyes swell with tears of joy for the simplicity in their pleasure; their big flopping lips feeling out the wet, clean grass as they continue on about life as if they exist only for this moment.

With this beautiful mixture of rain, and sun, and sweat comes the intoxicating smell of the horses' bodies lifting into the air, steam rising from their backs. So sweet and musty, I close my eyes to take it in. Here in this moment, I am whole. I am nothing other

than being for the sake of being. The rain. The sun. The wet earth holding us up. They are always existing in this effortless way. It is what I can only understand as in-between, because for me I have to cross certain borders to get here. It is an entirely other way of existing.

“What is described here is a world, a psychic reality, which we, with our Western egos, can understand only as an *idea*, not as a *knowing*” (Bernstein, 2005, p. 28). An idea as powerful as the one hinted at in such experiences with the horses has a definite texture to it. It is an idea that grips you with its display and seduces your senses into an altered state. The idea of a reality that lies in-between or maybe even behind the one we have come so accustomed to referring to as conscious, unconscious, subconscious, ego conscious, and so on, is an idea that begs our attention. As Bernstein pointed out, “For the most part, we have relegated this magical world of reality—the *only* reality prior to the advent of alphabetic technology—to such two-dimensional terms as ‘animism’, ‘magic,’ and ‘primitive,’ most of which carry pejorative connotations” (p. 28). This other world, or way of being, cannot easily be reduced to such terms once the fullness of it has been experienced. Luckily, we do not have to rely completely on our human sensibilities for entrée into this realm.

The idea becomes a practice and the practice begins to take shape like wet clay in the hands of a loving potter. In moments of rain, and sun, and musk, time is lost in a stillness of heart and mind and deep inner silence curls over like a wave on top of linear thought. This shift in time is an offering, a gift for imagination to do its work with psyche. “This adjustment is what Jung called the process of individuation . . . establishing a friendship between the conscious and the unconscious” (as cited in Paris, 2007, p. 208).

Forging a friendship between horse and human, this relationship continues to draw the two together in subjective realities and inner fantasies. This navigation through multiple layers of meaning and experience creates depth of life and patterns new ways of seeing. The process, the working of the relationship, becomes a reworking of time itself. In this in-between and in-between, the silence whittles out a space to listen to the universe. It is from within this space that we can “make use of that wondrous inner route from mind to mind and from heart to heart . . . we cross each other’s boundaries, only to find that there were no boundaries separating us from each other, except in the dark illusions of the human senses” (Boone, 1954, p. 80).

To recognize an illusion for what it is, a way of thinking and experiencing that is psychologically limiting and possibly even crippling, can be an arduous undertaking. Reflection is key. I watch how easily a horse can slide in and out of sleep as I scratch behind her ear and I see how spontaneously she can move as her spirit calls her to. My observations presented questions of my own experience of time, freedom, boundary, movement, and attunement. I began to bump up against walls in my own psyche, dams that have been built by whom I do not know. The important question rather was whether or not they need to be there any longer. What purposes did they serve? In this in-between that I experience with the horses, a new consciousness slowly began to dissolve the interiorized illusions of a compartmentalized self-perception that Bernstein (2005) saw as becoming manifest in certain borderland personalities. He believed that “the ultimate question is whether we can take advantage of our new consciousness so as to be able to participate as an aware coevolutionary partner in reining in our own self-destructive nature” (p. 121). He remained hopeful that “doing so holds the prospect for crossing a

threshold into a broader and deeper relationship with all of life, and for embracing the intriguing mystery of the greater fullness of who we are and who we are intended to become—not merely who we choose to be” (p. 121).

The consequence of this statement is systemic. The practice of becoming what Bernstein calls a coevolutionary partner, in the microcosm of the horse-human relationship, challenges tightly held conceptions of self as contained in my individual psyche and divided between differing layers of consciousness. In my quest to gain access and to map out the terrain of this new consciousness, emergent from the borderland, I knew I must make myself ready to receive, while simultaneously remaining in my power. To listen and be aware in order to receive begins as a practice in self-preservation that eventually becomes a practice in creating genuine relationship. Taking the time to listen to where the relationship wants to go, rather than where I may like to force it to be, was part of the practice of being able to shift into authentic connection.

It was on the night of the super moon that I had to face my romantic notions of how the horse-human bond should be and accept the reality of what it really is:

To romanticize is to set yourself up for disappointment and the experience of humble mundanes. . . . With horses it is far too easy to romanticize and envision experiences of ultimate nirvana through the oneness between horse and human that is depicted in nearly every myth about the relationship between the two. Certainly this does exist but it is not something that comes immediately or through the willing of my desires to have these “oneness experiences.” More often than not, my experiences between the horses and myself are ones of tutelage and humility, not ecstatic union.

Tonight outside my window is the biggest or rather the closest the moon has been to the earth all year, making it appear bigger and brighter than usual. It’s been given the name of Super Moon. With the Super Moon in mind, I planned to go riding with Jeni. I have never ridden at night except in my dreams, and the anticipation of riding under the full moon while I was awake made my skin electric with just the thought.

My vision leading up to the ride consisted of more or less some mythical moonlit ride in which my hair would fly behind me as Hush and I rode into the

oneness that was surely to be U.S. Turns out my little girl horse fantasy got the better of me once again. . . . Hush was exceptionally stubborn and disinterested because she's in heat. I could barely get her to walk a straight line, much less carry me into the heavens . . . I felt her whole body tense and watched her head drop. She was obviously not feeling it. To add onto everything else, the mosquitos came out in full force as soon as that super moon rose into the night sky. . . .

It's rather more of the same reminder that I keep getting which is that the relationship between horse and human is not always as synergetic as I would like to make it. . . . In truth the moments that stuck out for me tonight were while I was on the ground, on my own two feet, eye level with the horses. . . . I certainly doubt that horses would ever romanticize humans. Maybe it's time we stopped romanticizing them and started learning about who they really are. (Author's field notes, May 5, 2012)

Recognizing my romantic tendencies towards the horses was never easy, but in doing so I was more able to move into a clear space where an authentic connection could begin to form without the hindrance of my romantic projections. Disappointment became a clear indicator for me that I was projecting and thus not allowing for true connection. Sifting through these layers of fantasy and expectation, I began to feel a more quieted energy come over me. This inner silence and peace that began to fill me up was what allowed for interspecies communication to take place.

The move towards silence came on like a season, slowly creeping its way in, changing the color and mood of my psychic scenery. If I could remain in this way, I could begin to act fully within the present; to act in the present means that you no longer act blindly from past experiences, future expectations, or current projections. In this state, the in-between becomes more available because it is something that must be received and recognized in the moment, not bushwhacked into. To be with horses, one must learn to operate within the present. Hempfling (2010) echoed this sentiment when he asked, "When should we open up as individuals in order to finally accept the gift of life, i.e. authenticity and closeness, if not when together with the horse, that ancient symbol of

human, inner elevation and growth?" (p. 30). When we become silent and receptive, when we can splay ourselves open and ready under the burning stars, our worlds will begin to merge and from these points of contact we may finally be able to move, unbridled, into a paradigm of union.

The horses taught me how to be ready for these points of contact, these experiences of integration. My movement became more spontaneous and relaxed as I became familiar with the loosening of my logical notions of time and space. Expectations fell to the wayside, as I have learned that they only serve to decenter you in a moment's notice when what is really required is not a reaction but a true interaction. When the two can be differentiated, a foundation of trust begins to lay itself down, piece by piece, growing stronger with every free encounter. What once was frantic becomes soothed, what used to appear as fearful becomes confident, and what held itself tight in constant tension loosens under the care of honest intention. The two are reflected for each other so that a third may emerge. I am continually taught these lessons not just by my flesh and bone horses but also by the dream horses that come to me with such purpose in their approach and intentional contact. I recall one such potent experience from the dream world that continues to remind me of the power in numinous confrontation:

As I emerge from the muggy Florida swamp I can see the old family house on the grassy clearing. It's a square two-story cracker house and the white paint is peeling off the wood around the windows, exposing the tired gray bones of its structure. My family members are all gathered here for some sort of reunion. Some of them I recognize, like my little sister, and some of them seem to be distant cousins that I do not remember.

From the lawn I can see the thick swamp that I traveled through to get here. But now there is a wooden fence around it, separating the lush green grass from the black mud of the marsh. Amongst the Cyprus trees and roots, on the other side of the fence, there is a herd of horses grazing through the sparse dark land. My sister approaches the fence to pet one of the horses that has separated

itself from the herd. She stretches over the fence and barley reaches to pet the giant Appaloosa.

This beast of a horse with his white coat and glistening black spots comes closer to the fence as my little sister is mesmerized by his beauty. From the distance where I stand I can sense that he is becoming too aggressive, pushing his body against the fence where my sister unknowingly stands in the way of danger. I can feel the Appaloosa's spirit ready to explode through the now shabby looking wooden rails.

I run over to where my sister stands and push her out of the way so that I am directly in front of the now frenzied horse. I know that to calm him down I must feel his heart, know his breath. Reaching over the fence I put my right hand to his chest and my left between his ears on his forehead. Closing my eyes I feel his heart beating in my own chest, I know his breath to be my own spirit.

He steps up one leg onto the bottom rail of the fence. I know now he is challenging me. With my hands still on him I match his step and quickly climb the same rail. He steps again, this time with both of his front legs on the middle rail, his body pushing powerfully against mine. I am all that stands between his animal strength and the people behind me. I lean my body even closer against his, releasing the idea of danger, and slow my breath. I can feel his heart begin to slow and soften under my palm.

After some time he steps down from the fence, putting his hooves back to the earth. I open my eyes to see his so intently looking back at me. I see something in them that I have always known. I know now that he was always my horse. We had always belonged to each other, our souls intertwined from the beginning.

As I step down from the fence, putting my boots back on the grass, I turn to see my family, my sister, looking on in silent amazement. I feel a hand heavy on my shoulder and turn to see an old Indian chief coyly smiling at me from under his cowboy hat and have the feeling that he is only appearing to me.
(Author's personal dream, February 2011)

It is here at the edge of chaos that I meet my truth incarnate. At the borderline, I am faced with a challenge, a lesson of true action determined by a moment-to-moment happening, not an expectation. On the fence line, much can happen and even more may be realized. This meeting ground is precisely what Bernstein (2005) called the "Borderland." He validated such experiences by claiming that "the Borderland . . . is the 'space,' the nexus, the threshold whereby the Western ego is being thrust into reconnection with transrational dimensions" (p. 82). These transrational dimensions are not determined or shaped by an individual's internal psychic state, nor are they

personalized projections. On the contrary, they are realities in and of themselves that have their own order of existence.

As an essential ordering element in any reality, *time* in the borderland is experienced as most noticeably altered, taking shape into something much more compressed and immediate, as opposed to the usual phenomena of linear time. Time in this place becomes concerned with happenings and senses, not questions of how long something will take or when something did or will happen. It becomes intertwined with heightened levels of awareness, making it a practice of being-in-time rather than being a slave to time. The internal meanderings constantly caught up in worries about past events or future outcomes are dissolved by a clarity that consumes one's being.

My articulation thus far of this in-between and the structure of time that shapes it is not a way to define a new philosophical conception of the metaphysics of time and space. It is more of an invitation into true experience, into a more soulful life. For when we can find the place where time is defined by the quality of our experiences, we naturally begin to seek the experiences that feed our soul and release us back into life. It is as Avens (1984) pointed out that "releasement is a suspension of all teleological attitudes accompanied by openness to the mystery of the Play. It happens neither in 'me' nor in the world of objects but in that emptiness which is also an 'invisible fullness'" (p. 103). Equus embodies this way of being in the overflowing void, remaining unattached yet fully aware.

As in the dream when I am aware of the coming surge of energy that is building from the horse on the other side of the fence before anyone else; my sister, being completely oblivious to the dangers of what can happen when one is unaware, this

energetic awareness is something that I share with the horses and it enabled me to more accurately tune into their state of being and respond accordingly. Again, as in many of my dreams of Equus, the fence marks a meeting place, a space where horse and human are separate but the possibility of crossing over is also represented. It is on this border, in this borderland between horse and human, that my power is challenged and my ability to respond in the moment is tested to its most extreme. Through coming to know Equus, I come to know my own inner strength and psychic agility so that my relationship with them is unattached to the outcome yet fully present in the interaction. This way of being with Equus is the in-between.

On the back of a horse I am always carried to this place. It is nothing and it is everything at once. At this point in the story I might be obliged to rationalize why horses are so apt for traversing this threshold between worlds by explaining the nature of prey animals. It has been commonly theorized that because horses are prey animals, always instinctually attuned to their possibly life-threatening surroundings, their people develop new sensitivities in their dealings with such an alert animal. Horses “need to respond instantly to any perceived threat, any unknown movement, sound, or smell” (DeMayo, as cited in Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009, p. 152). The operative idea here is that in order to relate on such an elevated level of awareness, the human must in turn tune into this prey perception of the world, which can feel like an altered state of consciousness.

Although this is certainly a legitimate explanation of how people who are engaged with horses may vicariously learn to elevate their levels of awareness, it does not tell the whole story. In fact, I am tempted to say that it puts the story of the horse and human into yet another dichotomous way of languaging something much more complex. In

simplifying horse-human to prey-predator, we step into our own trap and suffer the consequences of killing off the mystery that may save us from a deadened, over determined life. When we can so easily explain a phenomenon by splitting it into two contrasting, opposing views, we are subsequently limiting other possibilities. Although it may be easy and habitual to structure things in this way, many times it only serves to settle our nerves about things that we do not understand.

For how does the fact that prey animals explain their ability to carry some of their people into spaces where linear time becomes nil and whole other worlds begin to crack open? Have we lost our ability to believe in the invisible? Does the possibility of something sacred have a place outside of religion? “For indigenous peoples from Amazonas to far Northern latitudes, for whom animals display the divine, an animal is an eternal form walking around, the palpable presence of the regeneration of time . . . each animal is eternity sensuously displayed” (Hillman, 1997a, p. 9.) The explanations as to why horses have held such a strong and lasting mythological structure in human culture cannot be explained away in terms of biology or behavior, on part of the horse or the human. When perceptions of time, space, soul, and self come into question in the presence of other, the ego grows uneasy in its comfortable position. When we feel that our ways are faltering in the presence of something beyond our capacities, we are quick to draw upon over simplistic explanations of why things are the way they are. Time, in and of itself, is an excellent way to impose order on a world that can sometimes feel disordering. Through the strict and systematized confines of linear time, we have managed to ward off endless possibilities of the true form of reality.

Buddhism believes in “a time without beginning, an eternity with neither beginning nor end, beyond the confines of time. In this sense eternity is the unbroken continuance of a single moment” (Kirimura, 1982, p. 66). Kirimura (1982) concluded that “the present moment or any moment contains the ultimate existence in which the past without beginning and the infinite future are both contained” (pp. 67). This is a sense of time that has nothing to do with hour hands on a clock or even the rising and setting of the sun to signify a day’s length. It is a sense of time that is felt, not thought. Every now and then, with the horses, I dip into this wormhole, this sense of being outside my usual structure of time as I have always experienced it. There is a certain smoothness to it, a soothing quality that reassures you everything is as it should be. Your mind powers down, and you ease into a current that is always steady, always flowing.

Yet, the end of a story is always contained in its beginning. Time wraps around and spirals through my narrative like a golden thread attaching itself to every other story of horse and human before and after my own; some of them grim, some of them wonderful. Equus “stands at the crest of our dreams, proud and noble. . . . He stands close when we wake, right at the ends of our fingers” (Pierson, 2000, p. 247). I must constantly ask myself, am I dreaming, or am I waking? Maybe the answer is neither.

Infiltrating Psychology with a Trans-species Ethic

I arrive home from a trip. Home appears to be my grandparents’ house on the river. My family is out front in the yard and there are horses everywhere. The yard has been fenced off and is now a sort of ranch. I get the feeling that things have not been looked after properly since I’ve been gone.

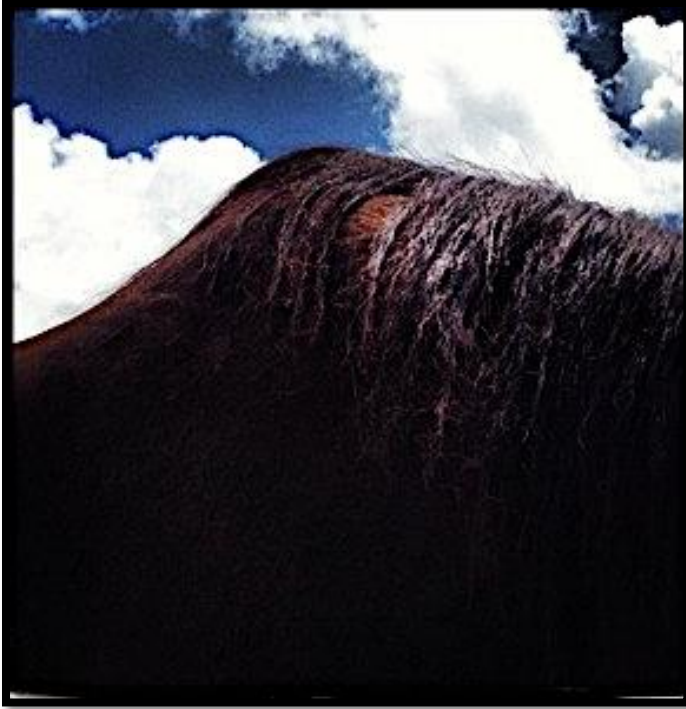


Figure 5. A New Vision. Photo by author.

My sister starts telling me about how she's been working with one of the horses, a massive, pitch black gelding. She tells me that she's not sure if he's ready to ride yet. A bit frustrated with the whole operation of things I say to her, "Well, let's find out," as if it should be obvious that this is in fact the only way to know if he's ready to ride. So I turn and lead us to the tack room, which is the garage, to get our saddles. I grab my saddle and hand my sister hers and we head back to the black horse.

Something distracts us from our task and I realize how out of order things are. I know that it is my purpose to look after the ranch and my family. I will

be in charge and I will have my work cut out for me.

Then I see that my father has taken down all of the fencing and the horses are running wild all over the place around my mother, who sits in a lawn chair in front of the house, seemingly undisturbed. I am immediately furious that my father has done this, because it is obviously not safe and I cannot work with the horses loose like this.

But my perspective changes as I look out into the fenceless yard. It is suddenly much more vast and stretches out into rolling green hills. My anger resides and I am filled with breath and a sense of openness in this new landscape. I know that I will have to find new ways of working with the horses in these wide-open spaces. I know it may take time but it is better this way now for all of us. I will teach my family how to be with the horses too.

Then Jeni comes over from next door where she lives. She is angry about what my father has done, as I was at first. I calm her mood and tell her that I will sort it out. I know that I will also be the mediator.

The horses are so beautiful and free. Saltos is with them. This is my life.
(Author's dream, February 2, 2012)

To understand our human selves, our psychology, in the larger context of an intricately intertwined environment, takes moral effort. The desire to pay our way towards peace of mind, one-hour session at a time, ultimately serves to place us in an abstract world where the only solutions are believed to come from the mind, or thought. Consequently, the

professional mind must have all the answers we blindly, and I dare say lazily, seek. I may take my dream to the professional where I am poked and prodded with questions about anger towards my father, possible complacency in my mother, or maybe I am given a pat on the back for seeing myself as being in charge or stepping into the role of my own psychic mediator between my power, the horses, and my inept family, those parts of my personality that have yet to integrate with my larger Self. The possible interpretations of this dream are endless.

I dare not berate the efforts of psychology completely, as I would be a hypocrite to do so. But rather I plead for a shift in its perspective. I ask it to step into the dream and wake up to a world that is beyond the confines of human experience as defined as contained within an individual psyche. The question posing itself to me through this dream, as I enter back into it now, is what would happen if Father took down the fencing? Not my father, or my intra-psychic imago of Father, but what about that masculine force that has attempted to contain the power of nature? De Quincey (2010) believed that “the dream of complete prediction and control of nature for the benefit of humanity—must be given up. *We are part of the system*, and ultimately always at its mercy . . . we can only *participate*” (p. 29). As this masculine ordering and controlling element can be clearly seen in the practice of Western psychology in all of its dominating and naming behaviors, the fence line only serves as a continued practice in futility and self-deception.

The idea that we may come closer to realizing our true Self, extracted and abstracted from a natural world, is quite pathological. As Hillman (1992) appealed, the only way he could “justify still using the term *individuation* today is by extending it to mean the individuation of each moment in life, each action, each relationship, and each

thing.” He went on to clarify that “the individuation of things. Not merely my individuation with its belief in an interior self that draws my care from the world to my “process,” my “journey” (p. 52). Once we can move out of the idea of the interiorized Self, the work of opening up to the vastness of the world can begin. And it is not just the ideas, the psychological constructs, that must shift but the behaviors that are attached to these ideas that must also be re-configured.

The horses do not belong to me, the power is not my own, fenced into some familiar image in my memory of childhood. *I realize how out of order things are. I know that it is my purpose to look after the ranch, and my family. I will be in charge and I will have my work cut out for me.* Learning new ways of relating, of being in relationship to things, is the kind of work that reveals the world to you. Father takes down the fencing. Mother is undisturbed because she knows there is nothing to be afraid of in the act of turning wild things loose. We may be angry at any experience where we sense we have lost control. But it is in these chaotic transitions that we can shift, and be *filled with breath and a sense of openness in this new landscape.* The Self then becomes not an encapsulated, determined, center of individual human psyche, but an experience of Self as co-creating with the world. Hillman (1992) suggested that “we start with the fullness of maturity, who and where and what you are in your communal world now, and read from the tree’s leaves and branches and dead wood backwards to younger phases as foreshadowings, as smaller mirrors of the larger person” (p. 67). *I will teach my family how to be with the horses too . . . I know that I will also be the mediator . . . The horses are so beautiful and free . . . This is my life.* It is all already there, mirrored in the dream.

Once again, there is a moment of contact where two seemingly opposing worlds collide. Human and animal. Fence and vastness. Anger and openness. How do we within the traditions, the family of psychology, begin to re-think such oppositions with the intention of integration on levels beyond the human self? De Quincey (2010) suggested, “at the heart of this shift is the need for a new relationship with paradox itself. Instead of trying to remove it, our task will be to move into it and to know it in a new way” (p. 7). What then does it mean to move into a paradox? More importantly, do the practices of modern, Western psychology have the capacity to even allow paradox? The intellect and the instinct sense the approach of the other but before any reconciliation can be made the questions pile up to create what may seem to be an overwhelming and impossible obstacle. As De Quincey explains, “in the end, when we come to that point where intellect can take us no further, we must bow in silence before the mystery—and participate with it on its own ineffable terms” (p. 15). Accepting that not everything can be determined on human terms is a first step towards opening for new paths to be forged.

My main approach with the horses was always to wait to be approached, to withhold my desire to determine our interaction and provide them with the space to display their natural autonomy. In doing so, I believe that my relationships with the horses was an imagining into the practice of living through a trans-species ethic. To let go of the illusion of control and allow for the expansion and immersion of my sense of self with that of the wide-open space, the horses and my dreams, was to co-create a new way of being in relationship trans-species.

They come closer and closer. They follow me, they watch me and wonder about me as I do the same with them. They ask for my touch, I respond with gratitude and amazement always just to be face to face with any one of the.

The ride I had with Hush today felt like it feels in my dreams. It feels like flight. Like floating. It feels like what I was meant to do. My heart expands in this new place. I was afraid it would contract but it just splays itself open as I ride out under the hot summer sun, wishing never to stop this dizzy fantasy that has become my life. Hush responds better to me because I know I can take care of her now. Before I was afraid. I saw her to be more fragile than she really is. I couldn't recognize her strength because I couldn't feel my own. (Author's field notes, August 1, 2012)

The closeness between myself and the horses, my dreams and my waking realities was a testament to the belief that if one takes down the fence, breaks the barriers and creates new ways of being in the world, life will open up. The dream mirrors for us the possibilities of life, if only we are brave enough to believe it. Our ideas about ourselves, as theorized through the traditions and practices of Western psychology are still fenced in.

On the cultural level, the integration I hint at is that between the practices of Western psychology and a trans-species ethic. Bradshaw and Watkins (2006) reasonably



Figure 6. Salto de Fe. Photo by author.

argued that “psychology, by maintaining an agenda of speciesism, violates one of its central projects: individual development of moral consciousness” (p. 2). Every time a dream animal is interpreted *purely* as a symbol of human character, the illusion of human supremacy is maintained. Just as every time the language of psychology abstracts the realities of nature and individual

species as if their conditions were unrelated to human psychic states, healing and vice

versa. If the psychic interrelatedness of human and animal continues to be ignored, or at best abstracted, in the language and practice of Western psychology, we can only expect a further deterioration of soul. If our relationships with animals are seen to be second to our relationships with humans, we consequently destroy the relationship to our own inner animal and thus sever our connection with the natural world. *The perspective changes in the fenceless yard . . . filled with breath . . . the horses are so beautiful and free . . . this is . . . life.*

The relationship and the story between Saltos and myself (his full name, Salto de Fe, meaning Leap of Faith) continues to define who I am and opens me to the paradox of being both human and animal. If psyche is to be tended through the paradigms and structures of psychology, consciousness around the kinship of humans to other life must be developed and infused into new healing modalities with the intentions of moving away from egocentric therapies and theories. In short, the place of the ego within psychological theory and practice needs to be re-rooted to that from which it came. As Neumann (1990) so bluntly put it, “to be obliged to admit that one is infantile and maladjusted . . . a human animal related to the monkeys, a sexual beast and a creature of the herd is in itself a shattering experience for any ego that has identified itself with the collective values” (p. 80). To introduce a neophyte, for lack of a better term, to a herd of horses and witness the awkwardness and unease that suddenly seizes them in the presence of strange and unknown animals is to witness such a maladjusted human animal. When did it become so unnerving to be amongst animals that have no interest in harming us? Has the ego carried our being that far from the earth?

The unease witnessed in such awkward encounters reveals to the ego the massive illusion of human control, thus the stumbling behavior triggered in such an encounter. “A trans-species psychology embeds humans in the continuum of nature through the disavowal of human privilege” (Bradshaw & Watkins, 2006, p. 4). If our understanding of ourselves was as Bradshaw put it, embedded in the continuum of nature, egocentric ways of being human would shift into a more eco-centric and co-collaborative being. The uneasy human in the presence of the herd would be able to reach out and make peaceful contact rather than withdraw and isolate in fear or feel the need to dominate and control. In a more continuous and connected way of being, a sense of fellowship would slowly replace deep loneliness, trust would drown out the voice of paranoia, and grace would bring true presence to numb bodies. The possibilities for massive healing through the development of a trans-species psychology are very real.

To infuse psychology with a trans-species ethic is to take responsibility on a larger scale, to reach across species lines, decentralizing the ego. If Western psychology were to consider the psychological health of human and animal together in relationship (as do many indigenous philosophies), the human ego would be forced back into connection with its animal ancestors, thus reconfiguring its place and role in our psyche.

It is as Hempfling (2010) so intuitively warned:

Man, having outgrown his childhood and thus been robbed of his authentic life form, believes that he is reorganizing on a higher level, whereas in reality he is forcing the natural elements of his environment down to his own “lower level”. In the consequent belief that he is organizing, refining and perfecting, he destroys the natural structures of order that he simply cannot comprehend and that, indeed, frighten him. The result is always and inevitably destruction, disorder and reduction of energy. Applied on a global scale, it will inevitably lead to global catastrophe. It is only a matter of time. (p. 28)

How curious to come across such an impactful idea in a book about horses. As the ego inflates, our connection to nature, to our real selves, consequently becomes increasingly estranged, leaving us in an isolated state of confusion and loss. The direction Klaus so subtly hints at is a downward movement of psyche in order to re-root and re-member a more authentic way of being human, in this case through the realization of the horse-human relationship.

A most interesting and certainly powerful way to think about this movement of psyche is through what De Quincey (2010) suggested via Rosen as “epistemotherapy—a reintegration of the collective ego with the Self of the physical world, of psyche and physis” (p. 5). If the aim in infusing psychology with a trans-species ethic is in part to shift ego-centric modes of being, than our current concepts of ego, Self, psyche, conscious, unconscious, dreaming, waking, and all of our most dearly held ideas about psyche must necessarily be reconfigured in some way or another. In just the languaging of expanding the concept of ego to a collective ego and Self to a Self that belongs to the physical world, the inclusion of the individual in the whole can be sensed. Necessarily, if we can allow for the possibility of collective egos and Selves that belong to other than human beings, every other aspect of psyche that is conceptualized as being specific to the individual must be considered equally expansive and indiscriminate in nature.

The dry illusion of the specialized human ego, for example, is unmasked within the horse-human relationship. Ego in the presence of Equus is quickly sniffed out and met with considerable tension and unease. Like a predator in the grass, it is sensed as something that must be watched with full attention, because it does not belong. An inflated ego in the horse-human relationship becomes a severe impediment to the

development of trust between the two. However, if there is a true desire to come closer, to connect and understand, the ego will slowly begin to deflate and assume its essential role as mediator rather than dictator. As Mandy reflected on this transformation she admitted, “I had put up many walls, which have now somehow come tumbling down after working with horses a few times a week” (personal conversation, 2012). This reconfiguration of the human ego in the context of the horse-human relationship is an essential transformational process that draws people into equine-assisted psychotherapy. It is typically framed as learning true “leadership” skills via the engagement of horses; ironically in a way tricking the ego into believing it is still in control. Essentially, what is happening is that the horse does not respond well to ego driven behavior, thus suggesting to the human that they must figure out other more co-collaborative ways to get a desired result, essentially recalibrating the ego and building a foundation of true intention and clarity in thinking.

Early on in my fieldwork I knew that creativity was essential in trying to escape my egoistic reflexes in relation to the horses. I depended greatly on my dreams for inspiration as to new ways of relating to the horses. Recalling my dream of the white horse that lay down with me as I sang to it, I decided one day that I would sing to the horses as a way to attempt to draw them out of a possible programmed way of associating and behaving towards humans. I wanted them to experience me differently and respond in a more spontaneous and authentic way towards me . . .

When I got close enough to be heard, I started singing. Immediately all eyes were on me . . . I approached until I felt like they would move away if I got any closer. There’s not just a certain distance to keep but also a certain energetic field of the herd that I don’t want to penetrate without being invited in. So I sat down in the grass; tired, hot, not expecting much. I just wanted to offer my song, my voice and a peaceful human presence. Then here he came, the little black pony. He was

one of the first to show interest in me but hadn't yet approached me directly. He was walking straight towards me as I kept singing, now to him.

It seemed as though the singing was what brought him to me. I'm sure of it really. He came right up to me as I sat in the grass. He stood only about a foot above my head. His eyes were soft and sweet. As he sniffed in my direction I held my hand out below his nose for him to get a better whiff. I kept singing, so glad just for his company. Some of the other horses looked on, probably wondering what was about to happen.

My heart goes soft thinking about what did happen. He invited me to touch him. His black coat, covered in some sort of mange. He's been entirely eaten up with it. He couldn't stop biting and scratching at himself with his teeth and even his hooves, using his back foot to scratch at himself like a cat . . .

Another horse was curious about my singing as well and started to approach us, but the pony fended her off and came back to me. I kept singing to him as I scratched at the places I knew he couldn't reach. He was grateful. He tried to return the favor by nibbling at my head. I became overwhelmed with his suffering . . .

I cried for him, and as I did so I realized that I also cried for my own similar suffering. . . . He stood perfectly still as I lay my hand on his chest, offering him understanding and ideally healing. He didn't move. He was glad to be touched, to be welcomed. So was I. (Author's field notes, June 11, 2012)

If in practice a trans-species psychology has the capability to diffuse the ego perspective and move individuals and culture into an eco perspective, the overwhelming sense of emptiness and loneliness in the modern world would gradually be replaced with a deep sense of belonging and purpose. Abram (2010) spoke to the paradox of this possible realization when he pointed out that "encounters with the outrageous scale of the larger Body we inhabit bring a shuddering humility, yet they can also release an unexpected intuition of safety, a sense of being held and sustained by powers far larger than anything we can comprehend" (p. 261). Infiltrating psychology with a trans-species ethic in this sense becomes a project of reclamation and remembering our place in the world. Equus in the paradox that she embodies, an animal filled with fear yet driven by great power, becomes a living and breathing representation of this fragile line we ride between feeling our nothingness and simultaneously sensing an overwhelming fullness.

The downward move of psyche towards the moistened roots of our *prima materia* draws all aspects of our selves with it, re-connecting our being with the delicate golden fibers of a remembered knowing that still lives deep within. As I wade through the grass towards my Saltos, taking the leap of faith that we may truly understand one another, I realize at bottom we are the same. The unease I may have carried with me fades into the vastness of the encounter with the great mystery that is the horse-human bond. The only real problems we may have are the things that keep us from seeking connection to our wider, deeper selves, to our true nature. It is as Jung (2002) so boldly diagnosed: “It is the growth of consciousness

which we must thank for the existence of problems.

. . . It is just man’s turning away from instinct—his opposing himself to instinct—that creates consciousness” (p. 73). As we turn towards the animal, the animal



Figure 7. The Re-membering. Photo by author.

within ourselves is re-membered along with her instinct, consciousness re-members the place from which it came, and is humbled in the encounter.

The sincere move within ecopsychology to understand ourselves in the context of the natural world is a step towards recovering our animal selves with the ultimate intention of addressing the ecological crisis that faces the Earth. But are we not still in

part serving the ego by imagining that the human race is the collective embodiment of some savior archetype? As I look into the eyes of Equus, I sense that we are both ultimately just trying to save ourselves the best way we know how. “In the end, though we look very different on the outside—luxuriant fur, brilliant plumage, iridescent scales, or bare skin—inside we are very much the same and respond to the world around us and to each other in strikingly similar ways” (Bradshaw, 2009, p. 159). The common life behind our individual displays can be seen and wholly felt through the trans-species gaze. If we can stare into the face of our own animal, we may remember the answers to the questions that plague us. Quite possibly, the things that ail us, the questions that seem so important, would become unwarranted altogether.

Hillman (1997a), in his usual sideways approach, suggested: “abandon the idea of solutions and problems cannot exist. Instead there is enigma, *ainigma*, meaning all things with a second sense, symbols, oracles, mysteries, secrets” (p. 2). A life lived with a sense of mystery is one that is experienced as intertwined with something much larger than the individual. Hempfling (2010) coincidentally supported Hillman’s view when he advised that “in an authentic way of life, where feeling, thinking, acting and dreaming merge into a related experience, we do not need to worry about not being able to solve the problems that arise, because most of them will not occur at all” (p. 31). In the continued intentional practice of striving for clarity within and through the horse-human relationship, the merging or re-membering of compartmentalized and specialized parts of ourselves start to lay the foundation of a new way of being. The integration that psychology seeks would be achieved in large part through the trans-species bond.

But then where would psychology be of use if there were no problems that plagued this new interwoven individual, if there were no solutions to be hounded after but rather mysteries and paradoxes to merely experience and ponder? Is it possible that the project of psychology may be doing the individual more harm than good? And where would psychology be if the animals were consulted with the matters that concern us, if our queries were to be shared and defined not by human agenda but by a trans-species curiosity? Of course the answers are not something we can know but when I imagine into it, it looks more like poetry than science.

Voices of the Herd and the Responsibility of Animal Eyes

Every morning on the way to school, as my mother drove down Crill Avenue, I would anticipate our daily pass by Master's Funeral Home. The display at the front of the building was like something out of medieval times. I always thought it incredibly odd and a bit disturbing that I seemed to be the only one deeply irked by this frozen shrine of death. Extending off the front of the funeral home, edging uncomfortably close to the road, was a large room made all of glass. In this display room was a black funeral carriage to which two stiff white horses were harnessed. Draped and pulled tight over their lifeless bodies were black leathers, buckled and crossed in the most uncomfortable looking patterns, their eyes, hidden by black leather blinders that cast their faces in shadow. If it were not for the fact that their positions never changed day in and day out, and to be sure I always studied so intensely their conformation, I would have believed they were just very still horses.

This display took quite a hold in my childhood imagination. I so badly did not want these beautiful creatures to be sentenced to an afterlife of having their bodies still bound, still in service, that I became preoccupied with their condition. On the regular trip

to school I would patiently await our approach to the funeral home so that I could imagine something else for these two white horses, as it seemed obvious that no one else cared to. I began to imagine them coming to life within that glass room. Once they started to feel their bodies, they would burst with a life force so incredible that all of the black leathers and buckles would go flying off of their once numb bellies and chests. They would madly stomp and paw at the ground, tossing their beautiful white heads and flaring their nostrils with new breath. They would shake free of the blinders that kept them from even seeing one another, their eyes wild with the possibility of freedom. Finally they would jump through their once suffocating glass walls and stampede off, tails and manes flying behind them, away from the funeral carriage, away from the road, and into some woods somewhere.

The feverish imagination that linked me to the plight of those two horses still lives within me today. The imagining of wild possibilities, of newborn freedom, and bodies filled with life, resurrected from some suffocating existence, is what carries on and endures in the face of seemingly endless subjugation. It is one thing to look upon an animal. It is another thing to see through animal eyes. To look upon an animal sets the animal apart, as if its existence may have nothing to do with your own. To see through animal eyes however, requires imagination into that animal, which requires a certain level of empathic understanding. It is this identification with the animal, with nature, that humans have come dis-membered from and have subsequently come to understand themselves as wholly separate from. From this separated place the human looks upon the animal with a disinterested and often times oppressive gaze.

In my own study of Equus, I constantly scrutinized my gaze. I consider the all too obvious fact that the simple awareness of my gaze alone means that I experience myself as separate. Putting this in a disconcerting sort of perspective, Martin (1999) explained that “the English word ‘nature,’ by definition, is ‘out there.’ The earth, the environment, the place—all out there. An object. Yupiit don’t gaze upon the earth; Yupiit . . . don’t talk about environmentalism, conservation . . . or affection for or awe of nature”; rather, he explained, “it’s very rare for them to talk about nature at all. Traditional Eskimos don’t acknowledge these things because they *are* nature; they are coterminous with the mind, the spirit, the being of it all. This is being a *real person*” (p. 136). Unfortunately, there is no going back to this place, this state of being; at least I do not believe so. Neither is the idea to move forward in a linear development in regard to our relationship with nature, animals, individuation, the cosmos, horsemanship, or whatever it is that draws the human back in. I believe it is more like an intentional move towards a more authentic way of participating with the animal soul as it uniquely presents itself within each individuating experience. Most importantly, an intentional move in this regard does not imply a certain linear direction, forward or backward, but rather an operating from within the present.

To see with animal eyes means that one can perceive, on multiple levels, animal soul as intertwined with the fabric of one’s own being and fate. To see through animal eyes begins as experiences of empathy with nonhuman animals; from these experiences a new perspective begins to grow in which empathy becomes an integrated way of being in the world. Necessarily, the fantasy of human superiority must be honestly surrendered. On the most practical level, this can never be accomplished through psychological theory, whether it is trans-species, ecopsychology, or any other paradigm of thought that intends

to bring humankind closer to nature, nor can the ideas that I present within this study. Certainly understanding and empathy can assimilate through ideas, but the animal is the animal no matter what we may think or say about it. It is then for the sake of truly reclaiming our animal eyes that we are beckoned to convene with them in a very real sense. The gap between the words on this page and feeling the nudge of a horse's nose on your back is worlds apart.

The gaze that looks upon the animal, the words and theories with no experiential foundation, is the perspective that turns living creatures into mere objects. When our eyes view something as an object, it becomes something that might be used or seen as useless, depending on our desire. In a culture that tells us that the more objects of desire we accumulate, the more worthy we become as individuals, why wouldn't we gaze upon animals and think of what use they are to us? It has been deeply and narcissistically etched in us to ask the question, "what can that do for me?" Sadly, in our groping attempts to collaborate with nature with the ultimate goal of healing, we often times get our paw caught in the trap of unconscious patterns of oppression. But there is a way to at least partially escape, and it lies in the shifting of our gaze and the attunement of our animal eye. However, animal eyes may come with the price of witnessing their suffering at the hands of humans, and possibly even unknowingly participating in the oppression of those you seek to help.

A therapeutic barn housing 20 something horses who work to heal clients with a wide array of disabilities becomes nothing more than a prison for those who cannot speak for themselves. What then is the price for the first words of an autistic child, or the first few unassisted steps of the crippled veteran? Can we really say that healing is taking

place when it is on the backs of oppression and abuse? Bradshaw (as cited in Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009) pointed to the painfully obvious fact that “unlike their human counterparts, AAT [Animal Assisted Therapy] animal therapists are generally not given the choice to engage in therapeutic work” (p. 164).¹⁰ Having witnessed first hand this silent form of neglect towards AAT horses, I can say that it is easy not to see the abuse taking place right under your nose when the “results” for the benefit of the human patients is so convincing. Being a culture that is so intensely goal oriented, the road to results is often times littered with silent bodies.

The time I spent at this therapeutic barn, as depressing an experience as it was, opened my eyes to the nature of the oppression of horses in Western culture. Hempfling (2010) predicted that “the signs of deception have now become too obvious and the completely jaded and ‘spiritually abandoned’ horses too numerous.” He went on to assert that “unimaginable damage has occurred, the full extent of which is not completely known” (p. 61). I could write pages upon pages of the symptoms of stress I witnessed in the horses at this barn, which claimed first and foremost to “care for the health and happiness of the horses.” In my seven months I witnessed malnourishment, extreme overworking, cribbing (a stress relieving act from being in stalls too long), vacant stares, kicking and biting from wanting to be left alone, colic (also brought on by stress and not enough natural food source), and even death. The list went on, but the clients kept coming. As long as they were seeing results for their children and loved ones, the symptoms of oppression were easily overlooked.

It took me several months to admit and accept the painful fact that these horses

¹⁰ AAT stands for Animal Assisted Therapy.

were totally and completely prisoners to human exploitation. What was even more agonizing was to realize that I had unintentionally participated in their demise by my own sheer ignorance. Although Freire (1970) spoke specifically to human oppression, I believe his insights into the dynamics of oppression are greatly illuminating in the context of trans-species subjugation. Freire (1970) explained that “within history, in concrete, objective contexts, both humanization and dehumanization are possibilities for a person as an uncompleted being conscious of their incompleteness” (p. 43). Through my blindness and subsequent participation in the oppression of another, I unknowingly became dehumanized. In the stabbing realization of such an entanglement, a space cracks open from which other possibilities may emerge. Echoing through my mind were words from Jeni about the lessons she had learned from her own work with horses. She told me, “all in all they have taught me that things are never as they seem and if you can relax and take the time to figure out the basics . . . you will find that everything is rather simple and that we are the cause of the difficulty” (Personal conversation, 2012). We are the only ones standing in the way of a path towards becoming better human beings. Other ways of being human, of accepting the incompleteness of one’s being, can recalibrate our gaze from one that looks upon to one that can see from within.

Blue, named for her one crystalline blue eye was the head mare of the herd that I worked with for this research. Lucky to not be confined to the circumstances of other horses like the AAT horses I had previously known, Blue lived a more natural life in an open setting on over 300 acres. Although she was never overly aggressive, she was always acutely attentive. The mellow yet intentionally detailed attention she would give to my presence was at first unnerving. I could not set my gaze upon her without knowing



Figure 8. Blue. Photo by author.

that it would surely be returned. Her blue eye holding steady on my every movement, I was no longer the only one with intention, the only one with consciousness behind my gaze. These exchanges between Blue and myself allowed for me to reflect on what it meant, on what it felt like, to be the one that was being gazed upon.

Once this perspective has been glimpsed, once the crack spreads further and further through old and hardened ways of thinking and the childlike imagination of the animal begin to awake, we can once again participate in a world that once seemed so far away. The safe yet neurotic illusion of the objective observer can no longer comfort the one who has seen through animal eyes, if even only for a moment. Eventually the truth will claim her, and the world will be born anew through such realizations, unbounded from the suffocating visions of big white bodies strapped down with leather, exploding forth from an existence tied to death into a new freedom of being, she has empathy for the animal, and with this empathy comes certain responsibilities.

The responsibilities that come inherent with animal eyes, however, are not actions that perpetuate the idea of the human as savior; rather it is the practice that teaches us to live in kinship with animal soul. Empathy is a seeing through that requires a certain level

of immersion of one's being into another. The vision of ourselves as liberators can blind us from the true needs of other species and our own. Rather than saving and protecting, maybe we should strive for simply being. At this point I hope it is clear that being does not imply any kind of passivity or acceptance of unconsciousness. Quite the opposite: Being as a possibility, as opposed to than saving, implies a way that is intentionally collaborative, and conscious of a necessary entanglement with everything. "To be means to be open, unhidden" (Avens, 1984, p. 12). And in order to be open and unhidden, the true nature of one's being must be accepted. Even if we are never to understand our true nature completely, the attempt to come closer to it is the way to being more fully human.

I recall the initial formulation of such attempts to come closer to the herd by coming closer to my own true nature:

I've decided for now to wait for my invitation into the herd. I don't want to create any sort of situation wherein I become too threatening or pushy or aggressive. I also need to first determine the herd hierarchy or social order rather. I had the thought that it may benefit me to model the behavior of a specific horse, but should it be the lead mare or gelding, or possibly the lowest herd member? Maybe none of them. Probably none of them. If I try too hard to become something else I may appear to be a wolf in sheep's clothing. Yes, it is a constant struggle to just be human, to just be yourself.

So, I sit. I chew on long stalks of grass, closing my eyes, trying to reach down into the earth, trying to reach down into myself. Relax. Breathe. Just be.

It started to rain. My first reaction was that it was time to leave, but I made myself stay, crouched under some brush, watching as the horses trotted off in their excitement.

There are always the others that are more curious, more trusting than the rest. Blue was the first to approach me, sniffing at my cooler and water jug and then at me. I yearn for just the smallest moments like these. The ones where they want to know me, where they invite me in, if even for a moment. It's a much different experience to be invited in than when you push yourself in. These moments are more precious, more full in their meaning and mystery. These are the moments when they are the teachers and not just simply the machine that we've made of them.

So I wait for the invitation. I think it's as simple as that. I want my presence to be open and receptive, not closed and pushing outward. Yin energy. I ask for the invitation. I close my eyes and reach out to them through the

rain with my heart, so tender just for the blessing of their presence. (Author's field notes, May 30, 2012)

The intentional moving towards a kinship with animal and animal soul is organically braided into a trans-species process of individuation. Although we may never fully realize the contents of the unconscious, as this would be like trying to swallow the sea, the effort to integrate, and to welcome those other parts of ourselves that may lay hidden, is a necessary practice within the horse-human relationship. The projecting of



Figure 9. The Gaze. Photo by author.

those unconscious parts of ourselves onto an other is like the leather blinders on the funeral carriage horses—keeping us from knowing true freedom, hiding the image, the imagining of our true being. But what could be more “other than an animal; what can call us forth from the prison of the self better than the need to understand something that is

different from us, but which then magically turns to show us how alike we all are?” (Pierson, 2000, p. 89), as in my floundering moments of considering whether or not to adopt the behavior of Blue, the head mare, or a lower ranking horse in order to come closer to understanding them but quickly realizing the absurdity of trying to be something that I am most definitely not. In relaxing into my own sense of self, my own humanness, I ironically become more like them and I realize that I am coming closer to my own animal self.

The realization of animal eyes, of shaking loose the blinders, becomes a synonymous path through the spiraling process of individuation. In coming to know the other, as Equus, humans come to know the true nature of their own being as connected to

the larger whole. Avens said that “the soul is a stranger on earth, not because she is made of a different stuff, radically alien to the stuff of the earth,” and he went on to clarify, “but rather because she has not yet recognized her belongingness to and her consubstantiality with the stuff the earth is made of” (1984, p. 86). When we recognize our belongingness, the responsibility that comes with new sight becomes more of an imagining into a new way of being in congruence *with* rather than a tired manipulation and control of surroundings.

I was fulfilled just to be with them without any other intention other than wanting to see them and to let them know that I could be a witness to their being. I came closer to the steadiness that is required within my own being, that allows for authentic encounter and relationship. It’s not so much a confidence as it is a trust in one’s own center, in one’s own balance with life. It’s an acceptance of the circumstances, an awareness that I am not an observer; I am a participator, a mutual creator. (Author’s field notes, 2012)

I am so gratefully reminded that “in Heidegger’s terms: Being ‘essentiates’ as appearing” (Avens, 1984, p. 108). With new vision, the world appears anew. As I walk into the woods one day with the herd, I get the feeling that they are allowing me to see them in their true form for the first time, as I am doing the same for them. They choose to appear open, unhidden from my gaze. I capture their images, somehow sensing that in the act of doing so, in this mutual seeing, I am participating in something rare, something sacred. I see their faces and their bodies as if it were the first time, even though I have spent countless hours watching them. In between the trees I can feel their gaze upon me; they see me anew as well and invite me in. This meeting in the woods becomes the intersecting of worlds, and we are allowed the possibility of imaging a new way of being through the trans-species gaze.

As I enter into this new way of seeing, it occurs to me that through their image, their voice is bound. In being witness to their display, I am listening to them. What they tell me does not concern the things I may be doing wrong in my relating to them. What they tell me through the revealing of themselves is that if I can do the same, we can meet on common ground and come to understand and know one another in truth. Avens (1984) understood that “we see subtly (imaginatively) only when we ourselves have become subtle. Subtle seeing is . . .



Figure 10. Into the Woods. Photo by author.

a way of knowing which is also a way of being” (p. 101). It is a misty perception. Form and image blur their boundaries into a feeling state, like something that can be sensed amidst the wet fog of inner silence. It is a way of seeing, and listening that can only be achieved through a letting go.

My responsibility towards Equus speaks to me from these subtle and sacred encounters. Yet it is not so much a voice, but rather a shared field of knowing that exists before verbal language and is experienced only through the present moment. Abram (2010) shared a similar understanding of this encounter: “It was a dimension wherein my verbal self was hardly present, but where an older, animal awareness came to the fore, responding spontaneously to the gestures of these other animals with hardly any interpolation by my ‘interior’ thinking mind” (p. 167). The responsibility lay in our

ability to exist in this way. If saving means learning how to *Be* human, we must turn to the animal for instruction on how to do so. Quite possibly, it is the animals that must save us.

Chapter 5 Waking Up to the Dream



Figure 11. Awakening. Photo by author.

The only ones that will know I am here
are the horses and the velvet sky.

I shut my eyes and imagine our awakening.
Time gets closer to itself as the seasons pass
and the stars contemplate this new constellation.

I dream of nothing but the backs of horses
and a blazing white fire.

(Author's poem, 2013)

Re-visioning the Dream Animal

I shelter my dreams. I get the feeling that they somehow need protection. There is the sense that the images that come to me through the dream do so in confidence. The unspoken agreement is that I will be gentle with them, that I will not try to manipulate

them and that I will give them my honest attention. Watkins (1984) agreed with a similar sentiment towards dreams when she said that “if we are careless in sharing our dreams and waking dreams without a clear purpose in doing so, we seem to lose much of their benefit through not showing them respect” (p. 29.) If I approach the dream in this humble way, it returns to me, it continues to open and expand and reveal the most beautiful moments I have ever known. In turn, the dream protects me, and new constellations between worlds begin to form under velvet skies. To dream is to be awake. A life lived without connection to the dream is a sleeping life and one that is falling short of its potential for living. Jung (1983) so powerfully reminded us that it is in dreams that “we put on the likeness of that more universal, truer, more eternal man dwelling in the darkness of primordial night. . . . He is still the whole and the whole is in him, indistinguishable from nature and bare of all egohood” (cited in Deloria, 2009, p. 169). It is irrefutably in the dream that I am able to sense the full potential of my being.¹¹ As I yearn to live as my dream self—unbounded, open, and naked to my own truth—my waking self is continually transformed and molded by my dream experiences.

For this, I count myself a lucky dreamer. The truth is that many people have forgotten how to dream, and when they do there is no sense of how to be in relationship to the dreaming world. The dream is typically written off as “the weirdest dream” and is quickly dismissed and forgotten amidst the chores of the day. What has happened to our dreams? Where are they living? How have we come to dismiss and insult them as some oddity or quirk of the all-powerful mind? In tending to my own dreams I can only

¹¹ Full potential does not suggest a romantic notion of a “perfect” human being. Rather, it is the unbounded sense of *being* inherent in experiences in which the ego is not actively determining self worth or suppressing raw essence.

imagine what my life would be like without their constant streaming voice to direct my deeply felt sense of purpose. It is as Hillman (1997b) echoed, “in the nightworld, as Heraclitus says, each turns into his and her private soul; there animal image and dreaming mind meet” (p. 40). My dreams are where my soul takes root, drinking from the pool of true imagination, of the deepest blues and blacks of waters unknown.

Having a relationship with the dream world creates depth and mystery in the mundane. Even Freud (1952) admitted, “One day I discovered to my great astonishment that the view of dreams which came nearest to the truth was not the medical but the popular one, half-involved though it still was in superstition” (p. 8). Though science may attempt to make a cadaver out of dreams, slicing and cutting into its ethereal body, looking for some sort of cause, the mystery, the superstition will always remain. For how can a brain scan during REM sleep explain clairvoyant dreams or dreams that provide the answer to some deeply troubling problem? At the risk of generalizing, Western psychology and science have made it their business to explain the nature and origin of dreams and in doing so have made a history of the desecration and colonization of the dream world. Yet it is still alive, despite our best efforts to kill it. Hillman (1979) asserted that “when the dream is a riddle, there is a Sphinx, and where there is a Sphinx, there is a hero” (p. 72). Like a caged animal, the dream has become a test subject for institutions to flex their technological and intellectual muscle.¹²

The approach to the dream that aims to control, to uncover, and tame is synonymously entrenched and born from the egoic ways in which one might be inclined

¹² On the quest to uncover the mystery of dreams, researchers have used animal test subjects, performing lobotomies on parts of the brain that serve to paralyze the body during REM sleep, in order to “see” what is being dreamt as the animal plays out the dream.

to behave towards the waking world. This unconscious reflex had to be constantly tempered within my interactions with my waking horses, and my relationship to my dreaming horses was a continuous informant to the formation of my relationships. I recall my struggle in one such instance:

It's incredibly difficult to resist the urge to force my way into engagement with the horses . . . it is too easy to take control of the interaction, being the one to approach the horse rather than having the horse approach the human. But this is what feels necessary for me if there is to be true relationship. These horses are too used to people dominating the interaction between the two.



Figure 12. Little Friend. Photo by author.

So, I resist the urge to take advantage and impose my touch where it has not yet been invited. I try to think of ways to allow myself to remain an unthreatening and open presence. I pay attention to my body. Is it giving the message that I want? Is it closed or open, playful or suspicious? Often times we are not aware of the signals our bodies are relaying. I have to constantly check in to see if

the message my body is sending is in alignment with my internal condition. This is the most important thing; consistency between the two.

I sit and wait. I begin to pick long stalks of grass, grazing in my own way alongside the herd. The smallest black pony, Rosco, is the most curious. But when I moved to greet him as he came closer, he froze and his eye glazed over. I shouldn't have been so impatient. I do not take advantage of his fear and reach for him though; instead I slowly recede, giving him back his freedom. (Author's field notes, June 2, 2012)

Just as I protect my dream horses from my sometimes overly egoic approaches, I always strived to protect my waking world horses. In turn they offered me a place, a space to dream with them. As in the poem at the start of this chapter, I imagine our awakening, I imagine into a new way of being with our dreams and thus of being in our world. New constellations form between conscious and unconscious, and they exist only from a co-creating force that seeks authenticity and freedom. Though my waking horses

may be domesticated, we can still create spaces of freedom between us, spaces that contain a natural sort of mystery.

In a way, the dream has taken on a different kind of mystery because of its forced domestication within the sphere of Western psychology. It has become something that only the people with letters behind of their names can know about. The dream no longer belongs to the dreamer or the community but to the few who pretend to hold the intellectual key to the mysterious language of the dream. Rather than being a part of or an agent for culture, the dream has been relegated to the institution of mind. It has also been decided that the dream only holds meaning for the individual who recalls it. “For the Sioux, they were decidedly practical, and had implications not only for the individual life, but for the community as a whole” (Deloria, 2009, p. 172). The possibility that a dream carries a message for the community is not a part of common thinking for Western dreamers, thus trapping it in an even smaller structure of thought.

The place where dreams happen has been determined by the world of science to be located in the unconscious mind of the dreamer. Then on some rare occasions with what may be called a Big Dream, it may have emerged from the pool of the collective unconscious, signified by its archetypal contents. However, I tend to agree with Waggoner (2009) in that although “Jung’s view of the collective unconscious suggests common features within the individual’s psyche, it falls short of suggesting an active connected awareness at an unconscious level” (p. 248). Collective or individual, the view of the unconscious within psychology has not changed very much since the 1880s. In speaking to the views of Freud and Nietzsche, Ellenberger (1970) said that “for both men the unconscious is the realm of the wild, brutish instincts that cannot find permissible

outlets, derive from earlier stages of the individual and of mankind, and find expression in passion, dreams, and mental illness” (p. 277). In the beginnings of dynamic psychiatry, the dream was treated as something to be exposed, to be rooted out of the unconscious and examined as if it were the contents of a test tube. In taking inventory, has depth psychology really changed its scientific thinking and approach towards the dream and the unconscious?

Watkins (1984) inquired “whether psychology will continue to apply the methodologies of the natural sciences to issues of human existence or whether psychology will derive approaches that are more adequate and appropriate to their particular domain of study” (p. 74). Perhaps the dream never belonged to psychology in the first place. Maybe it was meant to remain with the community, the shamans, and the prophets, with the people who might respect it as not to want to morph it into the narrow paradigm of individualism. Quite possibly the dream should be returned to those who seek its mystery, not its answers, to the ones who might imagine into the dream rather than strip it of its animal skin.

When the dream is approached through ego-oriented goals, it is inadvertently taken out of its natural environment in order to meet the demands of prevalent psychological paradigm. A dream that is understood out of the context of nature is no longer a dream but rather a figment of our ego’s imagination, betraying the dream’s healing and deepening potential for psyche. “And yet, regardless of the psychic task to be accomplished, Western psychologists have frequently chosen mythological motifs with a Greek origin and story line. They have needed little encouragement to appropriate a symbol from one culture and insist that it is present in other cultures” (Deloria, 2009, p.

177). When it comes to dream interpretation, there is indeed a lot of borrowing of symbols and myths that may have little to do with the world of the dream or the dreamer, even if it presents itself in cultural frameworks that may be more palatable.

There is also a great deal of borrowing from scientific methodology in the way psychology approaches interpretation of the dream. As Watkins (1984) spoke to what she termed “the death of introspectionism and the fall of the image,” (p. 74) she clarified that psychology “tried to fit itself within the framework of the natural sciences—participating as much as possible in its approach, methods, concepts, and frames of reference” (p. 77). When it comes to the image, the dream, and imagination, methods that serve to control, contain, and pin down, become oppressive to such acts of psychic freedom. Just as we struggle to control the natural environment outside of us, we inevitably strip the nature within of its vitality and force. The destruction of both is one and the same and cannot be brought to healing without an understanding and acceptance of their inseparability. We may make every concerted effort towards rehabilitation and reclamation of natural environments, but what does it amount to if we have no understanding of how to be with and dream with our surroundings? The same question of course can be asked in regards to our attempts to heal the inner terrain of psyche. The foundation for a re-membering, for a true reclamation of our human nature depends on our relationship to the inner and outer landscape of psyche.

The idea of the two flowing together harmoniously, being brought back to an experience of unison, often times summons the image of the Native American and a way of life that existed alongside nature. But we must be careful not to think that, as we have done with Greek mythology, we can just borrow another culture’s system of beliefs as a

sort of quick fix for our severe disconnection. As Westerners with a very specific history in direct opposition to Native Americans, it would be deeply naïve and offensive to believe that we might transplant their understanding of nature to make it our own. What we can do, however, is educate ourselves about what might be possible in our relationship to how we think about nature and how we might wish to behave as a part of it. The linkage between living with nature, animals, and dreams through an indigenous perception is hinted at in Deloria's (2009) writing when he explained that "living completely within the natural landscape and faced with the necessity of feeding themselves and warding off enemies, the Sioux had to be alert and always seeking allies to ensure their survival. If animals could provide the information they needed, then it was important to have a good relationship with the animal." He understood that "the secret of course, was to regard dreams as having an equal status to that of the waking observations and to act on the basis that dreams were an important source of reliable information" (p. 126). To live in harmony with the ebb and flow of nature because your life depends upon it is not something that the typical Westerner appreciates. But no matter which direction we have come from, below individuality and below culture, there is a collective experience of being human.

Without going into a full-blown explicit discussion of archetypes in dreams, let me just for now point to the archetypal significance of horses in dreams as an experience of what I might wish to call the collective human. If dreams can be thought of, or better yet experienced as, a means to "get below" individuality and culture with the aim of remembering a different way to be human, then the archetypal dream is of great significance. Archetypal materials in dreams, as Jung (1974) discerned, "prove that the

human psyche is unique and subjective or personal only in part, and for the rest is collective and objective” (p. 77). Equus as an archetypal dream presence is a gateway to the collective and to the experience of unity, no matter how fleeting it may be. Certainly this might be said of any archetypal dream image, but consider those voices that describe the experience of riding in unity with a horse, or the spell-like transfixion that takes one over once the eyes are fixed on its galloping body, or the feverish appetite of the little feminine psyche to be close to horses. If the relationship to Equus, dreaming and waking, can aid us in re-membering a feeling of unity, then the gap between inner and outer nature might possibly be bridged through a relationship with them.

Many times in my dreams of Saltos, there was a fence between us. It would be a different fence in each dream. Sometimes it was a wooden fence, other times it was chain link, and sometimes the fence would be abnormally high while others seemed smaller. Yet, in every dream where Saltos and I were separated by a fence, there was the overwhelming desire and purposeful intention to somehow get myself over the fence and to Saltos.

I dreamt I was at some unknown barn in the woods. . . . There was a lot of commotion at this barn. I looked out into the pasture, shaded by oak trees and saw Saltos. His posture was so beautifully Spanish with his neck curved and his back arched, like he was in a show. He was pawing the earth and had directed his energy beyond the fence. . . . I called his name, quietly though, I almost whispered it actually. Saltos. His head turned towards me and we locked eyes. He trotted around under the bending oak shadows, prancing and dancing for me now. He kept looking back towards me and I couldn't resist the temptation to climb over the white fence and into the pasture, my body magnetically drawn to him. I kept whispering his name. Saltos. Saltos. Saltos. His energy was so playful and fiery. I start to think about how I could get on him bareback without causing too much of a scene. (Author's field notes, January 3, 2012)

The desire for unity with Saltos, on the other side of the fence, is always compelling enough to move me, to make me climb over, to follow my own playful and

fiery spirit. Though we may both be domesticated, we are still very much wild things that seek each other out. As easily as I might be able to turn this dream into a metaphorical comment about a personality conflict or the psychological state of my being, I find my dream experiences to be more true to the essence of life than most of my waking experiences that are clouded with layers of ego, interpretation, agenda, projection, and self-consciousness. I began to learn how to take my cues from the dream and from Equus to get behind such layers. It became my waking experiences that needed interpretation, that needed metaphorical structure.

I went to ride Saltos the other day and he walked off from me. Or rather he walked off from my egoic intentions. He forces me to be honest, to be pure in my intention with him. He still has spirit unlike many domestic horses. His spirit refuses to be completely harnessed, as does my own, which is why I can recognize and must respect this quality in him.

I am under constant scrutiny in his eyes. Nothing about me goes unnoticed and I can see that once again, all along, I am the one being taught. It is when I start to fully buy into the idea that I am the one teaching, that he denies me. His walking off from me forces me to stand alone and contemplate why he will not allow me to ride him. . . .

It is much more difficult to meet one another in naked being, without agenda, without ego, without self-delusion. There is a difference between having intention that is direct and honest, and agenda that is secretive and manipulative. The two cannot be confused and have no overlap. (Author's field notes, November 29, 2012)

If there is a desire to re-connect, to reconcile, these worlds that have been so disastrously riven apart, there must be a concurrent willingness to reorder thinking in regard to commonly accepted psychological theory. When it comes to the dream, it might benefit us to ask why it is that we prefer to turn our dream images into metaphors. Who is to say that our waking life is not the metaphor or reflection of the dream: the living, breathing, galloping, natural horse, the metaphor for the dream horse, or my experience

of Self as a metaphor for the Dream Self? To take our thinking and turn it on its head is a necessary chaos, however temporary it may be, that may lead to new intelligence.

Waktins (1984) took close notice of the difference between the way we might approach a dream image and the way the Oglala Sioux were in relationship to images when she affirmed that while “modern man usually tries to understand the image with rational knowledge and the metaphor through its concrete referent, the Oglala Sioux acknowledged in their actions that it may be the material which belongs to the metaphor, to the imaginal” (p. 30). In this light, when I consider that Saltos may have come from the dream, rather than the dream images of him being created by my psychic projections born of my waking experiences with him, then I must allow that the dream is much more autonomous in nature, existing outside of my concerns about waking life.

When the dream is regarded with respect and concern, when it is taken as a source of deep knowledge and intuitive intelligence, with dreamers understanding that they have access to this wellspring under the condition that they heed its advice for the sake of their survival, the dreamers are then supported by a force much larger than their individual selves. Serious participation with the dream world builds bridges of consciousness between dream images and the waking world responses to those images, bringing together a more complete experience of being human. Martin (1992) discussed what he called earth-being and the way that humans used to live in the context of the natural rhythms of earth, reminding us that “we left that context only in our fevered imagination. It all began as an act of imagination, an illusory image—most fundamentally an image of fear—and so the corrective process must likewise begin with an image” (p. 130.) The closer humans may come to the archetype through the dream image, the closer they come

to an understanding of the commonality shared not just between humans but also between all species.

And so the archetypal image transcends the microcosm of the personal and splays open the infinitely unfolding mystery of psyche. Moving beyond the individual and into the communal, through the archetypal image, is the corrective process that Martin suggests through imagination and dreaming. Equus as an archetypal experience, in the dreaming and waking worlds, offers the space in which imagination can dream into possibilities of unity with other. Jung (1974) said that “archetypal products are no longer concerned with personal experiences but with general ideas, whose chief significance lies in their intrinsic meaning and not in any personal experience and its associations” (p. 77.) To believe that the dream holds significance beyond personal issues is to believe that the dream is autonomous at its core. The dream horse comes to me not because I need to work through psychological issues of power or freedom but maybe because it has something to reveal about the very nature of reality.

In one such dream that came to me at the very beginning of the fieldwork, it seems clear that the path that was laid out in front of me was already realized in the dream. In a way everything that came after the dream has just been a sort of catching up to what was already known.

I'm riding Saltos on a trail and we are ponying another horse with another horse and rider pulling up the tail. I have a big man in the saddle with me, behind me. I don't know who he is but in the dream we know each other somehow. The saddle is too small for both of us and I can't get my feet positioned right in the stirrups so I can't pick up the pace with Saltos. I'm trying to explain to the man riding with me that it isn't safe for us to ride faster. He seems to be taunting me about my skills. I ignore him.

We come to a place in the trail where we must head down a different road. It looks like a scene from Sleepy Hollow. The road is pitch black and ominous. In the distance a horse whinnies, calling out to our group. I quickly tell my horses

not to answer back. I know it is the six black horses and they are like sirens to our task.

One of the men on the trail with us calls back like he is a horse, ignoring my warning. We are resting somewhere, off of our horses. The men with me want to go to some circus nearby before continuing on. I try to explain that we cannot rest long but no one seems to be taking me the least bit seriously and head towards the busy lights of the circus in the distance. I tell the one person left behind with me that I came here to finish this mission and I will do it with or without the group.

So I head out, just Saltos and me, determined to go down the Sleepy Hollow road and finish my mission. (Author's dream, field notes, November 11, 2012)

It would be easy for me to interpret this dream as an anticipatory or even anxious unconscious attitude towards the project of the dissertation ahead of me at the time.

However, the easy interpretation should never be trusted. Although this may certainly have been an element of the dream, I believe that this dream, through the image of the archetypal horse-human, points to a much bigger story about the condition of humanity and human consciousness. From the perspective of the rider, there is a serious task to be accomplished, and any distraction that might deter horse and rider from finishing their mission must be ignored. "The group" that follows along behind is, however, all too easily distracted and would rather indulge in life's circus.

Not to say that there is anything wrong with an actual circus and having a little bit of fun! What I am trying to point towards, what I felt that this dream was attempting to relay to me, is that in order to accomplish or to fulfill our true purpose, to approach a more essential consciousness, one must not only accept the seriousness of the task as they look down the sleepy hollow trail in front of them; it is also essential that they separate themselves from the group, from the hive-mentality that only serves to distract.

I think that Hempfling (2010) did a superb job of carrying forward the idea of the horse-human relationship as the archetypal connection that has the capacity to re-member the human being to a truer state of consciousness. Similar to Jung's explanation of how archetypal products are not concerned with the personal, Hempfling suggested that in the microcosm of the horse-human relationship, "we are concerned with the horse but the horse is concerned with the world and what goes on in it" (p. 24). To be engaged in this trans-species dynamic is to bridge the worlds that have been cast apart in fear and to re-member our dream life and our waking life as an interinforming reality that is intrinsically, and most beautifully, entangled. Even if we experience such a trans-species relationship as deeply personal, something is happening beyond the bounds of character development for the human.

As we move deeper into paradox, struggling to stay in the uncomfortable tension of the unknown, withholding the desire to interpret and to know, the feeling of coming closer to something is accompanied by the intuition that we are so much farther away than we may have imagined. In stepping into the dream without the buoyant bag full of metaphors, we may find that dream life takes on a much more serious shade that leads into the underworld of psyche. In attempting to build bridges between worlds, Hillman (1979) reminded us that in the dream, "within the underworld perspective, the world does not fall into duality, needing balancing and bridges" (p. 81). So the idea is not to initiate a project towards the conscious bridging of worlds, but rather to be with the dream image on its own ineffable terms without the imposition of ego-oriented analysis. In this way we allow for the dream to come to us and to be freed from the cages in which we have sought to contain it.

I am reminded of an experience I had while engaging in an active imagination about my work with horses. Sitting on my back porch, I gave myself time to sink into my chair; noticing the flow of my breath, the sounds of the bugs and birds, the warmth of the summer heat still penetrating the shade of the trees. My intention was to make an approach to psyche directly and consciously through the posing of a question in regard to my relationship with horses. But first I chose an image to focus on in order to drown out all other distraction. I chose the image of Saltos, of course. Once I had him fixed, his form in my mind's eye, I asked my question which in so many words queried what the purpose was in my work. I received an immediate response that came with a booming and unexpected voice that told me, "This is how you get closer to death."

I immediately opened my eyes and sat straight up in my chair, the hair on my arms erect, my muscles immediately clenched, I looked about for the source of that voice. When I saw no one, I wanted to crawl out of my own skin for fear that I had gone too far, was too direct. I am still haunted by those words. But they have shifted ever so slightly from being drenched in trepidation of my own actual mortality to the possibility that in this work with Equus I may be approaching, or approached by, the essence of the archetype. "As the psyche moves toward the underworld—which is a perspective and not necessarily actual death—there develops an ever stronger feeling for sameness, an identity of opposites. . . . One cannot distinguish here from there. There is only the image" (Hillman, 1979, p. 82).

My imagination returns to the funeral carriage horses in their glass display of

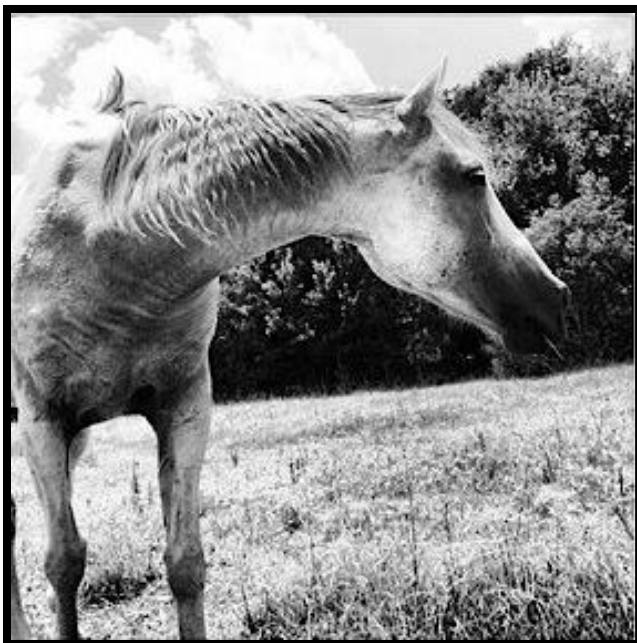


Figure 13. In Betwixt. Photo by author.

motionless death. But the dream brings new meaning to death through the image. I begin to sense the sameness of opposites in death and freedom through the following dream:

I remember . . . Saltos has been boarded at the funeral home where he is being used to pull the funeral carriages with the other white horses. I know I have to go and check up on him to see how he is doing. I have the sense that he is lonely. My father drives me to the funeral home, which resembles the

one from my childhood with the horses in the window. As soon as we pull up I can see Saltos standing there, getting ready to be tacked up by the groom. But he hardly looks like himself. I can only recognize him by his eyes. He is practically skin and bones, his coat has turned dark and some of it is even falling out, his legs barely holding his fragile body up.

I jump out of the car before it stops and run to him. Even though we have not seen each other in a long time, I know he recognizes me. I wrap my arms around his neck and breathe him in. I am so angry with myself for not knowing sooner that he needed me. He nuzzles his face into me, telling me unspoken things about how relieved he is to see me. I take in the sight of his deteriorating condition and know that he cannot stay another day here. He must come home with me and I will do whatever it takes to make that happen.

My father is trying to work out the details with the groom of how to get Saltos out of there. Not wanting to leave his side, I stand in front of him, petting his face and rubbing his ears, telling him it's going to be all right. Then he lowers his head and puts it between my legs so he can hoist me up onto his back. With his last ounce of strength he tosses me over his neck so that I flip and land square on his bony spine.

He can hardly hold me and starts to wobble forward, his knees slowly giving way under him. I close my eyes and sink into him. I feel his weakness as my own, his sadness as my own, and his happiness as my own. I convey to him through my body that he must find the strength to stand back up. He must keep his spirit for a little bit longer so I can get him out of this place of death. (Author's dream, Sept. 10, 2012)

Equus in the dream is close acquaintances with death. In coming closer to the image we come closer to the dream, we come closer to death, we come closer to freedom. In surrendering the ego's grip on the dream and the image, allowing it to be as it is, we may be able to reformulate our relationship to the dream and the underworld and thus to life. Avens (1984) explained that "the soul, in her wandering, is called to go down into the peace and silence of the dead" (p. 87). Sinking down into the image, into the world of Hades, is a surrendering to the process of life and to the illusion that we can control all aspects of it, thus keeping us from genuinely participating in it. Rather than this downward movement being depressing, it is quite the opposite. When you get closer to death, you get closer to releasement, to letting go, to living in the present. "There is an imagination below the earth that abounds in animal forms, that revels and makes music. There is a dance in death" (Hillman, 1979, p. 45). This underworld imagination, these animal forms, are asking to be set free from the perspective of glass cases and stiff bodies and an imagination that is enslaved by the ego.

The image is pleading for a new perspective from which it can be experienced as whole in its own right, not as an amalgamation of projections. In freeing the dream image from the onslaught of projections, it may be allowed to express itself more fully and openly without the suffocating burden of carrying another's psychic rubbish. And then where would all of that projecting turn its attention? Maybe back unto itself. Once the dream image is freed from this kind of countertransference, it may become possible to appreciate its true connection to our waking world. This is yet a most demanding and even fearful undertaking. Don Juan instructed:

We must realize, that is it our cognition, which is in essence an interpretation system, that curtails our resources . . . our interpretation system is what tells us

what the parameters of our possibilities are, and since we have been using that system of interpretation all our lives, we cannot possibly dare to go against its dictums. (cited in Castaneda, 1998, p. 199)

Although Don Juan is speaking here to the comprehension of what he calls *inorganic beings*, that is entities with awareness but no physical organism, the parallel or maybe even the uniformity of what he described with that of the dream image can easily be entertained. His advice to Castaneda (1998) was that

the fewer interpretations sorcerers make, the better off they are. . . . hold your ground and gaze at it with an inflexible attitude. If it is an *inorganic being*, your interpretation of it will fall off like dead leaves. If nothing happens, it is just a chicken-shit aberration of your mind, which is not your mind anyway. (p. 200)

When interpretation falls away and the image is still there, a new relationship with the dream world can begin and the dream image can finally present itself as what it is, another reality that exists outside of human awareness of its presence.

Dreaming with Equus

I step into this other world, seeking advice if only it were a few words that would guide me towards a better understanding of what I am doing here, of why these horses, or images of horses, constantly surround me. Walking amongst them in the field, I often wondered if I was dreaming. Being alone with them, I had no one else to verify what I was



Figure 14. Paradox. Photo by author.

witnessing, which at times felt like something completely otherworldly. The image of

Saltos above seems as if I carried it with me from the dream, yet as I sink into it, I realize that he carries me into the dream. I capture and am captured by these uroboric moments that are pure paradox, in which I feel I have no place to start and no idea of where I might end up. In speaking to this paradox of the relationship of the dreaming world to our day world understanding of it, Hillman (1979) carefully advised that “essential for working with what is unknown is an attitude of unknowing. This leaves room for the phenomenon itself to speak” (p. 194). From this space of unknowing, I carefully addressed my questions of the purpose of this work through an active imagination:

The other world appears to be a barn that I suddenly find myself in. But I am not alone, my Indian friend and his horse are with me. I ask my friend how it happens. How does he know his horse like he knows his land? With his hand on his horse’s neck he answers, “It is like making love.”

“Why is it like making love?”

He does not respond. . . .

We are dancing around a fire and it is night now. It is just us two. The flames shape into a white horse in the center and disappear. We dance until the fire has worked us, until the fire is dancing in between us. I follow him running into the dark woods. We climb a huge tree and he tells me to walk out onto a branch high above the earth. He need not ask me to trust him. I always have. So I walk out and stand looking at the black sky. He pushes me off the tree and a horse catches me. The horse runs at a furious pace through the trees, his breath louder than the beat of his feet on the earth. My friend comes from behind on his horse, running with me now, the horses know the way and we let them take us. They stop in the clearing. Now I can see that there are a hundred blazing fires, licking the stars with their flames. His people are here too. We run to join them in a maddening dance that takes me out of my body and into the blackness of the night sky.

Somehow, we are back in the barn where we first started. Exhausted, I lie with my horse on a bed of hay, resting my head on his white neck. As I feel myself drifting to sleep my Indian friend says to me, “You must dream with the horse.” I fall asleep, trusting that I will. (Author’s active imagination, November 17, 2012)

The advice that I seek in this other world is never superficial or one dimensional in its implications. My Indian friend, who tells me that I must dream with the horse,

knows that his advice must be considered on every level of awareness, and it is not intended to be fully comprehended. His words accompany the image, the image accompanies a feeling, and the feeling provokes new thinking in regard to my relationship with horses and with the dream world. Immediately from his advice I recognize that I am no longer in a world that has been created by my individual fantasy projection. Any attempt at interpretation falls away like dead leaves, leaving me with a sense of bewilderment in the presence of something truly other. Rather than ask myself what my Indian friend meant, I trust that I am ready for the experience and that it will come. I just have to recognize it when it does.

Yet, as the work of trans-species relations is no stranger to paradox, it has been through the experience of dreaming with the horse that I have come closer to understanding the essence behind those words that I continue to carry with me. In such an experience, you open to the possibility of the shared dream. To dream with implies that the dream reality can be simultaneously experienced by something other than ‘I.’ And this other must be separated from the idea of our inner other, that unconscious element in our individual psyche that we project in order to become aware of. When we understand “other” or “otherness” as still enclosed in a singular psychic world of our unique interior selves, then it is not other but still “me” or “I.” This self-sabotaging idea of other that does not actually lend itself to the real possibility of awareness outside individual human consciousness only serves to maintain the fantasy that we are being open and vulnerable, when in fact we are closed and protective.

To consider the possibility that there are entities of awareness that do not require our acknowledgment as a precondition for their existence is to admit to a level of naivety

that shakes the foundations of our most central beliefs about the order and nature of human life on earth. It almost goes without saying that it is the Western human's ego that has warded off such possibilities, as they would threaten the advantageous position of the ego in the Western psyche. Bernstein (2005) even went so far as to suggest that in our current state of naivety or ignorance, we put ourselves at risk of species extinction. He cautioned, "I believe that we are today exactly at the point of a *feeling* realization of the disadvantageous limits of Western man's 'mental faculties'" (p. 43). Admitting to the restrictions of our mind means allowing for the idea of worlds upon worlds of unknown otherness.

To dream with is to open up to those unknown worlds in the hopes of remembering a more complete human being who lives in an interconnected way with the mystery of life and does not pretend to control it. When such revealing experiences present themselves, the urge to contain must be tempered in order to allow an unfolding of psyche. I present this dreaming experience as one in several that provokes a deep and serious pondering on the implications of dreaming with:

I am in downtown St. Augustine, my hometown, on Cordova Street. I hear a horse trotting up from behind me and turn to see it. The horse is pulling a carriage and as I watch it go by I am overwhelmed with a deep sadness. I wonder to myself if the carriage horses could talk what they might say about their conditions and what they could ask for me to do for them. I feel helpless in this moment as I watch the horse and carriage pass me by on their usual route towards the bay front.
(Author's dream, Jan. 03, 2012)

The same night my partner reported to me that he had this dream:

I am sitting on the bay front and I see a horse and carriage headed towards me. I feel very sad for some reason watching the horse. I feel sorry for him and wonder about the ways that I might be able to help him. (Danny's dream, Jan. 03 2012)

This was the first of several shared dream experiences that Danny and I had. There seemed not much use in trying to explain why or how such a phenomenon was happening, we rather wondered about it, allowing ourselves to be in awe. I of course also could not help but wonder whom else we were sharing the dream with. Certainly it felt as if we were also dreaming with the horse.

The experience of the shared dream, of dreaming with other, calls into serious question our notion of the dream as not only belonging to but created by “my” individual psyche. How is Western psychology prepared to deal with the possibility of dream material that creates itself, that comes *to* and not *from* the dreamer and that can be simultaneously experienced by multiple dreamers, and not just humans, for that matter? Although indigenous traditions accept this perspective of dreaming as interwoven into the fabric of their collective being, generally speaking to the Western psyche, such a perspective is felt to be wholly foreign. The typical models of analysis cannot apply when they are based on the idea of individualized dreaming phenomena.¹³ There are of course scores of accounts of predictive dreams, dreams in which solutions to problems are presented and groundbreaking theories are revealed. But it is in the shared dream that one comes to sense the true autonomy of dream life. In explaining this particular type of dreaming with, it is not wholly sufficient to turn to our limited understanding of the unconscious mind, individual or collective.

¹³ Without generalizing the entire project of psychology as ill prepared to deal with a new dreaming paradigm, or dreaming reality, it should be noted that there are those who are attempting to approach the dream on its own terms and do not assume complete individual authority over the dream. However, there is still a foundational structure in Western psychology that assumes dreams to be individual that is more than difficult to separate from and build anew.

Castaneda spoke to the deeply delusional sense that humans have as being immortal and how negatively this affects our behavior. I would argue that this is because we are not connected to the dream world, to that underworld that psyche longs to grow roots to and draw water from. Castaneda (1998) warned that “even more injurious than this sense of immortality is what comes with it: the sense that we can engulf this inconceivable universe with our minds” (p. 119). Being confronted with the challenge of trying to understand, or even process the experience of dreaming with, reveals more ignorance than answers.

What I call shared dreaming, Waggoner (2009) termed mutual dreaming. He said that “mutual dreaming indicates that some dreams may possess elements of a consensus reality . . . in effect, any evidence for mutual dreaming advances the idea of the dream state as an alternate reality, albeit a mental one” (p. 207). Yet, is not our awareness of the physical world also a mental reality? To accept such evidence as the dream state being an alternate reality challenges on every level our understanding of our physical world, which we pride ourselves on mastering through our mental capacities. And if there is an alternate reality that lives through the dream world and comingles with our waking world, then surely we do not understand as much as we would like to imagine. Waggoner (2009) provided numerous examples of mutual or shared dreaming experiences that bring into serious question the possibility that our means of perception are severely limited by our ideas of consciousness.

In my dreaming experiences with the horses, it became increasingly obvious that I was not the only dreamer in my dreamscapes. Once I was able to accept that my dreams were not a private affair, I was able to create a shared experience between the horses and

myself on multiple levels, moving closer to what felt like a shared perception. This shared perception involves more than just the concurrence of physicality but extends into a simultaneous perceiving of feeling levels, energy currents, and even perceptions of Self. This shared experiencing contributes to a practice of true trans-species communication and its advancement is obvious in those who put forth concerted effort. And still, there are those, human and animal alike, who seem to possess the ability for shared perception more naturally than others. The trans-species shared dreaming experience is a testament not only to the idea of an alternate reality, but what's even more compelling and troubling for some is that this reality is not determined purely by human awareness of its existence.

Several years ago, when I was first coming to know Saltos, I had this dream:

I am standing in the barn aisle when I see Saltos come in through the back entrance. He walks purposefully up to me. As I am petting his face I can tell that something is bothering him and he seems sick. I ask him what's wrong and he tells me he has a cold. (Author's dream, n.d.)

That next day I went to the barn after having been absent for several days. Before I saw Saltos, Suzette met me at the front of the barn. We chatted about usual business and I naturally asked how the horses had been. She told me that Saltos was having trouble with his allergies. Surely enough, when I saw him, he had snot running out of his nose and swollen red eyes. As simple a message as this was, it was undeniably a message and arguably a shared dreaming experience. "When demonstrated, such experiences could begin to revolutionize traditional views of dreaming and the dreaming state" (Waggoner, 2009, p. 220). In the trans-species context, our ability to communicate and share dreaming realities with nonhumans would transform our relationships to animals, thus to nature, thus to ourselves, thus to each other. The domino effect of such evidence would be systemic.

A New Interinforming Reality

An interinforming reality that flows between dreaming and waking states is possible and desirable for those adventurous enough to reject the status quo and open themselves to the massive vulnerability that accompanies such endeavors. In the realization that *others* may “impinge” upon what you believed to be your most private relationship, that between yourself and your dreams comes the feeling that something most precious has been exposed. Simultaneously, the light that exposes reveals the opportunity in finding new worlds. This is not to suggest a colonizing mentality in regards to the dream world. As the lucid dreamer may search the depths of the dream, the intention should not be to conquer or control but rather to discover and wonder. The emerging consciousness created through shared dreaming experiences, trans-species or not, can be molded into an interinforming reality that in turn shifts the dreamer into alternate modes of perception that extend beyond, in a multidimensional way, the typical surface awareness that is required for the “day-to day.”

Once you allow the dream to inform your waking modes of perception, everything around you begins to change. Nothing is as it was. As Martin (1999) explained,

Just when you think you’re lost is when interesting things begin to happen, and they emphatically won’t happen until you lose your usual frame of reference. When you’re lost is actually when you are opening yourself up to being found by a different reality. (p. 78)

This different reality then becomes your new frame of reference, but rather than being fueled by egocentric desires and goals, it is connected to a much larger matrix of meaning. In this new interinforming reality, the things that once blinded you and stunted your expansion become clear and unattractive. Like the animal, you begin to remember

how to live for the moment, your awareness becomes sharper every day that passes, and the pleasures of the natural world burst forth with the most vibrant life force. When you find yourself in this place, life begins to take a turn towards true fulfillment and self-realization.

Inspired by the horse-human relationship, this process became inextricably involved in the simultaneous realization of the other. In the context of a trans-species inspired process of individuation, Other is an actual autonomous being that must be acknowledged and treated as such. Otherwise, one becomes involved in a self-reflecting narcissistic and ultimately shallow activity. This logic of the autonomous, animal other extends into the dream world, where images that were once thought of as reflections of a human self are finally seen as the fur covered, pawing, tangled haired beings that they really are. Storr (1983) explained that through the process of individuation, “the individual comes to change his attitude from one in which ego and will are paramount to one in which he acknowledges that he is guided by an integrating factor which is not of his own making” (p. 229). This integrating factor, as understood through a Jungian lens of individuation, is the Self.

Although the idea of a Self points to a transpersonal realm that the individuating human may come to integrate with, it is still locked in the premise that one comes to know this Self through the “symbols” and “fantasy” of the unconscious. Although I am certainly not arguing that there are not symbols and fantasy that abound in psyche, I do believe that there is little room left for the actual animal and the intentional overlapping and traversing of beings between worlds. Deloria (2009) suggested that following a Sioux perspective, “dreams . . . are also tangible intersections with a reality that looms in front

of us” (p. 181). For what if we were to consider that the animals in our dreams were not there to teach us something about our unbalanced character but rather to whisper to us something from this intersection about the state of the world, or even the cosmos? If we were able to consider our dreams as viable sources of information regarding concerns beyond the individual human, an interinforming reality would be possible. Deloria, in comparing primitive experiences of dreams to that of the civilized man, asked an important question:

Is it not possible that a civilized people with few family linkages, in a society that stresses individualism at all costs, and that considers only the tangible physical existence of something as “real,” would have prospective dreams—but would be so mistrusting as to experience them as simply the perpetual circling of the Self around the objective existence of the ego? (p. 180)

The idea of the Self in regard to the process of individuation needs to be re-visioned to mean something other than purely human, or even worldly. Possibly, because it is considered indistinguishable from an anthropomorphic God-image, it is unfortunately too inbred with religious mentality that places human above and separate from nature, making the process of individuation one that may in some ways, separate us from the others, the self, and the other than human rather than integrate.

The more time I spent with the horses, the more I understood and began to embodied this new perspective of an interinforming reality in which horse and human defined each other through relationship:

Immediately, as I scrambled onto Hush’s back I felt at home. I told her we would pretend like we were Indians. Wrapping my fingers in her mane, my legs hugging tight around her belly, her body carrying me to somewhere else, somewhere that makes sense.

Without the saddle I actually felt safer. There was nothing to drag me or get caught up on, no stirrups to push into, or seat to adjust, just my body and her body. We both moved more freely because of it. My breath released as she trotted along, sweat dripping down my forehead and stinging in my eyes. I loved every

second of it. I savored every step. She brought me into the dream, into the place that my body reaches for, searches for in every expression of an opportunity for freedom. (Author's field notes, July 4, 2012)

Through experiences like this one with the horses, I began to realize that I was practicing dreaming in the waking world. In an embodied way, I began to enter into the dream becoming in some respect an embodied dreamer.

In a new vision of individuation in which humans rely on autonomous other selves to inform and direct them, experiences and phenomena become more integrated into a much larger idea of Self, a world Self or a cosmic Self that becomes a continuous experience of being. There are no isolated incidents. There is an old cowboy saying that goes "what happened before what happened, happened." Though this does point to a linear cause and effect way of understanding experience, it essentially signifies the unity of experience as being ever related, ever entangled. Yet, we treat our dreams as isolated incidents. Even if we do believe that they are relating to us some hidden meaning that lives beneath our conscious attention, we still put them off, choose to forget them, and excuse them as some sort of mistake.

But we are ever entangled. "By understanding this broader canvas on which our psychic life is painted, we can make considerably better use of dreams and understand our vocational responsibilities with greater precision" (Deloria, 2009, p. 181). The entrance of Equus into my life has been no mistake. Nor has it been an intrapsychic journey through which I have reduced its image to symbol in order to integrate aspects of my personality with the goal of becoming a more complete human being. No. It has been very real. It has been, and will continue to be, a process that demands complete involvement and commitment. A trans-species inspired process of individuation is one

that is predicated on the belief that I am no better than the horse that stands beside me. Though we may both be products of our environment, history, culture, and family we are still found standing next to one another, looking to the other for answers, for comfort, for understanding. So when Equus and I meet in the dream, as we so often do, I know that the reason for our meeting is beyond what I have been told dreams are for.

My encounters with Equus have done more than complement my character and reveal hidden aspects of my psyche. They have opened me to endless possibilities. They have shown me that perhaps this world is but a reflection of some other one from which they travel back and forth. They have made me question the nature of this “reality” in which we have so blindly operated within for the sake of wanting to be comfortable and secure in our own thoughts, constructing for ourselves a false sense of authority. In the intersection where I meet Equus, where the flesh and bone fades to ethereal and back again, I fear I know nothing at all, but I have hope that in being lost, I am just beginning to be found.

The search for the Self becomes more of an allowing, an opening, a space from which you can come back to the next time you decide to venture out. The horses are inextricably interwoven with who I am now, they always have been from the very beginning, from before I was born. They were there, waiting. How perfect it feels to know that this was always true, that Equus always carried me before I even laid eyes on their bodies.

The dream becomes manifest when you wake up to it. . . . The beauty is more than transforming, it is transcendent yet grounded, it is becoming, it is awakening to the dream. (Author’s field notes, Oct. 3, 2012)

In the perplexing practice of learning how to relate to Equus, one acquires a certain kind of psychological creativity that slowly becomes a regular way of adapting to and integrating with phenomena that at one time may have been too unusual or unsavory to relate to. The psychological flexibility required to understand and empathize with

another species begins to loosen the once rigid boundaries between elements of psyche, creating a more fluid capacity of interinforming. This is how the search for self becomes an opening, rather than some sort of linear goal towards a defining moment in time. In this ongoing relating to Equus, it becomes clear that the gap that separated us was only one we had created in our minds and our hearts. “We tend to suppress the knowledge that we are in any way just like them, or else some terribly unsavory details of the lives we have so carefully constructed will be revealed” (Pierson, 2000, p. 220). In the clearing where human and horse stand gazing into the mystery of one another, many things are revealed, but just as many will always remain hidden.

Letting go the Reins: The Apprenticed Dream Ego

On the tail winds of Eastern religions and philosophies, it has become quite popular within Western psychological theory to chastise the greedy, self-involved, and manipulative Ego, almost as if it were a bratty child. Yes, the ego of the Western human has run amuck and taken us down a most destructive path of domination, self-service, and narcissism. But rather than put a dunce cap on our children and face them to a corner, why not show them another way; provide them with a different option? The Western psyche is not equipped to take on the abolishment of the ego entirely. Yet, the idea of such a thing becomes appealing in the face of bleak options out of our predicament, of which we hardly even comprehend. From a psychological perspective, the detachment of consciousness from unconsciousness, or a state of rootlessness of psyche is the most threatening dilemma. As Jung warned, “it is then that the rootless condition of consciousness becomes a real danger. This . . . results in a hubris of the conscious mind which manifests in the form of exaggerated self-esteem or an inferiority complex” (Jung, 2002, p. 73). Jung ensured that “at all levels a loss of balance ensues, and this is the most

fruitful soil for psychic injury” (p. 73). The rootless ego operates with the self-government of a child dictator. And when confronted with something as uncontrollable as nature, in whatever form it appears, the ego puts up every defense to maintain its position within the individual psyche.

It is the ego that labels the dream upon awakening as ‘weird,’ ‘stupid’ and ‘crazy’: For if it were to open itself to the possibility of intelligent forces beyond its ability, it would necessarily have to relinquish some of its power. In paralleling the collective unconscious and Nature, Jung affirmed that both are “beyond truth and error, independent of the interference of consciousness, and therefore often completely at odds with the intentions and attitudes of the ego” (2002, p. 82). Yet in between ego and Nature, possibility abounds. Wherever there is discomfort, unease, and fear, there is room for fruition.

The ego need not be punished or taken arms against in order to realize a balance and create an interinforming reality in which the ego becomes a conduit for rather than an obstruction to. It is not unlike first-time riders who believe they will climb upon their mounts and control them with the greatest of ease, but once they are in the saddle they become overridden with a deep fear at the sudden realization that there are forces much greater than the willful ego. It is in these moments of confrontation that the ego has the opportunity to be humbled by nature in the form of a horse. The apprenticed ego is reluctant at first but eventually sees the benefit of being supported by greater forces. After all, the ego was born from nature, from the collective unconscious, and so in its remembering of its origins, it is able to function in a more natural and harmonious way with the rest of the elements of psyche.

Watkins (1984) suggested that rather than identifying this heroic ego-consciousness as the only ego, we might rather think of multiple egos, or different “styles of awareness” (p. 120). The idea of the singularity of the ego restricts movement and relaxation into other modes of consciousness. If one could surrender to the dream world, not write it off each morning as the sun rises and the image fades but rather to invite it into the day-world, the heroic ego that consumes us so might be transformed, re-rooting itself back to a more natural state. “We have mistaken and failed to recognize what opus(es) of transformation the imaginal could create because we have persevered in looking at her images from the standpoint of the heroic ego” (Watkins, 1984, p. 121). In learning how to shift perspective from one imagining of the ego to another, one discovers the elasticity inherent in differing levels of awareness.

But the heroic ego is not so willing at first to let go of the reins. Waggoner (2009) warned that “to give up control or focus on the unknown can engender fear, and an inflexible waking ego avoids possible fears” (p. 88). The desire to interrelate must be present in order to bring flexibility and willingness to the waking ego. To enter into the dream world with the intention of apprenticing the ego to the imaginal world can be a first step towards the comprehension of multiple ego awareness’s. Retracting and expanding into the landscape of the dream, the dreamer begins to carry over these ethereal qualities into dealings with the day world, transforming its surroundings into the likeness of the dream. When the ego allows the dream to bleed over into waking awareness without judgment, without fear, it becomes responsible in a new way, in a more purposeful way to being mediator and channeler. This deepened ego awareness begins to operate from a place of trust and sureness rather than anxiety.

In the dream, the ego is more willing or able to shift into these layered experiences of what ego can be, of what it is capable of beyond day world dealings.

I am headed up a steep rocky slope. Negotiating my footing on the rugged terrain makes my progress slow. There is a herd of horses following my lead and I am suddenly aware that I am responsible for their safe passage. I look down at the path only to see that my feet are not human but horse. I am quite aware now that I am Saltos. I look ahead to try and understand where it is that I am so purposefully leading these other horses and I see a dark cave at the top of the mountain.
(Author's Dream, May 2013)

Who am I in this dream? How is it possible to be Saltos and myself simultaneously? What happened to my ego in this dream? It would be easy enough for me to excuse these types of questions with the simple explanation that dreams are nonsensical and are nothing more than an imagination run wild. In the dream I become something



Figure 15. Self Reflected. Photo by author.

else and am quite aware that the physical form I have taken is not the one I am accustomed to, yet I somehow remain myself. The idea of Saltos as a dream figure representing elements of my psyche is severely challenged in a dream where I am consciously aware of taking on his form. He is no longer some unconscious, detached figure outside of me upon which I am projecting unconscious qualities. As Waggoner (2009) suggested, “as we consciously move deeper into the unconscious, experiences

arise to suggest that the ‘self’ exists in much broader terms than the waking ego self alone” (p. 87). The conscious embodiment of another being would certainly suggest a different kind of ego than the one that presumably writes these words.

As I take this dream with me into the field, a different sensation comes over me as I watch Saltos turn to face me in the distance. It’s more than seeing him now, I can feel his movement from a distance as if it were my own. I remember from the dream what his body feels like from his perspective, how his eyes view the path in front of him and how the step of each foot vibrates up into his muscle. As I feel him coming closer, I wonder if he has ever dreamt himself into human form. Why should he be any less capable of such a dream? I cannot help but suspect that he has and that in my dreaming of becoming him it was possibly necessary that he also would become me. And just maybe, Saltos was lending me his perspective so that I might become conscious of the dream and of the cave ahead, so that I might understand that my perspective was not the totality of me.¹⁴ “It is an ability we have to become an image other than a person, but . . . once this has happened we follow not the rules of logic and linear space and time but rules of the imaginal” (Watkins, 1984, p. 119). The ego that finds itself consciously participating in the imaginal is the ego that has let go the reins in the hero’s hand and has given itself over to the tutelage of the great mystery.

Once the ego has given itself to this apprenticeship with the dream, the transformation to come is unavoidable, sometimes most uncomfortable, but ultimately yields something very real and valuable. Dreaming with Equus is a most special apprenticeship. Even from the level of just symbolic interpretation, “you could . . .

¹⁴ This particular insight was gleaned through a conversation with a fellow dreamer about the nature of lucid dreaming and the cave.

describe the horse as the king of all symbols. Horses symbolize qualities of being, that in many respects, are directly opposed to those of our modern world” (Hempfling, 2010, p. 40). The ego that is confronted with Equus in the dream is confronted with shadow, with its opposing values and ambitions. To wake up to the dream, then, in part means to come to terms with these difficult oppositions of ego-consciousness. Is it not also curious to consider, as Hempfling points out, that of all the credit ego-consciousness takes for creating, maintaining, and moving forward modernity, “according to anthropologists, our culture could never have existed without horses” (p. 40)? What better being to confront the Western ego?

Once the ego climbs down, or is sometimes thrown off, its mount’s back, it is forced to stand on the same ground and must consider other ways of being with this horse that now is alongside rather than underneath. As in the dream of becoming Saltos, the ego has been swathed in the being of Equus. Just as Hillman (1997b) reminded us, “alchemy suggests getting inside the horse, like Jonah in the whale” (p. 51). The ego inside Equus is the ego that has surrendered to an interior process of transformation, cooking in the heat of one’s soul life. This is possibly precisely the juncture where the potential for the horse-human relationship to transform not just the individual but Western culture is underappreciated and at best shallowly understood amongst the people of horse culture. It seems that even the most intuitive endeavors that orient themselves towards deepening and transforming the purpose of this relationship seem to miss the boat. With the best of intentions, it seems inevitable that the ego of the human would get in the way. Programs that aim towards psychological transformation still hide an agenda of egoism behind

language like leadership, empowerment, and confidence building. Where is the transformation in trying to stay on top?

Many of the emerging equine therapy and equine encounters programs that claim to guide people towards a more connected, more natural way of being, via the way of horses, are sadly still operating within a hierarchical paradigm in which the human is still determining the outcome. Such an example is when equine therapy programs use horses to teach employees of a corporation about the tenets of “teamwork” by completing exercises with horses that highlight their natural herd behavior. This approach might offer a metaphor of teamwork, but in the process it diminishes and undermines the truth of herd life. The last therapeutic ranch where I worked was no different. The embodied mentality was that the horses were there to serve as therapeutic tools for the humans. They were taken in and out of stalls, saddled, mounted, dismounted, kicked at, yanked on, jerked around, all with a blind acceptance that as long as the humans were getting better, the program must be working.

If the ego cannot dismount, stand alongside, and be enveloped by the image, then it will not be transformed, it will not evolve. The apprenticed dream ego that does relinquish itself to this alchemical process is cooked down until it is softened and more agreeable to psyche. Hillman (1979) explained that “there is an operation, which we call dreaming, that makes the heroic ego a more subtle body, enabling it to become a free soul” (p. 107).¹⁵ This dreaming subtle body can be translated into a waking subtle ego body and with a newfound freedom that is not attached to shallow, short-term interests. Then it can begin the real work of being an intermediary between worlds. It is then not so

¹⁵ This particular quote was previously used earlier in this work. However, its relevance in multiple contexts lends it to be repeated.

much building a bridge as it is creating an opening. It forms new alliances with psyche and re-directs itself inward, as the process of individuation would require such a turning in. It may feel like a quiet, gentle motion of energetic forces that eventually become a consciously intentional shift towards soul-making. There is much work to be done in the re-membering and the softening of the ego is vital to creating a new way of being.

In dreams, as we might be invited to leave behind our human form in exchange for a different perspective, our egos must realize that they are not meant to be so solid, so attached, so finite. In its new way it is like “The Cosmic Dancer, declares Nietzsche, [that] does not rest heavily in a single spot, but gaily, lightly, turns and leaps from one position to another” (Campbell, 1949, p. 196). We must truly consider the path of another as simultaneously our own, intently climbing towards the cave, ready to enter into a great mystery. The leadership we embrace is not the kind that seeks recognition but is made of willingness and surrender in the face of unknown forces. It is a way of being that has the flexibility of such a luminous dancer, a blissful and spirited horse.

You begin to re-member your true form, your true identity that has been hiding in the whispers of your dreams, in the echo of memories long forgotten. Carey (1988) perfectly resolved that

when your ego stops trying to do everything all by itself, and invites eternal spirit into your consciousness, your historical illusion evaporates like mist on a sunny morning. A polarity reversal takes place in the charge of your human envelope. The field of consciousness around you changes. Instead of your ego dominating your sense of identity and blocking your awareness of the Great Spirit, an eternal sense of self awakens within you. You know yourself as a projection of the Creator of all the stars in the sky . . . you remember. Everything is seen differently. The world is perceived anew through the eyes of a universal awareness. Your ego becomes your working partner, and you commence the conscious creation of a new human reality. (p. 48)

This new reality, perceived through an awakened ego consciousness, is collective rather than individual, it is synchronistic because it is psyche and soma experienced together.

The ego consciousness that is grown from a dreaming consciousness can relax its strict and dominating efforts in light of its new purpose with psyche. Finally, things start to make just a little more sense. I re-member my self through the eyes of another.

Chapter 6
Moon's Body



Figure 16. Moonshine. Photo by the author.

Equus in the Moon

The shadow of thundering hooves and flaring nostrils
dance across the dusty face of the moon.

From where I sit,
on the line of sand and sea,
I can almost hear her furious pace
across endless galaxies.

Waning and waxing,
the shadowed moon mare bends to man's will.

She commands the waters
that wash over my feet
and molds the grains of sand that swallow me in.

Grain by grain,
she wants only for the rushing of wind in her hair,
and the beating of forever in her heart.

The haze of this waxing moon showers her down to the sea
like fairy dust blown onto an invisible wish.

Millions of horses made of moonlit sea foam
stampede out of their darkened depths

and crush me under the weight of eternity.

I cannot escape her.
This moon mare,
made of sea foam and milky galaxies.

She is the beckoning of everything that is my soul.

(Author's poem, 2011)

The Dismemberment of Dualism

From the contemplation of the moon come many things. Her luminous body, cast glowing against the night sky, reminds us of pure beauty and glowing fantasy. We reach for her, wishing to gather her up, swallow her into our bellies so that we might become just as radiant. As shadows are cast against her, she changes her form. She waxes and wanes, pulling the tides and the calls of crickets with her. Her gravity is soft and forgiving like some dreams. I imagine all the horses born from her being, carrying with them this iridescent spark that holds its own gentle power. To their center I am pulled like the tides of the ocean, I sing out like a cricket in the woods, undone by their unearthly presence suspended in front of me. Every time I reach for them, it is like touching the moon.

To be able to reach out and grasp at something that once seemed so far, so fantastical in my imagination, is like arriving on the moon. The more I am with them, the more I take on their gravity; my body waxing and waning, changing boundary and form, absorbing and reflecting shadow. I become increasingly conscious of my limitations in their atmosphere and my thinking about physicality swirls around my experiences. As Kohanov (2001) explained

because so much . . . work with horses involves body-to-body contact, because they operate from the preconquest¹⁶ state of consciousness, these animals can reactivate the sociosensual mind in their human handlers . . . [consequently] bringing long-forgotten knowledge back to the surface where it can temper the destructive by-products of the rational mind. (p. 95)

This long-forgotten knowledge that Kohanov spoke of is that which existed before our present state of dualistic thinking and experiencing.

It is a sort of knowledge that integrates “feeling, intuition, relationship, and preverbal body wisdom” (Kohanov, 2001 p. 94). It does not discriminate between body and mind but rather experiences them as a unified element in knowing and being. It is an experience of being able to *feel* your thinking in your body. There is no separation of logic and feeling as the two begin to form a new (or rather re-member an old) way of being in the world. The more time spent with the horses, the more easily I am able to access this point of reference from which I respond to the moment-to-moment happenings rather than getting caught up in patterns of overthinking in which the wisdom of the body is shut off for the preference of the mind. As I think back to some of my first encounters with horses, I can clearly recall the awkward discord between the horses and me. My approach was always unsure and flimsy, my body in a constant state of nervousness, and my mind frantically self-conscious about my actions. Because they were able to sense my obvious anxiety, it took a while before I was able to approach and be amongst the horses without them avoiding me.

Eventually, as Martin (1999) held, “somewhere we must cross over—to where it possesses us” (p. 46). And so I eventually did. Leaving behind old ways of being, I dedicated myself to the re-membrance of a way that would bring me closer to their world

¹⁶ “Preconquest consciousness characteristic of the minds of indigenous peoples . . . rooted in feeling” (Kohanov, 2001, p. 93).

that so captivated me. I spent many countless hours just sitting amongst them, waiting for an invitation that would allow me to cross the threshold. The task of integrating thought and action, mind and body, takes immense patience and stillness. As the practice of integration continues, against and over many impediments, eventually “I am no longer concerned with my body, nor with time, nor with the world, as I experience them in antepredicative knowledge, in the inner communion that I have with them” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 82). It is a way of being that is extremely difficult to retain for a suspended length of time. Upon returning to the clatter of modernity, one finds a million distractions that serve to separate what was briefly re-membered.

This mode of operating from a separated being is often attributed to what is referred to as the Cartesian split, or the mind-body problem associated with Rene Descartes’s philosophy of mind. Although the influence of this philosophy was most certainly a detrimental blow to humankind’s relationship with nature, it would not have been so were it not for the disposition of the times. Many have contributed to the disarticulation of nature through the belief that mind held superiority over matter, and many continue to do so even now, with overwhelming evidence pointing to the weakness of this variety of philosophy. Martin (1999) clearly asserted that

the process of disarticulating nature reaches back much further than any of these cultural traditions would have it, all the way back to the environmental stresses and oral-artifactual responses of Paleolithic hunters. The Greeks and Romans, with their demystified philosophy and history, their emphasis on the chosen individual, and their civilized-barbarian dichotomy, and the Hebrews, Christians, and Moslems, with their extraordinary violence, chauvinistic god, and fanatical belief in a chosen people, were the heirs rather than the fount of a process more universal, more anthropological, and more ancient than is commonly acknowledged. (p. 32)

With this lineage in mind, I find it arbitrary to focus all of one's efforts at explaining dualism, and the consequent tragedies it has born upon psyche, through an over-recited discussion of the history and philosophy of Descartes.

Another key element to understanding the Western dualistic mode of being is that of the *direction* of one's experience. Martin (1999) alluded to this idea throughout his work, suggesting that when the direction of our experience is one of acting upon our environment instead of allowing ourselves to be acted upon *by* our environment, then we fall into discord and dualism. This idea is similar to understanding the difference between pre- and postconquest consciousness, which Kohanov outlines in the context of working with horses, and shifting from a postconquest state in which nature is something to be acted upon to a preconquest state in which nature acts upon and through you. In this directional awareness of one's experiencing, it becomes easier to maintain a state of openness through which the integration of mind and body, thought and matter, may merge. The problem of mind and body may not lie so much in its historical references but rather in a simple shift of direction.

Getting caught up in the intellectual airiness of the ponderings of the reasons for this problem of mind and body only serves to heighten the pedestal upon which logical thinking is comfortably situated. Returning to the microcosm of this problem, the only way to sort it out would necessarily be between one's own mind-body relationship. The fantastic thing about sorting this out through the horse-human relationship is that the direction of intention quickly becomes a conscious aspect in even the briefest of encounters. If you unknowingly act upon horses, they will immediately bring to your attention the direction of your intent by their sharp response. Whether this can be

attributed to their herd mentality, in that every member has a very specific place in the hierarchy, thus any action directed at a fellow herd member is either quickly and clearly accepted or denied, is debatable. In regard to the mind-body problem, Equus is a beautiful reflection of what is possible when we allow our direction to flow with that of the natural world and when we can feel the value in being acted upon by such forces and



Figure 17. Sweetness. Photo by author.

give up the unconscious habits that continue to push us into acting upon others.

Understanding the direction of our intent is pivotal to reformulating our personal relationship to our bodies and deconstructing dualistic thinking. If one can curb the desire to act upon another,

¹⁷whether it be a landscape, an

animal, a partner, then attention is redirected inward, allowing for the object that was to be acted upon, to be experienced as what it truly is. When I allowed myself to just sit amongst the herd, rather than trying to force my way into being a part of the herd, I was unknowingly affording myself the space in which I could evaluate my own relationship

¹⁷ An image of our horse Hank, whom we adopted from a rescue ranch. Hank was given up on after it was decided that his career as a race-horse would be doomed to failure, given that he did not possess the aggressiveness needed for the track. The direction of intention to make this horse something he is not, to act upon him as an object, and then discard him as such, could have been avoided had he been allowed to act upon, to affect the humans whom he came in contact with.

or lack thereof between mind and body, as it was held in stark contrast to my observations of the effortless flow of the body of the herd.

It was in this way, through simple observation, that I was able to more fully understand, on a feeling level, that we “can come to knowledge only laterally, by crossing paths with other entities and sometimes lingering. . . . All our knowledge, in this sense, is carnal knowledge, born of the encounter between our flesh and the cacophonous landscape we inhabit” (Abram, 2010, p. 72). The aim of attempting to bridge the gap between mind and body within my individual sphere of experience with Equus was about re-membering a way of being that was more free flowing and interinforming. The dissonance between the two has the great capacity to create deep suffering and confusion, leading one to assume that there is no purpose in a life, in a culture that feels so disconnected.

Everything that has been discussed up to this point, and will continue to be discussed until the dissertation’s end, has carried with it the underlying assumption that in order to receive the gifts of psyche, the problem of the mind-body disconnect must be continually tended to in a most conscious and careful way. In the midst of the horse-human relationship, a multitude of concerns and questions simmer and bubble underneath long held assumptions about the form and function of body and the usefulness of mind. Many clumsy attempts to reconcile the two are forgiven and tutored in dreams of union between horse and human. As Merleau-Ponty (1945) advised, “the psycho-physical event can no longer be conceived after the model of Cartesian physiology and as the juxtaposition of a process in itself and a *cogitatio*” (p. 102). The paradigm of separation

must be let go of in the interaction between horse and human in order for a more appropriate relationship between mind and body to form.

Once old ideas are released from the sinews of experience, one is left in an ethereal state. The dreams of union became a real possibility that I was able to touch ever so gently here and there. The awkward approaches became light-footed echoes of a horse's slightest movement. The hesitation between thought and action that once held movement from becoming free faded into a distant memory. My body became the place from which I felt through my thoughts in a single, synchronistic moment. It became as "a novel, poem, picture or musical work are individuals, that is, beings in which the expression is indistinguishable from the thing expressed, their meaning, accessible only through direct contact, being radiated with no change of their temporal and spatial situation . . . it is in this sense that our body is comparable to a work of art" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, p. 175). Indeed, I was striving to create a masterpiece every time I went to the horses, like the ones I had lived in my dreams.

In the shift from dualistic modes of experiencing the world to a more unified and spontaneous way of being in the world, there is the realization that this organism from which we live and breathe is more boundless, more formless than we had previously allowed. Abram (2010) resoundingly explained that

the human body is precisely our capacity for metamorphosis. We mistakenly think of our flesh as a fixed and finite form, a neatly bounded package of muscle and bone and bottled electricity, [yet] even the most cursory pondering of the body's manifold entanglements . . . suffices to make evident that the body is less a self-enclosed sack than a realm wherein the diverse textures and colors of the world meet up with one another. (p. 229)

Once you begin to sense the porousness of the body, the flexibility of the mind, it is no surprise then when you look down to see that your feet have become hooves, feathered with white hair. The boundary between body and mind disintegrates with each new experience of union, of shape shifting, of imagining new possibilities, new forms from which we might feel into the world.

The Western tradition of healing psyche through processes of the mind is re-defined and re-visioned in light of a new body that is capable of metamorphosis through imagination. However, old paradigms do not let go so easily, and the aim to re-member a cohesive body-mind entity must be taken in earnest and met with an intentional practice that involves the re-shaping of both simultaneously. The horse-human interaction provides fertile soil for this ethereal mind-body to become re-rooted back to a place of quiet solidarity. In her quest to re-member the unity so deeply felt in those visions of horse and human, Pierson (2000) vowed, “I will return to my teachers, and I will try to make amends. I will . . . try to overcome a stiff body, a negative mind, and a tendency to think too much about something that yields so little to thinking” (p. 158). In the here and now of the horse and human, she is right: thinking yields little result in what can only be accomplished through a connected mind-body state.

The direction has changed with the new intention, and the old patterns begin to loosen their hold. As I allow Equus to approach me, waiting for the invitation, I feel my way into knowing when the time is right. When it is, my body responds to the moment, not to my thinking. It is in this way that I begin, for myself, to solve the riddle of the mind-body problem. It requires trust that I will respond appropriately and if I do not that I will learn from that experience of dissonance, from which there has been many.

“Progress may not come for a long time, and then may appear suddenly and surprisingly, like an unexpected meeting or like an event that you had stopped believing could happen” (Hempfling, 2010, p. 42). But when it does, the mind-body that you thought you always knew becomes the dreaming mind-body you always yearned for.

The Third Body: A new Imagining of Riding

It is the deepest, most troubling conflict of this work. Do they want to be ridden? Am I forcing myself upon them? Are their instincts for companionship and leadership their only motivations to let me ride? Does all of my work become a narcissistic trap the second I mount up? At times, I felt certain that I was an imposter, a romantic who was only forcing a childish and naive vision upon the horses that I rode. I am sure that this was true on some occasions. But I pursued this conflict, determined to give an answer to those haunting questions that made me doubt years of dedicated study. And what if the answers were grim? Would I be satisfied never to ride again? In all honesty, I knew the answer was most likely no. I knew well that my desire to ride together, consensually, was too consuming. I believed that I would eventually figure it out, that I would be able to create a work of art between the horses and myself, and that one day I would be able to ride as free and unbridled as I did in my dreams.

Yet despite my best intentions, this ethical dilemma continued to haunt me every time I put my foot in a stirrup and my hand on a rein. I was consoled by the fact that these horses had it about a million times better than your typical domestic horse. They were never confined to a stall or barn, never had shoes nailed to their feet, were never isolated, they were eating grass instead of grain, feeling the warmth of the sun and the coolness of the rain and most importantly living as a herd. They are a lucky few. Every time I rode, I

felt it necessary and polite to whisper in their ears that I meant them no harm, that I only wished for partnership and that I would not ask too much of them. Inevitably, there were power struggles, there were times when I knew I had to dismount and moments when I found myself disregarding and dismissing my doubts in order to try and enjoy a ride.

I had seen too much. I had worked at ranches that gave lessons on bone thin horses with child after child kicking into exposed ribs and pulling at tired faces. But there was money to be made; they had to ride. I saw horses that became so sour of riding that they would turn their back and threaten to kick at anyone who dared enter their stall with a piece of leather tack dangling from their hopeful hand. Horses drenched in sweat from riding in the middle of a summer day, blank stares on their faces that were too sallow to ignore, saddles sores from rubbing leather, horses that refused to move once mounted until the instructor handed the rider a crop to swat them on the shoulder, horses that would reach around to try and bite the foot of a kicking rider. All the evidence of reasons why I shouldn't ride was readily available; I had experienced it first hand.

I remained in the tension, in this great dilemma that threatened to tear down everything I had hoped was possible. I evaluated every moment, asking myself if what I thought felt like companionship was only my ability to manipulate an animal that sought companionship for the simple purpose of safety, not love. I recall reading words of Griffin (1978) that seemed so convincingly simple and true that I considered giving up on several occasions. She asked, "is it not love the horse is feeling? But she is mute. The rider has named her and so he must also name her feelings. He decides that she loves him" (p. 84). Was I deciding that the horses wanted to be ridden when in fact they did not? The guilt and confusion was overwhelming on some days, and on others it would

fade into the sunlight just long enough for me to enjoy an easy ride through the woods and to remember and feel that childhood vision of unity with my horse.

Like me, Pierson (2000) struggled with the same dark conflict. She had courted the same doubts.

Suddenly you've got to ask, because of that damned demon who seems to stay here to infect everything you once took for granted, what they get out of it. And if the answer is nothing that they would want more than the fulfillment of the instincts that pull and pull at them until something has to give, then it doesn't matter what you want, because you've got all the power you need to fulfill your desires. And they have none. This is not a comfortable state of affairs anymore, you are sorry to report. You no longer want to be a party to it, even if it means giving up part of your past, or the opportunity to join this large community of others who are embraced by their joy and do not see the dark clouds over the horizon you seem to notice at every turn. It appears you have become an outsider, and all the other horsewomen are inside, warm. (p. 172)

I wondered where my work might find its place in a trans-species ethic if I continued to ride. Or more importantly where it would find its place in my own personal story if it turned out that I could not continue. The deeper my work progressed the heavier the implications became.

Looking into the eyes of the horses that I groomed for a ride, I begged them to give me an answer but they withheld. I had moments atop my mount when I would look down to see my horse chewing at the bit and curling its neck up trying to rid itself of this human made thing that it had allowed me to place behind her teeth. I cringed at the thought that I was only falling deeper into a narcissistic whirlpool of "horse lovers" whilst I wrote about and clung to a fantasy that was unreachable. Hempfling (2010) confirmed that "the horse world, in particular, offers so many opportunities for all kinds of projections and therefore represents a happy hunting ground for many people who

have symptoms of narcissism” (p. 168). I was forced to consider, with utmost scrutiny, my desire to ride.

As Hempfling expounded upon the dynamic between the narcissist rider and their mount, I felt I finally had an explanation for the problem that had eluded me for so long. To navigate in the midst of the horse-human culture, it is an unavoidable thing to encounter, to witness and sometimes be a part of, this damaging dyad. But once it is recognized, the task of getting behind it becomes a real and hopeful possibility. Hempfling (2010) admonished that “apparent power, apparent closeness, apparent recognition, apparent success, apparent outer glamour, physical contact, warmth and, above all, an ever-silent victim, can be found by the narcissist in the horse and in the horse world” (p. 170). However, once named and spoken to, the air between horse and human can begin to clear for a space in which healing can happen between horse and rider, if they are both willing and ready. Trust and a readiness for true closeness are the foundational elements for this process and for the formation of a new way of riding. The woman who feels herself the outsider eventually becomes happy for the peace and quiet afforded on the fringes that nourish the work.

I felt I had an advantage to beginning to understand how to get behind this heroic embodiment of the rider that controls her mount without concern for the horses’ experience of riding. I believed there was also a historical aspect to be considered in understanding why the horse-human relationship is what it is today in the Western world. With a cultural imagination of a Wild West where cowboys lived on the backs of their horses, and the land had no bounds, the horse world has struggled to contain or reclaim the essence of what we might imagine to be a real sense of freedom; riding off into the

sunset on our faithful steed, sleeping under the stars and moving freely in a more expansive sense of time and space.

Trying to recapture this Western ideal of the horseman whose best friend is his horse, the horse that is ever loyal, ever ready, ever willing to go anywhere his rider might imagine, has been an unconscious grasping into a past that cannot be reclaimed. Certainly this way of life has been romanticized beyond what we might care to realize, with its violence and destruction of a native people and way of life and the beginnings of a crusade to control and harness the wild terrain of unsettled lands. But we still wish to hold onto the sense of newness, the sense of wild freedom and abandon that surges up in our blood every time we see the image of the cowboy and his horse. I admit it is a tricky thing to avoid. But as Bosnak (2007) so optimistically explained, “much of our past is potential presence, constantly ready for embodiment, open to change” (p. 46). The key here, in the horse-human relationship is that the embodiment must become a conscious element in riding that is continually striving to become aware of those socio-historical forces that dictate the ways in which we behave towards our mount.

In this way, as I wished to create and embody a new kind of horseman- or horsewomanship that strived for a more conscious experience of riding, I became more



Figure 18. The New Cowboy. Photo by author.

confident that in understanding my culturally embedded motivations I could begin to change the actual connective fibers between myself and my mount. Todres (2007) reminded us that “such relational reality (rather than relative reality) is a movement that is both beyond and within us—the snake swallows its tail, and we belong to tradition, history, and language just as they belong to us as an unfinished story” (p. 32). What felt most important in my riding was that I am striving to create an example of this movement, of the possibility of a new story between horse and rider.

I was greatly inspired by Hempfling’s (2010) approach to riding as he understood the image that a rider has in regard to their riding experience as central to shaping a more trusting and consensual relationship. The images of riding, the experiences of riding that I had night after night in my dream world, became the experience I wished to create in my day world. The feeling of ultimate trust and unison that I was able to experience in my dreams was not just a romantic wish fulfillment but also something that I could sense the horses and myself creating together. I began to notice that slowly, the socio-historical image of horseback riding that was culturally imbedded in me was being replaced by a way of riding that paralleled my dream world experience of riding. One day I stopped taking lessons so that I could begin to create my own way of riding and training that was informed more by my own relationships with the horses rather than someone else’s experience and understanding of riding. In my own way of riding and training I never used bits, spurs, whips or crops. From a logistical point of reference, I ride only in a simple rope halter, I use western saddles as they distribute your weight as opposed to concentrating it in one spot as bareback riding does, my girth is always nice and loose, I never show and never will, I do not confine the horses to stalls or barns or small

paddocks, they never wear shoes (how ridiculous), I don't blanket them or cut their hair, and I will never sell them. My riding has never been centered on an idea or an image of control or mastery but rather beauty.

Hempfling (2010) clarified that "there is hardly anything more complex than the experience of sitting on an ever-wild animal," but he asked, "how close do we allow this extremely complex, deeply natural and therefore real experience come to us?" (p. 301). In the space where we have been made aware of our projections (personal, historical, cultural) this question of true closeness, of trust and authenticity becomes the foundation for a new way of riding. This foundation of trust must be established before any real or natural experience of riding can be achieved. It was my boyfriend Danny's sentiment that "walking with a horse and feeling its warm trusting breathe on your back can be more exhilarating than being on its back" (Personal conversation, 2012). The urge to ride must be tempered with an understanding of the purpose of riding as something beyond a simple pleasure, reaching into the complexities of what it means to embody this archetypal relationship in a conscious way.

The embodiment of the horse and rider that become ever closer in the midst of and in spite of practices that so easily encourage distance and callousness is most assuredly complex and demanding. In the horse world, nearly every rider you encounter is happy to inform you of the "right way," suggesting specific training techniques and technology and religiously adhering to the newest pop trainers with their seminars and custom gadgets that leave their customers wildly hopeful that they have bought the secret of closeness to their equine partner. All of this is nothing but a distraction to a real experience of riding in which all is needed is the imagination. "Riding is nothing more

than activating pictures. Riding is the image of a world in which images can be realized unhindered, because they are as real as our dreams themselves” (Hempfling, 2010, p. 303). If I could allow it, everything I needed to create the riding relationship I had always imagined was completely available to me.

I kiss Hush into the canter from a stand still. She explodes with vitality. I relax into her, let my hips go, my legs stretch down and around her belly. We’re both looking forward, off into the woods ahead. I don’t remember the last time I felt this power, this authentic connection to my own strength, my own knowing, my own womanhood.

But I knew I would get here. I knew it was right around the corner waiting for me, on the back of a horse like Hush, ready to carry me into a new way of becoming, a new way of experiencing myself. Here I am. It feels like an arrival, a grand opening. My dreams have been so crystal clear. Like they’re saying to me,



Figure 19. Waters Edge. Photo by author.

“you’re on exactly the right path at exactly the right moment. Keep going because there’s more to come.” I push Hush forward with this new found vision, this new seeing into the distance, this new body that relaxes instead of tenses with fear. (Author’s field notes, August 1, 2012)

¹⁸ I was beginning to realize that the dream

images I carried with me were informing and even determining my experiences of riding.

operating and rapport between what was once an over determining mind and a withheld body,

were becoming actualized through the embodiment of dream images of riding.

Finding my way through the labyrinth of riding propaganda and the cowboy mentality of the Western horse-human culture and into a different kind of truth that could only be reached through actual bodily experiences with horses, was like setting off into

¹⁸ An image of Hush, one of the horses I started riding at the beginning of my fieldwork. Such a gentle soul, Hush provided for me the space to relax into the experience of riding and to begin to truly trust my body for the first time in years.

the sea with nothing but the stars to navigate by. My imagination became my guiding constellation, from which I trusted I would find a new route to Equus. As Avens (1984) understood, “truth is not *adequatio intellectus et rei* but a movement from concealment, a movement that is patterned upon the cosmic alternation of seasons, of day and night, light and darkness. Imaginal truth is essentially uroboric” (p. 25). It was this sort of imaginal truth that I sought through my riding. It was not about becoming some sort of embodied pillar of confidence or a self-serving quest to recover a body that was always certain, always assured in its form and movement. It became more about discovering a different truth to the embodied action of riding, as it was relevant in the moment.

The body I sought to create was one that operated in the present moment, in conjunction with the body of a horse, one feeding off the other creating this sense of uroboric truth that Avens hinted at. Little by little, like tiny brush strokes on a canvas, I was creating the embodied image of horse and human that mirrored my dreams. Yet, I will always have a long way to go and will most likely never be finished. Hempfling (2010) encouraged, “You are beginning a long path that will lead you endlessly forward. A kind of dream path that you cannot see, but that you have to find your way back to” (p. 303). The more I was able to approach riding as a co-creating experience of consciousness through the dream, the closer I was able to get to Equus, the more accepting and even inviting they became of me as a rider. I realized it was not so much about whether or not they wanted to be ridden; it was more about how they should be involved in the process. Riding can be a most profound experience of two beings revealing to each other the most intimate image of their selves.

This self-image that is evoked through the ongoing experience of riding is like the image of your dream self, re-membered and brought to conscious embodied action. The path as a whole is continuous and the rider must always seek the equal participation of the horse. Every now and then “I lose my way, but am carried by my horse and his cooperation, his input and his understanding” (Hempfling, 2010, p. 321). In this way, every movement becomes an interinforming motion towards understanding one another, towards creating a trans-species consciousness. The closeness between horse and human that can be attained through the final expression of riding has nothing to do with control but everything to do with allowing oneself to be in a state of grace. The more I was able to enter into this natural flow on the back of a horse, the more confident I became in the idea that riding was indeed a natural affair between two beings who were meant to know one another in this most familiar way.

I found that the archetype of the horse-human that is imagined as the expression of riding was only as complex as I allowed it to be. At its base it is actually quite simple. All of my doubts, all of my questions and troubling concerns about riding, began to fade away with every natural encounter between Equus and myself. The simplicity of the essence of riding, in its natural form, existed for no other reason than that it is an expression of beauty. What is nature if not beauty? However, this way of riding can only be experienced through trust and authenticity. Without these two elements, riding becomes an attempt to demonstrate qualities that the human longs for but is not willing to participate fully in and release to. This is when riding is turned into an “attempt to make a functioning device out of a natural being” (Hempfling, 2010, p. 318). In the quest to

embody the archetype of horse and rider, it has to be about more than riding. It has to be about a desire to participate in the world as deeply and fully as possible.

Re-membering: Becoming an Embodied Being

In my dreams with the horses, my body participates effortlessly in the natural rhythm of the presenting experience. Moment to moment it adjusts and tunes itself into the dreamscape, becoming a necessary element of the whole. The dream horses presented me with the opportunity to feel true embodiment through my dream self and my interactions with them in the dreamscape. Our movements are synonymous in the dream because in the dream we are whole. It is the translation of this embodied dreaming experience into a waking world embodied experience that proved difficult. The attempt to re-configure, to re-member what seems to be a deeply fractured psychosomatic way of being, is typically met with great resistance.

Somehow, riding on top of Hush, my weaknesses were so exposed. She was so much stronger than me, she was certainly more beautiful than I have ever felt and steadier in whom she is. I found my body not wanting to comply, not knowing how to release into her motion, not knowing how to trust it.

It certainly is not the way I imagine myself riding; complete freedom, complete abandon into my own rhythm and beauty, complete trusting of my body. I know it will eventually come, but until then my body tenses, it goes rigid and awkward, fluctuating between spurts of strength and weakness, trying to find a steady rhythm. Every few steps it's there, I can feel it for a brief few seconds before my head gets in the way again, before my fear clinches me up so tight that the back of my thighs cramp. (Author's field notes, June 6, 2012)

Yet, the desire to fully embody and to re-member a more authentic body that I experienced in my dreams, kept me determined to break down the resistances that had molded this unwilling, fearful and rigid body.

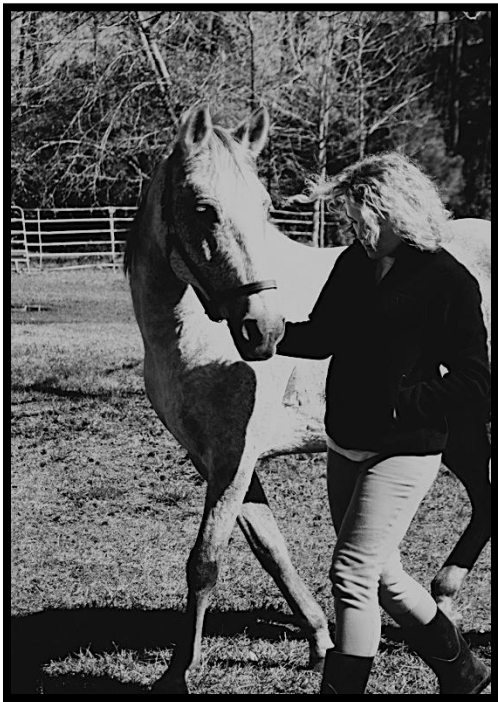


Figure 20. Wholeness. Photo by author.

does not come without struggle and tension. Henderson and Sherwood went on to clarify that “the ego may not trust that something new can really be embodied and may fear that it is not possible to survive the internal change” (p. 77). To re-member, one must first come to terms with the current state of dis-memberment, an unpleasing circumstance that the ego would much rather repress in order to continue on in the illusion that one is whole.

The paradox however is that at every juncture along the path to re-membering an embodied way of being, you are already whole. I am constantly reminded of this every time I look at the picture on my bookshelf of Saltos and me that was taken nearly six years ago, before I had consciously decided to embark on this research. As awkward as I had perceived myself to be around horses, as dis-membered as I felt in their presence, there were moments of wholeness and of embodied cohesion happening all around me,

The transformation from this dis-membered state of being to a more integrated and embodied way of being through the practice of the horse-human relationship was not a linear progression by any means. It was, and continues to be, an amplification of an embodied archetypal essence. As Henderson and Sherwood (2003) reiterated, “a new attitude or way of being functions naively or awkwardly when a person begins to apply it in real life” (p. 77). The re-membering of a dis-membered way of being

between the horses and myself. I offer this image as a connective tissue that represents the embodied wholeness even at the beginning of a quest to re-member the perceived dis-membered being.

In referring to an alchemical process of transformation Jung (1937/1968) cited that “Thou canst conceive the greater, therefore your body can bring it into reality” (p. 282). The body is the medium between psyche and soma that has the capacity to enact expression. The re-membering of the body is not a narcissistic idea that revolves around cultural imagination but rather an internal experience of integrating psyche with the experience of one’s body with the intention of realizing wholeness. Of course, as in alchemy, as in individuation, or whatever language you wish to conceive of transformation, the opus is in the journey itself; just as in the mirrored image above, wholeness is at every juncture along the path, even at the very beginning. “The wholeness at the source of human identity is . . . always already there, obscured by the relentlessness of the quest to become something-in-particular” (Todres, 2007, p. 132). Once it is realized that one is already whole, in all of the paradoxical incompleteness that wholeness implies, a deepening into the process rather than an accelerating of the process in a linear mode can occur.

Woodman and Dickson (1996) recognized that “body work, like dream work, is soul work; together they illuminate that point where the apexes of the spirit and matter touch and do not touch” (p. 172). Because everything we do with horses involves the practice of becoming conscious of the body, the horse-human relationship becomes a container in which soul work, through the body, may be carefully tended to. Much unlike the therapeutic analytic hour, the body (of both horse and human) is intensely and

intricately involved in the happenings between the two. Speaking to this particular benefit for the human that is involved with the horse, Pierson (2000) claimed that

there is the gift of concentration, the shortcut to Zen enlightenment in which the exigencies of the pursuit—pay attention to what’s around you, what you are doing with body, mind, breath, *or else* force you to inhabit the here and the now with a consummate excellence that it would otherwise take a lifetime to master. (p. 88)

The conscious integration of psyche and soma into a reciprocally functioning being is the re-remembering of a human being before all of the dismembering events that life has brought. What a precious gift that was being offered to me.

Much of my attention and energy was directed towards the simple study of their display.

I spent a lot of my attention just looking at their bodies, the way they were each built, the veins running underneath their skins, the patterns that the rain had made on their coats, the curve of their spines and noses, the way their eyes were set and their ears. . . . Each on of them held their bodies in different ways. Some more relaxed than others, some more confident or insecure. I just wanted to see them. So I looked. I looked and I saw so many things about them. And they returned my inquiries. When I think about it, I’m not sure if I’ve ever been looked at so much. So many eyes on me, figuring me out, wanting to come closer, wanting my attention, feeling my eyes on them and not sure what to do about it. Their gaze brought a new awareness to my own posture, my own ways of carrying and representing myself. (Author’s field notes, July 19, 2012)

Between horse and human, the potential for an alchemical transformation through the medium of the body can be realized. This embodied presence is not just for the benefit of the human either. Both work together, reflecting for one another the possibilities of a more consciously embodied way of being. “The person is the mirror for the horse, for his very own need to display himself, to grow and surpass himself in play and happiness” (Hempfling, 2010, p. 58). We are not the only ones in need of reflecting ourselves through our form, our unique display of being. In order to be a mirror for

horses, one must be ever aware of their own bodily state. This awareness takes root in the belief that there is a more natural body to be remembered. The imagination of the horse-human relationship lends itself to this belief that the human body can and should be able to function in unity with Equus.

The blueprint, as it might be imagined, of the optimal embodied human, can be sensed through the archetypal imagination of the horse-human bond. As Merleau-Ponty (1945) declared, “I am my body, at least wholly to the extent that I possess experience, and yet at the same time my body is as it were a ‘natural’ subject, a provisional sketch of my total being” (p. 231). The body as a natural subject becomes magnified in the presence of Equus. As the senses become more and more attuned to the rhythms of Equus, though domestic she is always wild, The human body re-adjusts in order to accommodate the image that is so feverishly desired. The body becomes a willing and flexible conduit for the dreaming experience of horse and human to manifest. Bosnak (2007) said, “taking the realm of dreaming as our paradigm, we have seen that images are embodiments of their own intelligence, and that the physical objective body may become the book into which they inscribe their stories” (p. 112). In a very real way, the dream has the opportunity to cross over the threshold and become an embodied presence in multiple realities.

This multiplicity of embodiment and the desire to embody the archetypal horse-human relationship can be felt in the description of my fellow horsewoman Mandy as she talked about her own experience of dreams and visions with Equus.

As I started my work with horses I started having many dreams with horses in them. I was always mounted, bareback, and riding the horse. What I noticed is that no matter what movement the horse made in my dreams I was always one with the horse, a sort of dance. I also experienced a vision. I had this vision in

the middle of the night when I was in a state that I'm not sure what to call. I was not sleeping, very aware of my environment yet in a dream state. This does happen often to me but this time I saw a woman that I like to think of as my spirit guide. She was mounted on a white horse that was decorated. She looked Native American with long hair that was black and peppered with gray streaks, and wore a wolf skin headdress. She had a predator bird perched on her shoulder that looked like a hawk. She did not say anything but sat proudly on her horse. She and the horse seemed to be dancing with one another. (Personal conversation, 2012)

The co-creative process of transformation towards embodiment was being presented to Mandy in her dreams and visions. The wholeness, the woman who is proud and mounted atop her decorated horse, the woman who knows how to dance with Equus and is a part of nature as she is nature herself, was already there in the beginning with Mandy, waiting at the outskirts, ready to cross over. The embodied imagining, the actual presence of this unison with Equus was displayed with such purposeful force so as not to be ignored.

It is without a doubt a reciprocal transformation. The willing horse that responds to the subtlest of movements from their human partner is equally participating in the alchemical process of transformation through embodied interaction. For us to assume otherwise, that other beings have no investment in psyche and her activities, would be naïve and arrogant. The dream horse is fully invested in the connection between horse and human, so why wouldn't the waking horse be as well? After all, I have been arguing ever so quietly that they are one in the same. Hillman (1997b) agreed and said that "our civilized mind makes a terrible mistake by contrasting 'real' animals and animal 'images,' as if the one standing in the zoo and the one you meet in a dream are two different beasts altogether" (p. 9). The co-creation of an embodied trans-species imagination is completely possible if one admits to the reality of their dreams and the intelligent autonomy of the animal.

The body is not just an object participating in the waking world. From the flesh and bone body, we are able to create a subtle body and a dream body and all are reliant on the other and simultaneously synonymous with one another. The way in which we imagine our body and the bodies of other beings, determines our embodied experiences. If we blindly assume that our body is only one body that operates within the world like a gear in a machine, than we will experience the world in that way. If we are able to imagine that our body can take on numerous forms and exist in multiple levels of reality, than we will experience the world from a much more expansive and enigmatic perspective. Todres (2007) explained, “the body is the ‘shepherd’ of participation. . . . It is interwoven with many realms, the perceptual-textural, the languaged, the affective, the immediately responsive, the interpersonal, the temporal, and even the ‘unsaid’ interweaving of all this together” (p. 20). The complexity of embodiment is happening on multiple levels whether we are conscious of it or not.

The interweaving embodied experiences between Equus and myself have shown me that to re-member a way of embodying experience more consciously means to listen deeply and to trust my intuition. My intuition is more of a felt experience than a logical, linear thought process. It is my intuition that guides my interactions with the horses and the ways in which I embody my thoughts and feelings. The body becomes an imaginative force in the moment of experiencing, capable of carrying out the visions of our dreams. It is able to act, to react, to move, touch, carry, be carried, it is capable of being the messenger between worlds. Co-creating an embodied presence with Equus is like throwing a stone into a glassy lake; the reverberating ripples affect every part of psyche, waking up the whole of one’s being to the event of embodiment.

Becoming an embodied being is not about perfection or the denial of a modern world with the wish to fulfill some romantic idea of a *participation mystique* with nature. It is more about waking up to the unfolding experience of body as it is entangled with the world. Abram (2010) reminded us that the “body is not a closed or static object, but an open, unfinished entity utterly entwined . . . a wild creature whose life is contingent upon the multiple other lives that surround it, and the shifting flows that surge through it” (p. 110). What better teacher than Equus to bring us to this realization? The animal whose life is so surely contingent upon its environment, this animal that reminded me daily of the delicacy of the relationships our bodies form in order just to be in the world. My bodily entanglements with Equus allowed me to explore the meaning of embodiment on multiple levels of being.

The re-membering of a way of being that operates in an embodied way within the world is necessarily paralleled with a change of perception. Merleau-Ponty (1945) agreed that “by thus remaking contact with the body and with the world, we shall also rediscover ourselves, since, perceiving as we do with our body, the body is a natural self and, as it were, the subject of perception” (p. 239). The movement between tension to relaxation, apprehension to trust, and bodily unconsciousness to conscious embodiment was for me, realized through the ever-truthful encounters with Equus. The body as a natural self is a perceiving body, it is a consciously embodied way of being in the world as an equal participant rather than a worried bystander.

The co-creation of this new body, this new embodied human, between the horses and myself was something that was abundantly clear in the deepening of my relationships to them. This co-creation of a re-membered body was not just my projecting upon them

my unconscious issues of “body”; it was clear that it was instead a mutual give and take of information, a collaborative learning experience. Bosnak (2007) spoke of a similar co-creative force, “of mutual intelligence which presupposes an intelligent dance of subjects, their joint choreography articulating their mutual involvement” (p. 76). The creation of new consciousness through the interacting bodies of horse and human is the remembering of a forgotten way of being, it is the waking up of bodies that have been sleeping in a consumerist coma, it is the dreaming reality of the horse-human bond.

Chapter 7 Reflections

The Image of Trans-species Individuation

It was on August 20, 2012, during my fieldwork with the horses, that I had with them what I like to now call “The Day.” I call it The Day because it was the day that all of my efforts, all of my time, my energy, and my hopefulness came together in a collective expression with the herd. The Day was so powerful for me that it took me several days after to even conceive of writing the experience out as field notes. In a way I felt I would betray the essence of the experience by doing so and even now am not entirely sure that I won’t. Because the truth is, words cannot capture what it is I wish to convey, what was conveyed to me on The Day.

As always, I went into the field with no anticipation, no preconstructed idea about what I wished to accomplish. I was always as open as I could be to the possibilities that may have remained hidden between the horses and myself, only wishing to be ready if an invitation presented itself. And indeed an invitation did. As I sat in the grass watching the herd lazily graze scattered about me, I decided to take out my phone, which I used for photographs.¹⁹ In my typical state of awe over their beautiful form, I began to take their pictures. Unlike some of my previous attempts to capture their image, which usually ended in some awkward apology on my part for invading their space and even more awkward photos, on this day, they revealed themselves to me through their image.

I rolled in the grass, looking up at her shape, framed by the clouds and trees, marveling at every inch of grace. They posed for me, they looked on at me with the truth from which I looked back at them. We met in this place of everything,

¹⁹ I found that it was less obtrusive to use my phone for photographs than a big bulky camera. The horses were always too curious about a camera, which made photographing more difficult.

this space where a single moment is the expression of every moment. They allowed me to see, they wanted me to see, their magic, their power, their dream bodies. I saw it all. It consumed me. It filled me up until the boundaries of my being blew across their fields like a dandelion. They let me to the wind. They let me into their world. (Author's field notes, August 20, 2012)

The majority of the images in this work are from that one single day. The herd was finally allowing me to see them in their truest form, without pretense, without projection, without hiding anything. Up until this day, I was deeply concerned that I would not be able to capture any images that truly expressed their voice.

That is not all that happened on The Day. As overwhelmed as I was with what was transpiring between the herd and myself, I put my phone away and tried to absorb the magnitude of what was truly being imaged between us. I approached Diva until I got her attention and then stopped, letting her close the distance between us. I stood there with her for the longest time. As we latched onto each other I felt I had finally allowed myself to let go.

I rub my hands over her eyes, under her cheeks, I put my fingers in her ears. She resists nothing. She invites everything, all of me. I drape myself over her neck, push my face into her shoulder, run my hand down her chest. She stands unwavering, trusting in my embrace. I could cease to exist in this moment and never know the better. (Author's field notes, August 20, 2012)

The other horses had obviously caught wind of whatever it was that was happening between Diva and I. Blue, the head mare approached and decided she wanted to be in Diva's place. Not wanting to break the connection, I put my hand out to Blue as a request for her not to interrupt. She stopped dead in her tracks and stood staring at me. It was then that I looked around to notice that the rest of the herd had been closing in on us, coming closer and closer, and they were all facing in my direction.

As a way to confirm what I thought was happening but couldn't be sure of, I decided to head down towards the water. Resnick (2005) observed that "at the water's edge, pecking order is a language of law and acceptance where rules are desirable and companionship mandatory. The way horses approach the water hole makes their language as clear as the streams they share" (p. 217). With the herd's attention and most importantly the head mare's, I walked down to the lake. At the watering hole, the head mare always drinks first as another herd member keeps watch for her, and the drinking order progresses through the herd's pecking order in this way.

As I crouched down at the edge of the lake, dipping my hands in the water, I turned to see Blue standing patient and alert behind me. She was standing guard for me. I took just a little more time in the water before I stood up and moved aside as an invitation for her to drink. I almost couldn't believe what was happening. She casually walked down to drink from the same spot I had crouched at. I thanked her and realized that the rest of the herd was coming down to meet us for a drink. They were engaging with me in the watering hole ritual. Not only was I accepted as a member of the herd, I was given priority by the head mare. Needless to say, I was so overwhelmed that it took me several days to integrate everything that had transpired.

It was complete. That day, The Day, became an ingrained image of the culmination of not just my fieldwork but of a more complete idea of the meaning of a trans-species inspired process of individuation. Without directly pointing to it, this work has carried on with the intention of allowing one to imagine into such a process. As individuation is, this has been a deeply personal journey that will continue on with me for the rest of my days. Pierson (2000) reflected for me that "the woman with the horse is the

completion of the girl with the desire for the horse, full circle into the past by embracing the present” (pp. 247-248). A re-working of the idea of individuation that includes other than human influence has been presented through my story of the horses with the simple hope that we might allow ourselves to be moved, to be shaken, and to be transformed by those that are wholly and truly Other.

Stepping outside of the idea of the world that revolves around a Self and moving into a way of experiencing the Self as something that revolves around, in, and through the world, is the actual and theoretical shift I have been hinting at. It is a multidimensional mandala that spirals through one’s life and simultaneously ties them to the world as an integral piece of it. It is a mandala that is not of our own creation. It is a process that extends beyond our understanding of human psychology. A trans-species process of individuation implies that there is “something enfolding us in its own immense imagination” (Martin, 1999, p. 194). The mystery of the horse-human bond points to something greater, something much more incomprehensible than the idea of the individual.

It is not a deconstruction of the idea of individuation but rather a re-imagining and expansion of its concepts. Jung (as cited in Storr, 1983) summarized that individuation is “the process by which a person becomes a psychological ‘in-dividual,’ that is, a separate, indivisible unity or ‘whole’” (p. 212). Certainly there is nothing much wrong with this concept as it only a natural process of becoming aware of one’s own autonomy within the world. However it has become my belief that in our frenzied quest to become this separate individual, we have forgotten that we are already whole and we are already a part of a much larger whole. For me, the work of individuation is conceiving the

wholeness that is already present within oneself and the world around you. The idea of the individual then is more to do with a process of integration, not separation.

Ultimately, I would argue for a trans-species ethic to become a necessary element in the theorizing of individuation for the sake of making psychology a force that returns humanity to nature, rather than extracting us from it. Bradshaw and Watkins (2006) agreed, “psychology is urged not to limit individual change as a process in isolation, but rather facilitate the process as an ethical dynamic between an individual and their environment” (p. 8). Furthermore, within this new understanding of the development of the human being in the context of nature, we might be able to remember the true meaning of nature. Like the unnecessary differentiation of dream animals and natural animals, the nature within and the nature without are one in the same and interinform each other in every moment. The concept of the Self then becomes one that is not individual and contained but manifold and expansive. The Self as defined and experienced through an intentional engagement with nature and other species is a Self that spirals around the ultimately mysterious purpose of life.

I do not believe that Jung intended for his theory of individuation to exclude other than human species, or serve to separate human kind from nature. Had he been afforded insight into the deplorable state of our relationship to the natural world, even so much further deteriorated than at his time, he maybe would have voiced more loudly the necessity of such a process to include engagement with nature. I believe it is psychology’s task, and even more specifically depth psychology’s task, to re-member a way to becoming human that is less abstracted from the natural world. I believe the task is to re-member ourselves as part of it, immersed in its processes because those processes

are our own. Jung (2002) clarified in speaking to the condition of humankind that “he needs to return, not to Nature in the manner of Rousseau, but to his own nature” (p. 125).



Figure 21. New Sight. Photo by author.

It was through my work with the horses, that I was able to begin the process of doing just that, of returning to my own nature.

The image, or maybe better, the imagining of a trans-species informed process of individuation has

been braided through this work as a story of horse and human in their attempts to come closer to one another. In each attempt, whether it was perceived as a failure or a great success, an offering was being made from both, a sacrifice of comfort and predictability for the sake of understanding and growth. We make our offerings in the clearing, wishing only for the blessing of a happy life.

Eco-imagining Through the Horse-human Relationship

I was so unbelievably fortunate to be able to carry out this research in a space where the horses were never confined to a barn or stall and were able to interact with each other as members of a herd, rather than machines for human pleasure. In this more open and free environment I was able to experience my interactions with them as more of a mutual engagement as opposed to something that is typically forced upon horses that are kept in stalls and small paddocks like some sort of vehicle. In order to meet them on

their own terms there was a parallel process of learning how to move gracefully, physically and psychically, within the rhythms of a more natural setting. Granted, the fence line was hidden amongst the trees, creating an illusion of sorts that the horses and I were unbounded but even in knowing that we were both still domesticated, I believe we also knew that our freedom was more than most.

In this space I was able to imagine myself into a more eco-centered way of being human. I had to imagine this for myself unless I wanted to step on a moccasin or a rattlesnake, be trampled by a sudden explosion of the herd, unknowingly put myself between two disagreeing horses, or ride into a dangerous situation. I had to tune my senses to a different, more heightened frequency than I was accustomed to, a frequency that kept me in a constant state of noticing. The development of this sense of eco-awareness is implied in the depth of mindfulness between the interactions of Equus and myself and the shifting of consciousness from an ego-centered way of being to a more involved and integrated eco-centered way of being.

It was my careful intention to not explicitly unveil the ultimate importance of an ecological imagination as a foundational element in being able to connect trans-species. The reason for my doing so was so as not to frame this work within the voice of an archetypal savior. It was not and will never be my intention to build projects that might save what we can only partially view and understand as an environment destroyed by humans. Though this may appear to be the state of things at present, I can only claim to do the work that re-members me as a part of the whole. If I label myself and humanity as destroyer/savior, I do not feel that I am coming closer to anything but rather that I am separating and dividing myself.

The undertones of the development of an eco-imagination, subtle though they may be, are inevitable in a trans-species relationship that is approached with the intention of coming closer to one's own nature. When you can truly sense the fundamental closeness between yourself and the animal, you begin to see that we are all in the same predicament. The animals that are being neglected and abused, used for profit and propaganda, and even the ones that are close to extinction, suddenly find place and part in our own story. Borchers and Bradshaw (2008) asserted that "with reports on global warming and the ever-increasing list of species extinctions, it is clear that the welfare of nature and human psyche are interdependent. Species reconciliation is long overdue and the need for healing even more urgent" (p. 41). The ideas of ecopsychology are calling to be implemented in a very real way that connects us across species lines.

This work was intended to be an example of an honest approach towards the remembering of a trans-species connected way of life. It is not necessarily the animal that connects us back to the natural world but rather the simple turning of our attention in their direction. Hence, the other reason that this work resisted being framed explicitly within an ecopsychological structure was so that it would not be misconstrued as an example of a strictly therapeutic relationship in which "horse" becomes a therapeutic tool for the human in constant need of healing. The relationship is not a linear one in which events A, B, and C lead to some completed version of the healed human being. It is far too easy to get one's foot caught in the trap of a therapeutic model that aims to bring human closer to nature but inevitably turns nature into yet another machine we think we can plug ourselves into and it will magically start running right again.

It was my aim to reflect a way of being that is not speeding towards some image

of the green human. Sometimes in a counterbalance things need to be “nonlinear, imprecise, slow, meandering, even inefficient. Psychotherapy from this perspective has much more to do with soul, with images of art, poetry, and myth, with failure and loss, with ambiguity and complexity” (Robinson, as cited in Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009, p. 26). This work has been more about imagining than healing. It is through the imagination that new ways of being can emerge without the hindrance of preconceived structures.

In a way this work has aspired to free itself of getting caught in the language and theory of ecopsychology while simultaneously trying to expand upon its ideas. As Snyder (1990) remarked, “To be truly free one must take on the basic conditions as they are—painful, impermanent, open, imperfect—and then be grateful for impermanence and the freedom it grants us” (p. 5). The impermanence and ever shifting paradigms of psychological theory should be experienced as a means to freedom, a means for expansion, re-visioning, and re-membering. Although this work is delivered in the language of depth psychology, at base it is simply a natural encounter between species. It is a re-membering of wildness.

The outward moving energies of this work were equaled by a turning inwards, both balancing and informing the activities of the other. An eco-imagining through the horse-human bond is then not about doing and saving, but rather being present to and dreaming into new possibilities. The dreaming reality that has guided and informed this work is as much a testament to finding the eco-centered self as the efforts to connect on a physical level. Stevens advised that “we should regard dreams as an endangered species. . . They represent our primordial habitat, our last wilderness, and we must protect them with as much fervor as the rainforests, the ozone layer, the elephant, and the whale”

(cited in Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009, p. 212). Dreaming as a means to communicate and connect trans-species is of course not a new idea, but it is one that has been greatly lost and should be recognized an essential element in the project of ecopsychology and trans-species psychology.

Though it is blatantly obvious that our disconnect from the natural world has delivered us into an ecological crisis and we are in more than desperate need of a change heart, I can only intuit that ecopsychology must be fulfilled in a spiritual sense before it can make the deep effect that it pursues. Greenway realized that “today ‘the experience of wilderness’ has become a tidy package, in some cases taking the form of a class in a few adventurous universities, and in others, a business for thousands of ‘wilderness therapists,’ so called to emphasize their professionalism . . . skill at guiding and caring for urban-immersed clients who can afford it, and a noble intention to facilitate change in those clients in ways that imply healing” (cited in Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009, p. 133). Real change, true intention, and deep empathy cannot be bought. They need to be experienced and felt within the daily context of one’s life.

To re-imagine our trans-species’ relationships is to re-imagine our worldview. The domino effect that cascades through our lives when we begin to give attention to these relationships touches every cell of our being, awakening us to a truer place within the natural phenomena of being human. It is in this way that our behavior towards the environment becomes less destructive and more soulful. One does not need a pasture full of horses to realize a connection. Everyone is approached in a different way. The idea is to be ready, to welcome the confrontation, and to allow the shift to occur. There is no right way to go about it. As Jung (1965) recognized, “when one follows the path of

individuation, when one lives one's own life . . . there is no guarantee . . . we may think there is a sure road. But that would be the road of death" (p. 297). This is only my road, my account of my own re-membering through my life with horses.

Implications for Further Research

As this work will continue with me for the rest of my life, I can only begin to imagine its shifting tides and colorful changes of season. I see this piece of it as a mere snapshot of what will be my life's work. Every day that I go to the horses, something new happens, something different occurs to me, and the life of the work changes with each encounter between Equus and myself. It will never be complete. The work is embodied by a definite degree of autonomy that has, from the beginning, molded and directed the course and shape of the research. Many times, I have felt that I am just a scribe to the voice of something needing to be heard. As for what I might hope to foresee as possibilities of furthered research, if the work calls for these ideas to be explored, I would be interested in how the research would be informed by wild horses, how I might develop and implement a mutually therapeutic paradigm for horse and human that could facilitate a re-membering on an expanded scale, and the deepening of the dream research that has already been presented here.

To have the opportunity to work with wild horses would be an amazing privilege and one that, for me, is not too far fetched. Not too far from where I live, off the coast of Georgia, there is an island that is inhabited by herds of wild horses. Originally, it was my intention to camp on the island for several days as a part of this research. However, due to factors out of my control, I was not able to spend any time on the island. I feel that this experience would require more than several days of research, probably months or even

several years, to offer any depth of findings. So, it was with the gentled domesticated horses that I became fully immersed. The advantages of working with domestic horses are obvious, in that I did not have to spend the majority of my time learning how to make my approaches. The horses that I researched with were easy about my presence; a wild horse herd might not have been. Granted, I was still considerate and careful about my presence, trying not to take for granted the fact that these were domesticated horses. I imagine that the research would take on an entirely different shape in its involvement with wild horses, and I hope to one day explore the implications of such an unbounded engagement with Equus.

It seems apparent to me now that from the beginning of my work with horses, which could arguably date from the first dream I ever had of a horse, I have been creating what feels to be a self-sustaining, mutually therapeutic paradigm in which horse and human may begin to re-member a more authentic way of living and being. Since the inception of this research, I have shaped a riding program that offers lessons on how to approach the experience of riding as a mutually engaging, spiritual, and moral phenomena. I offer my riding program as a means to invite people to experience their love for horses as they might truly imagine it in their dreams and not as an oppressive culture might prescribe it for them. My research will continue to inform and expand in this direction with the intention of being able to offer horse and human a space in which they might come to re-member each other in a more empathetic and authentic way.

The call to re-member myself through my connection with horses has always come from the realm of dreams. It is to this dream world that I owe my deepest inspiration, and I continue to be informed in this work. My attempt to make connections

between my dreaming and waking experiences with Equus has merely scratched the surface of what I believe could be the most profound means towards trans-species communication and understanding. To deepen the research into the realm of the dream would be, for me, to come closer to the essence of the archetypal horse-human bond. I believe this type of research would be particularly beneficial to the infusion and expansion of a trans-species ethic within depth psychology.

In my hopes of dreaming forward into a continued imagining of a world where there is no need for a trans-species psychology or ethic, because it has once again become a way of life, I reach out my hand and offer my dreams to Equus. I will always ride in the tension of what I wish to bring into the world and what the world will accept from me. Every night that I go to sleep I say a silent prayer that I might dream of horses. I am continually blessed each time they present themselves to me and I will continue to present myself as authentically as I am able to them. It is my heart that knows them best as it still beats so feverishly in a deep yearning for their smell, their breath, the sound of their hooves beating against the earth, and the ever intoxicating rhythm of their being. I will forever be in service to them, for they have given me this most beautiful dream.

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Appendix
Images from the In-between



Noticing. Photo by the author.



From the Horse's Mouth. Photo by the author.



Dream Horse. Photo by the author.



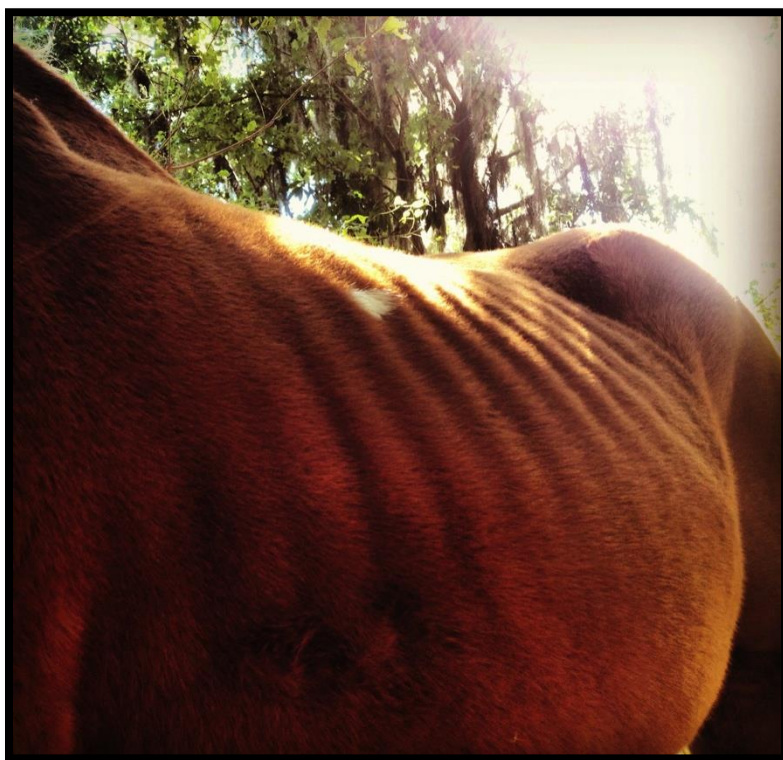
Always Watching. Photo by the author.



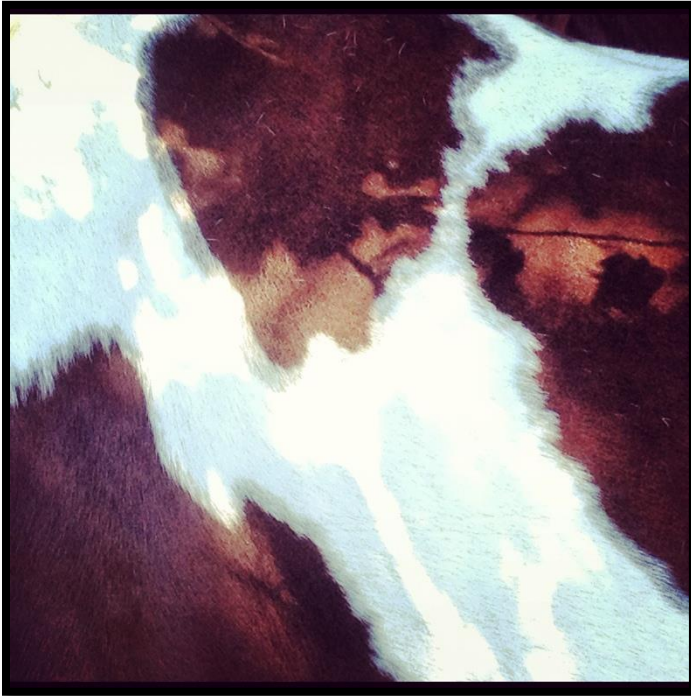
Hidden Perspectives. Photo by the author.



Initiation. Photo by the author.



Last Days. Photo by the author.



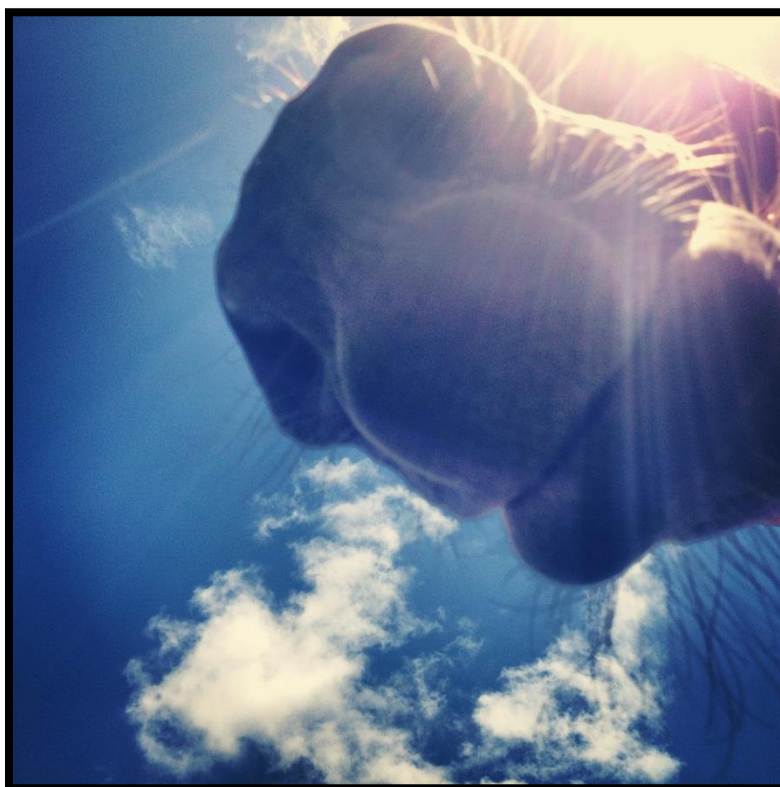
Unknown Beauty. Photo by the author.



Hideaway. Photo by the author.



Brilliance. Photo by the author.



Hank. Photo by the author.



This Green World. Photo by the author.



Rescued. Photo by the author.



Perfect Day. Photo by the author.



Neo. Photo by the author.



Distance. Photo by the author.



Barbed Wire. Photo by the author.



Old Men. Photo by the author.