

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE TERRAIN OF THE SELF AND THE
OTHER: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
ANIMALS AS CARTOGRAPHIC TEACHERS
AND HEALERS

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Using the metaphor of a journey, the phenomenon of companion animal caregiving is opened for appraisal. Companion animals are revealed as metaphoric cartographers or mapmakers, creators of guides of caring. Through these guides, we are called to care through the task of exploration of the inner terrain of the Self as well as the intimate terrain of the Other.

Hermeneutic phenomenology as the mode of inquiry for this study uses the framework of six methodological guidelines described by van Manen (1990). The voices of six nurse educators provide narratives of the lived experiences of being-with a companion animal. These narratives are generated through the use of various texts for examination: conversations, art or photographs, and written life stories. Developed from narratives, significant themes of companion animals are identified. These themes are viewed as the lived language of *soul*, a felt connection to the Other, an ontological communion or attunement that reveals mystery, spirit, and an enhanced awareness. This experience of soul in its essence reveals the terrain of the Self and the Other.

These themes of soul become known through the lived existentials of spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality (van Manen, 1990). These intertwined themes are manifested as animal love, generated through deep connections or soul-mates; senses of animal soul by which intimate terrains are revealed through touch, vision, and hearing thereby offering an authentic knowing by the heart of a companion animal; animal courage, the terrain in which we are tended and mended through presence and compassion; and animal havens, a felt terrain of homecoming. Companion animal caring with the soul is sustained as insights from the conversations are examined in view of current pedagogical practices within the arena of nurse education. Lastly, the journey concludes with the invitation to dwell in a pedagogy of companionship, a pedagogy emulated by companion animals in which we are gathered into this newly created sacred place of being-with the Other, an authentic place in the circle of life.

**THE TERRAIN OF THE SELF AND THE OTHER:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
ANIMALS AS CARTOGRAPHIC TEACHERS AND
HEALERS**

By

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DEDICATION

The writing of this dissertation has been witness to many transitions or compassionate passages in my life's journey. These compassionate passages have heralded both tears and joy. I wish to dedicate this dissertation to my children, Melanie and Kevin, whose presences have filled me with a joy and love that is beyond words. You both dwell in my heart. Since the beginning of this study, I have also transitioned into a new identity of grandmother. To my little grandson, Franz, I owe the incredible joy of laughter and the pleasure of play! You have brought so much love into my world and have shown me that the circle does continue.

Additionally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother and father whose lifelong lessons of respect for all forms of life have literally made me the human being I have become. They continue to provide those sacred spaces for becoming. It is with a bittersweet sorrow that I say a special thank you to my mother whose physical death during this dissertation, created unspeakable sorrow and an aching loss too great for words, yet opened my vulnerable side, and as such, healed long hidden heart spaces. I miss you, Mom, more than words can say. I lastly say a special wish of gratitude to my partner in ant-healing, Louise, my fellow adventurer and map-reader for all of her generous support and caring and of course a willingness to read my many drafts of my writing!

And what can I say of the wonderful four-footed presences of soul throughout my life? I began this study with a prologue written to Angel Marie, my forever soul-mate. Her presence continues to guide me. I ended this dissertation with a special passage to Rocky, my current rescuer whose *joie de vivre* is contagious. I wish to

acknowledge, as well, those other special beings who have revealed their souls and spirits to me and as such completed me and taught me many life lessons. I re-member Pierre, a French poodle of my childhood who was my first dog, purchased with hard-earned money of childhood tasks. Pierre created those sacred spaces of safe childhood transitions...Tinkerbell, the feline surrogate mother to my daughter, Melanie...my adopted “first grandchild,” François who fills my life with happiness and memories of my daughter...Milton, my little eating machine and in whose eyes I catch a glimpse of his sister, Angel Marie...Sister Beetle, ever ready to truly lend a paw in greeting to me each morning...and lastly, Barkley, a silent, gentle presence who taught me much of dignity of soul, hope, love and un-demanding presence. Barkley, from the initial day she was rescued by my son, Kevin, gave me the great lesson of hope and starting again despite the path in life previously traveled. Barkley opened my heart to quiet love, a love that needs no voice except the voice of the soul. Barkley, while gone in physical presence only recently, taught me so very much about difficult life decisions and end of life caring. Barkley helped me to realize that true caring can cause suffering but that caring from the heart ultimately always brings healing. And to all my other healers and teachers, a special heart of gratitude and love. It is your love and compassion to which I give voice in the following dissertation. I dedicate this to you.

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Many years ago, I yearned to commence a journey, a quest for an alternate way of be-ing and be-coming. I initially started on this path without a felt sense of destination or direction, only a compelling desire to begin. Along the way, I have been fortunate to embrace the gentle hearts and caring spirits of so many wonderful, extraordinary people. In looking back over the path of my journey, I marvel at their presences. I count my blessings that their life paths have intertwined with my road. I continue to be sustained by their spirits!

It is with heartfelt voice that I wish to acknowledge the guiding light of my advisor, Dr. Francine Hultgren. She has been a candle in the sacristy faithfully bearing witness to my journey. She has opened my soul to such fresh visions of places I never realized existed! Dr. Hultgren emulates that wonderful gift of compassion and *being-with*. Through her eternal support and caring, I have been cradled in a chrysalis of becoming. Her ponderings and writings in the margins will forever be treasured as will her “stories.”

I extend a special thank you to Dr. Maggie Neal and Duffy. Dr. Neal revealed an initial pathway into phenomenology. She, like Dr. Hultgren, created a secure place for dwelling and respite for both body and soul. In Dr. Neal, I entertain the notion of being-with a kindred spirit. To Duffy, I owe much gratitude for her caring presence. I wish to recognize the caring contributions of the other members of my dissertation committee: Dr. Gloria Carpeneto for her gifts of the labyrinth and the concept of transfiguration that I experienced during the writing of this dissertation; Dr. Susan

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Lastly, I wish to thank the many friends, family, and fellow students who have given of their thoughts as I journeyed through my writing. In my pursuit of my question of study, I have been graced by the profound voices of my participants and their companion animals. Their caring presences continue to accompany me upon my journey. I wish to recognize the support of the nurse educators at Villa Julie College for their creation of a caring place to *be*. A final special note of gratitude is extended to the Wonderful Women's Writing Group (WWWG). Throughout my dissertation chapters and revisions of my writing, this special group of women have *been there* armed with a deeply listening ear to my work. My thoughts are filled with stories of both tears and smiles as we continue to journey together. In closing to everyone, I say a deeply felt thank you for the creation of a sanctuary, a place allowing me to open my soul to the deeper mystery of be-ing here in this study.

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A PROLOGUE: MUSINGS AND REFLECTIONS UPON THE ART OF ANIMAL CARTOGRAPHY

During the writing of this dissertation proposal, I experienced the sudden, physical death of one of my beloved companion animals, Angel Marie, a dachshund who by her constant presence provided me with joy, caring, my sense of space and place, home and self. Angel is my Toto, my guide, a being who accompanied me through a portion of this journey called my life. Angel's eyes were those of an old, wise soul. Within those eyes I recognized myself. Without those eyes, I became "blind." As Susan McElroy (1998a) relates, "Primitive societies believed each person had a bush soul and a human soul. The bush soul incarnates as an animal or tree with which the person has a psychic connection. When the bush soul is injured, so the person is injured as well" (p. 174); I, too, experienced this sense of injury to my soul.

Like Toto from *The Wizard of Oz* (Baum, 1900), Angel has guided me toward and provided me with the "reflected" gifts of the knowing of the Scarecrow, the Lion's courage, and the unconditional love of the Tin Man's heart. Lines from a poem by May Sarton reflect my immense grief and sense of loss:

Wilderness Lost:

For Brambles, my cat

I

She was the wilderness in me
The secret solitary place
Where grow the healing herbs.
We had recognized each other
Years ago, the bond was deep.
Now since her death two seasons ago,
The landscape is ghostly.

II

Distant, passionate one.
I miss you in my bones.
I miss you like my heartbeat.
I have mourned you for nine months...
And in a new time
I grow old without you...
(Sarton, 1993, p. 508)

As May Sarton suggests, Angel is the wildness within me, the uncharted part of the Self, glimpsed only perhaps, through our interactions and being-with animals. Angel is my mirror, complementing my own human “being-ness” with the essence of her very be-ing. With Angel’s physical death, came a sense of incompleteness of Self, a loss of intense connection to my soul and spirit. I became homeless and orphaned, a dis-embodied soul, immersed as Casey (1993) suggests within a wilderness, “a place in which one readily loses their way, goes astray, and becomes bewildered” (p. 229).

Like Dorothy I seemed to wander alone in a Land of Oz, far away from my homeland of Kansas. Indeed my landscape became ghostly, comprised of only the fragments of images and obscurity where once there had existed clarity and vision. However, Angel’s physical death has emerged as her greatest gift to me, for by bearing witness to her passage from this life, I emerge a different person. In a new time or temporality, despite the timelessness of my grief, the ghosts of my landscape of self are becoming clear. My landscape is composed of her indelible paw prints. Her paw prints upon my soul reflect a new road map within my landscape of self.

Thus, Angel continues to emerge for me as my soul mate or *anam cara*, soul friend (O’Donohue, 1997). Moore (1994) describes a soul-mate as “someone to whom we feel profoundly connected, as though the communicating and communing that take

place between the two were not the product of intentional efforts, but rather a divine grace” (p. xvii). Moore describes this experience of the soul as one of depth, value, relatedness, heart and personal sustenance. Thus, the sense of Angel’s gentle spirit and presence remains in my writing and dwells in my very being. Angel, through her wondrous gift of showing, opened my eyes to the possibility of truly be-coming Badger, the mythical animal keeper of the animal stories.

Angel was lovingly nicknamed Emily Dickinson, a true “poet” at heart, a being who translated the magical language of unconditional love and caring to my life. As poetry is known for bringing the language of the unknown into light, so Angel Marie opened those muted voices in myself through her presence. From her I continue to speak in “animal tongue” through the voices of the animals. To Angel and to all of my beloved companion animals throughout my life who went before, I wish to dedicate a voice in this dissertation. It is from their teachings and love that I emerge with a new voice. Through them, I am re-membered, healed and made whole.

I am called to a few lines from a song from Celine Dion, *Because You Loved Me*, from the film, *Up Close and Personal*. Perhaps it is by having the courage to see with a newly opened set of eyes, the “eyes of the heart,” into the eyes of the Other, that the perceived distance of difference and language dissolve into a space of a true knowing of the Other through a recognition of the Other’s gifts to us through example and love. In essence, it is truly by being up close and personal that one learns to become familiar with animals in their immense capacity for bringing us to a real or authentic sense of personhood, our place in the world. They care for us by teaching life’s lessons in the most simplistic of voices, voices perhaps long forgotten,

untranslatable within language as we know it, or voices that have now fallen on deaf ears. This might be a new way of looking at animals, the embodiment of my philosophy toward animals.

Because You Loved Me

For all those times you stood by me.
For all the truth that you made me see.
For all the joy you brought to my life.
For all the wrongs you made right.
For every dream you made come true,
For all the love I found in you.
I will be forever thankful.
You were the one who held me up and never let me fall.
You are the one who saw me through it all.

You were my strength when I was weak.
You were my voice when I could not speak.
You were my eyes when I could not see.
You saw the best there was in me.
Lifted me up when I couldn't reach.
You gave me faith because you believed.
I am everything I am because you loved me.

You gave me wings and made me fly.
You touched my hand and I could touch the sky.
I lost my faith you gave it back to me.
You said no star was out of reach.
You stood by me and I stood tall.
I had your love, I had it all.
I am grateful for each day you gave me.
Maybe I don't know that much, but I know this much is true.
I was blessed because I was loved by you.

You were my strength when I was weak.
You gave me a voice when I couldn't speak.
You were my eyes when I couldn't see.
You saw the best there was in me.
Lifted me up when I could not reach.
You gave me faith because you believed.
I am everything I am because you loved me.

You were always there for me,
A tender wind that carried me.

A light in the dark shining your light into my life.
You have been my inspiration.
Through the lies you were the truth.
My world is a better place because of you.

You were my strength when I was weak.
You were my voice when I could not speak.
You were my eyes when I could not see.
You saw the best there was in me.
Lifted me up when I couldn't reach.
You gave me faith because you believed.
I am everything I am because you loved me.
(emphasis added)

This dissertation opens as a celebration of Angel's life and a gift of gratitude to her for the continued guidance in my life. I once again follow the cartographic track of her paw prints.

This day, O Soul, I give you a wondrous mirror,
Long in the dark, in tarnish and cloud it lay—
But the cloud has passed, and the tarnish gone,
Behold, O Soul it is now a clean and bright mirror,
Faithfully showing you all the things of the world.
(Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, 1993, p. 485)

CHAPTER ONE:

THE CALL OF THE JOURNEY: TURNING TO THE PHENOMENON OF ANIMALS AS TEACHERS AND HEALERS

Rainer Maria Rilke writes, “There is only one journey. Going inside yourself” (as cited in Dipenza, 1999, p. 1). To embark on a phenomenological inquiry is to journey within the self, a resting within the self in order to go beyond the self ultimately. It is a journey of profound questioning regarding ontology and epistemology, our connections to the world. Through the inner journey, we invite “the world” to share its secrets. In return, we, too, surrender our innermost questions and ponderings. In surrendering, we enable ourselves and the world to render an openness for exploration through interpretation.

This journey is one of “intentionality” (van Manen, 1990, p. 5), as we cannot separate ourselves from the world. The space of inner travel is reflected in my outer world of place. My outer world of place is embedded in the realm of the professional practice of nursing education. Despite the twenty-five years I have traversed this outer place of nurse education, first as a student in a nurse educational program and later as a nurse educator, this outer realm remains comprised of ghostly images and landscapes reflective of no points of connection. I ponder my place in nurse education and cannot seem to find a foothold. In lieu of firm ground, I find a barren ground where the ultimate conflict emerges as a battle for my very ontology. I seek a point of entry. I am called to travel.

A Call to Travel

The call to travel is a voice that re-sounds and echoes. This call to travel has circled back upon my being, akin to an echo. I listen. This call to travel demands my presence. This call seeks an opening conversation within story. Travel and travail hail “as doublets, words possessing separate meaning but evolving from a common ancestor, the Latin, *trepalium*, an instrument of torture” (Ayto, 1990, pp. 539-540). Thus, the following stories open to a re-membrance of suffering as I ponder my place and *her-story* within nurse education.

Initial Travails

This story begins with my first encounter in the profession of nursing in July 1977. It can be said that as a nurse or truly any profession, one always remembers those special beings, in this case patients, whose presence in our lives serve the function of transformation, assisting us in making ourselves that which we potentially have the capability to be-come.

In 1977, the profession of nursing was suffering from a shortage of nurses, similar to the current crisis in our health care system. It was due to this shortage, that I had the privilege of accepting a pediatric position. The offer of a pediatric position for a new graduate was a novelty and went against the prevailing professional notion that all new nurse graduates must have a period of initiation into the profession, a rite of passage comprised of a year’s professional nursing experience on an adult medical-surgical floor. This prevailing paradigm suggested that only through such suffering was a person deemed worthy to encompass the societal title of registered nurse. Even

then, the nursing profession produced mediocrity as many nurses fled the profession in this first year, totally unprepared for the demands of such a position.

I re-member this day so very vividly, re-calling it though it were replaying on a movie screen in front of me:

The day started out all wrong! I was scheduled to work with one of the regular staff nurses. As was typical, it was just the two of us scheduled. In essence, she was the only “real” nurse as I had just taken my licensure examination and was still awaiting the results. To my dismay, my mentor was ill that day and I was “teaming up” with a nurse very unfamiliar with the unit. This nurse’s area of practice was not pediatrics. I was more or less on my own with approximately ten pediatric patients of varying degrees of illness and needs for care. This pediatric unit I should note is also the regional burn trauma unit for the immediate East Coast area.

The phone call came right after lunch. I can now recall wishing I had never let my hand touch the receiver. I answered the call and with a sinking remembrance of a feeling of dis-belief, I “see” myself lifeless and still as a statue. I am glued to this phone and position within the nurse’s station area. My breath came in short spurts, not seemingly to be able to “just breathe.” I struggled to hear and translate the words spoken to me, “There is an air transport of a boating accident from the Chesapeake Bay involving two children.” The voice at the other end of the phone was crisp and curt, “female, age 4 years, approximate body surface area involved, 20%...male, age 9 years, approximate body surface area involved, 60-70%. See you in ten minutes.” I was suddenly mute as I hung up the phone.

There was no time to think or process, only become like an automatic machine and take the directions provided by the other staff members. I will never forget my first sight of these two children, the feeling of being overwhelmed, the feeling of being totally impotent to do anything but provide “routine” care for them during those first hours. (Personal Journal)

Why do these two children, to this day evoke such a vivid scene? Was it my own lack of expertise as a nurse? Was it a bearing witness to a magnitude of physical suffering for which I had no lived experience for meaning? I still ponder these questions and realize that being-with these two children and their family would resonate throughout the years to come. These two children began a conversation in my

psyche that continued as a murmur and gave birth to a loud roar for many years in my practice as a nurse.

What did I lack with regard to entering a conversation with the parents as they sought to make medical decisions and needed a sympathetic ear? Was I fearful of lending an ear, feeling that I may indeed lose myself? In what manner had my experience of nurse education prevented me from entering into this personal space of parental caring? In hindsight, I now know the depth of my lack of preparation as I struggled to fit these children into a standard plan of *caring*. I quickly tried to revert back to the language of dis-tance practiced so finely in my educational program. I, too, suffered as I looked in their eyes and saw the person behind the standard nursing care plan. My hands knew the suffering they [my hands] caused, while my heart and soul resisted acknowledgement of this knowing. I now know that to acknowledge myself, as a cause of suffering was to create a wound for which I had no mechanisms for healing.

These two children (brother and sister) and their family were to provide the first lesson in true caring as the course of their injuries kept me in contact with them for their three months of healing, at a time when the mortality rate for these types of injuries hovered near fifty percent. I will never forget their hospital room, directly across from the nurse's station. Every time I looked up or glanced around, these children were in my field of view. A closed door with a sign indicating "Protective Isolation" alienated them from the rest of the activity on the nursing unit as the closed door protected them from contamination with others. I think, now, that perhaps this closed door sought to protect the staff from true caring.

It was behind that closed door, where a sense of intimacy developed when as a nurse, I, too, was *cut off* from the rest of the nursing unit and acquired a private stance of my own creation (my first ruby slippers). Behind this closed door, I had no choice but to be held hostage in the eyes of these two children. These four walls, birthed a great closeness and intimacy, when as a nurse I bore witness to the father's signature providing permission to use an experimental drug in the hopes of arresting an overwhelming, life-threatening infection in his son. There was an intimacy in my bearing witness to the caress of this little boy's mother as she sought to comfort him as his fever raged and threatened to take him from her, despite medical intervention. I sensed her despair and truly heard her words when she spoke guiltily about not being able to *do more*. There was an intimacy when this little boy, quite delusional from pain and uncontrollable fever, called out to his cat at home, Socks, who he saw sitting upon his bed. There was an intimacy when I looked into the eyes of his sister and saw the fear as she, too, at the age of four years bears witness to her brother's struggles. There was an intimacy when I looked at the weariness and tears in the eyes of these parents as they, too, struggled to keep going, day after day, month after month. Within this intimacy, I sense my own vulnerability.

I reflect upon this place of vulnerability, sensing a physical place of caring as well as the hidden places of caring in myself. I open to this feeling of fateful, fragile existence as I struggle to make meaning:

A Tarot of Nines

Room Five-Four-Nine...
Five plus four equals nine.
A fateful place.

Rules of nine to “quantify” your pain and injury.
A fateful body.

Nine years of age.
A fateful time.

Nine eyes watch...
A pair of eyes filled with fear.
A pair of eyes filled with pain.
A pair of eyes filled with uncertainty.
A pair of eyes filled with fatigue.
A single eye of fate shared by three.

A tarot of nines...
The Nine of Wands, the card of strength in opposition.
The Nine of Cups, the card of contentment and well-being.
The Nine of Swords, the card of despair.
The Nine of Pentacles, the card of safety.

A fateful “being-with nines.”
(Personal Journal)

Beginning Travels

Many years later, I was to once again re-visit this transformational time in my identity as a nurse educator. I shape shifted into the be-ing of the student. Lashley (1994) describes her own process of turning to be-come a student. She writes:

Ironically by becoming an inquirer into one’s own presence in teaching, the experienced educator and practitioner also becomes a student, studying and learning about his or her own practice. This type of self-reflection can leave one feeling isolated and lonely. (p. 46)

I, too, felt quite lonely as I struggled to find my soul. As a novice nurse educator, I strove to create and perpetuate this boundary so emulated from my own nurse faculty mentors, despite the feeling of dis-ease I felt when practicing these boundaries. After many years, I slowly felt more comfortable and safe in my identity as I formulated my own pedagogy of nurse education. At this time, the murmurings in my soul become louder and louder. I instituted new ways of knowing my students as I

sought to recognize each student as an individual. I was still weary, though, as I constantly struggled to defend my positions of self-disclosure to both other faculty members and students, long indoctrinated in this pedagogy of dis-tance. It was on one of these typical days that my circle of understandings came full face. I wrote as I stood on the edge of the abyss:

I am so tired of all of this. I am tired of trying to bridge this chasm that exists between me and the rest of the nurse educational system. I am sick of it all. All I ever have time for are these educational practices that are simply words upon paper, no meanings, just words. Why cannot I make these students “see” the person behind the diagnosis and not be so “concerned” with memorization of formulas and standards of “caring?” (Personal Journal)

A technique I employed for getting to know my students as individuals in a small group was to question them regarding their choice of nursing as a profession as Coles (1989) suggests, “Stories are the rock-bottom capacity, the universal gift, to be shared with others” (p. 30). The responses always fascinated me; students felt safe to voice their true reasons for *being-there*. One particular day, approximately fifteen years into my identity as a nurse educator, an interesting voice emerged from one of the students in my group, “I am here in this nursing program because of the care given to me when I was a child.”

No sooner were the words spoken, that I knew in my body the words that were to follow. There was a roaring in my ears, accompanied by a thudding heart, trying to break through the confines of my body. *I turned to face my fateful nines once again, gazing upon the face of a ghost from Room 549.* Prior to her utterance of any further words or conversation, I looked at her student identification. I spoke in a voice that I was not certain was my own, a voice emitting from a void, “Boating accident... July 1977...Chesapeake Bay...You have a brother named---and a cat named Socks...You

were on the pediatric unit at Baltimore City Hospital.” At the end of my words, we looked into each other’s eyes with total dis-belief as the realization crept in that I had been her nurse. We both cried and hugged one another.

Travails of the Traveler

What meaning do I embrace through these two stories, stories that have encircled me in my outer world of nursing practice and nurse education? What understandings emerge for me? Currently, my outer world of this barren terrain called nurse education is mirrored within my space of inner travel. I no longer recognize myself. Within myself, I too, seek points of connection. I struggle to uncover the language of my soul. My soul utters first words like the beginning speech of a child, a dialect familiar to my ears, yet untranslatable as I struggle. I suffer as Estes (1995) suggests from *hambre del alma*, “a starved soul” (p. 228), a soul whose very attributes of creativity, sensory awareness, and intuition seek nourishment in order to thrive. I recognize within myself the soul of the feral woman, a woman who was once wild and then domesticated, seeks to re-turn to the wildness once again (Estes,1995).

Once again, I turn toward my starved soul, seeking to translate this wild tongue and find respite from this conflict. I find my essence in a story, a brief tale of a feral woman wearing red shoes:

There once was a motherless child who had no shoes; but the child saved scraps of red cloth, creating her own pair of shoes. An old woman in a gilded carriage happens upon this child one day, offering a new life and new shoes, in exchange for the relinquishment of another “life of homemade and handmade red shoes.” Within this new life, there dwells an alternate way of living comprised of certain modes of being within the world. The girl dances within these new red shoes, finding eventually that she cannot stop the dancing, a dance that contains no meaning for her. The dance continues until sheer exhaustion ensues, relieved only through the severance of the girl’s feet in order to stop the dance of the red shoes. (Estes, 1995, pp. 215-218)

Like the girl in this brief story, I, too, choose to stop dancing the dance of non-meaning in my inner and outer landscapes. I seek to recover my handmade red shoes. My red shoes be-come that soul upon which I embody a stance for being. Donning my red shoes, I choose to embark upon this journey. For me, the phenomenological journey is in essence, a journey of spirit and soul, reflected in a beckoning or enticement to a way of being in the world. Within my journey of spirit and soul, I open toward the echo of the quiet recesses of my very being. I read the ancient pictographs upon the mirror walls of my soul. Within the ancient dwelling of my soul, the language of the pictographs is translated into a kindred dialect of the wilderness. There are animal voices in this wilderness calling me home. I respond to their call as a woman within her midlife journey and as a nurse educator. The voices of the animals begin to fashion and create a new pair of handmade red shoes. I answer the call of my inner questions to explore the terrain of animals as teachers and healers.

To bring forth my inner questions for review, I seek to create a dialogue. I recognize and re-member my soul and spirit in the words of Beston (1928/1977):

We need another wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals...
We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate of
Having taken form so far below ourselves.
And therein we err, and greatly err. For the animal shall not be measured by
man.
In a world older and more complete than ours, they moved finished and
complete,
Gifted with extensions of the senses we lost or never attained,
Living by voices we shall never hear.
They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other nations,
Caught with ourselves in the net of life and time,
Fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the earth.
(Beston, 1928/1977, pp. 24-25)

In entering a conversation with Beston (1928/1977), how do I begin to open the experience with animals as teachers and healers? How does the passage offered by Beston invite my soul to reveal what it previously has concealed? What sense of refuge is summoned? How does this language emerge as a homecoming, an inner landscape (O'Donohue, 1999) to which I belong?

Within my inner landscape of soul, this language of Beston opens to create a refuge. Within this refuge I quietly surrender, allowing the “saliencies” embedded within the language to leap out at me, “unbidden” (West, 2000, p. 235). The language calls out to me, summoning and inviting me to an intimacy, a sacred union or communion with animals. To be intimate emerges from the late Latin *intimare*, “to make known,” and the Latin *intimus* “innermost” (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999, p. 941). In what manner do the words of Beston call forth a closeness, an inwardness toward the soul, a knowing from the heart, and the creation of a sacred place of dwelling and pondering? Indeed the etymology of the word nation comes forth from the “notion of a common ancestry” (Ayto, 1990, p. 361). What common ancestry is shared with animals, and thus, what connections with animals emerge in me?

I ponder the dichotomy of being wise and being mystical...living by senses lost and voices now unheard. How do animals by connection with us provide an opening to a greater sense of self, an ontological knowing through the senses of sight, sound, and touch? What does it mean to “live by the senses,” to dwell in the experience of being bodily present-in-the-moment within the world? In what manner do animals tend or care for us through the creation of an openness of space within our

sensual knowing? What are the tensions we currently dwell in regarding animals and our perception of them? What mystery lies within the being of an animal?

Upon encountering these words, a sense of clarity emerged within me. As I began to explore this uncharted terrain of my inner self, I indeed, had found a sense of homecoming within this language. A sense of home evokes notions of caring, being tended and needs met. My homecoming, however, reciprocally created a tension, a tension of a dis-stance from self. My dis-stance from self previously concealed within my soul was suddenly brought forth as a conflict of ontology and epistemology, a discordance of the being I projected within the world and the emanation of my true self.

Within my inner journey, I reflected upon my outer quest for a guide for my own self-caring, as well as the caring of others in the world. I began to re-collect and re-member myself. Looking into the mirror, anticipating a reflection of myself as a mirror of caring, I instead caught the reflection of an animal. An ontological and epistemological shift had occurred. I hearken to the call toward the phenomenon of animals as caregivers through their unique ways of being in the world: teaching and healing. Animals be-came my guide, my maker of a map of my inner terrain of self-caring and the outer terrain of caring in the world.

Being-Called to a Journey: Entering a Map

There is a call to this journey toward the terrain of animals as teachers and healers through care giving. A call invokes the thoughts of sound, a beckoning and summoning. A call demands our attention. A call is a summons to the murmurings of the soul (Cooper, 1994). Thus, this call of the soul is a sacred call. The sacred call is a

call to one's true nature or self, thus "being heard," creating transformation (Marlow, 1995).

A homonym is language that reflects the sense of sameness. Perhaps it is by no coincidence that the homonym of "heard" is "herd." By listening to the voices and the call of animals within our lives, perhaps are we "being herd?" How do animals invite us to hear the "sound of the herd," a linguistic community to which we belong? By immersing ourselves in this sense of belonging, in what ways are we transformed? Within the paradigm of belonging, this transformation evokes a monologue of the heart transformed into a dialogue of the soul. However, as Levoy (1997) describes:

A call is only a monologue. A return call, a response creates a dialogue. Our own unfolding requires that we be in constant dialogue with whatever is calling us. The call and one's response to it are also a central metaphor for the spiritual life, and in Latin there is even a correspondence between the words listening and following. (p. 2)

A calling births the sense of new possibilities, through the art of listening, speaking, and responding. A calling is an evocation, opening to new questions and a heightened sense of awareness (Berman, 1994). In short, a calling is a sense of being alive or akin to awakening after a long, fitful sleep. I awaken to the possibility of new questions: In what manner do animals evoke a dialogue of caring? How is this dialogue "heard within the herd?" What response-ability do I maintain to this dialogue with animals?

My ability to respond to a dialogue with animals involves the response-ability of the creation of a language for knowing and understanding. In order to create this language, I turn toward the use of metaphor. "By way of metaphor, language can take us beyond the content of the metaphor toward the original region where language speaks through silence" (van Manen, 1990, p. 49).

Mirror Maps

Maps are graphic representations that facilitate a spatial understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes, or events in the human world. (Harley & Woodward, 1987, p. xvi)

Maps are a way of organizing wonder. (Steinhart, as cited in Least Heat-Moon, 1991, p. 4)

A map etymologically evolves from the Medieval Latin *mappa (mundi)*, sheet of the world (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999, p. 1101). This “sheet of the world” becomes a guide for an interpretive journey through ontology and epistemology. A map evokes an excitement of discovery of new terrain and places, through the visualization of points of connection and direction. Quite simply, then, a map emerges as “a way of being-in-the-world,” providing us with a surface for reflection, a mirror.

Like a map, a mirror, too, is a source of wonder, etymologically belonging to a small family of words, meaning simply to wonder at, weakened to look at; it derives from the Middle English, *mirour*, from Old French, *mirer*, to look at, from Latin, *mirari*, to wonder at (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999, p. 1154). When we wonder at someone or something, we are drawn out of ourselves, our heart is enlarged and we invite a mystery to come closer and become intimate (O’Donohue, 1999). Such is the wondering-at animals.

This wondering-at animals as mirrors provides a critical view, a place in space. A mirror allows one to see not only a part of the self, but rather, the self as a whole. A mirror forms images by reflection, a space of tension, a reflective bending back toward the self. Is it perhaps through this bending backwards toward the self by our interactions with animals that we are summoned to discover hidden aspects of

ourselves? A mirror is an exemplary model, something that gives a true representation, a clear image. A mirror provides a mirror image, an opposite but identical reflection. Perhaps it is within this opposite but identical reflection I sense the dichotomy of Beston's words of wise and mystical.

Animal Maps: Cartographers and Guides

A cartographer is a maker of maps. A cartographer is called to the art of making sense of this "sheet of the world" named our inner spaces of self and outer places. Therefore, a cartographer moves that which is intuitively sensed or grasped into the realm of the visual. This realm of the visual is provided within a mirror image for reflection. Within this reflection, an alternate way of knowing is given birth. We are given the opportunity to interpret our journey. As we reflect upon a map, we conjure visions of place, travel and the self.

In reflection, I feel that for me animals be-come cartographers, providing a visual reflection of "maps" through the use of metaphorical mirror images. The animal reflects this map back unto us, creating a mirror for review and interpretation. Animals emerge as travel guides and fellow travelers. Animals are the beings who travel "along-with." A guide directs and assists us, extending out a hand, or a paw, if you will, inviting us into a closer space with him or her, a true being-beside while on a journey. The extension of a hand invites a point of connection within us, reflected within a point of connection with the world. Like a map, a guide interprets our journey. The etymological tracings of the word, guide, stem from the Germanic source of wit or know, source of the English wise and witness (Ayto, 1990, p. 267). Beston's reflections on our perception of animals, therefore, certainly provide us with animals

as guides. How do animals witness our journey? How do animals bear witness to a sense of wholeness of self? Gary Kowalski writes in his book, *The Souls of Animals* (1999), “We need a sense of our own possibilities and limits, and we find them not only in the artificial rules and restraints imposed by human society, but in the lessons for living suggested by earth and biology itself. In a fundamental way, we need other creatures to tell us who we are” (p. 132).

Animals as Caring Cartographers: A Terrain of Care

A cartographer of a map of caring embodies all aspects of what it means to care. The paradigm of caring can be described within the phenomenological framework of the transpersonal relationships present and maintained with others in one’s personal space. To care is a going beyond oneself, a traveling beyond the self. What are the facets of companion animals caring for their human guardians and for other animals? In what manner do animals invite us to journey into unknown terrains of caring or perhaps invite or evoke us truly to enter the terrain of caring and experience this terrain with new eyes? When this terrain is experienced with new eyes we become open once again to alternate possibilities for being in the world: healing and teaching. Thus, to care involves both healing and teaching.

The following is a brief identification or opening of themes that emerge within my own reflections of animals as caregivers. These themes are developed further in Chapter Two as the terrain of animals as caregivers is explored through alternate courses of experience. Lastly, a philosophical grounding for the identity of animals as caregivers is shared in Chapter Three.

Animals as Cartographers: Terrains of Teaching and Learning

Animals are teachers. The word, *teach*, from the Middle English, *techen*, to show, to instruct, a sign, leads us to the word *token*, akin to the Old High German, *zeihhan*, “sign” and the Greek, *deiknynai*, “to show” (Ayto, 1990, p. 522). How do animals teach us? In what manner do we learn from animals? What signs do they give to us? What language is used to show us? From the word, *token*, emerges the word *diction* from the Latin *diction-*, *dictio-*, speaking style (Ayto, 1990, p. 170). How do animals act as interpreters of the language of mystical knowing? How do animals appeal to us through their teachings? In the words of Evans (1995), “...The best teachers I ever met were the horses themselves. You will find a lot of folk have opinions, but if it’s facts you want you’re better off going to the horse...” (p. 117).

Hillman (1997) maintains that in being a human, one can never lose this animal inheritance of looking to other animals for teaching. Hillman suggests that learning occurs even in our modern-day society by means of such activities as walking in the woods, bird watching, fishing, or tracking. This knowledge evolves wisely and mystically. Consider the following passage Leopold ascribes to the wolf who lay dying from his bullet, “...a fierce green fire was dying in her eyes...there was something new to me in [the mother wolf’s] eyes—something known only to her and the mountain” (1966, p. 138). “There is in every animal’s eye a dim image and a gleam of humanity, a flash of strange light, through which their life looks at and up to our great mystery of command over them and claims the fellowship of the creature, if not of the soul” (Ruskin, 1996, p. 79).

Animals as Cartographers: Terrains of Healing

By providing a place for us, do animals, then, perhaps offer us what we are missing of ourselves? Thus, it may be said that animals complete us and lead us to wholeness. When we are whole, we are healed. In what manner are animals healers? Small (1994) defines wholeness as the “incorporation of our soul and ego...making all unconscious elements conscious” (p. 133). Whole and heal evolve from the same root, *heilen*, Old High German, to heal (Ayto, 1990, p. 573). Conversely, without the connection to animals, would authentic wholeness and healing be mastered?

Apollonius of Tyana (as cited in Dossey, 1993, p. 1997) states:

Pythagoras said that the most divine art was that of healing. And if the healing art is most divine, it must occupy itself with the soul as well as with the body; for no creature can be sound so long as the higher part in it is sickly.

Healing *is a way of be-ing instead of do-ing* according to LeShan (1990). He describes healing as involving the following:

One can only be fully in this mode when one has, if only for a moment, given up all wishes and desires for oneself (since the separate self does not exist) and for others (since they do not exist as separate either) and just allow oneself to be and therefore to be with and be one with all of existence...Any awareness of doing or of the wish to do disrupts this mode. (p. 9)

How do animals give this selfless healing? What do we understand of animals giving of themselves unconditionally? By the description of this fusion of boundaries, we obtain a sense of harmony, a fitting together within ourselves and in the world.

A Guide for the Journey: Map Legends

A map legend quite simply is the language for deciphering a map. Through the embrace of a legend, we are able to read a map. To decipher is to figure out or unlayer in order to understand. A legend makes it possible to understand and recognize that which is brought forth into our lives. Thus, a legend uncovers that which is hidden in a

map. In essence the act of deciphering is to make that which was to this point unreadable or impossible, moving that into the realm of possibility.

Animals as cartographers, through the creation of map legends, aid in my ability to read such maps as ourselves through their capacity for caring through teaching and healing. I am called to bring forth those map legends that have aided me along my journey.

The Map Legend of Animal Story

As I am called to embody the identity of animals as caring cartographers, there emerges a sense of incompleteness and a need to open further this sense of possibility for animals within my life. I am called to the cartography of story. Stories heal and set the inner life in motion (Estes, 1995). Through stories, I am nourished within my soul and spirit. Through stories, I further am provided with evidence of the experience of animal cartography within my life.

A Re-turning to Badger—The Keeper of Animal Stories

To enter into a dialogue with animals, I first and foremost must seek a guide for my journey. A totem is an animal mentor or guide. Totem etymologically refers to a kinship or “belonging within a family group” (Ayto, 1990, p. 537). More specifically, an animal totem is said to represent an individual’s animal characteristics as manifested in the human world. Badger, within Native American mythology emerges as the totem animal of story. Badger, described as “the keeper of animal stories,” digs deep within the earth in search of medicine that heals. Ted Andrews (1994) describes the badger in the following manner:

The badger is described and noted most significantly by a white stripe, extending from nose to the back of the head. This white stripe is indicative of

light, the opening to knowledge and knowing. Through the strong jaws of the badger, a significant voice is attained. The home of the badger is within the earth, thus the badger possesses a knowing of the land. The badger is a powerful “healer”, digging deep within the earth to find the source of truth. (pp. 246-247)

Thus, the badger through “voice,” “head,” and “hands” is the keeper of the animal stories. As Badger invited me, as well, to enter my own animal story, I began to sense points of powerful connection to digging deeper within myself, to a connection to the land, place and animals, an “unearthing” of that which lies hidden from view, deep within the soul. The boundaries of Badger “shape-shifted,” merging and blending into my soul and spirit. I be-came a bodily territory “marked” by Badger.

Badger’s voice: Murmurings. A murmur is a faint sound, seemingly coming from a distance. A murmur is at first, perhaps, indistinct and untranslatable. A murmur gains our attention and our senses gather toward this faint, strange sound. Most significantly, a murmuring creates a temporal space for questioning. Through this questioning, we dis-cover the source of the sound and are able to translate this murmuring into an epistemology of true voice.

At a writing workshop in 2000, Susan McElroy opened my heart space and created a soulful place for me to once again reopen to my “closet identity” of being Badger, the sacred holder of animal stories. One of the writing activities within the writing group was the assumption of the identity of an animal being, chosen randomly from a deck of animal cards. Having the experience of “being selected or chosen” by the Badger card, I was mute and dumbfounded. From this sense of muteness or no voice emerged the voice of new questions. How could I write from the perspective of an animal of which I had no knowledge, no kinship, or commonplace for meaning?

How could I write from the stance of not knowing? What is the human rendition of the animal experience as limited by our own human consciousness, human language, and human ways of knowing? Where does the aspect of humanness obscure the animal's true ability "to be?" What does anthropomorphism promote and engender?

Badger's voice: Native language. Upon returning home, I noted in my reading that the Badger also represents an affinity for the badger dog, the dachshund, by historical lore. Dachshunds, through their breeding, are used historically to "uncover" badgers. At that moment I realized the strong teaching and healing power of my dachshund, Angel Marie, even months following her physical death. Once again, she had taken the identity of cartographic guide within my life, and a part of my healing and grieving process was to compose a story of her death. This story was to comprise another part of my map of self. Through her images and a fond remembrance of her eyes, I had dug deeper into myself. By bearing witness to her death once again through her story, I realized the immense capacity of the companion animal and human connection.

As reflected within this dissertation, I, too, have dug deep within the world to reflect my beingness and place within the world. Badger is also the medicine of persistence. Through story, Badger contains the gifts of temporality, past and future, while maintaining elements of the present (Palmer, 2001). Badger allows for the hermeneutical movement across story to uncover and expose animals as teachers and healers.

A Re-turn to Story—Following Tracks

There were several roads nearby, but it did not take her [Dorothy] long to find the one paved with yellow brick. (Baum, 1900/1958, p. 13)

“I would ask you to remember only this one thing,” said Badger. “The stories people tell have a way of taking care of them. If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive. That is why we put these stories in each other’s memory. This is how people care for themselves.” (Lopez, 1990, p. 48)

Through the opening to two stories, Badger allows me to open further the phenomenon of animals as teachers and healers. I reflect on animals as teachers and healers. The meaning-making of the legend of a map brings forth many notions such as an old story in the case of *Jumping Mouse*, or a modern myth such as *The Wizard of Oz*. My journey through these stories reflects a metamorphic transformation of self.

A map for this part of the journey of revealing animals as teachers and healers is comprised of these two stories. While certainly there is a temporality present within these narratives as myths precede those texts of more recent times, I embody both the beings of *Jumping Mouse* and Dorothy. It is within this task of naming that I signify my belongingness to a clan or family. Just as these two stories imply a temporality, so my naming evokes a sense of temporality through understanding, for to separate my human beingness from animals is not a likely task as the landscape of my soul is an “animal-scape.” This soul-scape or animal-scape is comprised of a self-made map of animals along my life’s journey.

The story of Jumping Mouse: Mouse tracks. *Jumping Mouse* is an ancient mythological tale related by the Plains Indians. Like the more recent story of Frank Baum’s *The Wizard of Oz*, it is a story of initiation as well as transformation. It is a tale of a small mouse who paradoxically leaves the familiarity of place in search of authentic self. Through the embracing and encountering of other animal beings within

the journey, Jumping Mouse is changed and re-named. The authenticity of self is manifested through the meeting of personal paradoxes of choice opening to a knowing not previously grasped. Quite simply, it is a story of be-coming whole and coming “home.”

The story of the wizard of Oz: Toto’s tracks. I can recall a favorite childhood story of journeying, portraying an animal as a guide: Dorothy and Toto in *The Wizard of Oz*. To re-call Dorothy’s journey with Toto was to re-name my own journey within nursing and my life. In the re-naming, I sensed the prominence and place of animals within my life journey. Therefore, the metaphorical journey of Dorothy in the strange Land of Oz, her subsequent search for home, Kansas, within herself, and the beings who aid Dorothy in her search for Kansas resonate within me. I begin to sense that my place within the world was opened by the presence of animals. Indeed, I felt like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, that I, too, was traversing a yellow brick road, without an obvious travel guide. The words of Beston revealed my travel guide, in the guise of my traveling companion, Toto, a being who would come to symbolize not simply the animals within my life, but my greatest mirrors of teaching and healing. Toto etymologically means “everything” (Myss, 2001, p. 135).

My tracks: The shape shifting of Dorothy and Jumping Mouse. This call to animals finally was recognized at a time of great lostness within myself as a person and within my chosen profession as an educator within the discipline of nursing. I was directionless and guideless. The mouse village of nurse education had emerged into a territory of psychomotor skills founded upon a sense of “hurriedness.” My tale parallels Jumping Mouse:

Jumping Mouse was always busy, running and jumping, hurrying and scurrying to and fro. It seemed he was always in motion. In fact, he hardly ever stood still. And, like the other mice, he couldn't see very far. Nor was he able to see clearly. (Storm, 1972, p. 68)

Like Jumping Mouse, I, too, "scurried" here and there. I had become a mirror image of Dorothy within the opening passages of *The Wizard of Oz*. My place, too, was one of grayness. As Baum (1900/1958) describes:

When Dorothy stood in the doorway and looked around, she could see nothing but the great grey prairie on every side. Not a tree nor a house broke the broad sweep of flat country that reached to the edge of the sky in all directions. The sun had baked the plowed land into a grey mass with little cracks running through it. Even the grass was not green, for the sun had burned the tops of the long blade until they were the same grey colour to be seen everywhere. Once the house had been painted, but the sun blistered the paint and the rains washed it away, and now the house was as dull and grey as everything else. (pp. 1-2)

My home or dwelling place within the profession of nursing, too, had evolved to grayness. My stance was one of marginality. Nursing as a chosen vocation or calling had been mutated within my lostness in a vastness of space, with no coherent points of connection within a framework of caring or knowing. In lieu of finding a place to care within nursing, I was faced with a sense of disconnection and betrayal. Animals, so much a part of my life as a child, had provided me with an epistemology that now was absent within my vocation of nursing. While the notion of story offered a pedagogy for caring and teaching, I could find no tale to travel within nursing. Once again, I am summoned to a passage offered by Baum (1900/1958):

It was Toto that made Dorothy laugh, and saved her from growing grey like her surroundings. Toto was not grey; he was a little black dog, with long silky hair and small black eyes that twinkled merrily on either side of his funny, wee nose. Toto played all day long, and Dorothy played with him, and loved him dearly. (p. 2)

Questions emerge within me. What is the epistemology offered by animals? How is the authentic caring of animals potentially reflected within the profession of nursing? In what manner does the profession of nursing summon a pedagogy of absence, a pedagogy of exclusion of Self? Within a pedagogy of absence, how can caring be voiced? As Gadamer (1960/1989) suggests,

The essence of the question is to have a sense. Now sense involves a sense of direction. Hence the sense of the question is the only direction from which the answer can be given if it is to make sense. A question places what is questioned in a particular perspective. When a question arises, it breaks open the being of the object, as it were...Discourse that is intended to reveal something requires that that thing be broken open by the question. (pp. 362-363)

Through my initial questions, I began to sense a true loss of direction within my experience of the profession of nurse education. I find that I follow a path situated between two questions: a question of the ontic self, “a concern with the entities of the world” (van Manen, 1990, p. 183) and a question of the ontological self. Calls are questions that re-emerge, emitting a sense of a need to re-pond (Levoy, 1997). For myself, the call to an enhanced sense of personhood and authenticity was manifested within the skywriting of the Wicked Witch in *The Wizard of Oz*. I, too, was called to “Surrender Dorothy” (Green, 1998, p. 89). Through the surrendering of Self, the notion of a long-hidden sense of direction came forth into view. What other stories open my map further? What directions do these stories provide?

Map Legends: The Road Taken

One day Jumping Mouse began to hear a strange sound, one he had not heard before. It was a roar coming from somewhere out in the distance. Jumping Mouse knew the different sounds of the two-legged and the four-legged and the winged and the hoofed. But this was unlike anything he had known. Sometimes he would stop everything and lift his head in the direction of the roar. What could it be he wondered? (Storm, 1972, p. 68)

Hour after hour passed away, and slowly Dorothy got over her fright [of being in the cyclone]...At last she crawled over the swaying floor to her bed, and lay down upon it; and Toto followed and lay down beside her. (Baum, 1900/1958, p. 4)

Within any map legend, we are shown the availability of roads. Those roads well traveled are relegated the color of red, while those less traveled are symbolized through the use of the color blue. While certainly, travel upon the red roads is safer, the blue roads beckon as Least-Heat Moon (1982) notes:

On the old highway maps of America, the main routes were red and the back roads blue. Now even the colors are changing. But in those brevities just before dawn and a little after dusk—times neither day or night—the old roads return to the sky some of its color. Then, in truth, they carry a mysterious cast of blue, and it's that time when the pull of the blue highway is strongest, when the open road is a beckoning, a strangeness, a place where a man can lose himself. (p. 1)

I had been “asleep” within myself for a long time, only dreaming of my blue roads. With the presence, however, of animals, I begin to connect once again within “the blue roads” of Beston’s words, the sense of the commonality of self, animal, and place. The irrefutable connections of these three concepts are paramount in the opening to animals as teachers and healers.

A Place to Turn in the Road: In-Sightful Terrain

“This will serve me a lesson,” said he [the Tin Woodsman], “to look where I step. For I should kill another bug or beetle I should surely cry again, and crying rusts my jaws so I cannot speak.” (Baum, 1900/1958, p. 38)

Insight leads to a “seeing-inward,” a greater understanding. An insight is a re-turning inward in the journey of the self. An insight occurs through a point of connection of meaning.

Insight is more than the knowledge of this or that situation. It always involves an escape from something that had deceived us and held us captive. Thus insight always involves an element of self-knowledge and constitutes a

necessary side of what we called experience in the proper sense. Insight is something we come to. It too is ultimately the vocation of man. (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 356)

An insight provides a sense of direction at the crossroads of the journey. A crossroad is a meeting of roads but also infers a place of meeting. A crossroad allows for a decision.

First Crossroads

“Perhaps you have heart disease (dis-ease),” said the Tin Woodman. “It may be,” said the Lion. “If you have,” continued the Tin Woodman, “you ought to be glad, for it proves you have a heart. For my part, I have no heart; so, I cannot have heart disease.” “Perhaps,” said the Lion thoughtfully, “if I had no heart I should not be a coward.” (Baum, 1900/1958, p. 36)

No matter how busy he [Jumping Mouse] was, he would still hear the sound. He tried to pretend that it had disappeared. But even when he tried not to hear it, he knew it was still there! (Storm, 1972, p. 68)

Within my journey an opening to a life experience provides initial points of connection. Consider the following story....

The rabbit lay wounded upon the road, flailing and attempting to move legs that once provided him with quickness. Now, the legs were useless. With every movement of his upper body, the rabbit sought safety. The cars continued to drive by, seemingly unaware of the rabbit’s plight. I wondered, “How can they not see this animal?...Why do they not care?” Turning my car around, I quickly returned to the rabbit. With the advent of my approach, the rabbit became still, turning its head to gaze in my direction seemingly all pain “forgotten” in light of my presence. Reaching for the rabbit, I picked him up, his eyes met my eyes. Within those eyes, I sensed the wisdom of a million lifetimes, a knowing, and a peace, which I had not felt within my own life for a long time.

Picking the rabbit up, I cradled the dangling useless legs. The upper limbs moments ago struggling for safety had become still as well. The only visual movement of life came from the eyes that followed my every action and the twitch of a nose seeking to “know” me through my scent. I sought a haven of safety for the rabbit, finding a place concealed with long grass. The grass in other times, perhaps, would have provided a home for the rabbit. A home, indeed, a place of return, a port of safety. Gently laying him on the grass, he continued to follow me with his eyes and nose. I knew he sensed my departure from him. (Personal Journal)

This sense of “unsightedness” is eloquently portrayed within the Poem

Destinations by May Sarton:

Destinations

Every day we meet these bodies on the road,
The torn-up porcupines like tanks exploded,
The battered cats, dogs, raccoons, dead.
Every road we take is normally bloodied,
Bodies the usual, like thrown-out beer cans,
Or cars abandoned in the fields to rust.
Only these animals were never machines.
It hurts to think of so much living lost,
Of where they wanted to go and never got to,
Of the brute man who killed them for no reason
Simply because he saw no reason not to,
And kills on every day in every season,
And will not look at what he is doing,
To love, himself, or the starving nations,
Slow down and think, consider destinations.
Destructive man, poor rat, just keeps going.
(Sarton, 1993, p. 513)

As I returned to my car and left, I was filled with a myriad of questions as well as sorrow and remorse. The further I drove away, the more a sense of distress and anger emerged within me, anger directed at myself for not having the courage (rationalized by a lack of time) to stay with the rabbit, be-along-side of him, bear witness to his pain and suffering, provide a presence as he made a transition from one life to another mode of being and spirit. Yes, I had cared for him, by providing at least momentary comfort and a place of safety, but how had I not cared for him?

A startling realization emerged from within myself. I had chosen not to bear witness to the pain and suffering of the rabbit, because he mirrored my own sense of pain, suffering, and loss. Ted Andrews (1999) relates, “All animals are gateways to the

world of the human spirit. People frequently fail to recognize that the way they think of animals reflects the way they perceive themselves” (p. 32).

McElroy (1998a) describes a dream in which the images of a small black dog’s injuries mirror her own sense of broken structure. She relates, “As I sought food for sustenance for a broken heart, his dream presence in front of me reminded me of the sacrifice necessary for growth, redirecting toward the inner animal doctor, the source of instinctual wisdom” (p. 174). How do we come to recognize the identity of animals within our lives?

In my own experience, the rabbit’s physical loss of the ability to move within his world spoke of my own sense of stuckness and stagnation, feelings of entrapment. My entrapment was within the discipline of nursing that for me had no further meaning, having been transformed and translated into a set of psychomotor skills, a technical trade. Nursing was a mode of doing rather than being. I dwelled within what Grumet (1988) describes as the “presence of the absent curriculum” (p. xiii), lacking the ground upon which I had previously stood to come to know myself and the world around me as a living curriculum. I struggled to find firm footing within the discipline of nursing. Instead, I found only “a temporary settlement between the life I was leading and the life I was capable of” (Grumet, 1988, p. xiii).

I was fragmented and incomplete. It was this sense of incompleteness, the open question, that summoned me to the task of knowledge and action, the quest for meaning-making or actively inserting my own perception into the lived world (Greene, 1995a). I was, like Dorothy from *The Wizard of Oz*, an orphan, a being who struggled to negotiate an identity within a world where there are many orphans (West,

1998). By recognizing my absence of self, I also returned to my presence, for as O'Donohue (1999) notes, "Absence and presence or a longing desire to seek and find the absent one exist together" (p. 73).

I, too, had lost my ability to run from myself. I had be-come like Persephone, trapped within the underworld of nurse education. Nurse education was no longer a pedagogy based upon caring, but rather a technology of nurse education. Bishop and Scudder (1991) describe this chasm as one of interpretation in which "to call a practice based upon technology as caring is a falsehood" (p. 49).

I had reached the edge of the abyss. An abyss as written by Heidegger (1971) is "where the ground falls away and is lacking to us" (p. 191). I was in grave danger of falling further into the underworld. I suddenly realized that at the time in which my fall would occur, there was a sense of no re-turning to an epistemology with which I was at home. The rabbit, however, offered a sense of a re-turning. In re-turning to the rabbit, I re-turned to myself.

The rabbit had given of himself to me, becoming my mirror. Within the mirror an opposite image is portrayed. The image in the mirror is reflected as the Other, a distinct being possessing a separate ontology. According to Levinas (2001), "The absolutely other is Other" (p. 39). The rabbit emerged like a mirage to transform into a pomegranate seed, a travel guide of re-turning to Self through the Other. Even now, I reflect on my position, as it were within nursing—truly a middle of the road approach—much like the position of the rabbit. I "walked the talk of a technical model," but this was a foreign language in a foreign land. I was no better than a tourist, an "accidental," and a nomad.

Within the eyes of the rabbit was reflected my own pain. When we look into another's eyes—even into the eyes of an animal, the mirror image is both blinding and revealing. Perhaps it can be said exiles hail one another by seeing their reflections in the other's eyes. As I write these words, I am confronted with another mirror image of the Evil Queen within the fairy tale of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. As the Queen asked, "Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who is the fairest of us all?" I, too, had questioned my own fairness preferring, like the Queen, to dwell in an image of illusion and self-denial.

This "illusion of self-delusion" is inherent when a practice like nursing, that maintains a dominant moral sense of caring, evolves as mis-founded. According to Gadamer (1976/1981), a practice in addition to having a moral sense, also provides a sense of identity to practitioners. This delusion in nurse education is supported not only by a loss of self but a falseness found in a power-over mode of dwelling, where nurturance is spoken with foreign tongues and altered meanings. I could not speak within the sterility and bleakness of the language of nursing, for the words held no meaning. By continuing to deny myself and my origins, I risked a true loss of soul in all facets and aspects of my life. I knew when I looked into the mirror, I no longer recognized the image of the person before me; instead, I caught a fleeting glimpse of a part of a person who seemed small and distant and now stood mute. I had become like Narcissus, enticed by my own image. Contrary to the popular belief of gazing upon the self as narcissistic self-esteem, this gaze portrayed my own loss of attachment and disruption. This image within the reflection was not of my own creation, but rather an image resultant of a false environment (Grumet, 1988). My voice was that of Echo, a

voice of muteness, able only of repeating nursings' foreign tongue and language. A fundamental question emerged, "Who am I? What is my being in the world?"

Many other questions poured forth through an opening within myself long concealed and locked. What does it mean to care? Is it a doing for others, or, rather a doing with others? Does care take away independent thought and power? In my remise of caring, I found that the rabbit, indeed, had cared for me. Through his caring and presencing of self, he provided a teaching, a showing of self. In essence, he had provided me with a place, a place within a foreign land.

I had lost the essence of nursing, caring. I no longer, perhaps, knew how to care for myself, let alone others within my world. But what had the rabbit given to me in return? What was his reciprocal caring? When did the rabbit emerge as a caregiver and teacher? What are the boundaries of being a caregiver? Or are there boundaries within caregiving? What knowing emerged from the depth of his eyes? I wondered about my re-sponse to his teaching. What foundational epistemology was present? What had I found in his eyes that were missing and vacant within my own? Had my soul found the home, the attachment it yearned for? How, I questioned myself, had I wandered so very far away from home, my haven of safety, my esoterical home of self and place within the world?

A Re-turn to Crossroads

"You people with hearts," he [the Tin Woodman] said, "have something to guide you, and need never do anything wrong; but I have no heart, and must be very careful. When Oz gives me a heart of course, I need not mind so much."
(Baum, 1900/1958, p. 38)

Jumping Mouse settled quietly [once again] into life in the Mouse Village. For a while that is. Then there came a day he knew he must leave. (Storm, 1972, p. 70)

To continue a conversation of interpretive mirrors, I must pause once again to consider those mirrors within my own autobiography. Stories are embedded, alive, possess fluidity and radiate a dynamic attraction. The living body readily incorporates a story, “appropriating each event or episode as a variation of its own unfolding” (Abram, 1996, p. 120). In reflecting backward, I realize the lesson of the rabbit was truly a mirror of my own sense of lostness within the world. The rabbit was a reflection of a lost epistemology of the dynamics of the wilderness of place and the wildness of self.

I embody the story of the wilderness and the wild.

Upon traveling down a busy road, I was met by the passing of a deer, who, in attempting to cross the highway, had been struck by a car. Already on the scene, to the “rescue” were two men, pulling the deer from the road to the side for safety. Like the rabbit, the deer’s hind legs angled contorted and useless as she struggled to right herself once again on only two front legs. The struggle was futile as she struggled time and time again to stand. Getting out of the car, I attempted to approach the two men and the wounded deer until I saw a knife emerge from its area of concealment, the pocket of one of the “rescuers.” The rescuers were surely ending the suffering to which I was a witness. Yes, I had progressed along a continuum to being a witness to the transition of another being into death. Physically there was nothing to do but watch. Out of fear, fear of chastising, I did not approach, only stood at a distance. However, I knew I was there to learn and witness. In starting to turn away from the deer, I was captured by the final glimpse within this being’s eyes. The depths of those eyes transfixed me. The eyes looked past my outer body to the depths of my spirit, to a place within my essence long lost and hidden. As the eyes held me spellbound, the deer called and bleated to me. Then silence occurred. This voice still echoes in my ears. (Personal Journal)

This is a prime example of my opening to perceptual reciprocity. As I listened to the deer, I felt myself being listened to by the deer. Gazing into the eyes of the deer, I had the experience of being gazed at by the deer. To be intent upon the act of silencing the

deer's voice, my own throat was cut, initiating my muteness. Askins (1998) ponders this sense of the mysteriousness of connection:

Something mysterious happens to us when we hear the howl of a wolf or look into the eyes of a wolf. Something familiar is calling back to us, or looking back at us. Ourselves? Yes, but we also see another. We see something that is in us, and yet outside us, something we know, but perhaps lost, something we hear, but are drawn to. (p. 377)

The text of the deer becomes conjoined or brought together on this outward surface, forging as Abram (1996) describes, into a “new linkage that ensures that a phenomenon, apprehended by one sense is instantly transposed unto the other” (p. 124). “To directly perceive any phenomenon is to enter into relations with it, to feel oneself in a living interaction with another being” (Abram, p. 117). The deer was my guide over the crossroads of self. Through the physical lesson, as it were, of literally crossing over the road, the deer sought to transform through this lesson. The questions opened by the rabbit began to take shape in the clarity of form. The rabbit's murmurings emerged into my native tongue. Whereas the silence of the rabbit was deafening, the deer provided a much-needed voice, hearkening to a call for all animals. I fundamentally began to realize that through the telling of their stories, I was revealing my own autobiography.

A Final Crossroad

Jumping Mouse stood on the edge of the Mouse Village and took one long look back at the only life he had ever known. He sat listening to the sound and knew that no longer could he be content to just listen. It was time to discover more about this sound. He turned to face another direction. (Storm, 1972, p. 70)

The final crossroads emerged and shattered the very depths of my own soul. This final question emerged within me, “How many times would I be given the lesson

of a true mirror of interpretation?” How many more experiences would speak to my own sense of futility within my world and myself? How long would I close my eyes and deafen my ears to my own pleas of self-rescue?

It was a few months later when the answer was provided to me through the death of my companion animal, Angel Marie. With her physical death, her greatest gift to me was to witness this passing, through which came the most intense lostness and sense of abandonment. As I held her close, I truly bore witness to her passage. As I held my hand over her heart, I was struck by a sense of connection as I willed my own heartbeat into her faltering rhythm. At that moment I would have given anything I was capable of giving to sustain Angel and care for her. But my efforts were met by a silence. From within the silence, a new language was created, a language of the heart. With Angel Marie’s passage came this abandonment of the old Self. The experience was such of the ancient animal rite of transmutation, a deep transformation and transfiguration of the self. The voice of Levin (1985) foretells of my metamorphosis:

As we begin to feel the call in our body of pre-understandings, as we begin to sense the significance of our attunement, the ontical fact of our belongingness-to-the-field becomes an ontological question that cannot be avoided; and our very existence becomes the answer. Our decision is how we live: how we are moved to comport ourselves, how we bear witness to that which has moved us, the kind of stand we take, and the various postures and positions by which we continually manifest what we have understood of the attunement. (p. 103)

Be-ing at the Center of the Crossroads

With the physical death of Angel Marie, I realized a true surrendering of the Self. Angel, through her presence, be-came transformed into my midwife as I struggled to give birth to myself and simply learn to be with the pain and suffering. At other previous crossroads, I had either run from suffering or I dwelled along side of

the suffering I witnessed, but never truly embodied the suffering as my own. It was not until I sensed this suffering within the roar of the silence of my ears or the blindedness of my sight that I truly gave birth to myself.

I saw that the exterior terrain of my world mirrored my interior ground (Koerner, 2003). I realized that in order to “be-come,” I desperately needed to “be” and embrace the silence within my very being. I was thrust into a terrain of strangeness, yet a terrain embraced by some previous acknowledgement or recognition. I began to catch glimpses of this stranger with traces of remnants of myself. The murmurings of voices became my own voice. I found myself staring into the eyes of Angel Marie and seeing myself reflected back within them. Angel transformed me through her teachings.

Standing once again at the edge of this abyss, I face the choice to fall within this environment of sterility or the choice to finally heed the hearkening of the voices provided to me. I had experienced throughout my journey, as Heidegger (1953/1996) maintains, “a falling prey, *Verfallen*, an alienation that closed myself off from authenticity and possibility” (pp. 166-167). I choose to heed the voice calling me to find my wilderness epistemology and myself once again. It is within this acceptance of my chosen path that full disclosure of Self emerges. There is a stripping away, a notion of nakedness.

In essence, I became vulnerable. As Lashley (1994) notes, “A vulnerability is experienced as the self is faced with uncertainty” (p. 42). Vulnerability is a necessary nakedness of being called to care. Vulnerability commences as an ontological question of disclosure and spirals back to reveal the new skin of the Self. With the sense of

being vulnerable comes, as well, a sense of detachment and being an orphan. An orphan often will seek her birthrights of time, place, and parentage in order to form new connections.

What are my ancient points of connection within the world? What can I uncover or un-map through recollection of myself? What map legends emerge for me within this wilderness epistemology?

Map Legends: Compass Roses

Upon ancient maps, a compass rose provided the viewer or traveler with a sense of true north. Within my own reflection, I seek my true north within my world. As a child, my true north was brought forth within nature. A naturalist is one who studies place and nature within this place. To the naturalist, there is a sense of place and being in-place. I long to be-come once again a naturalist, one at home with nature. It is through the perception of the naturalist, the language of sight, sound, and touch, that one comes to know nature. As Terry Tempest Williams (1994) maintains, “For a naturalist, traveling into unfamiliar territory is like turning a kaleidoscope ninety degrees. Suddenly, the colors and pieces of glass find a fresh arrangement. The light shifts, and you enter a new landscape in search of the order you know to be there” (p. 1). It is within this order that a knowing emerges and takes form.

As the horizon provides a fixed point of connection for the traveler, the earth and the sky provide my true north. Sirius, the Dog Star, is the brightest star to be noted within the sky. The Dog Star in ancient times was used as a point of navigation and location, synonymous with the currently used Polaris or North Star. My point of

connection is Sirius, my North Star, a fixed point on my horizon of understanding. The North Star always can be used to figure out where one is traveling (Beck, 2001).

It is interesting to note that Sirius has a companion star, Sirius B, affectionately known as the Pup. Astrologers believe that the brightness of Sirius is attributable to the care-giving, if you will, of its companion star. Astrologers have come to realize or know that the Pup gives star materials to Sirius to complement its brightness and insure Sirius's title of the brightest star in the night. Once again I reflect upon my companion animals, whose giving of their own brilliance has caused me to shine to my brighter capacity.

This story of the true north of the North Star opens other compass roses of family, geography, place, home and myth and the directional guides these stories have elicited within me. As I re-enter these map legends of compass roses, I ponder their meanings, noting the location of the north stars within.

Family Legends

A family is our first map of the world.
(Napier, 1993, p. 144)

Family portraits contemplate an image of intimacy. Through this intimacy or closeness, we intimate or "hint at" our very notions of be-coming human. Quite literally, we are re-produced. The family becomes our earliest form of text, an open picture book of portraits and relationships. Grumet (1988) maintains that these initial parent/child relationships mold male and female epistemologies, reflective of the openness to future texts within our world. "Curriculum becomes a way of contradicting biology and ideology" (Grumet, 1988, p. 8). These foundational texts for me would reflect the pillars of my questioning of the place of companion animals

within my life and my path of nurse education. The following story illustrates some family connections.

Bobtail's story. There is favorite family story of my father, who at the age of ten years, encountered and tread upon his own quest to pursue veterinary medicine, or perhaps it may have been described as plastic surgery. My father, raised upon a farm certainly viewed animals through the lens of service, a facet perhaps he attempts to modify. There was a puppy on the farm with an exceptionally long tail. My father, along with his eight-year-old brother, felt that they wanted to have a dog with a shorter tail. Without thinking of consequences or infliction of pain, my father and my uncle quickly came to the determination that this procedure could be done with the assistance of an axe. With my uncle holding the puppy, my father swung the axe, creating a short tailed dog. Panicking after cutting a bit too much of the tail off, my father and uncle ran for my grandmother, requesting mercurochrome, a topical medicinal. Upon questioning the need for such medicine, my grandmother was horrified to learn of the puppy's tail or lack thereof. My grandmother was quickly called into service for her great nursing ability.

As my father relates, "We didn't know what we were doing, only that we wanted a short-tailed dog. When the stump was healed and Bobtail wagged his tail, his entire hind end moved...that was how close we had gotten..." My mother adds to the story, "You always did love animals" [to my father] and then directed toward me is the final ending sentence to this tale, "You are an animal lover just like your father."

Pondering this story once again, I am struck by the analogies created between my sense of caring and the "caring" projected from within my father's story. At first

glance, this story emerges as one embodying elements of “not caring.” Questions surfaced within me. Is caring a fixing, or rather an acceptance of original being in the face of the Other? How does caring embrace the precipice of alterity, “the radical heterogeneity of the other” (Levinas, 2001, p. 36)? As will be noted later within the compass rose of family and gender, I sense the notion once again of a more subtle connection, perhaps, to masculine forms of caring within my life. Only within recent years, was I able to connect once again with a slightly different version of this story and perhaps the hidden universality of the tale. A friend relates the belief among the Native American tribes of cutting off a dog’s tail as a means of caring. According the belief, the tail is removed and buried to keep the dog within running distance of its birthplace or home. As the legend goes, this belief keeps the dog safe from harm and within the protection of home. Once more I ponder the hidden meaning of what it means to care.

Positionality. Mirrors allow one to see one’s relative place and space. In the act of looking at oneself, there is a turning to face the mirror. Reminiscing and remembering childhood has provided me with a nostalgic look backward. The word nostalgia derives from the Greek word, *nostos*, to return home, and *algos*, pain (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999, p. 1236). I am the eldest and only daughter of a working-class family.

I am the first in many things within my family: the first child after ten years of marriage, the first grandchild to both sets of grandparents, and the first niece. I was the focus of everyone’s attention. I later became the first person ever in my family to go on to college and obtain a degree. I later became the first to become divorced, the

first to be married and divorced twice, thus, the first to have to change surnames three times, and the first to be a single parent. The vantage point of being first allows clarity of vision, but perhaps not clarity of understanding. In hindsight, this notion of unencumbered vision or not wearing blinders actually allowed a greater sense of personhood to emerge. However, many times I felt, like the misbegotten zygote of *The Ugly Duckling* (Anderson, 1979), an orphan, an abandoned child.

A child lost, though on the margins, allows for clarity of vision on the periphery, allowing a looking back as well as forward. While certainly never lacking for human attention, I now reflect on the companionship I sought as a child from not only the family dog, but also the animals present within my home space. Perhaps feeling like the misbegotten zygote, I felt more of a sense of belonging to the four-legged animal kingdom.

Gender. I wore the shoes of only-childhood until almost my twelfth birthday when I was greeted by a younger sibling, my only sibling, my brother. My shoes of being the only child no longer fit, and I struggled to maintain a space and place within the family. In an effort to insure my status as the first child and insure fit of my shoes, I quickly learned to care for my brother. I was quick to please my parents by folding diapers and offering baby-sitting services.

One day, my father jokingly complained about my long, waist-length hair being in my eyes and my baby brother's hands: "You look like a sheep dog!" At the age of thirteen years, I cut my hair with scissors to shoulder length. My father's expression was one of disdain, rather than pleasure and approval, as I had anticipated. I cried and cried that evening over the loss of my hair and my father's approval.

Suddenly, as I write, I recall an image of a character, Jo March, from the book, *Little Women*. Jo, too, had cut her hair in order to sacrifice for the family. My misguided sacrifice, as well, had sought to sustain the family. Once again, I reflect upon the manners in which my gender aligned me with my notions of my father's approval, an epistemology founded within gender.

Catholicism. The very geographical location of my home created a space for the experience of formal religion. My hometown, after all, was the site of the saintly work of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. I attended a Catholic grade school, Mother Seton School, for eight years. Within the school, I learned to become more like her, quiet, pious, and anonymous. The nuns who taught me were the epiphany of her existence, having started their order through her. Everywhere I turned, there was evidence of this saint. As a child growing up within Catholicism, I was enticed by lives of the saints, the everyday stories of the everyday person taken to loftier heights through the performance of extra-ordinary deeds and ways of being. Saints offered me a blessing, a way of being, a being to emulate and imitate. However, as Radnour (2000) contemplates, the sense of blessing or grace can be transformed or mutated into an unknown form. What was a blessing or grace within religion? Where were the animals? I continue to ponder and muse over my confusion of the lack of animal saint representation within my religion.

The private, spiritual spaces of my being were made public, by my constant adornment of my rosary at my side, much like the scarlet letter of Hester Prinn. In school I was called "goody two shoes" by my classmates (always helping the teacher, clapping erasers after school everyday, putting glitter on her projects –while they only

had colored theirs with crayons). Over the years of grade school an insidious shyness developed, causing me to call less attention to myself, preferring to fade into the scenery, as it were. Perhaps it was to exorcise myself of my baptismal name of “Saint Goody-Two-Shoes,” that I chose no longer to participate in class and only assisted the nuns when directly asked to, or having to, in the case of being assigned to a task. Animosity became both a burden and a blessing, for in Catholic school one’s true name only is known in the case of extreme piousness or perversity. Once again, having lost my sense of animal spirituality to a formal religion, my face was one among many, a faceless stranger, and my voice was muted.

Catholicism, as well, provided a forced chasm of perception regarding animals. As Bible verses were expressed and reinforced, the hierarchical positioning of animals below that of humans took on a false image within myself. To this day, I can never figure out the ceremony, Blessing of the Animals, held on the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi as animals were never included within the church, even on this day of blessing. Like myself banished to the periphery, I began to choose the Scarlet “A” for animals, and be banished like Hester Prinn of *The Scarlet Letter*, to the world of nature, outside places, and animals.

Legendary Places

My story opens to reveal a vertical travel guide or road map. The retracing of my steps within a place elicits a sense of finding my way, a guide (Casey, 1993). A travel guide may be described as a map for sightseeing. As Green (1978) would allude, a travel guide provides an “alternate reality” for an entry point into one’s everydayness (p. 94).

An entrance into Kansas. As Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, I travel, following the scent of my story within the metaphorical realms of a land called Kansas. Kansas reveals itself to me through its essence of a place of tensional borders. Kansas reigns as a land of not only displacement, but of belonging as well. Kansas emerges as home. A home is eloquently described by O'Donohue (1999):

A home is a place where sets of different destinies begin to articulate and define themselves. It is the cradle of one's future. Home is the place where the stranger arrives, the place where you see things for the first time...Home is where you belong. It is your shelter and place of rest, the place where you can be yourself. (pp. 31-32)

Kansas is a geographical point of reference. Perhaps it is by no coincidence that Kansas physically contains the geographical center of the Nation (Least Heat-Moon, 1991). How do I enter into my own geographical center? How is my geographical center my soul? Who resides with me in this place called Kansas? My geography becomes my autobiography. Kingsolver (1995) entertains this notion of autobiography, "And yet I never cease to long in my bones for what I left behind" (p. 6).

A Kansas geography. My first anchorage or place connection is one of a small rural town within the mountains of Western Maryland. My immediate community was one that had always been home to my parents and grandparents for many years. Thus, upon my entry into this community, many "parents" extending far back from my own immediate family greeted me. This community of parents created a safe haven to be as a child. However, at the same time, these many pairs of eyes soon became a burden in that no action was left unseen. The eyes became my jailer.

My town was composed of two major intersecting streets, bound together and controlled by a single traffic light within the town square. To the south and east of my town was open farmland. To follow the one main street westward provided one with the opportunity to enter into the mountains at a higher elevation. The mountains surrounded my views, creating a point of focus and direction. The mountains became a point on my horizon, a connector for me to the land.

Northward, as well as westward, within the sparse space of a few moments, one easily transverses the boundaries between states, entering the state of Pennsylvania. Somehow, Pennsylvania was entered into with a sense of a different world; for once this boundary was crossed, the north was entered. Despite Maryland's historical stance of border state during the Civil War, I always sensed a notion of being more southern than northern. For in the south, children were seen and not heard, especially female children.

Reflections of a Kansas home. Home is different from geography. Geography assumes a relative position in space, while home is a position in place. While certainly travel invokes a sense of the discovery of the unknown, the paradox remains that when we travel, we yearn to return home. Within our spirits and souls, a part of home never leaves us. Like the homing pigeons, once set free upon a journey, we ultimately return to home.

What is homing? It is the instinct to return, to go to the place we remember. It is the ability to find, whether in dark or in daylight, one's home place. We all know how to return home. No matter how long it's been, we find our way. We go through the night, over strange land, through tribes of strangers, without maps and asking of the old personages we meet along the road, "What is the way?" The exact answer to "Where is home?" is more complex...but in some way it is an internal place, a place somewhere in time, rather than space, where a woman feels of one piece. (Estes, 1995, p. 283)

My family certainly would never be described as nomads, having put such deep roots into the soil of this small town. Indeed, they always seemed to belong to this small rural town. In fact, quite ironically, the roots of my maternal grandparents' tree did not have to go very far before they once again sprouted another seedling. This other or new seedling was my home place, a small three bedroom bungalow-style home with a screened in front porch, located one house away from the home of my maternal grandparents.

Fourteen years of my childhood were spent in this home place. The porch was the *in-between* area of the house, serving as a safe base during childhood games and a border crossing between the inner world of home and the outer world of nature. The house was located on one of four intersecting main streets. We were described as living on the periphery of town, three blocks from the intersection of those four streets, commonly called the town square. Living outside of the town square perhaps allowed for the creation of a different shape of being, be-coming a circle, a circle ever-widening to encompass all spaces and places.

While the front yard of my house was small, the back yard proved in my eyes as a child to be massive and alive with the possibility of adventure. The eastern boundary of the backyard was bordered by a seven-foot picket fence. Other directional boundaries were not defined clearly, with one yard extending and blending into another, separated only by flowerbeds and gardens, easily jumped without effort. I became a pilgrim, an adventurer. I could easily transverse all worlds. After all, no eyes were concerned with me in the back yard.

At its southernmost border, the backyard continued to the outer reaches of a small meandering creek, teeming with creatures of many sorts: crayfish, minnows, tadpoles, and water bugs or “skippers,” as I named them. Donning boots, I stood inspecting this aquatic world, always aware of the rushing of the water in the same direction and the ever-changing and ever-constant life within my view beneath this water. Following the creek would lead, I knew, to another special place of a small bridge that opened at the far end of town. I became the troll under the bridge from the fairy tale of the Three Billy Goats Gruff, eliciting tokens of passage from the cars that infrequently traveled upon this bridge. Again, the bridge offered concealment for me.

Also present within the yard was a massive walnut tree and two large, spreading forsythia bushes. The walnut tree was too tall, even standing upon the seven-foot fence for entry. However, the forsythia bushes gathered me in, as a haven for the creation of a “home,” complete with “rooms” located around its circular base, the kitchen equipped with discarded ham bones which served as stove top burners. “Food” for my cooking ventures came from the fields surrounding the creek, with Queen Anne’s Lace providing the “cauliflower.” This sense of inclusion, or gathering in, fed my soul and opened me to the magical realms within nature. The land became the nourishment that fed a growing child’s imagination into the possibilities of the world around her. In the land I was not only seen, but also possessing of a voice. This voice was heard in the interior of my imagination.

Thus, when I recall my childhood home, it is the outdoors, the land of my yard, which clearly provides my re-membering. I recall the timelessness spent in the out-of-doors. As a child, I treasured the connections to the land, the caring for the land as the

mythical archetype, Demeter. Like Demeter, I extended my pomegranate seeds to Persephone for collection and saving. Other childhood pomegranate seeds of connection for me became countless, long hours digging in dirt; collecting and planting seeds; adding to my rock collection; assisting my paternal grandfather on his farm with the cattle; and hanging out in haylofts on my grandfather's farm. Animals were an integral part of my existence, with numerous dogs, cats, store-bought turtles (upon which I painted), and Easter chicks (who eventually found a home on my grandfather's farm) constantly emerging within my family tree. From these companion animals a sense of belonging was fostered, as I was welcomed into the "litter" as it were. As Midkiff (2001) notes, "A horse's acceptance remains one of my earliest memories of belonging. While I struggled to find who I was and would be as a person, horses gave me my first intimation of what acceptance and belonging would feel like" (p. 13).

From all of my grandparents I learned to care for the land and watch it return things to me. After all, I was so very much like my maternal grandmother, possessing the magic to "make a dead stick grow." To prove this, I was given a special garden spot in my backyard, ironically on the dark side of the house. Lovingly I tended this garden, hoping to create further pomegranate seeds. My pomegranate seeds were indeed magical, and I planted them along the periphery of my outside world. This outside world was my teacher. I belonged to it and it to me:

But perhaps we may make our stand along the edge of civilization, like a magician, or like a person who, having lived among another tribe, can no longer wholly return to his own. He lingers half within and half outside of his community, open as well then, to the shifting voices and flapping forms that crawl and hover beyond the mirrored walls of the city. And even there, moving along those walls, he may hope to find the precise clues to the mystery of how

those walls were erected, and how a simple boundary became a barrier, only if the moment is timely—only that is, if the margin he frequents is a temporal as well as a spatial edge, and the temporal structure that it bounds is about to dissolve, or metamorphose, into something else. (Abram, 1996, pp. 28-29)

The magic of my pomegranate seeds metamorphosed me into myself.

Myths and Legends

The concept of place is paramount within my mythic legend. Place is regarded as both geography (the beings of this space) and geographical location as well. We are the creation of the world within which we dwell. However, authentically I find myself embodied within the goddess Artemis. Bolen (1984) contends, “...the mid-life of an Artemis woman may also usher in a more reflective time as she turns inward...on the journey she confronts ‘ghosts’ from her past, often discovering long ignored feelings and yearnings” (p. 65). What longings do I embody?

It could be said that Artemis is the goddess of the in-between spaces and places. Artemis is seen as the guardian or mistress of birth. During the process of birth, one transitions from the inside to the outside world. Birth is the process of being in the in-between spaces. Like Demeter and Persephone whom I embody archetypically as well, Artemis provides my in-between connection to the outer world to which I belong. As Downey (1996) describes, “Though Artemis is a skillful and compassionate midwife, in her realm childbirth is always painful and difficult and always accompanied by the threat of death” (p. 161). In my adult years I struggle to re-unite myself with Artemis, by giving birth to my Self once again. I struggle with the in-between spaces of realization of selfhood. As May Sarton (1973) states, “I feel like a river when the tide changes and for a while the waters flow in crosscurrent, with no

direction, only a pulling from all sides” (p. 129). Again, I identify with the tornado that had set Dorothy into such a spin and turmoil.

Like Artemis, I am longing to return to a place and space that is reminiscent of a return to nature and to an identity self-determined. As a child, I was like Artemis, finding joy and passion within the out-of-doors among the wild. However, Woolger and Woolger (1989) describe Artemis as a displaced goddess in a modern world where materials and cities reign supreme. Artemis suffers the pain of alienation. Artemis is described as the goddess of wild nature, the protector of animals, and the fosterer of the growth of young children.

Artemis is bestowed with the title, Mistress of Animals; however, she is not merely the mistress, but rather the wilderness itself. Artemis frequently is seen holding four-footed animals or birds in paintings. The name Artemis means “bear,” which promotes further connection to the wisdom of wildness. My turning toward this relationship with animals within my space creates a sense of at-homeness for me. This at-homeness is facilitated by a knowing for Artemis, described by Downey (1996) as, “the one who knows each tree by its bark or leaf or fruit, each beast by its footprint or spoor, each bird by its plumage or call or nest” (p. 167). In essence, this type of knowing leads Artemis to the declaration of every living creature as a “Thou” not an it. Therefore, Artemis evolves as an “anima figure,” or what Hillman (1973) describes as the giver or bestower of the elements of soul. As Downey (1996) states, “Soul-making is not confined to the making simply of our own soul, but rather to the re-discovery of the world within which we live as a realm of souls, of living, meaningful-in-themselves, beings” (p. 167). This recognition of the inherent equality and

worth of all beings in the world, causes the Artemis woman to reject a patriarchal regime of power-over, the current educational paradigm in which I felt so dislodged and displaced.

Early Animal Legends: Looking into Ant Places

I never owned an ant farm. I recall a toy called Uncle Milton's Ant Farm—closed in spaces—a micro cosmos in full view of the world and others within that world—no action left unseen. Perhaps it was something about sending off through the mail for creatures so ready-at-hand within my present world. Somehow, perhaps, I equated this toy with my existence within a small rural town in western Maryland, where you had not one set of parents but a whole community of “parents.” Countless hours were spent in watching the ants. The word, ant, originally was “*emmet*” (Ayto, 1990, p. 27). Perhaps even the word, ant or emmet, provided a place for me to begin, having been born into a community named Emmitsburg, originally spelled, Emmetsburg. Etymologically, the word ant derives from the Old English, *awmette*, and the Germanic compound, *animaijon*, that which cuts or bites off. In the act of cutting or biting off, a place is carved for us or chiseled out for us. Indeed, the modern verb in the German language, *meissen*, to chisel or carve derives from the language from which ant derives! How had ants carved a place for me to be in the world? It was not only through the endless hours of watching, but through the creation of an ant hospital that I was provided with my sense of the care-giving of animals.

Present in the back yard, not far in distance from the house, was a freestanding structure of a garage. The garage was a simple wooden structure, large enough to enclose only one car. Lack of garage doors invited me into this dwelling at all times.

The garage stood as a giant beacon, offering safety and a dry play area in the out-of-doors. The garage offered its arms for concealment as well, away from the prying eyes of my parents. The garage was composed of two long wooden shelves on either side of the parallel walls, just high enough for my height of middle childhood.

The two shelves of this garage provided the space for my ant hospital. Despite my hesitation to pursue a career of distanced involvement with the little creatures, they became one of many beings to entice me in the years prior to my adolescence. The garage and the connecting backyard provided everything I required for the running of my hospital: grass for “patient” bedding (changed daily), tiny crumbs of vegetation to serve as food, mud for the casting of broken legs, string for suspended swings to meet recreational needs, discarded bones that functioned as hydrotherapy pools, stones for playgrounds, and most importantly, the yard provided discarded Popsicle sticks from the ice cream man. These Popsicle sticks served a two-fold function: as ambulances for transportation, to and from the “facility,” and as a source of eager and ready “patients.”

The ant hospital was made up of two areas: the inpatient and intake area on the right where grass beds were located, and the rehabilitation arena on the left, outfitted with hydrotherapy pool, gym, and casting areas. Treatments were not always successful with mud meant for the casting of only one limb; frequently they enveloped the entire “patient,” or the “patient” was left too long in the hydrotherapy pool. In my eyes as a child, I saw nothing wrong with this practice; after all, I would surely be able to save them. Had not I been taught that I had dominion over the non-human world in my religion classes? Thus, I was both the caregiver as well as the careless.

The sidewalks were studded with cracks. From these deep underground crevices poured my patients—always running, always going without any seeming purpose to their tasks. It appeared that each had a function or a job to do. Back and forth—to and fro—up and down—back and forth. I often wondered if the ants slept at night. In reflection, I now see the antics of the ants are parallel to my own scurrying within the realm of nursing. There was never a lack of patients. These sidewalks became the scenes of many “accidents.” I need only ride my bicycle up and down the street a few times (or direct my “assistant” to do so) inflicting injury, or study the sidewalk after a few children had passed. Occasionally, a tossed cigarette provided my burn victims. I showed no bias in my selection of patients—red ants, black ants; they all shared the same facilities. However, I found the red ants to be easier to work with, by virtue of their size.

When the hospital business was slow and night fell upon my heroic efforts, I designed houses for the ants upon paper, complete with mazes and numerous rooms. I wondered what life was like under the sidewalk. Many models were available, dependent upon whether or not the ant family was a wealthy one or a member of “the comfortable middle class.” What I remember most about my “ant antics” were the timeless hours where time was truly timeless and suspended. As an only child, the ants were transfigured from their insect-like state to one of “personhood.” The void felt or experienced by this only child quickly dissipated when immersed within my ant hospital.

In the mythic tale of Psyche and Eros, Psyche is given a seemingly impossible task of sorting grains into distinct piles. As a child, the ants assisted me in this task of

self-sorting. Lauck (1998) describes this myth as a rite of passage task, a push toward a newer consciousness in pursuit of wholeness. Perhaps as providing valuable lessons in caring for another, the ants pushed me onward toward what could only be described as my vocation in nursing. The ants also taught survival within the profession of nursing to me.

Within nature, “Ecotones are those places where edges fuse together, creating the soil for difference to be nurtured and change is immanent” (Krall, 1994, p. 4). Like the ecotones of Krall (1994), ants in the wild community exist on seemingly chaotic borders, the ecotone where stability of organization and chaos intersect. Living in the crevices of the sidewalks is but one example of these boundary edges. What is important to learn as Lauck (1998) reminds us, is that enough stability still exists in this region between chaos and organization. This becomes an arena for transition to alternate ways of organization and doing. Lauck (1998) notes, “It appears that optimal life is at the edge of chaos in all open complex systems, and that an ability to shift, to advance creatively, is essential for the emergence of new levels of evolution” (p. 159), even in nurse education!

An Absence of Legend: The Hall of Mirrors

The Hall of Mirrors is an amusement park attraction that seeks its fame from its existence as a narcissist maze in which only the Self is reflected. It is quite easy to get lost within the Hall of Mirrors, a glass abyss, as no other beings are able to be called forth to assist in the finding of a way of safe exit.

My initial experience within this Hall of Mirrors was my entrance through the proverbial “looking glass” as a student within nurse education. As a student within

nursing, I quickly learned not to seek ways through the mirrors, but rather ways simply around the mirrors. Pedagogies of the fragmentation of human bodily systems, standardized nursing plans of care and the technologies of lecture format where the political lines of “needing to know” versus “wanting to know” were clearly drawn. I learned the “voice of the parrot,” as it were, quickly mimicking the voices of nurse faculty within this realm of a “needing to know” epistemology.

I learned survival techniques rather quickly within both the “sense and non-sense” of nursing practice. Within this non-sense of nursing emerges a story, a critique of my ability to be a nurse as I was reprimanded for a less than perfect bed corner with the direct language of the following statement provided for my personal growth, “You will never make a good nurse if you cannot make a bed appropriately.”

For me as a nurse educator, I, too, metaphorically “find” myself lost in this maze. I wander the maze seeking the image of the Other; for the Other, the animal, provides for me a mode of being, of connection. As Grumet (1998) states, “The curriculum for me had become a distance between what we know and how we live” (p. 129). I sought to reflect my own identity within the-world as a learner as well as a teacher. Once again, I re-turned to the maze searching for that being from whom I can learn, the animal.

My passage into a foreign land has caused me, no longer, to be a pilgrim, but rather, a tourist. A tourist is one who visits a place, but never fully enters into an understanding of this space and place. Conversely, a pilgrim etymologically is “one who crosses boundaries or borders” (Ayto, 1990, p. 394). Like Annie Dillard (as cited in McClintock, 1994, p. 15), “I sought to reconcile the sometimes oppressive weight

of scientific discovery with the broader intuitions of the soul.” Schoen (2001) relates this chasm between his formal educative process and his experience of healing:

The intensive education of veterinary school helped instill in me a dogmatic thought process focused on developing a diagnosis and a therapeutic plan based on medicine and surgery...But Megan [my companion animal] was my guide on a journey to a deeper, clearer perception of all that is truly considered healing. Step by step, through example, metaphor, and insight, she reopened the doors to my heart and soul; she reawakened my sense of kindred connections to animals I had felt as a child. (p. 9)

Through this passage offered by Schoen (2001), I re-turn to the words offered by Beston (1928/1977) of the “wiser and more mystical concept of animals” (p. 24).

These words, however, did not have a voice or border crossing within the present system of nurse education, in which I found myself. Nurse has etymological tracings to the words “nurture and nourish” (Ayto, 1990, p. 368). However, within the profession of nursing and nurse education as a pedagogical discipline, in lieu of nurturance, the fine art of distance was practiced. Like Schoen (2001) suggests, distance was facilitated through the concealments of language, termed therapeutics and nursing plans of care; medical models of healing; technical models of inquiry within the classroom; and ultimately a need to hide behind the color of white, the absence of all colors and metaphoric individualizations. Nurse education was typically noted as truly being “a horse of a different color.”

From this dis-tance, I looked to the failing of a profession that had traveled so far from the very teachings of its founder, Florence Nightingale, who in 1860, indeed, kept numerous pets and wrote of their healing qualities, noting that “A small pet is often an excellent companion for the sick, especially in chronic care cases” (1860/1969, p. 103). I began to sense that perhaps a fundamental way of being within

nursing was one of connection to the Other. In initial conversations among nurse educators, conversations taking place beyond the public sphere of sight and sound, I found connection to other nurse educators also suffering the same sense of displacement and longing to return to “home.” Reflecting back, I do not know why I chose the profession of nursing within high school. Indeed, I can recall within high school, a sense of at-homeness with the liberal arts, particularly mythology and creative writing where there were no patterns of performance or formulas to memorize. In reflecting back, I note that what manifested in these modes of inquiry was the spirit or flow of creativity. Within this creativity, there was a sense of nomadic existence, a choice to journey without a set path. However, I, at this time in my life’s journey, did not recognize this yearning to wander. It is only in this present time and place of my writing that I re-collect myself through the re-membrance of this creative “homeland.” Perhaps I did possess this genetic coding for being a nomad.

The choice of nursing was one of triangulation, being comprised of the three equidistant angles of female gender, the economics of middle class, and familial position. This triangulation, in reflection, certainly was based upon the notion of being-called toward caring, as caring was epitomized within my gender, familial positioning, and societal position. With foremost certainty, the choice was one that met with approval from my parents. After all, “You will always be able to get a job,” a job from which I could retire with a pension, a job befitting of a female student who excelled in the sciences as well as the creative writing class. Most significantly, I remained the child ever quick to please the parent.

As I reflect upon my arenas for nursing practice, I suddenly realize my chosen field of pediatrics. For in being-with children, I am allowed to be with animals in story and inanimate form. Steeves (1999) reflects upon these early animal connections as he observes a two year old child imitating animals through language and body:

The process of becoming an adult is the process of conforming, of learning our concepts, our categories, and our places within them...The body becomes acceptably human; it must suppress its animality and mold itself appropriately. Whatever wild must go...As he [Joey] comes to think of his body as human it will become human, individual, and alone. Animals will die in the process—in his heart, his imagination, his stomach his dreams. (p. 1)

Through this brief smattering of family stories, I realize that I still strive as a person and a nurse educator to be a “goody-two-shoes.” Choices made, however, under the guise of independence, frequently are aided by the voices within my head that constantly chatter, “What would my father do?” As Mary Aswell Doll (1995) notes, “My relating to others has been determined by the patriarchy” (p. 33). Once again, I be-come Artemis sitting upon the lap of Zeus, her father, getting all wishes met. I have yet to recognize that voice which is mine alone.

The legends of my childhood educational process, especially those of a Catholic grade school, have made me feel responsible for the happiness of others. Like Tompkins (1996), I dwell within an I of “fear,” fearing that I will displease my students by not caring enough for them and fearing authority. Like Tompkins, “Childhood experiences of authority had controlled without my knowing it, the way I exercised or failed to exercise authority as an adult” (p. 7). I care for my students by meeting them at more than the proverbial half-way point, seeking to be the grand savior and emancipator of making all wrongs right, even those wrongs, perhaps, not within my realm of control.

An expression of sadness or aloofness from my students instantly causes me to question my role in its creation. As Merleau Ponty (1964) maintains, “I live in the facial expressions of the other, as I feel him living in mine” (p. 146). Perhaps in short, I am afraid to sense their own lostness within this technical world of nurse education for I, too, am a fellow traveler without guides. This reading of my mirror image on the faces of others within my family continues to this day when I excel in quickly changing gears in order to alter expressions.

However, my own recognition as a child, nameless and voiceless within the Catholic school system, has created within me a passion for truly seeing each and every individual student as a person, composed of individual needs and a life-story. This re-turning toward what Grumet (1988) describes as “a curriculum that provides the moral, epistemological, and social situations that allow persons to come to form, providing the ground for action rather than simply the acquiescence” (p. 172), evokes this creative homeland once again. In search of this homeland, I pursue a general question: **What is the lived experience of being-with companion animals as teachers and healers?** To address this question, I choose hermeneutic phenomenology as a mode of inquiry.

A Directional Shift: The Crosswalk of Phenomenological Maps

Through the temporality of life experiences and associated questions, I sought a crosswalk to transverse. A crosswalk allows for the safe passage or crossing over between two points of connection. A sense of tension dwells within the crosswalk. While offering safe passage, there is a notion of in-betweenness here. This in-

betweenness is reflected within my response to the tensions created by the questions raised.

A true crossing-over emerges in meaning making between these two points of connection. Through my re-cognition of my own points of connection and questions regarding the terrain of animals as teachers and healers, there emerges a sense of lostness within the dominant paradigm of technical knowing. There is a transposition of a need for safe travel. This crosswalk occurs with hermeneutic phenomenology, a methodology that allows a way of addressing my research question regarding animal identities of caregiving, teaching, and healing.

As a brief entrance into hermeneutic phenomenology, as a mode of inquiry, I am guided by that which I seek, a questioning that is circular. Hermeneutic phenomenology allows for a turning and re-turning, for the transverse over many crossroads within the journey. As Gadamer (1960/1998, p. 291) articulates, “The movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to the parts and back to the whole. Our task is to expand the unity of the understood meaning centrifugally.” Hermeneutic phenomenology is a showing, a sense of the felt experience of how we are in the world with a phenomenon toward an understanding of Self and Others to which the phenomenon beckons. Phenomenology assists us to be more alive in the world, to embrace existing tensions of life’s questions.

Hermeneutic phenomenology as a mode of inquiry is the description of lived experience (van Manen, 1990). As such, an interpretive act is never pre-suppositionless but rather grounded in something we have in advance, a fore-having (Heidegger, 1962). As Bontekoe (1996) maintains, these fore-havings are a result of

our involvements within the world. Thus, as I have shown, it is important to explore and uncover reflective, ancient mirrors or maps of myself. It is through the revealing of these fore-sights or hind-sights, that present mirror images be-come clear.

Language

Hermeneutic phenomenology opens to connections and crosswalks within our use of language.

By listening to a particularly individual pattern of words, catching tell-tale emphasis, or recognizing that something is being said which the speaker may not ever have been able to say before, there is a recognition of the infinite possibilities and experiences lying just under the surface of things. (Blythe, as cited in Least Heat-Moon, 1991, pp. 179-180)

These connections emerge by the act of transcendence (a going beyond oneself) and transformation (a changing of perceptions). A connection can be defined as the intentional act to create a bond or a special relationship. Connection is the essence of relationship in which the presence of another is acknowledged. The interactions or connections between humans and animals remain a mystery. Why to some humans are animals a being worthy of equality, while to others, animals reflect only an irrational life form, existing only to serve the human being? An answer may be found, perhaps, within the language offered to us.

“All creatures great and small, the good Lord made them all...” The opening lines of a favorite childhood hymn offer an opening into the temporality or historical significance of language. From an immediate view, it may be seen that my identity of animals includes all creatures: insects, birds, and all living beings. The connections within everydayness for me extends beyond the immediate sphere of personal space, opening to a diverse level of consciousness within all of nature, for even from the

smallest of creatures, the ant, I learned to experience caregiving and self. The “family of animals” extends to include all creatures.

A creature, etymologically, has roots in the Latin verb, *creatus*, that which is “produced or created” (Ayto, 1990, p. 144). Thus, a creature is made or formed. Within my eyes as a child, a creature emerged as that which I “created.” The act of creation took the form of a transformative molting into a being over which I had control. Small creatures entered into the cocoon of my space and emerged transformed into another being.

Soul

Conversely, the word animal, finds its immediate source from the Latin, *animalis*, “having a soul” (Ayto, 1990, p. 26). When a being is relegated a soul, a different image emerges and a different relationship ensues. Whereas, as a child, a creature was viewed as modifiable, an animal suddenly stood on its own four feet, as it were. A being with a soul, within my eyes is suddenly more intimate. A companion animal suggests a closeness in soul and spirit. There is an attachment when my soul meets that of another soul. Levels of consciousness are transformed. The word, human, derives from the Old French, *humain*, and the Latin, *humanus* (Ayto, 1990, p. 289). Translating and tracing the word, human, denotes an earthly being. Once again, we become connected to animal beings. As Kowalski (1991) suggests, animals “have not only biologies, but biographies as well...They contain inner landscapes: desert places and lonely canyons, cliffs of madness and rivers of serene awareness that merge in tranquil seas...They share with us consciousness, courage, and a soul” (p. 107). I,

too, find my biography within the soul of my companion animals. My inner landscape of soul greets their souls within a place that only can be called home.

Through language, animals reveal to us a sense of their everydayness of being. Language emerges as paramount in the relegation of an animal. Animals within close proximity to us are relegated to the status of being a pet. The word, *pet*, etymologically denotes a smallness, from the Middle English, *pety*, and the French *peti* (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999, p. 1348). At first glance, it may appear that in an ontological sense, animals exist at a very mundane level. However, the word domesticate, from the French *domestique* and the Latin *domesticus*, meaning house, (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999, p. 531) is evolved further into domicile, whose meaning denotes a dwelling-place. A dwelling place could be considered as a manor house. Etymologically, a manor is “a place where one stays or dwells, ultimately going back to the Latin verb, *manere*, remain or stay” (Ayto, 1990, p. 337). To dwell denotes a making of one’s home in a place.

Community

In order to enter into a relationship with animals a sense of community must be achieved. This sense of community is perhaps best emanated in the current language found within our world. Quite often the word pet is used interchangeably with the term companion animal. A companion, etymologically, is from the Middle English *compainoun* and the Latin *com + panis*, meaning food or bread (Merriam-Webster, online, 1998). Thus, even within the language, dichotomies and tensions are paramount. Opening the word companion animal, causes us to pause within such questions as, How do we break bread with animals? What sense of nourishment touches our souls

through our interactions with animals? How do our horizons of understanding get transformed with the sense of animals as companions?

Closely related to the word, companion, is community. Community emanates from the same root as the word common and communion. The word common originates from the Indo-European base, *moi-*, *mei-*, signifying change and exchange (Ayto, 1990, p. 126). Through our exchange with animals, how does the nature of the relationship evolve? What are the mystical or spiritual aspects of communion we share with animals? By what means are animals saints? By entering into the language, we come to view our relationship with animals as one of communion. Thus, a change or alteration in human language needs to maintain a sense of guardianship rather than ownership. A communion is, indeed, a sacred union of souls. To be reverent is “a holy perception,” relates Zukav (1989, p. 50), a seeing into the interior of the beingness of the Other. Do we see animals with reverence? To hold something as reverent, etymologically derives from the Latin *verei*, meaning to hold in awe or fear, possibly a distant relative of two words within our own English language: “aware and beware” (Ayto, 1990, p. 443). These words, alone, lead to many possibilities of being-in-the-world.

The proposal of Wilson’s (1984) biophilia hypothesis maintains that humans have an innate emotional affinity for other living organisms. Perhaps biophilia is the ground upon which all connections arise. Schoen (2001) contends that biophilia may perhaps be foundational for co-species healing, particularly when one accepts the definition of healing as being made whole. To be immersed within the notion of biophilia is to enter into a therapeutic community. A therapeutic community as

described by Palmer (1993) is an embodying capacity for openness and vulnerability in order to reveal wounds and promote healing. Indeed, this sense of community implies a sense of intimacy. To be intimate implies closeness or a kinship.

In summary, my call to the language of companion animals denotes animals as beings who share a dwelling with us and a sense of everyday intimacy. Within our worlds as human beings, we create these communities, and as human beings we are called to accept the naming of ourselves as guardians rather than owners. It is significant to note that there are many forms of companion animals, including service animals whose specialized training denotes, certainly, a more diverse identity than those of our everyday animals. Within Chapter Two as the phenomenon of companion animals is further explored, it is important to note this distinction, in that while these stories will be shared regarding service animals, my phenomenological question addresses the identity of companion animals within our lives. I open initially to reveal my phenomenological question of study: **What is the lived experience of being-with companion animals as teachers and healers?**

The Everydayness of the Extra-Ordinary

The word miracle like mirror emanates from the same group of words signifying “a wondering at” (Ayto, 1990, p. 350). When one witnesses a miracle, one looks at or regards it as the extraordinary. How does a miracle capture our gaze, alter our perceptions, and change our very being? Etymologically, the word extraordinary is comprised of two words: extra and ordinary. The word extra evolves from the Latin *extra* denoting outside of, beyond (Ayto, 1990, p. 214); while the word ordinary denotes following a usual course, from the Latin *ordinaries* (Ayto, 1990, p. 375).

How do animals create a place for us to go beyond ourselves? In what manner do animals emulate the being of truly going beyond the usual course?

Quite simply, it can be postulated that in the animal's everydayness, a sense of the extra-ordinary dwells. When one goes beyond the usual course of self, a sense of wholeness is achieved. This fundamental sense of the transformative nature of the ordinary versus the extra-ordinary is found in the children's book, *Millions of Cats* by Wanda Gaag (1928/1956). Within this story, quite an ordinary cat is transformed through acts of caring into a being of beauty. We are summoned to face the individuality of the singular face of the Other. We are called as within the voice of Beautiful Joe to the extra-ordinary:

My name is Beautiful Joe, and I am a brown dog of medium size. I am called Beautiful Joe, but not because I am a beauty...I know I am not beautiful, and I know I am not well bred. I am only a cur. (Marshall, 1920, p. 1)

How often within our world are we summoned perhaps to value only those beings with a potential for material gain? How often do we overlook those animals whose non-pedigreed faces watch us from a distance? What entrances to the soul are created within those eyes? I reflect, once again, on the immense capacity of animals to bring out our human everydayness. As I write I can see the joy within the eyes of my own companion animals when I return home at either the end of a workday or simply after only a brief respite of time. Within their eyes, I see myself beautifully reflected and transformed from the ugly duckling into a beautiful swan. They welcome me once again into their "pack."

A Directional Shift: van Manen's Framework

“Lived experience is both the beginning point and the end point of phenomenological research” (van Manen, 1990, p. 36). To clarify my directional shift toward a study of lived experience, van Manen (1990) provides a methodological structure for human science research. While the intent within this discussion is to bring forth for review these six components or methodological dimensions for consideration, a detailed exploration of these components is provided within Chapter Three. Van Manen (1990) maintains, these components exhibit a dynamic interplay among themselves, congruent with the very act of hermeneutic interpretation, comprised of the act of circular understandings. They are not meant to be carried out in a linear fashion. These components are cited here for a map of how the study unfolds:

1. Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
3. Reflecting on the essential themes, which characterize the phenomenon;
4. Describing the phenomenon through the acts of writing and rewriting;
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
- and
6. Balancing the parts and the whole of the research context. (van Manen, 1990, pp. 30-31)

Van Manen (1990) describes four lifeworld existentials used to illuminate and un-cover the phenomenon of a study. These existentials can be used as a map for guiding and directing reflection, and they are embedded throughout the themes found in lived experience accounts. Succinctly stated, these existentials are noted as follows. Lived space (spatiality) is felt space. Lived body (corporeality) refers to being bodily present within the world. Lived time (temporality) is subjective time. Lived other

(relationality) is the relationships one forms in the space we maintain with others.

These four lifeworld existentials are illuminated further in Chapter Three as the phenomenon of companion animals as teachers and healers is further grounded within the mode of inquiry chosen for this study—hermeneutic phenomenology.

By entering into the language of a children's story, *The Little Prince*, the connection between animals and humans is uncovered further. The words of Antoine de Saint-Exupery (2000) invite one to witness other potential dimensions of the animal/human connection, particularly those questions that spring forth when language emanates a change in perception. Distance (lived space), "tameness" (lived other), "vertical time" (lived temporality), and "being the fox or the Prince" (lived body) reveal these lifeworld existentials:

It was then that the fox appeared... "Who are you?" asked the little prince, and added, "You are very pretty to look at." "I am the fox," said the fox. "Come play with me," proposed the little prince. "I cannot play with you," the fox said. "I am not tamed."... "What does that mean tamed?" asked the little prince. "It is an act too often neglected," said the fox. "It means to establish ties."... "To establish ties?"... "Just that," said the fox. "To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys... But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world." "One only understands the things that one tamed," said the fox... "What must I do to tame you?" asked the little prince... "You must be very patient," replied the fox. "First you will sit down at a little distance from me—like that—in the grass. I shall look at you out of the corner of my eye, and you will say nothing. Words are the source of misunderstandings. But if you will sit a little closer to me, every day..." "It would be better to come back at the same hour," said the fox. "But if you come at just any time, I shall never know at what hour my heart is to be ready to greet you... One must observe the proper rites..." "You become responsible forever for what you have tamed," said the fox... "Goodbye," said the fox. "And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: *It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.*" (emphasis added) (2000, pp. 58-63)

What images are seen within my heart? What are the essential aspects of being cared-for by an animal?

The Terrain of Questions and Assumptions

Gadamer (1960/1998, p. 356) states, “(It) is more than the knowledge of this or that situation. It always involves an escape from something that had deceived us and held us captive.... Insight is something we come to...It too is ultimately part of the vocation of man.” Gadamer also speaks of horizons of understanding. How do we meet the horizons of other beings within the world? Is it by recognizing that these horizons exist, that we create a space for equality and identity of animals within our world? How are animals the root of my horizons of understanding? Where do the horizons of Kansas and Oz meet? Gadamer further states, “To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one’s own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain who we were” (p. 379).

Horizons meet in the foregrounds of understandings. Gadamer (1960/1994) further notes that “The horizon of the present cannot be formed without the past” (p. 306). The past is, therefore, a reminder of present possibilities. Thus, as Heidegger maintains, “Every questioning is a seeking. Every seeking takes its direction beforehand from what is sought. Questioning is a knowing search for beings in their thatness and whatness” (1977/1993, p. 45). The interpretive researcher’s questions inadvertently shape the possibilities of answers to those questions (Dreyfus, 1991). In order to open the questions further for exploration, I summarize my preunderstandings

and assumptions regarding animals and human interactions brought forward in this chapter:

1. Animals provide caring for us.
2. Animals provide a context for learning for human be-ing and be-coming.
3. Animals are healers through their teaching and caring.
4. Animals provide a sacred space, *a tremenos* (Bruyere, 1989) for healing.
5. Animals embody a part of humanity and without animals we are not whole.
6. Animals are ontological beings, capable of reciprocity and responsibility in relationships with humans.

It is paramount within a hermeneutic phenomenological study to bring forth assumptions for review. As van Manen explains, “It is better to make explicit our understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and theories” (p. 47). To bring forth my preunderstandings and assumptions is to illuminate this knowledge within myself, keeping this knowing in view throughout the task of hermeneutic interpretation. Having brought forth my assumptions, I now retrieve my hermeneutical question.

The Hermeneutical Question: Re-turning to the Cyclone

“The Silver Shoes,” said the Good Witch, “have wonderful powers. And one of the most curious things about them is that they can carry you to any place in the world in three steps, and each step will be made in the wink of an eye. All you have to do is to knock the heels together three times and command the shoes to carry you wherever you wish to go.” (Baum, 1900/ 1958, p. 154)

Jumping Mouse stood alone and trembling, sensing what was to come. He knew, somehow, that an eagle would find him. All of a sudden he could feel a shadow on his back. Then he heard the noise of a giant eagle swooping down, coming closer. He braced himself for what was to come—the noise grew louder—then, a thump on his back. Jumping Mouse fell into a deathlike sleep. (Storm, 1972, p. 83)

The turning to the phenomenon of animals as caregivers through teaching and healing is akin to my sense of being within a cyclone. Within a cyclone I am deafened and blinded. However, I emerge a different being, ready to embrace animals with new

eyes and new ears. I reveal the research question as revealed from the heart, to be visible to the eye, as I turn to nurse educators to help make that visible: **What is the lived experience of nurse educators being-with companion animals as teachers and healers?**

To address this question, I invoke and invite the voices of other nurse educators. In my preliminary conversations with nurse educators regarding companion animals, I sensed an opening into a deeper conversation. This deeper conversation emanates from a soulful place within each nurse educator. This soulful place, however, was for each of them a terrain of alienation and marginalization. These nurse educators were my first glimpse of others in my profession who also dwelled as wounded healers.

However, quite significantly, this voice emanated as well a notion of an ability to view their wounds. By the ability to view one's wounds, Newman (1986) notes, there is an ability or move toward self-healing. In essence, a person moves from the stance of dwelling as "the walking wounded" (Myss, 1997, p. 7) toward be-ing a wounded healer. As initial voice was given by nurse educators to the place of companion animals in their lives, I began to note the authenticity of companion animal be-ing beside as healers and teachers.

Additionally, nurse educators were chosen for two reasons. First, these nurse educators were selected as participants based upon the shared realm of common "lifeworlds" (van Manen, 1990) with myself, both as a fellow nurse educator and as a human being. The initial life world of being-in-the-world as a human being encompasses a generality of themes found within the inquiry to the fundamental

question of what it means to dwell as a human being. This mutually shared lifeworld invites the possibility of further opening the phenomenon of interest through their interactions and connections with animals.

Secondly, nurse educators are faced with and ultimately dwell within technical epistemologies currently inherent within nurse education. These technical epistemologies are founded upon an epistemology of exclusion. This stance of exclusion cannot maintain the fundamental premise of care, a principle upon which the philosophy of nursing practice historically and presently exists. Within the literature of nursing, a metaparadigm for caring is based upon person, health, and the environment. Thus, clearly, “to care” impacts greatly upon nursing philosophy, practice, and education. Caring cannot dwell along-side this sense of exclusion where multiple of ways of being-in-the-world are not acknowledged.

This exclusion includes companion animals and a dependence upon Western modalities for healing. Health has become focused upon the external person rather than the internal soul, promoting a division of mind, body, and soul. This notion of health is further cloned within nurse education. A technical epistemology of exclusion additionally structures pedagogical approaches. These technical pedagogical approaches fail to involve the spirit or soul. Within the technical realm, meaning making is facilitated through the knowledge of the powerful, the nurse educator. In a pedagogy of soul, however, meaning-making opens to a “seeing” of individuality through the development of a sense of morals, an appreciation of beauty, creativity, and an awareness of the Self in relation to the entire universe. It is hoped that through the connections of human beingness in relationship with companion animals, this

concurrent, alternate lifeworld of nurse education will be enhanced in meaning.

Therefore, through the opening of these conversations, I seek to reveal the potential of more coherent directions for transformative, emancipatory nursing curricula based upon a foundation of caring, where companion animals deepen the possibility for soul connecting and a language of care.

Therefore, in order to facilitate conversation and open my questions for further review, I bring forth my pre-assumptions regarding nurse education. It is important to note that these pre-assumptions are not mutually exclusive, but rather lend an image of nurse education as I currently expose it, based upon my perceptions and understandings:

1. Nurse education embraces a severe non-egalitarian teacher-learner dichotomy, contributing to a lack of community.
2. Nursing pedagogy embraces a positivist methodology wherein knowledge or epistemology is reductionist, hierarchical, and objective-based (rational-technical model).
3. This reductionist epistemology has contributed to limited vehicles for meaning making, creating a milieu of passive learning among its learners and a limited knowing of the world and the Self in relationship to the world.
4. The passivity of the identity of the learner within nurse education has “blossomed” into the far-reaching realms of professional nursing practice.
5. Nurse education is a “paternalistic” pedagogy.

Additionally, it is important to note my definition of the companion animal.

While with most certainty, many images and associated language come to mind, for the purpose of this inquiry, I describe a companion animal as an ontological being with whom one has had or presently maintains a meaningful relationship. A meaningful relationship is experienced as an enduring connection within the physical

or spiritual realm. While the spiritual realm may entail an esoteric stance as is the case with totem animals, the purpose of this inquiry is to reflect the teaching and healing experiences of companion animals who currently dwell with nurse educators, or whose presence within the spiritual realm are reflective of a past physical relationship with them. The premises of this definition for companion animal cause me to turn away from the more commonly noted language of *pet*. It is my interpretation that this language, while denoting a caress or closeness, also brings forth the notions of a lesser being, relegated to the margins of being “petty” and lacking ontology.

Stepping onto the Yellow Brick Road: Organization of the Journey

Throughout this chapter, an exploration of my turning to the phenomenon of companion animals as teachers and healers has been opened. Explicit assumptions regarding the practice, pedagogy, and foundational epistemologies of nurse education are brought forth for consideration. My entering question of study and a guide for traversing my study question is given. In order to explicate and un-cover the phenomenon of companion animals as teachers and healers further, I open to the additional chapters of this study.

Chapter Two draws upon the nursing and medical literature investigating the connection between people and animals. In addition, Chapter Two uncovers common themes found within the human-animal bond through a variety of sources. Chapter Three addresses philosophical underpinnings and foundations for this study. Chapter Four examines the conversations with nurse educators for relevant themes of their lived experience with companion animals as teachers and healers. In Chapter Five, the insights and experiences gained from these conversations are examined in light of

current pedagogical practices within nurse education. Chapter Five concludes with the recommendation for a curriculum of soul within nurse education. Implications for curricular expansion and revision in nurse education are discussed in relation to an enhanced ecological education, for nursing re-turning to “a homeland.”

CHAPTER TWO:

TOPOGRAPHY OF THE JOURNEY: EXPLORING THE PHENOMENON OF AN ANIMAL CARTOGRAPHY OF TEACHING AND HEALING

“We must journey on until we find the road of yellow brick again,” said Dorothy; “and then we can keep on to the Emerald City.” (Baum, 1900/1958, p. 58)

The topography of a terrain lends itself to a more intimate look at a phenomenon by peering at the true contours of its ground. Topographic maps are used to convey not only natural features of a terrain, but also artificial or cultural features such as boundaries and borders (Encarta Encyclopedia, available on-line). Through hermeneutic phenomenology, I seek to describe these topographic notions of our relationship with animals, those essences innately present as well as those essences artificially created, through alternate ways of looking and knowing.

Therefore, Chapter Two entails a historical perspective of human voice. Within this voice, an entering conversation is opened regarding the ontology of animals. This opening to the ontology of animals must be considered prior to the exploration of companion animals as beings capable of teaching and healing. A historical perspective offers not only a linear temporal view of human-companion animal relationships, but also an exploration of the phenomenon of animals and humans within the discipline of nursing science and nursing practice. A compilation of narrative anecdotes and stories further exposes this human-animal connection of caring. I use hermeneutic interpretation throughout these conversations, to reveal the identity of animals as teachers and healers in their relationship with us. This deeper revelation is embraced through a closer look at the terrain, through the topography of animal caring.

Animal Being-in-the World

To open to animal being is to bring to light the ontology of an animal. As Steeves (1999) contends, there is no single animal question; rather, the question of animals within the world and their associated relationships with human beings contains a myriad of questions. Dallery (1999) poses the following question, “How shall we be with animals?” (p. 249). Despite its simplicity, a multitude of questions pour forth for consideration. This question asks quite fundamentally, “What is the being of an animal?”

From the question of being evolves the concept of positioning within the world. What is our position or stance toward animals? Is there an equality of stance or a subjective posturing? How do animals express this relationship with humans? Most significantly, in what manner is this relationship translated, so that we may speak to our understanding of the place of animals within our human world space?

To question is to portray our humanness. These questions provide a point of departure, a beginning for the hermeneutical back and forth motion of questioning, revealing the temporality of the human-companion animal relationship, as well as the phenomenological relationship between humans and companion animals. As Derrida (1988) remarks, “The chosen point of departure...is the entity that we are, we, the questioning entities, we who, are open to the question of Being and of the being of the entity we are, have this relation to self that is lacking in everything that is not Dasein” (p. 104).

Sartre (1971) maintains, “The question is a kind of expectation” (p. 35). In our humanness, we anticipate the answers to our questions, but in reality, the animal

question remains in the elemental realm of the mysterious, reflected within our human knowingness. We cannot speak for the beingness of an animal, but only open these questions for review.

The intent of opening this line of questioning is to create a space for tensions and questions. The intent within Chapter Two is not to address these issues in depth, but rather, bring to light first, the assumptions held by this researcher that animals do possess ontology, and through ontology, companion animals enter into relationships with humans. Secondly, I address an element of ontology, soul, found within texts and interpretive writings.

To reflect upon soul is to go to the very essence of an animal as suggested by the etymology of the word, animal, “*animæ* soul” (Ayto, 1990, p. 26). Evidence of soul creates a space to address these beginning ontological questions. The lived existentials of van Manen (1990) (spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality) are explored and brought forth for consideration using the foundation of animal ontology, soul presence. Chapter Three continues the conversation, uniting animal ontology with philosophical grounding.

Soul Mirrors: Red Shoes

At that moment, Dorothy saw laying on the table the silver (red) shoes that had belonged to the Witch of the East. “I wonder if they will fit me,” she said to Toto. “They would be just the thing to take a long walk in, for they would not wear out.” She took off her old leather shoes and tried on the red ones, which fitted her as well as if they had been made for her...And so, with Toto trotting along soberly behind her, she started on her journey. (Baum, 1900/1958, p. 13)

The soul is a sense of being present to the self. As Kowalski (1999) relates, “The soul is the magic of life” (p. 142). While certainly the soul can be described by many means, Moore (1994) simply suggests that “The soul is not a mere thing, but a

quality or dimension of experience of life embodying depth, value, relatedness and heart” (p. xvii). Benner (1989) declares that the concept of presence is the situating of the self, sensitively and imaginatively, in the world of the Other. By the provision of this authentic presence, animals become for us, a reflection of ourselves, providing teaching and caring. Thus, perhaps animals complete humans, providing them with the means to dwell upon the earth by spirit, breath, and wind.

A Story of Tristan

Tristan within Greek mythology was a man who searched for his soul.

Matthew Fox relates the following story that illuminates, perhaps, one example of an animal whose connections, indeed, transverse perceived boundaries of knowing to provide caring and healing:

His name was Tristan...Entering a room, he would fill it with his presence...He was a being of great mystery who kept his secrets and mysteries well guarded. Who will ever know the secrets behind the eyes and in the souls of animals? When the mystic tell us that “the soul is not in the body, but the body in the soul,” I realize that this does not apply merely to humans but to animals as well...Today I would go one step further in my understanding of this person who was my dog. I would say that he was also a spirit. He was certainly my spirit guide for seventeen years...There were uncanny things that Tristan knew and did...He keenly listened to human conversations...During Tristan’s last year, I took special pains to observe him closely and try to learn what he was teaching me... “The two of you must have had an amazing communication (connection) between the two of you”, the vet said, “Because Tristan died at the exact moment you said we should put him to sleep. He was waiting for your permission to leave.” (as cited in McElroy, 1996, p. 43)

How can it be conjectured that Matthew Fox, indeed, found his soul through his connection with Tristan? How does the last breath of Tristan find its way into the heart and soul of Matthew Fox? In what manner does the last breath of Tristan echo and reverberate within the soul of Matthew Fox? How, through the story of Matthew

Fox, are we invited to echo Tristan's last breath through evidence of our own learning?

Presence (Being)

Presence is the soul atmosphere or spirit of a being (O'Donohue, 1999). "The body is a presence that cannot be silenced" (O'Donohue, 1999, p. 59). The echo of the outer presence of the body calls for an intimacy to look inward toward the presence of the soul. The soul reflects back to us a resemblance of ourselves, and is the mediator between the Self and the world. This is what it is like to be with animals. Through animal presence, we come to know ourselves well. How do animals call forth our presence rather than our absence?

The Lived Existentials

The lived existentials offered by van Manen (1990) open to the revealing or unconcealing of questions emerging from my research interest. The lived existentials of lived space, lived time, lived relationality, and lived body/corporeality are explored to reveal that which is potentially hidden from view within the lived experience of being with an animal. Inherent within these existentials is the assumption of a blurring of boundaries within the four realms. "These four existentials of lived body, lived space, lived time, and lived other or relationality to the other can be differentiated but not separated. They all form an intricate unity which we call the lifeworld" (van Manen, 1990, p. 105). It is noteworthy to embrace the lifeworld as encompassing all life forms of animals, companion and otherwise. To bring these questions into view is to expand upon our consciousness of animals and their potential ways of being present in our lives. To ask these questions is to "point one to look at something which we

may not be conscious of” (Hultgren, 1991, p. 44). In what manner does soul presence summon us to reflect upon the lived existentials offered by van Manen (1990)?

Lived Relationality: A Kinship of Souls

Lived other (relationality) is the lived relation we maintain with others in the interpersonal space that we share with them. (van Manen, 1990, p. 104)

To be kindred is to experience the kinship or the “condition of being family” (Ayto, 1990, p. 312). The identity of animals as soul-mates previously has been described as a profound connection. How do these intense connections constitute family? A family may be those with whom we dwell physically and emotionally. In what manner are companion animals our family? How do our kindred souls or presences seek out one another? How are the boundaries of family expanded to include all beings?

A family may assume a particular language of attachment. As Moore (1994) describes, “The soul has an innate tendency toward attachment” (p. 4); “The soul lives in the realm of imagination, and influences the direction and quality of life through a kind of poetics, a language of image and symbol” (p. xvi). What common dialect does the family speak? Gadamer (1960/1998) maintains a common language is founded upon the act of understanding. What is the foundation for understanding and comprehension within a kindred, soulful relationship with a companion animal?

Companion animals speak in a kindred dialect, reflected within soulful eyes and gestures. There are many instances that readily come into my memory of my companion animals within the past who embodied a sense of lived family. Sch was the tale of a former cat who chose me by climbing up my leg from among at least twenty other kittens! This was the companion who stood guard over my sleeping

infant daughter each night, transforming the empty space of the night into a sanctuary of caring.

Many times, it is a companion animal who assumes the identity of the Other, an absent human family member. Recently while attending a conference in San Francisco, I was struck by the place provided by companion animals to homeless human beings. It was not an uncommon sight to bear witness to a human arm intertwined with the arm of a companion animal during slumber. It was very clear, indeed, that the body of the companion animal physically served as home for these people. As I bore witness to this interaction, I am caught by the notion of having peered through the window of a family home, to view a family gathering; such was the feeling of intimacy generated.

The following passages from a story of a homeless man near death and his companion dog of several years, told through the experience of the companion animal, reflect the experience of lived relationality with a nonhuman family member:

But Willy [the man] still had some fight left in him, and once he wiped his face with the sleeve of his jacket and managed to recover his breath, he surprised Mr. Bones [the companion dog] by breaking into a beatific smile. With much difficulty, he maneuvered himself into a more comfortable position, leaning his back against the wall of the house and stretching out his legs before him. Once his master was still again, Mr. Bones lowered his head onto his right thigh. When Willy reached out and started stroking the top of that head, a measure of calm returned to the dog's broken heart (p. 51)...When he saw his master sit down on the ground and lean his back against the walls of Poland, he had vowed to stay awake, to keep watch over him until the bitter end. That was his duty, his fundamental responsibility as a dog. (Auster, 1999, p. 63)

Once again, I am called to pose questions: What are the soulful connections between a human being and a companion animal? In what manner are the identities of

companion animals portrayed within this brief smattering of stories? What is the responsibility of a companion animal toward the human family?

Lived Temporality: A Soulful Time

Lived time (temporality) is subjective time as opposed to clock or objective time. (van Manen, 1990, p. 104)

A present derives, etymologically, from the Latin adjective *praesens*, at hand, now here (Ayto, 1990, p. 410). Further mutations of this Latin adjective are transformed into the Latin, *praeentia*, from which is derived the English *presence*, to be at hand, the “now here,” that forms the foundation for a sense of being in front of. The presence of animals invites us to reflect critically and examine the identities of animals within-the-world. What does it mean to be in the presence of the Other? In relationship to the research question, in what manner do we come to describe the presence of animals within our everyday lives?

To be present to the Other authentically implies a sense of totality, a wholeness of being-there for the Other. Companion animals provide for us authentic presence by their being-with, enduring, and their temporal aspect of relating. Animals are present through their ability to be available, ready to care. Presence is, thus, a reciprocal act where the boundaries of the cared-for and the caregiver blend together. Presence is noted by purposing or sensing a call, a communicating or listening, and being authentic, specifically being –with, rather than being-there. As Jill (one with whom I had a preliminary conversation) states, “She [her dog] is my best friend....She will get up, despite her arthritis and leave the room to be with me...She is my rock.”

These authentic gifts of true presence are embodied within the very soul of an animal. Through our embrace of an animal we are called to our own sense of

authenticity. Authenticity emerges from the Greek, *authentikos*, signifying genuineness and *authentes*, a master or doer (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999, p. 113). As Hultgren (1994) explains, “Authenticity as an existential hermeneutic allows one to recall ourselves and restore our authentic selfhood and Being-with-others” (p. 32). How are we called to our own sense of authenticity through the embrace of animals?

This sense of lived time is described by the following narrative of a burro offered by Brian from the *Creation Spirituality Journal* (January/February, 1993):

He (Murray) is exceedingly present. When he is with you, you are being with someone. With him, I feel the whirling insanity of my mind decelerate. He teaches me to stand, to breathe, to take my place on the planet...That is why he is my living teacher, my “buru”...Murray lives in vertical time...I have been there a few times...I wonder what Murray gets from me, besides carrots. Love is the obvious answer, but I am not sure it suffices. I think presence is a better word. When I am with Murray, I am in vertical time, just contented to just be. (as cited in McElroy, 1996, pp. 39-41)

What is vertical time? In what manner is vertical time the experience of lived temporality? It may be proposed that companion animals provide a sense of fallowness, a respite within us from our sense of human activity, a time to re-connect with our souls. It is within this sense of timelessness that we catch a glimpse of our authentic self.

This lived time or timelessness is opened by being-with a companion animal. Consider the following story of how the continued presence of Gracie, a departed Great Dane, continues to evoke a sense of authentic be-ing for her human guardian:

Just the other day I saw Sarah and Dottie [Gracie’s great Dane sisters] playing with Claire [Gracie’s “little” Great Dane sister], and even though logically I knew it wasn’t Gracie, time slipped for a moment and I was watching Gracie alive again in front of me. Her dog spirit was soaring, her body growing almost visibly, ear flapping over her eyes, tail whipping back and forth like a

hydraulic windshield wiper, stumbling over her huge paws as she skidded into the turn to catch up with her sisters. When the moment passed, I saw that Sarah and Dottie are much older and slower, but also gentler and more patient—spending their time filling in any gaps Gracie might have left in Claire’s education. And suddenly I see myself as well. I’m standing here on my own land, the co-owner of an exciting growing business I love that touches the lives of thousands of people. I’m finally understanding and living the limitless possibilities and joys of my life. Looking across time in this way I realize that I have lost nothing, that I have everything I need, and always have. So amazing: I used to think I had saved Gracie. But now I realize that all along it was Gracie who saved me. (Dye & Beckloff, 2000, p. 248)

In what manner do the boundaries of caring extend across the meridian of lived time? How are companion animals called forth toward a sense of re-membrance of self? This re-membrance of the self is explained by Casey (2000):

The three modes [reminding, reminiscing, and recognizing] differ noticeable in their characteristic forms of temporality. We have seen that reminders send us either backward or forward in time—or both at once...But they abound only in the face of the basic fact that all three modes operate by intermediation between mind and world, an effective go-between connecting mind with body and body with world...and precisely as beings-of-the-between, reminders, reminiscences, and recognitions co-constitute our proximate environment—the domain of our commitments and tasks, of our musings upon our diverse pasts, and all that has recognitory value. (p. 141)

Therefore, through our acts of re-membering, perhaps facilitated through our memories of being-with a companion animal, we grasp a sense of our place within-the-world, a place of lived experience, a soulful place.

Lived Spatiality: Soulful Places

Lived space (spatiality) is felt space. (van Manen, 1990, p. 102)

Lived space is felt as a place of connections. Care is experienced through connecting. Animals create a place for connections to emerge. Animals transform space into place by their authentic sense of presence. The authentic sense of presence metamorphoses a companion animal into an identity of a “placemaker.” “What begins

as undifferentiated space,” says geographer Tuan (1997), “terminates in a single object or place. When space becomes familiar to us, it has become place” (pp. 72-73). “We seek to transform an amorphous space into articulated geography” (p. 83). Animals articulate this geography through their cartography of caring in their relationships with us. Animals reveal our intimate terrain of self, transforming those spaces within to places hailed by the soul.

Thus, animals are shamanic poets translating language into a form hearkened to by the soul. Place denotes “a sense of attachment, an arena reflective of met needs” (Tuan, 1997, p. 4). Place determines not only where I am but also how I am with others (Casey, 1993).

Casey (1993) maintains, “Implacement itself, being concretely placed, is intrinsically particular. It is occasion-bound; or more exactly, it binds actual occasions into unique collocations of space and time” (p. 23). Implacement is a communal act (Casey, 1993), a social collectivity encompassing a cultural reflection. We seek to alter place within the relationship of a communion of souls.

Animals allow for a fusion of self-boundaries of inner and outer landscapes. As Barry Lopez (1988) describes, the “projection of the inner landscape of the person is manifested within the relationships in the exterior landscape” (p. 65). Thus, the interior landscape is defined by our external relationships. In what manner do animals create a transformation of space into place? What is the inauthenticity of a space with animals?

Space. The playwright, Tennessee Williams (1945/1973) provides us with a brief glimpse into the world of dwelling within the space of a glass menagerie. In his

play, *The Glass Menagerie*, we are acquainted with Laura, the caregiver of a glass kingdom of creatures. This glass kingdom is relegated to a separate space for protection. There is separateness present. Through the glass figures, we are allowed a view into ourselves and our sense of both separateness and connection to the Other. Like Laura, our bodies are reflected through the glass. Our shadows create opaqueness, a paradoxical seeing-through. The word *menagerie*, etymologically, derives from the Latin verb, *manere*, to remain or to stay, and is founded with the English word *manor*, a place where one dwells or lives. From the word *manor* evolves our conception of home or a place to dwell within the world, the French *maison* and the English *mansion* (Ayto, 1990, p. 337). However, how does the *menagerie* disallow our entrance into the dwelling places of animals? In what ways, are distances maintained? What is our dis-ease with the *menagerie*? How does one transform a glass *menagerie* into a place of intimacy, an ark?

Place. Place is felt space. It denotes an intimacy, a closeness. The soul dwells in intimacy. Thus, a sense of presence within animals hearkens to our very need for a lessening of distance. The dis-stance within ourselves is decreased. Within place we belong. To belong is a yearning or longing to be. Belonging is a voice that has temporal and spatial qualities, as O'Donohue (1999) notes: "Longing is the most deepest ancient voice of the human soul...It is the secret source of all presence...Longing is a quality of desire which distance or duration evokes" (pp. 72-73). As O'Donohue (1999) additionally maintains, "Belonging is rooted in the faithfulness of place...this place remains full of presence and meaning" (p. 6).

In-place. To be in-place brings forth a sense of the familiar. To embrace the familiar is a re-turning to the most familiar of places, home. The notion of home is two fold: first, an experience of a being-at-home-within oneself and secondly, a being-within a physical place of familiarity. By being-with an animal, how is a physical space transformed into a place of soul, a home place? In what sense, as portrayed within the lived existential of lived relationality, do animals evoke a homecoming, a going-within, to a place of the soulful connections?

In addressing these questions, the sense of lived place is opened for further excavation through the notion of the lived body, the fourth lived existential, for “the intimate relationship of memory and place is realized through the lived body” (Casey, 2000, p. 189). Peterson (1993) offers a glimpse into the lived place of home through her lived body by way of her contact with dolphins:

I was always underwater during these discussions [family], on the green shady depths of my warm gulf, listening more intently to a language that creaked and chattered like high-speed hinges—dolphin gossip. Or sometimes I just tuned in to their other language: the pictures dolphins send one another in their minds. Because I had to come up for air, and my eyes were as good above water as below, I did keep a lookout on my family’s dinner drama. But if my mother was having one of her bad moods or my father was giving his lectures, back down I’d go to my other family, who welcomed me with wide-open fins. Even without hands, the dolphins embraced me more than most people did. It was body-to-body, full embrace, our eyes unblinking, utterly open as we swam, belly-to-belly, our skin twenty times more sensitive than that of humans. (pp. 2-3)

How does Peterson come home-to-herself through this place with the dolphins? In what manner have the dolphins elicited caring connections within Peterson? Openings are created within these questions. The lived body itself becomes the in-siteful place for caring connections.

Lived Corporeality: Body and Soul

Lived body (corporeality) refers to the phenomenological fact that we are always bodily in the world. (van Manen, 1990, p. 103)

The lived body is “a place of passage” (Casey, 2000, p. 196). This place of passage is manifested “within the body (intra-place) and through the body (inter-place)” (p. 196). The notion of body as a place of passage is reflected within the words of Kowalski (1999) who, as previously shared, suggests that animals have not only biologies, but biographies as well. “They contain inner landscapes: desert places and lonely canyons, cliffs of madness and rivers of serene awareness that merge in tranquil seas...They share with us consciousness, courage and a soul” (p. 107). These connections emerge by the act of transcendence (a going beyond oneself) and transformation (a changing of self). Both transcendence and transformation are evidence of authentic caring connections.

Hogan (1995) recounts the bodily experience of being-known by a companion animal. There is a story of a horse named Hans who reportedly was thought to solve mathematical equations. Given any mathematical problem to solve, Hans would tap out the answer with his hoofs. Upon closer investigation, it was found that Hans was never doing the counting or the analytical problem solving, but rather responding to innate and very subtle changes within the body space of the examiner himself! As Hogan clearly portrays, “Hans responded to the inner language of the people” (p. 58). Rather than be in awe of Hans’ ability to know people so very well, at a level of minute gesture, Hans and his owner were denounced as frauds. Hans truly reflected a knowing of the inner terrain of the self. What is this bodily language of soul that

reaches out and touches us in a very personal way? In what manner are we known by our bodily presence of soul within the world with animals?

The face possesses a landscape. Within this landscape is contained the threshold of the soul. The threshold of the soul dwells within the senses (O'Donohue, 1997). The faces of my companion animals provide a text for reading. As the teacher's bodily knowing is also a text, so reading the faces of the animals emerge as a text for me. Thus, Kowalski (1999) states, "It is difficult to probe the inner awareness of another being...When we look into another's eyes—even into the eyes of an animal—we find a small window into that inner sanctum, a window through which our souls can hail and greet one another" (p. 84).

In closing, the presentation of the lifeworld existentials of van Manen (1990) through this brief exploration provides a beginning sense of animal ontology and being. There is a sense, perhaps, of an opening to present and future possibilities. However, in order to continue to grasp fully these beginning notions of animal ontology, there is also a sense of the needful task of reminding. Reminding is "a thinking of the past, a point of connection between the past and the future" (Casey, 2000, p. 94). Therefore, as the life world existentials open to the possibility of animal ontology, so must I re-mind myself of perceived animal ontologies of the past. I now reveal a topography of an ancient map of animal ontology.

A Topography: The Mapping of Oz

Because if you did not wear spectacles the brightness and the glory of the Emerald City would blind you. Even those who live in the City must wear spectacles night and day. They are all locked on, for Oz so ordered it when the City was first built, and I have the only key that will unlock them. (Baum, 1900/1958, pp. 64-65)

A convex mirror allows for a more complete view. However, it must be noted, that within a convex mirror, the object of perception is distorted and distanced from the self. There is a “stepping back” from the self, a distant position. Conversely, a concave mirror is one where distance is lessened and nearness is achieved. How does the lens of the concave and convex merge within the Self? In order to ascertain this, a historical perspective must be entertained and explored. The position of the convex mirror and the concave mirror allows for differing points of view and, thus, departure. However, the creation of these spaces also has redefined the nearness and farness of animal being with human beings. In what ways have these distances lessened our perceptions of animals, as well as provided a more complete view or picture of the identity of animals within our lives?

Historical Maps of Oz: Nearness and Farness

Historical notions of the connections with animals must be explored. Animals and humans have been together in the world throughout history. Evidence of this co-dwelling, if you will, is found within the earliest stories of creation, religious writings, and myths. Animals, within these stories, have assumed the identities of the creator as well as the created beings of the world. Animals have been transformative beings, altering bodily dimensions, in order to provide care and shelter for humans. The myth of Artemis’ transformation into a deer suggests this philosophy. The Biblical tale of Jonah and the Whale portrays animals as protectors. In a similar fashion, Noah within the ark provides care and shelter for the animals. In return, the animals care for Noah through the act of leading him toward a haven of safety.

However, change, turbulence, and extreme instability of position have characterized the relationship between animals and humans. Since the beginning of time, animals and humans have dwelled with one another. With acknowledgment of co-dwelling, though, came a sense of difference. This sense of difference led to a sense of distancing. Although early primitive peoples who were hunter-gathers frequently “kept” pets (National Institutes of Health, 1987), one may propose that this separation began with this earliest cave dweller, who in response to explaining the identity of animals within the world, separated them through his pictorial written language. Hillman (1997) describes this dwelling together: “In the beginning Adam and the animals were together in Eden. The story says that the animals passed before Adam, who gave them each their names. He looked and he saw. He knew who they were” (p. 13). As Hearne (1994) points out, this naming also possesses an alternate manifestation of distancing through the use of human language. The use of language as distance is explored further in Chapter Three.

Toto Absence

With the advent of the Greek rationalists, the animal became devoid of a soul, and by becoming so, was placed beneath the hierarchical position of humankind. While Plato felt that animals possessed a mortal soul, only humans possessed a second soul, as it were, of immortality (Schoen, 2001). Aristotle created a further chiasm of delineation with a hierarchical positioning of humans, particularly males, over animals. Animals were recognized in terms of the services provided to humans. Aristotle states that animals possess sensitive souls (noting the ability to feel pleasure

and pain), rather than the rational souls (the ability to reason and possess emotion) of human beings (as cited in Fox, 1996).

Descartes and Kant continue the alienation of humans from animals in their argument that only humans can be rational and, therefore, worthy of moral concerns. Animals were motivated by instinct only (Fox, 1996). With Descartes went the stance of animals possessing consciousness. The Hebrew term *nefesh chaya*—meaning living being or living soul was given in the book of Genesis 1:21 and 1:24. This did not distinguish between humans and animals having a soul, but referred to being a living soul. Formalized religion within the Judeo-Christian traditions continued to separate man from the animals by hierarchical delineation. However, this practice of separating animals from formal religion was not in place prior to the 14th century (Richard, 1999). Early Christian statues of saints are shown as images triumphantly trampling an animal. Catholicism frequently portrayed Mary as standing on a snake, the representation of evil. Thus, history paints a diverse picture of the “place” of animals.

Toto Dis-tance: Scientific Inquiry

Therefore, in what manner, would we describe this relationship between animals and humans? Studies found within the medical and nursing literature can be described as using quantitative methodology and/or being anecdotal in nature. Certainly, scientific studies have attempted and sought to quantify this connection between humans and animals. A connection can be defined as the intentional act of creating a bond or a special relationship. However, most significantly, by opening the phenomenon quantifiably and superficially through anecdotal recordings (Brickel, 1980-1981; Cole & Gawlinski, 1995; Dolan, 1982; Harris, Rinehart, & Gerstman,

1993; Rosenkoetter, 1991), the essence of the human-animal relationship has never been explored fully and carried to its depth. Non-medical and nursing literature also tend to describe the human-animal interaction through anecdotal story (Shojani, 1996).

Within the empirical literature, quantitative measures of this bond have been sought. The capacities of pets to reduce stress and lower blood pressure have long been known (Baun, Bergstrom, Langston, & Thoma, 1984; Dossey, 1997; Katcher & Friedman, 1980). Allen and Blascovich (as cited in Dossey, 1997) found that dogs reduce the stress of a researcher's task of counting backwards. While in the presence of their dogs, subjects perceived their dogs as less stressful than other presences of humans, researcher or female friend (Bower, 1991). This theme of animals providing quantitatively more healing than other humans also is celebrated in another quantitative study in an earlier report, where the presence of a pet at home increases the likelihood of survival more than having a spouse or extensive family support (Friedman, Katcher, Lynch, & Thoma, 1980).

These studies fail, though, to thoroughly explore all of the dimensions of the animal-human bond or relationship. Rather than portraying animals as ontological beings with perceived identities, these studies yield to the scientific maintenance of distanced relationships with animals. Labeling and defining these relationships are relegated to numerical answers only. Further questions emerge to reveal, once again, the fundamental issue behind these studies: Is the companion animal an ontological being or a creation of human perspectives? What is the lived experience of being with a companion animal?

Complementarily, interactions between animals and people have been examined in order to determine changes in psychological well-being. In one such study, eight puppies were taken for weekly visits with the residents of an elderly nursing facility. By the end of the eight week study, statistically significant improvements could be seen in seven of the nine quality of life indicators, including increased social interaction, psychosocial function, life satisfaction, mental function, depression, social competence and psychological well-being (Francis, 1991). Animals also have been shown to provide a connection or a web within the micro cosmos of the family unit (Cain, 1991). The Animals Studies Center found that “Animals provided a vehicle for increased communication among humans” (as cited in Arehart-Treichel, 1982, p. 222). Pets also provide a connection through their ability to bring forth compassion within people, providing what one researcher terms “socially acceptable outlets for touching” (pp. 220-223).

Currently, medical and popular literature refer to this relationship as a bond (Francis, 1991). A bond implies “something which is tied together” (Ayto, 1990, p. 71). Etymologically, the word bond serves as a base for the development of further words within our language: dwell, be, build, and neighbor. Each of these derivatives opens additional questions as to this bond or tie between animals and humans: How do we dwell with animals in the world? What is our human be-ing and animal be-ing? How do we build or create a place or space with animals? What does it mean to dwell within-the-world, along-side with animals? As importantly noted, what identity do animals provide to assist us in be-ing, dwell ing, and build-ing?

Toto Nearness: A Sense of the Familiar

Thus, by dwell-ing, be-ing and build-ing, what relationships or bonds define nearness? By what map shall we pursue this mirror of nearness? As opposed to the dis-tance of current medical and nursing inquiry, hermeneutic phenomenology allows us to dwell within and build a sense of the familiar with our companion animals. The word familiar is defined in Webster's Dictionary, (1998, on-line) as closely acquainted; an intimate associate or companion; a spirit often embodied within an animal. Our word, familiar, originates from the Latin word, *famulus*, meaning attendant or servant (Ayto, 1990, p. 218). How do animals act as our attendants? Interestingly enough, the word familiar denotes family or whole household as well. Historically, a familiar connotated a small animal, most notably a witch's companion who assisted humans in the creation of magic (Conway, 1995). Today familiars are our companion animals, if you will, denoting family and whole households.

What is the magic that is fostered between a companion animal and a human guardian? Moore (1996) writes: "Enchantment is a spell that comes over us, an aura of fantasy and emotion that can settle on the heart...An enchanted life has many moments when the heart is overwhelmed by beauty and the imagination is electrified by some haunting quality in the world or by a spirit or voice speaking deep from within a thing, person, or place" (p. ix). In what manner do animals enchant us with their everydayness of being? What purveyors of wisdom and healing are cast upon us, holding us spellbound? By what means do animals hold us captive within their eyes? How do animals enchant us with their voices and cast a spell with their eyes? How do animals cast a trance upon us? A trance is a time of stillness and silence, listening to

the very marrow within our bones, tracing the course of blood through our veins. Through the casting of this trance, could it be said that as animals hold us in silence, we are open to teaching and healing? How do we learn to hear the oneness of the animal with an oneness of our own?

A Topography: Borders Within Oz

“Your Silver Shoes will carry you over the desert,” replied Glinda. “If you had known their power you could have gone back to Aunt Em the very first day you came to this country.”

“But then I should not have had my wonderful brains!” cried the Scarecrow. “I might have passed my whole life in the farmer’s cornfield.”

“And I should not have had a lovely heart,” Said the Tin Woodman. “I might have stood and rusted in the forest till the end of the world.”

“And I should have lived a coward forever,” declared the Lion, “and no beast in all the forest would have had a good word to say to me.”

“This is all true,” said Dorothy, “and I am glad I was of use to these good friends. But now that each of them has had what he most desired, and each is happy in having a kingdom to rule besides, I think I should like to go back to Kansas.” (Baum, 1900/1958, pp. 153-154)

Through our interactions and relationships with companion animals, we are called to a greater sense of what it means to be a human being. The identity of companion animals within our lives was opened in the beginning dialogue of Chapter One. Here in this chapter, the intent is to, perhaps, like Badger, dig deeper within the earth to reveal the themes of caring, teaching, and healing and the borders created by those spaces.

Etymologically, the word care, derived from the Old English, *caru*, akin to the Old High German, *kara* (laments) and the Latin *garrire* (to chatter), emits the word, voice (Ayto, 1990, p. 98). How do we give voice to other beings within the world? How do animals give voice to us? What is the identity of animals as listeners? Caring provides a voice to teaching and healing. Within the acts of teaching and healing,

connections are created. Through caring, there is a showing or uncovering of the self. As the self is revealed in totality, we are made whole and are healed. Thus, teaching and healing are caring acts.

Connecting can be described as evolving through levels of experience: presencing, an awareness of need for caring; attending-to, an ability to provide caregiving; affiliating-with, the recognizing of caregiving and the wish to reciprocate; and empowering, a final be-coming (Clayton, Murray, Horner, & Greene, 1991). These levels of experience can be described within the realm of companion animals as caregivers.

Animals care for us in the following ways: being-beside (extensions of ourselves); being-with (authentic presence); be-coming (a coming to know, a sense of Heideggerian actuality and potentiality/wholeness and healing); and being-there (physical place and space). As evidence of the lived existentials of van Manen (1990) traverse boundaries, so these caring identities of companion animals ebb and flow across language boundaries.

Preliminary conversations were opened with other nurse educators to elicit a sense of animal ontology. Within the conversations, caregiving identities were brought forth. However, as ontology becomes difficult to separate from the whole of the being, so it becomes quite difficult to separate these caring identities apart. This task of separation of identities emerged within a perceived level of difficulty during my preliminary conversations. The following are representative stories, conversations, and text as interpreted by me, reflective of animal caring, teaching, and healing. The real

names of the participants have been preserved by their choice. These texts are the borderlands of animal caregiving ontology.

Caring as Being-There

Maureen Frederickson relates this dialogue regarding her childhood and the special place animals created for her. She tells the following story:

As child, I was born with a heart problem in that I maintained a skin color of a bluish tint. My different coloring caused me to be treated much differently by my parents, who feared for my health and longevity. My parents, while caring for me, did not I think feel that I would survive. As a child, I was also separated from the group of children playing; again, the fear, I suppose of my appearance and looking so different. My world then consisted of my animals and myself. It was my animals that provided me with companionship and play. My animals were my family as much as my parents. (Interview, San Francisco, 1999)

In what manner did Maureen's animals provide her with love and a sense of closeness and touch when her own parents were "afraid" to tread on this ground? How did the ambiguous space become a place for a child to learn to belong to the world?

Again, I am called to relate a similar story of an animal who created a place for a human being to belong. An AIDS sufferer tells the following story of the first meeting between him and his companion cat (paraphrased from a group conversation):

I really had not intended to get an animal. You might say this animal chose me. As I was walking down an inner city street, I was approached by a group of stray cats, interestingly enough all fled from me when I approached except one who literally "stood his ground," allowing me in his space to pick him and take him home. We developed a close relationship over the ensuing months until a time when he became ill. Taking him to the veterinarian, I found out the cat was diagnosed with feline leukemia, a chronic, fatal, viral disorder similar to the human form of the HIV virus that causes AIDS in humans. Through his [the cat's] ability to fully engage in life, despite his diagnosis until the end of his life, I was taught that I did matter. The cat provided me with an opportunity for contact, often lacking within my own family. As important, the cat provided me with the ability to face my own illness with dignity. I learned to live more fully and even accept my death, when death would come.

What was the meeting of these two kindred souls? What presence did the cat reflect? In what manner did the cat sense a mirror image of himself within the eyes of this man? As Schoen (2001) succinctly maintains, the explanation is perhaps none short of the divine. He states, “Even as I began to understand that there was something in the wonderful bond between human and animal that could lead to increased well-being, I saw levels of connection between humans and animals that were greater than health—they reached into areas that could only be referred to as mystical, magical, or metaphysical” (p. 151).

Caring as Being-Beside—Extensions of the Self

We fit together with animals in harmony. Harmony, a fitting together, from the Greek, *hormozein*, relates once again to the concept of wholeness. A further tracing of the word, harmony, reveals or uncovers the Greek word, *harmus*, (joint) that evolves into the Old English word, *earm* (arm), the Latin *armus* (shoulder) and the Sanskrit, *Irma*, meaning arm (Ayto, 1990, p. 274). In what manner do we exist arm-in-arm-with animals? How do we dwell along-side with animals? Clearly the connection of the body with joints, arms, and shoulders completes a whole. What is the fitting together? How do we embody animals? What is the meaning of reaching out to animals? As importantly, what is the reciprocal act of reaching that animals extend to us? In what manner is communication with animals facilitated?

How do we give voice to the caregiver? But what does it mean to be a caregiver? Indeed the very word, *give*, etymologically means “a reaching out of the hands” (Ayto, 1990, p. 255). Conversely, or perhaps in connection with, animals are caretakers. The word *take*, means a laying of the hands onto the being of another. We

exist in this tension of give and take. What evidence of care do animals give to humans? The following two stories reveal an animal's immense capacity for caring by a literal laying on of the hands, or paws, if you will. Bill Goss, a pilot, at home recovering from skin cancer is given a rare opportunity to provide caring for an orphaned flying squirrel. He recounts the daily rituals with his caregiver, Rocky, the squirrel:

Moving at what seemed the speed of light, he was all over the inside and outside of our clothing as we tried to catch him with our bare hands. The tickling, particularly when he dived into our armpits—one of his favorite haunts—was incredible. This activity had become a daily ritual uplifting our spirits. My doctors are amazed at how quickly my scars have healed. If laughter is the best medicine, Rocky certainly delivered it by the truckload...One morning with Rocky sitting on top of my head; I sneezed, depositing Rocky into my cup of coffee. In an instant Rocky had scrambled back onto my head and was preening himself, probably getting a caffeine buzz to boot. I picked the newspaper back up, and then quickly put it back down in a moment of reflection. We've all had those moments, when suddenly everything is brilliantly clear and sharp, and laced with humor and an overwhelming sense of gratitude. I was overcome by the realization that I was an utterly unique being. Unquestionably—absolutely unquestionably—I was the only person in the world, perhaps in the universe, that had the amazing good fortune to have a flying squirrel in my coffee that morning. By now, Rocky was sound asleep under my sweater. Unaware of my earth-shattering musings, he had curled up directly on a large scar at the base of my neck where my jugular vein, trapezoid muscle and 200 lymph nodes had been removed. Rocky was doing his healing magic once again. (as cited in Canfield et al., 1998, pp. 140-142)

Is this tension of give and take, the truly reciprocal nature of caring authentically?

How had Rocky revealed his immense capacity to become a flying extension of Bill?

Caras (as cited in Canfield & Hansen, 1999) relates the following story of intense connection, that to the human eye, can only be called mysterious; however, to the eye of the heart, this story brings the visible to the invisible and it resounds with the voice of the soul:

Following an intense illness, a young child is left with a severe seizure disorder, called Multiple Seizure Syndrome. In this illness, she [the child] experienced several seizures per day. Sometimes she stopped breathing. As a result, the little girl could never be left alone. She grew to be a teenager and if her mother had to go out, her father or brothers had to accompany her everywhere, including to the bathroom, which became increasingly awkward for everyone involved. But the risk of leaving her alone was too great and so, for lack of a better solution, things went on this way for years. The girl and her family lived near a town where there was a penitentiary for women. One of the programs there was a dog-training program...The girl's mother read about the program and contacted the penitentiary to see if there was anything they could do for her daughter. They had no idea how to train a dog to help a person in the girl's condition, but her family decided that a companion animal would be good for the girl, as she had limited social opportunities and they felt she would enjoy a dog's company. The girl chose a random-bred dog named Queenie and, together with the women at the prison, trained her to be an obedient pet. But Queenie had other plans. She became a "seizure-alert" dog, letting the girl know when a seizure was coming on, so that the girl could be ready for it. I heard about Queenie's amazing abilities and went to visit the girl's family and meet Queenie. At one point during my visit, Queenie became agitated and took the girl's wrist in her mouth and started pulling her toward the living room couch. Her mother said, "Go on now. Listen to what Queenie is telling you." The girl went to the couch, curled up in a fetal position, facing the back of the couch and within moments started to seize. The dog jumped on the couch and wedged herself between the back of the couch and the front of the girl's body, placing her ear in front of the girl's mouth. Her family was used to this performance, but I watched in open-mouthed astonishment as the girl finished seizing and Queenie relaxed with her on the couch, wagging her tail and looking for all the world like an ordinary dog, playing with her mistress. Then the girl and her dog went to the girl's bedroom as her parents and I went to the kitchen for coffee. A little while later, Queenie came barreling down the hallway barking, She did a U-turn in the kitchen and then went racing back to the girl's room. She is having a seizure," the mother told me. The girl's father got up, in what seemed to me a casual manner for someone whose daughter often stopped breathing, and walked back to the bedroom after Queenie. My concern must have been evident on my face because the girl's mother stated, "I know what you are thinking, but you see, that's not the bark Queenie uses when my daughter stops breathing."

What embodied knowing does Queenie exhibit? Can it be said that Queenie is connected with her mistress soul to soul? As Queenie puts her ear to the girl's mouth, how does she know the voice of the girl's soul, calling out for assistance?

Recently at a conference, I, too, witnessed this powerful connection between a seizure alert dog and her human companion. In this case, it was truly a situation of human companion and animal guardian as the dog stood a quiet vigil over her human friend. As I watched, the dog's eyes never strayed from the woman's face. There was an intense quiet alertness despite the mayhem of activity within the room. At the same time, it was so very evident to me that there was intense love and unconditional acceptance from the dog, that perhaps was not present to this woman within her circle of humans. Again, I am called to summon within myself, a connection far too powerful for my own human language, a connection, that perhaps for me, defies description within the written text. This language was truly the language of love and a bond so deep that two souls were truly hailing one another.

Caring as Be-coming—Healing

What is the nature of healing? Historically, healing dogs in ancient times were named cynotherapists (Thurston, 1996). In essence, the cynotherapist would diagnose and relieve suffering through contact with the ill human, usually in the form of the proverbial 'lick.' In more recent times, contact with a companion animal is documented in the April, 1989 issue of *Lancet*, a British medical journal. A companion dog's "diagnosis" and "treatment" of a skin lesion is explained by the dog's behaviors of constantly sniffing and attempting to remove the skin lesion from the guardian's leg. The dog's behavior caused the woman to promptly seek medical treatment for the lesion that proved to be cancerous (in Thurston, 1996).

To the Native Americans, medicine was simply that which healed. The word medicine derives from the Latin, *mederi*, to heal (Ayto, 1990, p. 344). Derived from

the same root as medicine is the word remedy. How do the stories of animals provide a remedy, a medicine toward our own healing?

Schoen (2001) retells a story of an aged couple, who when faced with a terminal diagnosis of their dog, find a self healing through the magic of their shaman dog's being:

In a conversation that I found particularly moving, the Greenes [the couple] told me that their experience with Princess [the dog] helped them develop more loving, nurturing relationship with one another, as well as with their children. They had grown to realize that as they had aged, they had shut down emotionally and turned inward. They had each stopped showing each other—and their loved ones—how much they cared and how grateful they were for one another's existence. Now, having been able to experience this kind of expressive love for their dog, they were becoming more emotionally available to each other as well as to all their family and friends. (pp. 85-86)

In what manner did Princess facilitate their uncovering of self? How did the presence of Princess begin to peel away layers of inauthenticity within her human guardians?

The most poignant part of this story is the fact that Princess was diagnosed with a terminal disease with an extremely fast demise; however, Princess managed to “stay” with the Greenes’ until they could acknowledge that which they had learned from her. Thus, Princess draws forth a notion of healing as a “matter of meaning” (Moyers, 1993, p. 22). What sense of “temporality” dwells within Princess? What is her connection with knowing?

In a similar story, Yvonne Martell relates how she is re-membered by playing a childhood game with her dog, Cocoa, during her senior years:

He is a wonderful companion. When I throw a ball for him, he picks it up in his mouth and throws it back to me. We sometimes play a game I played as a child—but never with a dog. He puts his paw on my hand, I cover it with my other hand, he puts his paw on top, and I slide my hand out from underneath the pile and lay it on top and so on. (as cited in Canfield, et al., 1998, p. 132)

Martell continues with her story that reflects Cocoa's amazing capacity for healing by actual physical contact:

...But two years ago, Cocoa started acting strangely. I was sitting on the floor playing with him, when he started pawing and sniffing at the right side of my chest. He had never done anything like this ever before and I told him, "No." With Cocoa, one "no" is usually sufficient, but not that day. He stopped briefly, then suddenly ran toward me from the other side of the room, throwing his entire weight—eighteen pounds—at the right side of my chest. He crashed into me and I yelped in pain. It hurt more than I thought it should have. Soon after this, I felt a lump and was diagnosed with cancer. When cancer starts, for unknown reasons, a wall of calcium builds. Then the lump or cancer attaches itself to this wall. When Cocoa jumped on me, the force of the impact broke the lump away from the calcium wall. This made it possible for me to notice the lump. Before that, there was no way for me to see or feel it...The doctors told me that had the cancer gone undetected, it would have been too late. Was Cocoa aware of just what he was doing? (as cited in Canfield, et al., 1998, p. 133)

The verbalization of this simple question allows us to ponder the healing "knowing" of Cocoa. What connection existed? What extensions of senses unseen, as described by Beston (1928/1977) did Cocoa possess?

Caring as Be-coming—Re-membering

Animals assist us in our pursuit of wholeness by re membering us. This re-membering frequently takes the form of a teaching or a memory, long ago forgotten or hidden within ourselves. By caring for us and giving us voice, through esoterical means, animals provide for us a connection to the world through this special language.

The animals are speaking to us, through us, and with us. They are coming to us, not only in our dreams, but also in our lives. Perhaps in these moments of their disappearance and endangerment, they are offering themselves in the unknown ways of the past...and we are beginning to re-member and understand their lives and their many languages. (Hogan, Mentzger, & Peterson, 1998, p. xvi)

Jill (a preliminary participant) describes watching her dog, Molly, play in the snow: "It is such a joy to see her play. I had almost forgotten what it is like to play like

that when I was a kid...just play.” A story is recounted from the journal of Dian Fossey, environmentalist and researcher about her experience with a gorilla:

The nearest female was old Effie, mother of six, whom I had known since 1967. She'd had a new baby in my absence, little Maggie...Effie glanced my way while chewing on a stalk of celery. She looked away, then did a double-take myopic scrutiny as if not believing her eyes. Then she tossed the celery stalks aside and began walking rapidly toward me...Meantime Tuck, another female I had known nearly as long, appeared out of the underbrush and started to pick Maggie up...then Tuck too did a second take. She dropped Maggie and walked right up in front of me, resting her weight on her arms so that her face was level with mine and only a couple of inches away. She stared intently into my eyes, and it was eye-to-eye contact for thirty or forty seconds. Not knowing quite what to do, for I had never had this reaction from gorillas before, I squished myself flat on the bed of vegetation. Whereupon she smelled my head and neck, then lay down beside me...and embraced me. (Fossey, 1983, pp. 71-78)

What sense of completeness of self or self-identity emerges for review from Fossey's experience through her encounter with a gorilla? How is she re-collected, gathered again, through be-ing re-membered?

Caring as Be-coming—Teaching

Zukav (1989) notes that while perception with the five senses reveals our world, it is, actually, multisensory perception that allows for a true knowing, a crossing of boundaries between the Self and the Other. Multisensory perception is awareness with the soul rather than the mind. The soul knows through the use of intuition. Thus, animals open to us different ways of knowing, exposing alternate realities.

Teaching is the creation of a caring community. To re-inhabit a place, one must possess and embody an ecological perspective that encompasses interconnections, and extends beyond the technical knowing realm to embrace an ethical and spiritual knowing (McClintock, 1994). How do animals open or reveal

how one comes to know? In what manner do animals transform our lives? Palmer (1993) relates that community is clearly central to four issues that have long been basic to the life of the mind: “the nature of reality (ontology), how we come to know reality (epistemology), how we teach and learn (pedagogy), and how education forms or deforms our lives in the world (ethics)” (p. xiii).

The theme of knowing ourselves through animals appears again and again in the theories of the origins of consciousness (Hillman, 1997). The anthropologist Loren Eisely has said this, but until I read Hillman’s book, I was not ready to understand. “One does not meet oneself until one catches the reflection from an eye other than human” (as cited in Lasher, 1996, p. 5). Kowalski (1991) writes, “We need a sense of our own possibilities and limits, and we find them not only in the artificial rules and restraints imposed by human society, but in the lessons for living suggested by biology and the earth itself...In a fundamental way, we need other creatures to tell us who we are” (p. 132).

A knowing of self through an encounter with an animal can lead to the calling for life’s vocation or purpose. Jeff Werber, a veterinarian, recounts a childhood story of an accidental attack by the family dog, Baron, that led him down the path to veterinary medicine:

My parents rushed me to the emergency room, where I had immediate reconstructive surgery. When they brought me home, all stitched and bandaged, they put me straight to bed. When Dad came up to check on me a little while later, he stopped in the doorway to my room, startled by the scene in front of him. Baron had crept into my room. The dog had nudged my elbow with his nose, and by continuing his nudging, had managed to work his head under my arm so that my arm lay across his shoulders. He rested his big black head on my sleeping chest and sat there as still as a statue. Watching and guarding, he conducted a vigil of apology and love. My father said that Baron never moved, but held the same position through the long hours of the night.

When I think of Baron, I hardly remember his fierceness; instead, I recall the weight of his head on my chest and the concern in his expressive eyes. I had talked about wanting to be a veterinarian even before this incident, and my love for animals actually grew stronger after experiencing Baron's true display of sorrow. (as cited in Canfield, Hansen, Becker & Kline, 1998, p. 373)

In another story, an injury to an eye as a young boy transforms the path of a future scientist, Edward Wilson, a world-renowned entomologist who has studied ants for over fifty years. Wilson relates in his autobiography that his fascination for ants grew out of his vision entailing an exceptional myopic capacity in his uninjured eye, eliminating all opportunities to observe other creatures due to the injury (Lauck, 1998). Ants were seen as ready and easily observable subjects. Interestingly enough, Wilson's admitted learning disability once again allowed him to reconstruct knowledge with new images found in his ants (Evans, 1986).

I am summoned once again to re-call myself to caring through the teaching of my childhood beings, the ants. Again, animals exhibit a pedagogy of teaching that opens to reveal "multiple realities" (Greene, 1995b, p. 94). I experience a shift in perception. I be-come present.

Caring as Be-coming—Presence

Animals are our soul mates. A soul mate, as suggested by Moore (1994) is "a being with whom we feel profoundly connected, as though the communication and communing which takes place between us occurs effortlessly, not the product of intention, rather by divine grace" (p. 5). In my preliminary conversations, Jill speaks of these soul mate connections that provide her with a path inside of herself, into her own psych, "If I get upset she senses it right away. [She] really is in tune with my feelings." Donna describes her connections to her cat, Tinkerbelle, long after her death,

“There is not a day which goes by when I do not think of her and somehow, I know she thinks of me too.”

Sandy (a preliminary participant) recounts her astonishment over a “conversation” with her bird, Honey, in which following discharge from the hospital, the bird sensing Sandy’s physical needs, asks a pertinent question. In Sandy’s words, “I felt like there was someone looking over my shoulder. I turned to see Honey had entered my bedroom. All of a sudden, Honey asked, ‘How are you doing.’ ... ‘All right?’ ... I was astounded.”

Animals heal us by their unconditional love for us. Susan Race (as cited in Canfield, et al., 1998) tells a story of her adoption of a dog from an animal shelter:

People spend their whole lives searching for love. I was no different. Until one day, I decided to look in the cages at the local pound. And there was love waiting for me... And from the moment I claimed him, he gave his heart to me completely... I named the dog, Tugs, because he tugged at my heart strings, and I did all I could to make his life a happy one. In return, Tugs brought new meaning to the word, adoration. Wherever I went, he wanted to be there too. He never took his eyes off of me and with a simple glance in his direction, his whole body wagged with happiness. Despite his many handicaps and increasingly failing health, his enthusiasm for life was amazing... We were together for over a year. And constantly during that time, I felt a silent current of love from him—strong, steady and deep---unceasingly flowing to me. When it was time for the vet to end his suffering, I held his paw in my hands, the tears falling on his old muzzle and watched as he gently fell asleep. Even in my sadness, I was grateful for his gift of love. For someone who has never had this kind of experience with a pet, there are no words to adequately explain it. But if you have loved an animal in this way and have been loved in return, nothing more needs to be said. (pp. 41-43)

Schoen (2001) relates the following story about Megan, a stray golden retriever whom he adopts. Through Megan’s healing capacities, a transformation of remembering, re-turning, and re-knowing occurs within Schoen:

[Attending a house-call] I am the veterinarian. Megan is my attending assistant, nurse, and helpmate... Jesse is a Jersey cow, trying desperately to

deliver her calf and is clearly in trouble...Upon our approach, Megan 'attends' to Amy, an eight-year old whose face is wet with tears...[While I examine Jesse] Megan is ambling back and forth from Amy to her parents. She seems to understand her surroundings from having assisted me on so many late-night and early morning calls, and she knows that her job is to calm the nervous people by being present and loving, wagging her tail, licking everyone at the most appropriate times.

When she sees Jesse starting to strain once again, she approaches carefully, as though to make sure that the cow, who has met her many times before, recognizes her and accepts her presence. Once Megan feels she has a clear signal, she starts licking Jesse's face. The contact seems to have both a calming and revitalizing effect on the struggling animal. As I watch, I wonder what is going on in Megan's mind: Is this some form of interspecies maternal empathy?...Can she sense the cow's anxiety?...[Following the birth of the calf] Jesse allows Megan to assist her in cleaning off of the placenta...On the ride home, I simply ask Megan, "How do you know how to do all of this?" (pp. 5-8)

Although Megan does not provide Schoen the luxury of a reply in that moment, she provided Schoen with numerous instances and experiences of her healing in the years that followed. In summary, he describes Megan's healing powers as follows:

Throughout the rest of her life, Megan taught me that a healing power exists outside of Western medicine. My more scientifically minded peers might tell me that my companion was just a loving golden retriever exhibiting typical canine behavior patterns. I believe she was more than that. Megan was my teacher, a Florence Nightingale in canine clothing. She helped me realize that other species have a great deal to offer humankind...She guided me to open up my heart space after it had been shut down during veterinary school, where animals' feelings and emotions were not acknowledged. Megan was my door back to my childhood and my memories of being a boy who loved spending time with animals more than anything else. (Schoen, 2001, p. 8)

Thus, animals are present to us when we dare to enter the eyes of the Other. Jill finds joy and comfort within the eyes of her dog, Lady: "Seeing the joy in her eyes, made me remember my own childhood." Donna finds a sense of self within the eyes of her cat, Tinkerbelle: "I see something of myself when I look in her eyes."

Crossing Borders: Caring, Teaching, Healing and Being in Place

The use of an ending story explicates these intricate bonds of person, animal, and place. Brenda Peterson (1995) relates a story of the finding of Self within the face of the Other. By the act of seeing herself within the face of the Other, she finds a place to belong.

“Seagulls memorize your face,” the old man called out to me as he strode past on his daily walk. I stood on the seawall feeding the flock of gray-and-white gulls who also make this Puget Sound beach their home...I meet this man many days on the beach but we rarely talk; we perform our simple chores; I feed the gulls, he keeps his legs and his heart moving. But between us there is an understanding that these tasks are as important as anything else in our lives; maybe they even keep us alive. Certainly our relationship with each other and with this windswept Northwest beach is more than a habit. It is a bond, an unspoken treaty we’ve made with the territory we call home.

The Hopi Indians of Arizona believe that our daily rituals and prayers literally keep this world spinning on its axis. For me, feeding the gulls is one of those everyday prayers. When I walk out of my front door and cross the street to the seawall, they caw welcome, their wings almost touching me as they sail low over my shoulders, then hover overhead, midair. Sometimes if it’s been raining, their feathers flick water droplets onto my face like sprinklings of holy water...Before moving into the house; I stood on the beach and fed the gulls in thanksgiving. They floated above my head; I felt surrounded by little angels. Then I realized that these were the same gulls from two miles down the beach near my old home--there was that bit of fish line wrapped around a familiar webbed foot, that wounded wing and the distinct markings of a young gray gull, one of my favorite fliers...Perhaps the old man was right? The seagulls may have memorized my face and followed me—but I had also, quite without realizing it, memorized them. And I knew then that I was no newcomer here, not a nomad blown by changeable autumn winds. It is not to any house, but to this beach I have bonded. I belong alongside this rocky inlet with its salt tides, its pine-tiered, green islands, it is gulls who remember us even when we have forgotten ourselves. (Peterson, 1995, pp. 174-177)

The intimate topography of being in place by being remembered and made whole is, thus, fashioned by the animal cartographer. The animal cartographer takes the ground of our very being and creates maps of caring. Chapter Three commences

with the conversation of animal ontology. This question of animal ontology transforms into a firm topography for a terrain of philosophical grounding.

CHAPTER THREE:
THE DIVERSE TERRAIN OF THE JOURNEY:
TRAVERSING YELLOW BRICK ROADS
OF METHODOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHICAL GROUNDING

To uncover further or expose the phenomenon of animals as teachers and healers, I must situate myself within a diverse terrain. Heidegger (1979/1985) explains that “To situate is both to point to the proper place or site of something and to heed that place or site” (p. 173). By acknowledging this diverse terrain, I give special attention to this place of methodology and philosophical grounding, the dwelling site of my phenomenon of interest: companion animals as teachers and healers. I traverse this terrain moving across, backwards and forwards hermeneutically, to seek points of connection.

Points of Connection: In-Between Places

In order to commence with a sense of situatedness within the diverse terrain of methodology and philosophical grounding, I must heed those places and points of connection that call out to me, gathering me into their essence and mystery. Within this calling lies a notion of a place yet unnamed. Heidegger (1971) reflects upon this act of calling:

The naming calls. Calling brings closer what it calls...Thus it brings the presence of what was previously uncalled into a nearness...The calling calls itself and therefore is always here and there—here into presence, there into absence...The place of arrival which is also called in the calling is a presence sheltered in absence. The naming call bids things to come into such an arrival. Bidding is inviting. It invites things in, so that they may bear upon man [sic] as things. (pp. 198-199)

The dichotomy of both presence and absence opens to a place that I name the in-between, a place Heidegger (1971) describes as a “point of penetration, intimacy

and *dif-ference*, a carrying-toward” (p. 202). Points of connection lie within this intimate realm of the in-between, the space between an epistemology of knowing and an epistemology of that which I seek; it is a space of questions within an ontological and ontical pursuit regarding animals as teachers and healers. In what manner can this space of “*dif-ference*” be opened through further questions? What are the penetrating points of connection? Through these points of connection, what are the latitudes or possibilities for understanding?

The act of questioning calls forth a naming. Within the words of the poet, Rilke (2001), I begin to sense this dichotomy of presence and absence and an invitation to reside within the language of my questions:

Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a foreign language. Don’t search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything, live the questions now. (pp. 34-35)

To situate myself within my questions is to find a sense of homecoming and peace. It is an opening to a presence within my current absence of self. This situatedness, the merging or inter-twining of my outer and inner landscapes creates, as Greene (1978) would contend, the public and private spheres for attunement or hearkening. As Moore (2000) so significantly describes:

There are places in this world that are neither here nor there, neither up nor down, neither real nor imaginary. These are in the in-between places, difficult to find and even more challenging to sustain. Yet they are the most fruitful places of all. For in these limited narrows a kind of life takes place that is out of the ordinary, creative, and once in a while genuinely magical. We tend to divide life between mind and matter and to assume that we must be in one or the other or both. But religion and folklore tell of another place that is often found by accident, where strange events take place, and where we learn things that can’t be discovered in any other way. (Available on-line)

This place of in-betweenness within the Celtic world, is a threshold, a point of crossing over (O'Donohue, 1997). This place of in-betweenness or threshold is also what Heidegger (1971) would contend is a “ground-beam that bears the doorway as a whole, sustains the middle in which the two, the outside and the inside penetrate each other, bearing the between” (p. 204). Thus, these places of in-betweenness are the terrain of contradiction and paradox where tensions abound. Levinas (1993) speaks of the “between” as a place of co-presence, *co-esse* (p. 23), a space of speculative domain, “neither representing knowledge or ontology” (p. xx). The place of in-betweenness is one of dormancy and transformation, rest and migration. Through such tensions, we remain alive. As Greene (1978) reflects, we are transfixed into the state of “wide-awakefulness” (p. 163).

While certainly this in-between place may be viewed as somewhat difficult terrain, it becomes a necessary part of the journey of navigation toward and within the phenomenon of companion animals as teachers and healers. As O'Donohue (1997) so eloquently notes, “This contradiction is the creative force within the soul which demands an ethic of authenticity, opening up the space for an alternate conversation to occur” (pp. 114-115).

What alternate conversations are opened in this place? What questions emerge to rest upon and ponder? What questions respond to our sense of urgency of migration, moving toward a closer connection to the phenomenon of companion animals as teachers and healers? What are the questions of exploration through which my methodology will take me? In what manner does the sense of animal ontology make this place of in-betweenness known intimately to me?

This chapter pursues and exposes in-between places, revealing that which was previously concealed regarding the phenomenon of companion animals as teachers and healers. Phenomenological inquiry as a methodology of research is conducive to this in-between space of questions, a place of support for entering questions and exiting understandings of circular directions.

Lastly, the diverse terrain of philosophical grounding is charted in relation to the phenomenon of this study. The threshold of philosophical grounding evokes a sense of presence, as well as absence, within the ontology of language and being. In essence, this diverse terrain of hermeneutic phenomenology calls forth a ground of what Heidegger (1971) maintains as “pain,” the joining agent that divides and gathers, a joining of the threshold of outer and inner. I am beckoned toward initial ventures into the realm of possibility and magic in the in-between spaces.

A Place of Possibility: Magical Moments

What is the in-between space where magic occurs, transforming our very perceptions? Through magic, that which was not visible to the eye becomes visible. Perhaps it can be said that magic is synonymous with a heeding, careful attunement (Heidegger, 1962), “a true wondering-at” (van Manen, 1990, p. 12), that is made visible to us within the world. This visibility evolves and emerges within a sense of corporeality or embodiment. To open this conversation regarding “the invisible made visible,” I evoke the sense of possibility and extend an invitation to perhaps alter our corporeality and embody the beingness of the Other.

Be-coming a Unicorn

The spirit of possibilities transforms this space of in-betweenness. The in-between space shines its creativity and becomes an abode of belonging for the soul (Matthews, 1999). How do caring and knowing, and a change in perception, mold or create a space and place of creation and transformation? Abram (1996) reflects on this space of in-betweenness and possibility. He invites us to be-come the magician or unicorn, who having lived with another tribe,

can never truly return to his own. Rather the magician lingers outside of this community, being open to the flapping of wings and shifting voices that crawl over the city...and moving along these walls, he may find the answers to how those walls were constructed, and how a simple boundary became a barrier, -- only if the moment is timely, that is, if the margin he frequents is a temporal as well as spatial edge, and that the temporal structure that it bounds is about to dissolve, or metamorphose, not something else. (pp. 28-29)

The unicorn is a legendary beast evolving within the text of history from the rhinoceros or from a sideways perception of an antelope (Ayto, 1990). In short, how is the ordinary beauty of the horse an embodiment of the wise concept of animals, transformed into the extra-ordinary be-ing of the unicorn, the mystical? A poem by Rilke embraces this backward and forward motion along this question:

This is the creature there has never been.
They never knew it, and yet, none the less,
They loved the way it moved, its suppleness,
Its neck, its very gaze, mild and serene.
Not there, because they loved it, it behaved as though it were.
They always left some space.
And in that clear unpeopled space they saved.
It rightly reared its head, with scarce a trace of not being there.
They fed it, not with corn,
But only with the possibility of being.
And that was able to confer such strength,
Its brow put forth a horn. One horn.
Whitley it stole up to a maid to be

Within the silver mirror and in her.
(1957/1977, p. 98)

What is this possibility of being ascribed within Rilke's poem? In what manner, as Rilke suggests, does the unicorn's possibility for be-ing project toward and be-come our own sense of possibility, or as Heidegger proposes (1953/1996) "the possibility of existing as a whole *potentiality-of-being*" (p. 244)? Within the gaze toward an animal, what is reflected back within the in-between space of the mirror?

Shape Shifting

Perception is paradoxical. The perceived object itself is paradoxical; it exists only so far as someone can perceive it (Merleau Ponty, 1962). Ellsworth (1997) reveals the meaning of paradox as portraying that which is contrary to received opinion or expectation, a phenomenon that exhibits some conflict with preconceived notions of what is reasonable or possible. Thus, the paradox of the connection between animals and people calls forth tensions. As Ellsworth (1997) suggests, it is within these tensions that "a blurring of boundaries, a transgression or crossing over of the boundaries of the Self and the Other addresses the in-betweenness of the Like and the Other" (p. 178). May Sarton (1957/1983) eloquently describes this blurring of boundaries in her story of her cat, Tom Jones, and his relationship with two humans, Gentle Voice and Brusque Voice:

It is all in the name "Fur Person," he decided then—not really a name at all, but way of describing the relationship between a Gentleman Cat and his true friends among the human people. For a Fur *Person*, he saw in his state of extreme concentration, is not just an ordinary cat. He is a cat who is also a person. And Tom Jones realized that he had called himself the Fur Person when he did not really know what a Fur *Person* is for a Fur *Person* is a cat whom human beings love in the right way, allowing him to keep his dignity, his reserve and his freedom. And a Fur Person is a cat who has come to love one, or, in very exceptional cases, two human beings, and who has decided to

stay with them as long as he lives. This can only happen if the human being has imagined part of himself into a cat (Tom Jones had noticed that Brusque Voice sometimes tried to purr) just as the cat has imagined part of himself into a human being. It is a mutual exchange. (p. 105)

How can the mystical perception of animals be embraced? What are the possibilities for the connection between animals and people? In what manner can I effectively dwell within the in-between space, open to tensions and contradictions but at the same time, maintain a strong, oriented relationship to the phenomenon of companion animals as teachers and healers? As previously noted, in order to dwell within this space, I need to bring forth phenomenology as a mode of inquiry for my study.

Venturing-in: Hermeneutic Phenomenology as Opening to the In-Between Place

Phenomenology is “the study of lived experience or lifeworld” (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). It is both descriptive and interpretive or hermeneutical. According to Heidegger (1953/1996), phenomenology “is the art of let [ting] that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself” (pp. 26-27), authentically. Phenomenology attempts to describe a phenomenon by allowing this self-showing of a phenomenon, or the “speaking for itself of a phenomenon” (van Manen, 1990, p. 180), through descriptions of the lifeworld in such forms as written text or works of art.

Thus, as a mode of inquiry, phenomenology opens up the in-between places to enhance our understanding within the world. “Human beings are defined by their self-understandings and the stand they take-upon-themselves, which in turn opens to a wide range of possibilities within the world” (Benner, 1994, p. ix). “Phenomenology

as a study of essences” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. vii), captures a life experience in such a way that this life experience is opened for viewing in an alternate manner (van Manen, 1990), lending to the spirit of possibility.

Hermeneutic phenomenology as an in-between space allows for sites or locations to be generated. A location as a point of connection makes the in-between space intimately known, providing support within itself, as it brings forth the true meaning or essence of a phenomenon. Many sites or locations are brought forward within hermeneutic phenomenology. The sites of these locations lend “in-sight” into this mode of inquiry; as Heidegger (1971) notes, “Spaces receive their being from locations” (p. 154). Two prominent sites or locales within phenomenology emerge from this act of understanding our lifeworld: interpretation and the hermeneutic circle.

The Locale of Voice: Interpretation

“All interpretation is grounded in understanding,” (Heidegger, 1953/1996, p. 144). Within phenomenology we immerse ourselves in the site of interpretation. “Hermeneutics, the work of interpretation, is the phenomenology of Da-sein or Being” (Heidegger, 1953/1996, p. 33). To interpret is to move back and forth along a hermeneutical pathway, from inside to outside, in an attempt to bring into view a fuller understanding of what it means to be human. Heidegger (1953/1996) contends, “Interpretation is existentially based in understanding and not the other way around” (p. 139). Thus, interpretation encompasses a notion of temporality through its movement. This movement also is governed historically in that as humans we bring a sense of already being “related to the phenomenon,” reminiscent of a notion of situatedness within the phenomenon of study.

Hermeneutic phenomenology as a mode of inquiry into the lived experience of nurse educators' being-with companion animals addresses their situatedness and relatedness within this life-world, providing insights for understanding relationships with companion animals. This situatedness and relatedness is based upon interpretation, "the development of possibilities projected in understanding" (Heidegger, 1953/1996, p. 139).

In-Site: Situatedness

The participants in this inquiry (all nurse educators) share common background meanings and situatedness within the world at large, and in the world of nurse education. The manifestation or bringing forth of situatedness is as Heidegger (1953/1996) notes an, "*a priori* existential constitution of understanding" (p. 140). As Heidegger further elaborates, these *a priori* understandings constitute the grounding or legends for interpretation: *fore-having*, "an interpretation based upon a totality of relevance" (p. 140), *foresight*, "an approach that has been taken in fore-having with a definite interpretation in view" (p. 141), and *fore-conception*, "an interpretation decided upon a definite conceptuality" (p. 141).

Plager (1994) helps to expand upon these three legends for interpretation as used in my study: *fore-having* is coming to a situation with a practical familiarity in that participants are all immersed within the world of nurse education; *fore-sight* is a point of view from which interpretation is possible in that these nurse faculty maintain a sense of fragmentation within the world of nurse education; and *fore-conception* is a notion among participants of the identity companion animals possess within the world through their interactions with human beings.

In-Site: Relatedness

The legend of fore-conception emerges from within a site of participant relatedness to companion animals within-the-world. As Gadamer (1960/1998) states:

Hermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond to the subject matter that comes into language through the traditionary text and has, or acquires, a connection with the tradition from which the text speaks. (p. 295)

These connections within the text are brought into view by the common and shared meanings among participants, along with individual interpretations of experiences of being-with companion animals. Gadamer (1960/1998) notes, as well, a sense of tension within this relatedness to the phenomenon and the text projected for understanding. He describes this tension as “the play of the strange and the familiar” (p. 295). It is within the bounds of this arena of the strange and familiar that “the true locus of hermeneutics” is manifested, “the in-between” (p. 295). Once again, I am called to dwell within this place of magic, further opened through the hermeneutical act of interpretation.

Thus, these shared understandings of being-in-the-world allow for the engaging process of interpretation as a mode of inquiry within-the-world. Heidegger (1957/1996) explains:

Interpretation does not, so to speak, throw a “significance” over what is nakedly objectively present and does not stick a value on it, but what is encountered in the world is always already in a relevance which is disclosed in the understanding of the world, a relevance which is made explicit by interpretation...(p. 140)...The interpretation of something is essentially grounded in fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception...(p. 141)

Therefore, it is this totality of interpretation that promotes a sense of relatedness among the participants, as all constitute the “hermeneutical situation”

(Heidegger, 1957/1996, p. 214), lending toward the “potentiality-of-being or authenticity” (p. 215) within the world. There is potentiality-for-being among participants manifested within a sense of community. As Greene (1995b) explains, “To open up our experience to existential possibilities of multiple kinds is to extend and deepen what each of us thinks of when he or she speaks of community” (p. 161). Among the participants, a greater expansiveness of the notion of community is created, one to be inclusive of companion animals.

These three fore-structures of interpretation and understanding lend to the second locale of hermeneutic phenomenology, the hermeneutic circle, described below. However, at this point, it becomes important to note that the fore-understandings provide an entrance into the hermeneutic circle of interpretation. The pillars of fore-understandings create an anticipatory movement within the act of understanding. This act of understanding is comprised of the parts and the whole of the hermeneutic circle. I now open to the insights offered within the hermeneutic circle.

The Locale of In-Sight: The Hermeneutic Circle

Hermeneutical interpretations are based upon a circular meandering through the essence or showing of a phenomenon. These meanderings dwell within the hermeneutic circle, the site of integrative human understanding. Through engagement with the act of interpretation in relation to a phenomenon of interest, the hermeneutic circle of understanding is dynamic, possessing a temporal quality and expansiveness as new understandings are brought forth. Gadamer (1960/1998) describes the hermeneutic circle:

The circle then is not formal in nature. It is neither subjective nor objective, but describes understanding as the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter... Tradition is not simply a permanent precondition; rather, we produce it ourselves, inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of the tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves. Thus the circle of understanding is not a “methodological” circle, but describes an element of the ontological structure of understanding. The circle, which is fundamental to all understanding, has a further hermeneutic implication which I call the “fore-conception of completeness”... a text should completely express its meaning—but also what it says should be the complete truth. (pp. 293-294)

Therefore, the hermeneutical circle is representative of the proverbial snake, seen by graphic representation as swallowing its tail, for through hermeneutical interpretive acts and questions, we swallow ourselves, leaving our sense of ontology to embrace the ontology of the Other—questioning our understandings within the lifeworld, emerging with a sense of wholeness of self.

The hermeneutic circle represents an integrative aspect of human understanding (Bonetkoe, 1996). It has within its grasp both the whole of the circle and the parts contained within this circle of understanding. The circle has two primary poles or locales for understanding: ontology and epistemology. Thus, through interpretation we can enter the hermeneutic circle of understanding through questioning, coming to know a question regarding being-in-the-world. Since the circle’s foundation is the act of hermeneutical interpretation, there is a sense of temporality within its site. It is through this sense of temporality that the hermeneutic circle refrains from a blind chasing of one’s tail; through our understandings new insights into our being and our relationship to the phenomenon of interest are constantly being created.

It is not to be reduced to the level of a vicious circle, or even of a circle, which is merely tolerated. In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most

primordial kind of knowing, and we genuinely grasp this possibility only when we have understood that our first, last, and constant task in interpreting is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves. (Heidegger, 1953/1996, p. 153)

In closing, the hermeneutical circle embraces our humanness and our human journey through life's meanings. The hermeneutical circle is a true reflection of what it means to be-in-the-world.

Venturing With-in: The Terrain of Philosophical Grounding as In-Between Place

Van Manen (1990) states, "Phenomenological research is a search for what it means to be human, to be-come more fully who we are" (p. 12). This search for meanings within hermeneutical phenomenology is akin to the "mythological god of wild meanings, Hermes, from whom hermeneutics is named" (Levin, 1999, p. 238). The in-between place of philosophical grounding is transformed to the kingdom of Hermes through the revelations of concealed meanings.

Philosophical grounding is entrenchment within the terrain of ontology or being and the manifestations of this ontology. The philosophical exploration of ontology evokes the terrain of dwelling or being-in-the-world. To dwell within the world denotes a traveling of the topography of language and a topography of the body. To be guided through the topography of language and body, in short, is to be called to the essence of our humanness and the essence of the Other.

To ground phenomenology as a methodology makes reference to the identity of the Other in human experience. Most significantly, it is the identity of the Human Other that is addressed. As Dallery (1999) notes, "While phenomenologists make

much of the roles of Others in the development of the human individual, they almost always mean human Others, not animal Others. This exclusion is remarkable” (p. 267). In what manner has the identity of animal Others been concealed? What topography remains to be discovered? Within the realm of my human experience, how can animal Others be described to reflect a true ontology?

In order to address these entering questions, I turn-toward the terrain of ontology of the Self and the Other. Following an exploration of this terrain, I re-turn to the topographical notions of language and the body as epistemologies. Following these notions of language and the body, I venture into the terrain of caring, a blended region reflecting the points of connection between latitudes and longitudes of language and body.

The Ontology of Be-ing in-Between: A Map of Oz, Kansas

Throughout Chapter One, I have explored an opening to this space of the in-between through my re-inhabitation of the in-between places of ancient map legends during childhood and my evolution as a nurse educator within the ecotones offered by Krall (1994). Akin to Dorothy, who transverses the in-between place of the land of Oz, I, too, am a dweller within the in-between places. I acknowledge my home place within its borders.

The land of Oz as an “in-between” place emerges with a sense of possibility. Travels within Oz are founded within the metaphorical leaving of a homeland, Kansas, entering untraveled terrain of the in-between, and a re-turn to a homeland. Thus, within ontological notions, there is a traveling from the Self toward the possibility of

the Other and a re-turn to the Self through transformation. Within this in-between space a kinship develops.

An Ontology of Shoes

When Dorothy donned the Silver Shoes, popularly known as the Ruby Slippers, within Oz, she experienced a sense of power and perhaps invisibility in the face of danger. Dorothy sensed the power of the shoes and their magical qualities inherent within them. The power of the shoes is reflected in the understandings of the Self she masters through encounters with the Others. Within the magical slippers, Dorothy finds her innate ability to re-turn home. In essence, the shoes transformed Dorothy's bodily being or very ontology through the manner in which Dorothy experienced her lifeworld. Thus, to open to the question of ontology is contingent upon a symbolic donning of these "ruby slippers" for travel.

Two prominent locales are opened for further review: the philosophic underpinnings of ontology as described by Heidegger and the French phenomenologist, Levinas. These writings of ontology are addressed in the spirit of progression and transformation as we dwell initially within the fundamental ontology of Heidegger. This Heideggerian exploration provides an opening to the transformative, ethical notions of the ontology of Levinas.

The Ontology of Dorothy and Toto: Heidegger's Stance

To commence a conversation regarding human ontology and animal ontology it becomes necessary to bring forth the notion of exclusion. Dallery (1999) reminds us that "A logic of exclusion works by starting with an assumption of difference, often an assumption of uniqueness, and then proceeds to a question about the content or nature

or worth of that difference” (p. 253). This arena or language of exclusion must be addressed on an individual basis. What is the question of animal Being? By what means is the Other known? Is this as Beston (1928/1977) suggests, an experience of mystery or a wise knowing?

To open a conversation of ontology is a venturing-within the phenomenological philosophy of Martin Heidegger. While the ontologies of human being and animal being are entertained separately within the following discussion, one can note the in-between spaces for reflection within the ontology of humanness and the ontology of an animal. Within these spaces we can rest and pause, basking within the tensions of unanswered questions.

Be-ing Dorothy. Prior to entering the space of in-betweenness, we must pause to un-cover a philosophical grounding for our human being-ness within-the-world, for as previously surmised, it is through a reflection on ourselves we can begin to know the Other. Heidegger addressed a shift in philosophy from Cartesian epistemology to one of ontology, or what it means to be a person-in-the-world. This significant shift in thinking from the Cartesian view of person as subject and the world as object is replaced by a progressive view of a person, as a being possessing a body as opposed to having a body. Within this view, the person comes to know the world through the soul as opposed to the mind. These premises are fundamental to hermeneutic phenomenology.

For Heidegger (1953/1996) human being-ness is defined within the ontic and ontological language of *Da-sein*. To be human is described by Heidegger in the following passage:

Da-sein is a being that does not simply occur among other beings. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its being this being is concerned about its very being...The ontic distinction for Da-sein lies in the fact that it is ontological...Understanding of being is itself a determination of being Da-sein. (p. 10)

Heidegger, thus, makes an important distinction about our human being-ness: that of a determination of our essences or ontic qualities, and that of the question of our very existence, ontology. In order to ascertain these ontic essences and ontological attributes, we, as humans are called upon to relate in one way or another within the world, our existence [*Existenz*], for “Da-sein always understands itself in terms of its existence, in terms of the possibility to be itself or not to be itself” (p. 10). A fundamental way of being-in-the-world is caring. This concept is addressed later.

Da-sein is literally a “being-there,” within the world, situated within time and space. As Beston (1928/1977) suggests, “We are fellow travelers with animals” (p. 25). In a fundamental sense, without turning toward the presence of animals within-the-world, do we fail to reach our true potential as humans? I revisit the words of Kowalski (1999) who eloquently describes, “In a fundamental way, we need other creatures to tell us who we are” (p. 132).

Be-ing Toto. The question of “being Toto” only can be responded to or understood in terms of our own human notion of experience or “cross-species conviviality” (Acampora, 1999, p. 118). For Heidegger (1953/1996), human relationships within-the-world are evidenced through the capacity of a human being toward that of the other entities within-the-world. In other words, understanding is founded upon our human experience. Heidegger (1953/1996) states:

The answer to the question of the who of everyday *Da-sein* is to be won through the analysis of the kind of being in which *Da-sein*, initially and for the

most part, lives...The world of *Da-sein* is a with-world. Being-in is being-with others. The innerworldly being-in-itself is *Mitada-sein*...*Mitada-sein* characterizes the *Da-sein* of others in that it is freed for a being-with by the world of that being-with. Only because it has the essential structure of being-with, is one's own *Da-sein Mitada-sein* as encounterable by others...This is a matter of concern. (pp. 110-113)

Two Heideggerian notions are prominent within the discussion of *Mitada-sein* and, the relationships between human beings and animal beings: handiness and relevance. Handiness [*Zuhandenheit*] is “the ontological categorical definition of beings as they are ‘in themselves’” (Heidegger, 1953/1996, p. 67). Directly related to handiness is the concept of relevance. Relevance, “the being of innerworldly beings,” is the character of “being of things at hand, a letting something be together with something else” (Heidegger, 1953/1996, p. 78). In what manner do these notions call forth an ontology of animals?

Most significantly, these two notions suggest that the ontology of an animal is contingent upon the human experience of the animal. Thus, perhaps, the variety of responses to animal beings, as suggested by my entering questions, may be based upon this human understanding of animal beings as they are externally (hide and fur), reflecting little relevance or connection to some humans. Certainly, when animal beings are viewed in this manner, few esoteric or existential connections for human be-coming are manifested in an interpretive encounter within the lifeworld.

Heidegger's approach to the question of animal ontology is raised further in his Freiburg lectures, from 1929 to 1930 (McNeill & Walker, 1995). Heidegger attempts to uncover the dangers and difficulties inherent in the Platonic-Aristotelian concepts of living beings. Within this lecture, Heidegger notes important distinctions among human beings and animal beings. While Heidegger uses the language of the

word, organism, to delineate both animals and humans, for Heidegger animals and humans possess fundamentally different ways of being-in-the-world. While animals and humans are both present-at-hand within-the-world, the question comes down to one of accessibility or the ability to encounter other beings. This accessibility is commonly termed “the world” (Heidegger, 1953/1996, p. 296). This ability to access one’s world is achieved through the body and the senses.

Do animal beings possess a world? In addressing this question, Heidegger (1983/1995) notes that animals “are not without access to what is around them” (p. 292). For Heidegger, animals are “poor in the world.” Rather, the issue emerges as one of a transposition of the Self within the being of the Other, “a going along with it in its access and in its dealings within its world is possible in general” (p. 299). But for Heidegger, the question of animal ontology emerges as one only answered or responded to in terms of our relationships with animals, as humans cannot hope to “know” totally the animal experience of the world. As human beings, we cannot “know” the animal sense of accessibility and access to the world. In short, as humans, we cannot “see through the eyes of an animal” or “hear through animal ears.”

How, then, does our ontology open to the ontology of the Other, in this case animals? In what manner does our own understanding of existence, our way within-the-world, come to be described through our relationships with animals? How do animals initiate our possibility of be-coming?

Ontology of kinship: Blending Dorothy and Toto. Heidegger maintains that the element of transposition, in so far as a human being can transport him/herself into the interior of another being, is “based upon understanding, a going along with

[*Mitgehen mit*] the Other in its way of being” (Heidegger, 1953/1995, p. 297). In essence, we must let the Other be other. Heidegger (1953/1995) poses the following crucial questions:

Or from the perspective of the animal, what is it about the animal that allows and invites human transposedness into it, even while refusing human beings the possibility of going along with the animal? From the side of the animal, what is it that grants the possibility of transposition and necessarily refuses any going-along-with? What is this having and not having? (p. 308)

Heidegger (1953/1995) describes the relationship between human beings, *Dasein* and animal beings within the world as those of encircling rings. These encircling rings are “transposed” upon one another in a way that “fundamentally is different from a mere at hand presence” (p. 232). These encircling rings are conceptually different as Heidegger (1953/1995) points out:

No, the encircling rings amongst themselves are not remotely comparable, and the totality of the manifest enmeshing of encircling rings in each case is not simply part of those beings that are otherwise manifest for us, but rather holds us captive in a quite specific way. That is why we say that humans exist in a peculiar way in the midst [inmitten] of beings. In the midst of beings means: Living nature holds us ourselves captive human beings in a quite specific way...out from our essence. (pp. 403-404)

Quite remarkably, the essence is not the whatness of a being, but rather the presence of a being. *Da-sein* is held captive within nature through the phenomenon of attunement [*Stimmung*]. Attunement embodies the aspect of temporality and, thus, caring. Thus, while Heidegger credits animals with the existent mode of not being present-at-hand, he maintains that animals, unlike *Da-sein*, are ahistorical in their thrownness into the world. Precisely, it is this element of ahistorically, the animal’s refusal to show itself except in the moment, that captivates the essence of *Da-sein*. This captivity within attunement transfigures our perception. Can it be maintained,

therefore, that without this sense of captivity, animals emerge as less relevant? If so, in what manner does this potentially affect our ontological being of caring?

Heidegger's philosophy, in summary, regarding the interactions between animals and human beings continues to encompass elements of a hierarchy. While animals are viewed certainly as not ready-at-hand or present-at-hand, but rather as distinct entities onto themselves, we find animals lacking in temporality. Animals attend to the moment, the present. As such, we find through Heidegger that animals engage human beings or *Da-sein* in a reciprocal relationship. *Da-sein*, as such, in possessing a temporality of being, is called to care. However, it is unclear through Heidegger whether or not animals possess this ability to care due to a perceived deficit of temporality.

The Ontology of Dorothy and Toto: Levinas' Stance

To travel within the question of ontology founded by the phenomenological philosopher Levinas (2001), is to travel within a terrain of ethics, an embracing of the Same (the Self) and alterity (the Other). The following passage captures the essence of Levinas' thoughts regarding the relationship of the Self and the Other:

A calling into question of the same—which cannot occur within the egotist spontaneity of the same—is brought about by the Other. We name this calling into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other ethics. The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possessions, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics. (Levinas, 2001, p. 43)

As noted within this writing, the encounter with the Other for Levinas, lies not in the Heideggerian notion of *Mitda-sein*, “being-with or co-existence” (Heidegger, 1953/1996, p. 110), but rather lies within the premise of the irreducibility or “strangeness of the Other” (Levinas, 2001, p. 39). Levinas (2001) further elaborates,

“The absolutely other is the Other...the Stranger [the Other] who disturbs the being at home with oneself” (p. 39). Thus, for Levinas, the Other is the one who calls us out of ourselves, from our “at home-ness” within our fundamental ontology, “a calling into question of oneself, a critical attitude” (p. 81). Within this critical attitude, there emerges a sense of tension. This notion of tension creates a space where teaching and healing may be conceived and birthed.

It is within the stance of this critical attitude that we embrace not a common terrain, as that would potentially reduce the Other to the Same, but rather a call “to a relation without relation” (Levinas, 2001, p. 80), a mystery. This relationship is named by Levinas as the “face to face” encounter (p. 80). It is through reflection within the face of the Other, that I find expression and revelation, “a coinciding of the expressed with him who expresses, which is the privileged manifestation of the Other, the manifestation of a face over and beyond form” (p. 66).

This profound sense of being seen is noted within the writing of Grenier (2000) as he recounts a story of Levinas and a “face to face” encounter with a dog, following Levinas’ deportation to a work camp during Nazi Germany. Grenier relates:

Emmanuel Levinas, captured by the Germans in 1940 and sent to a forest work detail with other Jewish prisoners of war, realized that in the eyes of the guards, and even passersby, he and his fellow prisoners no longer belonged to the human race. Then a stray dog joined them: “For the dog, there was no doubt we were men.” (p. 5)

Expression for Levinas (2001) is “the living presence of the face of the Other (p. 66)...a source of all signification” (p. 297). This act of reflection is, therefore, of importance to note in the description of the understanding of the relationships between human beings and animal beings, as “the face” creates a space for self-reflection, “the

face overflows with images, which are always immanent to my thought” (p. 297).

Within this space of self reflection is created a place for caring, a caring manifested not only for the Other, but a caring for the Self.

But in what manner is this place of caring brought forth for review? How do we, as human beings, re-cognize this potential for ontology through the encounter with the face of the Other? Levinas (2001) answers this question quite simply, “The relation with the Other is conversation...To approach the Other in conversation is to welcome his expression” (p. 51). “The face speaks. The manifestation of the face is already discourse” (p. 66). Thus, this language of the face reveals in such a way as no other can. This language, “the coinciding of the revealer and the revealed in the face, which is accomplished in being situated in height with respect to us—is teaching” (p. 67).

Thus, the potential for ontology is opened through language. Gadamer (1960/1998) confers, “Conversation is a process of coming to an understanding” (p. 385). To be engaged in a conversation opens to the notions of reciprocity and responsibility. To be reciprocal is to complement, a return, a mutuality (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999, p. 1498). Responsibility is an acting for the Other, a response to the Other. Caring is a re-sponse to the Other.

Having opened the conversation of animal ontology within philosophical grounding, I now turn toward a discussion of my understanding of animals through a continued conversation with the Levinian notions of the face and language, and the “intercorporeality” of Merleau-Ponty. I reach out for an epistemology of caring

through this sense of embodiment, bodily senses, and an opening to a new sense of language.

Points of Connection: Longitudes of Caring

A meridian is a point of location, a line going north to south, signifying major distances. Conversely, a latitude is a line traversing east to west. The points of intersection or meaning making are termed longitudes. Individual stories are construed as longitudinal points of connection. These points of connection may be viewed as the lived experience of caring. Caring, as an ontological way of being-in-the-world, is, thus, the intimate topography of the blended terrain of language and the body.

During caregiving and receiving caring, we dance “the dance of attunement” (Gallagher, 1993, p. 114) through language and body. Caring reflects the possibility of being, the points of connection and coherence; the meridians of language and the latitudes of the body. Thus, to open to the notion of companion animal caring is to create a new way of seeing, a going beyond the Descartisian field of vision noted within Chapter Two, toward an engagement with the Other. It is a donning of a pair of spectacles, in order not to be “blinded by the brightness and glory of the Emerald City” (Baum, 1994, p. 112). Animal caring is a homesteading within language and the body.

The Terrain of Homesteading: Kinship

To homestead is to illuminate a sense of “the claiming of a terrain” (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999, p. 861). It is within homesteading, where I choose to dwell and remain. Dwelling and remaining evoke a sense of home. Home emerges, once again, as an intimate space, as all “really inhabited spaces bear the essence of the

notion of home” (Bachelard, 1964/1994, p. 5). By authentic inhabitation, this intimate terrain of home opens to an enhanced sense of Self and the world. Parker Palmer (1993) poses the question, “How do we seek to know as we are known?” (pp. xi-xiii). To address one question alone does not reflect the totality of the story. These questions inherently are intertwined within a kinship or a “circle of life.”

A kinship brings to mind feelings of family, mutuality, and reciprocity. Lingis notes that animal ways of being give rise and meaning to our own human actions and existence (as cited in Steeves, 1999). There is an affinity, a resemblance in structural plan and an indication of community of origin or kinship (Lauck, 1998). By what means do we re-semble animals? As voiced in Chapter One, we once again pause to ask, How are animals our mirrors of re-semblance?

A kinship reveals a sense of mutuality. To be mutual derives from the same root as the word, mutate. To be mutual implies a changing or mutation with consent (Shipley, 1945). In what ways are we mutated into animal being? In the Native American tradition of “shape-shifting,” the human ability to transform and blur boundaries of the corporal and temporal body are reflected (Andrews, 1994). Shamanism is a sense of knowing through the body of the Other, through the transformative properties of Self. The shaman is the poet, allowing language to transform us out of the Self toward a nearness with the Other. The shaman interprets language.

This nearness of the Self and the Other is projected within-the-world. Merleau-Ponty (1968) uses the term, of “the flesh,” to bring to light this connection of the Self, the Other, and the world. He states:

Yet this flesh that one sees and touches is not all there is to flesh, nor this massive corporeity all there is to the body. The reversibility that defines the flesh exists in other fields; it is even incomparably more agile there and capable of weaving relations between bodies that this time will not only enlarge, but will pass definitively beyond the circle of the visible... This new reversibility and the emergence of the flesh as expression are the point of insertion of speaking and thinking in a world of silence. (pp. 144-145)

As is noted in the above passage, the flesh is the entrance to mutuality within-the-world. What is the experience of entering the circle of animals? As Abram (1996) notes:

We cannot know, with the same familiarity and intimacy, the lived experience of a grass snake or a snapping turtle; we cannot readily experience the precise sensations of a hummingbird sipping nectar... To humankind, these Others are purveyors of secrets, carriers of intelligence that we often need... Yet they remain the Other (pp. 13-14)... However, there is a cycling of the human back into the larger world. This cycling of the human back into the larger world ensures that the other forms of experience that we encounter—whether ants, or willow trees, or clouds—are never absolutely alien to ourselves. Despite the obvious differences in shape, and ability, and style of being, they remain at least distantly familiar, even familial. It is, paradoxically, this perceived kinship or consanguinity that renders the difference or otherness, so eerily potent. (p. 16)

In what ways do we enter this kinship or circle of animals? As Abram (1996) suggests, it is through the body and through language that a sense of kinship develops with companion animals. I seek to know as I am known. My epistemology enfolds within the intertwining of my sense of Self with the body of the Other. I find myself reflected within my companion animals. I open to a new notion of epistemology, the language of the body and voice. I enter the terrain of uncharted territory to open further the philosophical grounding of companion animals as teachers and healers.

Dwelling-in the In-Between: Connections of Language and Body

The meridians of language and the latitudes of body project a certain affinity of essence or kinship; separate consideration of these two concepts is difficult to undertake. Merleau Ponty (1962) illuminates this sense of our bodily connection to the world through language:

It is the body which points out, and which speaks...This disclosure [of the body's immanent expressiveness]...extends, as we shall see, to the whole sensible world, and our gaze, prompted by the experience of our body, will discover in all other objects the miracle of expression. (p. 197)

What is this miracle of expression that captures us within the eyes of a companion animal? What blinders do I wear within the terrain of language? Prior to a venturing-in to reveal the topography and contours of language and body, it becomes necessary once again to invite a sense of magic into the conversation of animals as caregivers. This sense of magic is a bringing to light that which was currently left unrevealed. The magician promotes the removal of barriers or blinders within our perception. Within any conversation, it becomes paramount to remove those obstacles that inhibit a sense of heightened perception and understanding. In bringing these topographical barriers to the forefront, we sense a notion of unobstructed passage, a willingness to remove our masks. As language is the entrance into the relationship with the Other, I bring into view barriers within my in-sight: anthropomorphism and naming.

Difficult Terrain: Anthropomorphism

Prior to further steps onto the terrain of animal ontology, as evidenced through language and bodily engagement, it becomes necessary to bring the notion of human

language to the forefront for review. In reflecting upon the animal Other, I feel trapped, once again, within my own human written language. Anthropomorphism is the providing of animals with human traits and characteristics. Midgley (1984) notes the ancientness of the word, anthropomorphism, originally meaning in the time of early Christianity, associated with the provision of human attributes to God. Due to human language, anthropomorphism is unavoidable.

Rosen (1993) describes anthropomorphism as simply a means through language by which we reinforce our self-isolation. The individual qualities of animals are such that we metaphorically view and describe ourselves. McNeill (1999) contends, however, that to voice these questions and objections is the result of historical conditioning and the premise that the human perspective is subjective.

McNeill (1999) states:

What is striking about such objections is that they presuppose that our perspective is at once subjective and purely human. They presuppose as unquestioned that human beings, through the subjectivity of their thinking, are undeniably at the center of the world, and that the “world,” here conceived as the sum total of beings (objects) in their being, is merely a result and “function” of human representation. The said objections presuppose both that we know what the human being is and that this conception of the “world” as our “representation” is unquestionable. Not only are these presuppositions historically determined, they are also phenomenologically and ontologically reductive. (p. 213)

When one insists upon the perception of animals as possessing human-like traits, as we often do with companion animals, we deny the “otherness” of the being. As noted within the philosophical premises of Levinas (2001), by denying the “otherness” of the being, we fail as well to conceive of its innate wisdom and of our ability to respond in a relationship responsibly and reciprocally.

Difficult Terrain: Naming

The etymology of the word, name, finds its roots within the sense of anonymity, the “nameless” (Ayto, 1990, p. 360). As in anthropomorphism, the use of human language reaches out to provide a sense of being present through the bestowing of a name. However, as etymological sources bring forth, the notion of naming dwells within the tension of creating the nameless. It is important to note that naming confers both the essence of labeling, a non-distinct recognition of an animal’s being and the providing of a proper name. However, the use of proper names, bestows a notion of a lessening of distance. Hearne (1994) maintains:

There are proper names that really call, language that is genuinely invocative and uncontaminated by writing and thus by the concept of names as labels rather than genuine invocations. There has to be a reason for the name or else there is no name. (p. 170)

Within hermeneutic phenomenology, I begin to own the tensions created within the human language act of naming. Naming emerges as a further entrance into questions. By naming the Other, how do we also come to name ourselves? In what manner does naming promote kinship, or as Dallery (1999) proposes, “a reverence within the fleshly realm” (p. 269)? How does naming promote an entrance within the realm of the world of a companion animal? What is the lived experience of calling out to name the Other and seeing the response within the eyes of the Other? In naming through our human language, do we further separate ourselves from animals?

The Terrain of Language: Voice and Body

Within an exploration of the phenomenon of companion animals as teachers and healers, it becomes necessary to open the terrain of language to a greater, more enhanced degree of showing. Within the phenomenon of companion animals as

teachers and healers, language emerges as a sense of voice, a speaking of a language, and the embodied sense of language dwelling within the body.

The human experience of a companion animal as a teacher and healer emerges from a commonality of language and communication. As previously noted in Chapter Two, the human experience of teaching and healing must be translatable into our human epistemology. In order to open this epistemology, a new pedagogy of language must be brought forth. We are summoned to re-examine and reflect upon that which we call language. Abram (1996) poetically ponders this notion of language:

Ultimately then, it is not the human body alone but rather the whole of the sensuous world that provides the deep structure of language. As we ourselves dwell and move within language, so, ultimately, do the other animals and animate things of the world; if we do not notice them there, it is only because language has forgotten its expressive depths. (pp. 85-86)

From such reflections we begin to suspect the complexity of human language is related to the complexity of the early ecology—not to any complexity of our species considered apart from that matrix. Thus, the experience of language requires a turning away from the Self toward an embracing of the world. It is clearly a speaking to the world rather than about the world. Epistemology becomes universal. This stance is in direct opposition to the Cartesian sense of representation, where as such meaning making is private and idiosyncratic (Benner & Wrubel, 1989).

Opening to a multitude of animal voices within this universal epistemology, an ethical stance is revealed. Levinas (1991) describes this opening to a cacophony of animal voices within the sense of an ethical language:

The tropes of ethical language are found to be adequate for certain structures of the description: for the sense of the approach in its contrast with knowing, [for] the face in its contrast with a phenomenon. (p. 193)

Having brought forth earlier in this chapter an opening into animal ontology, the creation of a pathway into language as a source of ontology becomes inevitable. Heidegger maintains, “Language is the house of Being” and “the existential-ontological foundation of language is discourse” (1953/1996, p. 150). If this is true and language is the house of Being, then all forms of language need to be made acceptable and thus, all of beings, humankind and animals are part of the whole. Heidegger (1953/1996) elaborates in the following passage:

The way in which discourse gets expressed is language...Discoursing is the significant articulation of the intelligibility of being-in-the-world, to which belongs being-with, and which maintains itself in a particular way of heedful being-with-the another...*Mitada-sein* is essentially already manifest in attunement-with and understanding-with. Being-with is explicitly *shared* in discourse, that is, it already is, only unshared as something not grasped and appropriated. (pp. 151-152)

Language is the gesturing toward an attunement with the Other through understanding. Abram (1996) relates that the perspective of language requires an opening to a heightened sensuality within the world, an attuning to the “other voices” (pp. 95-96) of animal tracks, the calligraphy of a bird’s flight, and the hieroglyphics of a paw print. What is the sense of my experience of attuning to the language of companion animals?

As my cat, Sister Beetle, extends a paw toward me in the gesture of lessening distance and re-cognition, in what manner do I interpret the voice of this gesture? How does this gesture enfold me? What has transpired within our conversation? I seek to interpret Sister Beetle’s action. Through my act of interpretation, this foreign language of gesture is transformed into my repertoire of a mastery of this language. I be-come involved. Within the sense of the touch, there is a gesturing toward. When I touch a

companion animal, I sense my own body, I become aware of my bodily presence; quite simply, I am led or gestured toward a wholeness of Self.

Gadamer (1960/1998) proposes, “A genuine conversation is fallen into” (p. 383), evoking a sense of involvement. Within this engagement emerges “a common language and understanding, the speech of a hermeneutical conversation” (Gadamer, p. 388). A common language nudges me toward a border, perhaps, not previously crossed or noted, a border of reciprocity and responsibility, a notion of equality. Again, I wed ontology to language and the sense of potentiality-for-being. I pause, once again, to consider this notion of a hermeneutical conversation with a companion animal. What are the language landscapes of voice and body?

The Landscape of Voice

Language, writes Merleau Ponty, “is the very voice of the trees, the waves, and the forests” (1984, p. 155). Therefore, the landscape of language must open to reveal a witnessing of language as the voice of companion animals.

Language dwells within the tensions of silence and speech. Language becomes an opening to the silences of the soul, manifested within the knowing by the heart of the voices heard. These silences of the soul reverberate with the voice of the senses. Quite significantly for Levinas (1996), language “refers to the positions of the one that listens and the one that speaks” (pp. 36-37). In a narrative, Best (2001) relates, the hidden language between his cat, Dos, and himself:

Only a fellow animal lover could make sense of the claim that an animal--not a human--could be one's best friend. After all, skeptics would say, Dos didn't talk to me, didn't tell me he loved me, never thanked me for anything I ever did. How naively, myopically wrong. Animals do not need human language to communicate with us and express their deep love and appreciation; they do just fine with sounds, gestures, and unfathomly deep eyes. In fact, they do better,

since they never lie and their faithfulness is unfailing. (Best, 2001, available on-line)

This notion of speaking and listening is opened further for exploration within a story. When a language is unknown, one learns to translate the language into one's native tongue. The act of translation, etymologically is acquired from the Latin *tranferre*, to carry across (Ayto, 1990). How do we "carry across" the voice of animals? In a novel, *The Horse Whisperer* Evans (1995) gives voice to this language connection between animals and humans:

Quite why the life of a savage horse slammed up in a squalid country stall should seem now so crucially linked with her daughter's decline, Annie had no idea. And the thought suddenly occurred to Annie that perhaps this need she felt to keep Pilgrim alive, to find someone who could calm his troubled heart, wasn't about Grace (her daughter) at all. Perhaps it was about herself. (pp. 96-97)

Conversely, in this dichotomy, the horse whisperer communicates with horses. The word whisper, opening our perception toward a low voice, derives etymologically from the root meaning "to hiss and later to whistle" (Ayto, 1990, p. 572). The concept of the horse whisperer traces its roots back over the centuries as described by Evans (1995), "They could see into the creature's soul and soothe the wounds they found there. Often they were seen as witches and perhaps they were. For secrets uttered softly into pricked and troubled ears, these men were known as the Whisperers" (p. 94). What language is spoken and heard when we go straight to the horse's mouth?

The Landscape of Body

These acts of speaking and listening emerge from not only the essence of voice as speech, but also from the voice of the body, translated through the senses. The voice of the body is shown as the language of the sensual, "the aesthetic or spiritual dimension of the senses" (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999, p. 1632). Dossey

(1997) describes this connection as a spiritual one. Once again, the words of Beston (1928/1977) echo within my soul. A question resurfaces for review, “What is it like to live by senses that I may never possess?”

“To hearken is to cultivate a listening that is deeply rooted in our body’s sense of being, a sense of being open to the sonorous field as a totality” (Levin, 1989, pp. 219-220). In what manner is hearkening, an existing by voices no longer heard? How do companion animals hearken to us? Being-with a companion animal is a felt bodily experience, a re-sponse to an unheard voice. The enigma is that language is not static, but rather an evolving conversation between the world and the felt experience of the body (Abram, 1996).

The experience of the body occurs within perception through the bodily senses. This event of perception unfolds as a reciprocal exchange between the living body and the animate world. As Abram (1996) states, “This interplay between the senses is what enables the chiasm between the body and the earth, the reciprocal participation—between one’s own flesh and the encompassing flesh of the world—that we commonly call perception” (p. 128). This reciprocity is the very support of language. A knowing by the body is a communication that embraces a knowing penetrating deeper within our souls, a knowing of the Other through gesture, stance, facial expression and scent. The sense of re-embodiment opens to the possibility of transformation and transfiguration. A transformative sense is the notion of going beyond the Self. As one goes beyond the Self, a sense of change with transfiguration or bodily experiences are noted.

The Ontology of Animal Caring: Caring by Toto

Within the philosophical texts of caring, there is no literature that reflects the ontological ability of a companion animal to be provided with the identity of that of a caregiver. Rather, the lived experience of being cared for by a companion animal is reflected within the human experience of caring, and validated by the human response of being cared for, to elicit meaning-making. As my assumptions state, as a phenomenological researcher I believe that animals are ontological beings, capable of caring and entering into a reciprocal caring relationship with human companions.

Animals, described earlier by Heidegger, project intentionality and potentiality. But what of the potential of animals to care for us within Heideggerian terms? Clearly the ontology proposed by Heidegger, as previously addressed, does not allow for the potential of animal care giving to exist. However, animals project authenticity or a genuineness of being. This authentic being calls forth to our human beingness. Human beings or *Da-sein* are called into a relationship with other organisms through the act of attunement. In the world of concern, others are encountered; and the encountering as Heidegger (1953/1996) says, is a “*being-there-with*” (p. 179). This being-there-with is the essence of caring.

Thus, while for Heidegger animals do not emerge as the “caregiver,” it may be postulated that animals engage *Da-sein* in acts of caring. Through this captivity, *Da-sein* experiences a caring within-the-world. “Care or *sorge* is characterized by discoveredness. Discoveredness is the determination of the being of *Da-sein* whereby it is always involved in something, such involvement itself becomes sighted and so

can see...It is a dwelling intimately with the world by way of concern” (Heidegger, 1979/1985, p. 297).

Each one of us is identified by what we pursue and care about. In everyday terms, we understand ourselves and our existence by way of the activities we pursue and of the things for which we care. Therefore, through caring, *Da-sein* embarks upon a sense of authenticity, a deepening knowledge of the self and the world. Heidegger (1953/1996) remarks on this sense of authentic care:

There is a possibility of a concern which does not so much leap in for the other as *leap ahead* of him, not in order to take “care” away from him, but first to give it back to him as such. This concern which essentially pertains to authentic care; that is, the existence of the other, and not to a *what* which it takes care of, helps the other to become transparent to himself in his care and *free* for it. (p. 115)

This sense of transparency of Self leads toward caring, a freeness of constraints in the pursuit of wholeness. What is the capability of a companion animal to promote the experience of authentic caring with a human companion? The longitudinal connections are made clear in the following story:

[Following an encounter with a stray puppy] Dad couldn’t hold back the tears any longer. “I couldn’t put her back out on the streets,” Dad said as Mom took the box from his arms. “Look at those open sores. Who could be so cruel as to let her get in this condition?” Mom peered in the box and was repulsed by what she saw...Dad wrapped the sick, homeless pup back into the old bath towel and carried her to the car. That afternoon, he carried her gently out under the maple trees in the backyard and began the medication treatments...But when she [Mom] saw her husband’s face the first time that pup showed an ounce of playfulness, she knew that Dad was struck by more than compassion. He [Dad] knew little joy as a child and worked hard at manual jobs as an adult. Reaching down to rescue that weak, mangy pup seems to mend his wounded spirit, especially when he succeeded at beating the odds by nursing Tippy [the dog] back to health. (as cited in Canfield, et al., 1998, pp. 218-220)

Clearly, this is a story of a companion animal, making a difference. By making a difference, a border is crossed. By crossing this border, we are led to a terrain of familiarity, the topography of the Self.

Noddings (1984) writes of an ethic of ordinary caring that considers our relationships with animals. However, as with Heidegger, Noddings maintains that animals are not provided with the identity of caregiver or the “one-caring,” but rather the “one-cared-for.” The “one-cared-for” identity of animals is attributable, under Noddings’ philosophy, as occurring within the role of reciprocal relationship-- in that the one cared-for sustains the relationship with the one-caring through a responsiveness to caring.

“When my caring is directed to living things, I must consider their nature, ways of life, needs, and desires. And, although I can never accomplish it entirely, I try to apprehend the reality of the other” (Noddings, 1984, p. 14). Apprehending the other’s reality, feeling what he feels as nearly as possible, is the essential part of caring from the view of one-caring. The one cared-for sees the concern, delight, or interest in the eyes of the one-caring and feels her warmth in both verbal and body language. Noddings (1984) states, “We can see clearly that animals are not capable of entering a mutually or doubly caring relation with human beings, but as their responsiveness or perceived responsiveness increases, our natural caring increases also” (p. 159).

Clearly Noddings (1984) does not maintain the same hierarchy within the world as Heidegger. Noddings (1984) states, “For us, there is no absolute source of life, meaning, and morality that separates the species neatly according to some preordained value hierarchy. We are not given dominion over the beasts of the land”

(p. 148). Therefore, to care is to reflect upon the notion of power within a relationship. When notions of power are entertained, elements of reciprocity become mutated and altered to reflect not true caring, but rather a doing-for, in lieu of a doing-with. The philosophical underpinning of caring offered by Noddings (1984) offers a threshold or in-between space for the conversation and questions regarding the identity of a companion animal as the one-caring. In what manner can an animal be entertained as the one-caring? While certainly as humans, we cannot enter the mind of an animal; we only can reflect through a narrative our experience of being with an animal. As entertained through narratives in Chapter Two, it becomes evident of the potentiality for an animal to be allocated as the one-caring, for as Noddings (1984) describes, “The one-caring desires the well-being of the cared-for and acts to promote that well-being” (p. 24).

Within the caring philosophy of Noddings (1984), “The one-caring exhibits engrossment and motivational displacement, while the cared-for responds with reciprocity and responsiveness” (p. 150). In the caring relationship, engrossment involves living the experiences with the Other, and motivational displacement occurs when one acts with special regard for the Other. Perhaps the following pictorial descriptions of caring encounters, provided by rescue dogs following the aftermath of the tragedy of September 11, 2001 evoke a sense of a companion animal dwelling within the identity of the one-caring:

One [picture] was the face of a German Shepherd who had been nosing through the debris for hours--finding no one alive, only the dead. People who work with these dogs say that while they may not know the details of the earthquake or the bombing or whatever else brings them to the scene, they feel the distress and the horror very strongly. One rescuer told me how important it is for the dogs to find someone alive. “If they don’t,” she said, “they really get

depressed.” The dog I saw had all that pain and depression written all over his face. The second picture was one of a firefighter and his dog, lying together at the side of the scene, catching a few minutes of sleep—the man with his arm over the dog, and the dog with his paw over the man. (Mountain, 2001, Available on-line)

Dale (2001) continues these portraits of caring in his descriptions of the rescue dogs of September 11, 2001:

But as it turns out, the dogs serve an unintended mission, a kind of animal assisted therapy. Firefighters and police officers have spontaneously walked up to the dog and hugged them, some have shared their secrets only the dogs know. Fellow police officers and firefighters may not cry to their fellow firemen or police, somehow they open up to the dogs,” he says. “Just petting a dog provides comfort to those who need it—and where we are now, many need it.” (Available on-line)

Did these animals act as caregivers? Did they act within an inborn code of ethics? Perhaps so simply, our human language defies this description. However, who can deny the inherent enigma of looking into these animals’ eyes, feeling a “pull” toward joining them in a place, receiving bodily contact and somehow being healed by this approach? What depths of the soul are revealed within the extension of this animal paw toward the hand of a human?

Final Steps With Toto

“The prelude to homecoming involves completing and concluding all that this place has meant to us,” (Dispenza, 1999, p. 75). What has this place with animals created through meaning-making and understanding? Throughout this journey, I have extended an invitation to the possibility of animal caregiving within our lives. This evidence of caregiving has extended throughout all facets of our everyday existence and has culminated within the greatest gift of animal caring, a sense of rescue of the

Self, a true “journey within” (Rilke, as cited in Dispenza, 1999, p. 1). Through narratives, the souls of animals have reached out and enticed us toward an intimacy.

Quite prolifically, this invitation to embrace animal caregiving is one of sightedness, a seeing with new eyes. This sense of sightedness is the essence of authentic caring based upon reciprocity. Casey (2000) invites us “to glance at the world for through the glance, there is a sense of Becoming rather than Being” (p. 147). A glance is akin to the reflection within a mirror “for a glance takes in—it is informative” (p. 148). As Casey (2000) further explains, “A glance takes us beyond ourselves and situates us within the corporeality of the world” (p. 149). A glance opens the in-between places where we once again assume with animals, the identity of the magician, opening to the world of possibility. With new eyes, the words of Beston (1928/1977) are brought forward once again:

We need another wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals...
We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate of
Having taken form so far below ourselves.
And therein we err, and greatly err. For the animal shall not be measured by
man.
In a world older and more complete than ours, they moved finished and
complete,
Gifted with extensions of the senses we lost or never attained,
Living by voices we shall never hear.
They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other nations,
Caught with ourselves in the net of life and time,
Fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the earth. (pp. 24-25)

Embracing Toto: A Map of Inquiry

Life as a journey must be embraced, invited into oneself. Any journey is full of detours, main roads and perhaps the proverbial, “roads less traveled” so described by Robert Frost (1979, p. 105). The choice of a road taken is presented to us in many different guises. As a novice nurse educator and researcher, I encountered the

assistance of three mentors whose ears and hearts created for me a space to explore my own voice regarding a phenomenon near and dear to my own heart, the phenomenon of our relationships with companion animals. Dilthey (1985) describes the notion that the fulfillment of the soul is equal to the physical needs and requirements of the body. Therefore, these mentors opened this space within my heart.

The task of self-understanding, though, must not solely be guided by the heart, but also by a methodological map of inquiry into the phenomenon. This methodological map within phenomenology, however, is not as van Manen (1990) cautions, preordained by fixed guidelines. Gadamer (1960/1998) maintains, as well, this premise of an absent methodology within phenomenology and poses a question of the “possibility of the human sciences” (p. 512).

The methodology governing a hermeneutical phenomenological study is founded upon the same grounding as interpretation and hermeneutical understanding: tradition, ontology, and epistemology. To gain further understanding into my phenomenon of interest, I engaged in initial conversations, based upon my historicity or tradition, perceived epistemology, and sense of personal ontology. As within any circle of hermeneutic understanding, there is a backward and forward movement or engagement with the phenomenon of interest, the identity of companion animals as teachers and healers.

My engagement with understanding the phenomenon is opened further by way of six methodological dimensions, guided by the framework offered and described by van Manen (1990). These six components are not linear in nature; rather, as in understanding, there is a backward and forward flow within the interpretive process.

These components are dynamic in that they instigate and enliven, as they provide insights into understanding. There is a sense of turning and re-turning to the phenomenon. My initial journey through the phenomenological research process is illustrated through the six research activities developed by van Manen (1990):

1. The turning to a phenomenon of interest that commits, defines or engages us to the world;
2. The investigation of the experience of this phenomenon as we live it rather than conceptualize it;
3. The reflection upon essential themes, characteristic of the phenomenon;
4. The description of the phenomenon through the acts of writing and rewriting;
5. Maintenance of a strong and oriented pedagogical relationship to the phenomenon; and
6. Maintaining the balance of the parts and the whole during the research process. (pp. 30-31)

Each of these components is illustrated below in relation to my initial exploration of the phenomenon.

Turning to Face Toto: Turning to the Phenomenon of Interest

Van Manen (1990) maintains that lived experience is “the starting point and the end point of phenomenological research” (p. 36). Within phenomenology I seek to describe lived experience as a textual interpretation of the phenomenon of being-with companion animals. I orient to this phenomenon through the multiple lenses of personhood: a woman, a mother, a daughter, and a nurse. As such, my experiences of being with companion animals emerge within a framework of the past and the present, and as such, influence my understandings of the essence of this phenomenon. Dilthey (1976) writes:

The fundamental relation between experience and understanding...is one of gradual elucidation through the constant interaction of the two classes of truth. The obscurity of experience is illuminated, the mistakes, which arise from narrow comprehension of the subject, are corrected, experience itself is

widened and completed, by our understanding of other people—just as other people are understood through our own experience. (p. 189)

In Chapter One, as I peered through the eyes of a being within nurse education, I sensed an inherent connection for meaning-making that was absent, not only within myself but within the pedagogy of nursing education. Through autobiographical remembrances and soul-searching, I sought to find that missing link, as it were, through my own experiences. I found myself face-to-face with the companion animals I have known in my life. However, I still struggled to find a place for these connections within the nursing profession and nurse education.

As I spoke to an elderly woman many years ago, inquiring the reason for her tears, when to my professional nursing eyes, everything seemed in order, I was faced with a simple statement, “I am afraid that no one at home will care for my cat.” This slight, seemingly insignificant, simplistic statement tugged within my fragments of soul and self, illuminating and making connections. I now fully embrace the question—**What is the lived experience of nurse educators being-with companion animals as teachers and healers?**

However, to illuminate this phenomenon, at first, appeared far too expansive and simplistic in structure. As I began to live the question, (it is perhaps more correct to state that I once again was home in the question), a sense of expansiveness enveloped me. This conflict is well described by van Manen (1990):

The problem with phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate, but that we know too much. Or more accurately, the problem is that our “common sense” pre-understandings, our suppositions, assumptions, and the existing bodies of scientific knowledge, predispose us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological question. (p. 46)

Questions swirled within the cyclone of my thought. Are not companion animals significant to everyone? What are the significant connectors for the exploration of companion animals within nurse education? Do all nurse educators relate to companion animals in the same manner? In order to assist in my understanding of the phenomenon, I sought to delineate my historical pre-understandings. I began with my companion animals, but broadened my reflections to the experience of all other animal life forms, through the multiplicity of lenses of gender and childhood, familial experiences, and nurse education. My assumptions regarding companion animals were brought forth for examination as noted at the end of Chapter One.

Choosing to Travel with Toto: Investigating Experience as We Live It

In order to commence a journey with Toto, it became necessary to leave a place within my life that had, like the description of Kansas in Chapter One, become gray. The colloquial expression, “shades of gray” or “gray areas,” led me to seek meaning along more colorful arenas of my life experience of being with companion animals. This life world as van Manen (1990) notes is both “the source and the object of phenomenological research” (p. 53).

These sources for making meaning of the phenomenon emerge and are collected, as van Manen (1990) states, from a wide variety of textual sources. I turned to the pleasurable experience of re-visiting childhood stories of companion animals, literature, classical art, popular music, personal writings, and movies reflecting the animal-human bond. Through these sources, color once again re-entered my life and my capacity to make meaning. I entered into preliminary conversations with four

nurse educators in order to examine further the phenomenon of companion animals and their identity within my life.

In reflecting upon my significant turning experience to the phenomenon of companion animals and the autobiographical musings within my writing, I once again, felt overwhelmed with the phenomenon of interpreting the life experience of being with companion animals. I sought to find within language, that one exemplar of my thoughts and feelings of being with animals. After much soul-searching, I came to realize that within my writings and readings, and embedded within the conversations within nurse education, paramount was the metaphor of a guide, a maker of meaning within my journey of life. I reflected upon the presence of animals only to find myself reflected within this metaphoric mirror.

The word metaphor derives from the Greek, “to go beyond or carry between” (Encarta World English Dictionary, 1999, p. 1136). How does the metaphor of a map invite me to a journey beyond myself into a deeper exploration and excavation? Metaphors are the tools of transcendence and transformation. Madison (1990) writes that a metaphor performs an existential function, in that it provokes a change in the way we view things; it brings about a transformation in our thinking. How does the image of an animal as a cartographer provoke a sense of transcendence of self as well as transformation?

As Greene (1995a) contends, a metaphor is the center of language, and it is language that entails the capacity of initiating alterations in our ways of thinking, knowing, or seeing. Thus, metaphor directly is related to perception. Through perceptual changes, we catch a glimpse into the Other, developing a sense of empathy

with the Other. Ozick (1989) describes metaphor as a shocking extension of the self, the unknown—the intimate, private self. In short, a metaphor transforms the private places within the self to those of public viewing.

Having opened the phenomenon of companion animals as teachers and healers for my understanding, I then sought to transform my private sphere of knowing toward a larger ontological realm of understanding. In order to listen to and attend to companion animals as teachers and healers, I had conversations with six nurse educators. These nurse educators are involved in undergraduate baccalaureate nurse education as well as advanced practice nurse education at the masters and doctoral degree levels.

These nurse educators were selected based upon their interest in exploring the experience of connections with their companion animals. As synchronicity would have it, my selection of three of the participants was facilitated through my acquaintance with a nurse educator found serendipitously through an Internet search. This nurse educator resided on the West Coast and had a research interest in pet bereavement. Following an introductory email and phone conversation, this nurse educator willingly agreed to participate in my study based upon her interest in my question for inquiry.

This nurse educator provided two additional faculty names on the West Coast with whom she was acquainted. These two additional nurse faculty (one female and one male) exhibited, as well, a strong interest in the lived experience of being-with their companion animals. Initial contact was made with these two faculty by email and phone. Both faculty agreed to participate and were delighted to share their stories.

The remaining three participants (all women) were found within my informal circles of conversation at a university setting where I hold a faculty position. Prior to commencement of my conversations, all participants were provided with a copy of the Consent Form, describing my study and their agreement to participate (see Appendix A).

Initially, an opening conversation was conducted with each participant from both the East and West Coasts, lasting approximately two hours in length. With the exception of one person, all initial conversations were held within the participants' homes in the physical presence of their companion animals. The physical presence of their companion animals allowed for further anecdotal recordings of their identity with their companion animals. Additionally, it allowed me to get to know their companion animals through my "conversations" with the companion animals themselves. I was able to make physical connections with the companion animals and note the response of the companion animals to the human conversations. The opening conversation with one of West Coast participants occurred in his office at the university due to geographical location of his home. He expressed regret that I would not be able to meet his *children* physically.

In the opening conversation, I invited each participant to share a story of caregiving by a companion animal. During this narrative, the participant truly re-collected the Self through story. Observations of the participants' embodiment of the story, as noted through the senses and bodily manifestations and emotions, were recorded to enhance understanding through anecdotal observations. Additional

questions were used during this opening conversation to prompt an opening of the phenomenon of this study. Examples of these questions include:

1. In what manner would you describe the presence of a companion animal creating a milieu of felt caring in your daily life? How is this caring manifested?
2. What language would you use to describe companion animal caring?
3. Tell me a story of a time that you noted a life lesson learned from the presence or example projected from a companion animal? What is the significance of this pedagogical experience of being-with a companion animal?
4. Reflect upon the experience of different companion animals. In what manner would you describe these experiences? Is there a language of sameness or difference?
5. In what manner has your experience of being-with a companion animal assumed a presence over your lifespan?

Each participant was asked to bring a photograph or drawing of a companion animal for reference during the conversation. The photograph or drawing served to open the conversation further by allowing a place for additional stories to emerge. The photographs used were representative of present as well as past companion animals. Thus, the photos and drawings served to note the temporality of presence and identity of companion animals within the life world of the participants. During my transcriptions of the conversations, I placed the photograph in view to enhance my understandings of the identity of the companion animal. Through the words of the participants, I recalled further anecdotal recordings of connections between the participants and their companion animals noted during the conversations. Within the eyes of the companion animals, I sought to reveal a deeper level of understanding and soul.

Following the initial conversations, I transcribed each tape in order to dwell fully in the words and stories once again. As I transcribed the conversations, notations

were made regarding inflections in voice and silent pauses within the conversation. Anecdotal recordings such as gazing toward the companion animal, touching the companion animal, or directing human language toward the companion animal were noted as well. The transcribed text was explored for beginning themes and questions to be used in the following conversation. Each participant was sent a written copy of the transcribed conversation and instructed to read through for any possible additions, corrections or new insights.

A second conversation was conducted with each participant via email, based upon the text of the initial conversation. Each participant was provided specific questions related to his/her transcribed text. Copies of their letters are included in Appendix B. This re-visiting of the narrative allowed for further interpretive understanding to emerge.

The participants also were asked to write an account of a personal lived experience of being-with a companion animal. A template of this letter is provided in Appendix C. Writing serves as a more reflective mode of inquiry (van Manen, 1990). The act of reflection denotes a sense of temporality and distance within understanding: “Writing distances us from the lifeworld, yet it also draws us more closely to the lifeworld” (van Manen, 1990, p. 127). Therefore, the use of both narrative and written text, allows for an expansion of textual depth. As additional questions arose from the email responses to the questions from the text of the conversations, additional incidental emails were facilitated.

Following the validation of the written text through participant elaboration, further questioning, and other written personal accounts, a final email conversation

was held to address thematic insights for curriculum in nurse education. As specific themes within the context of teaching and healing emerged from the lived accounts of being-with companion animals, this conversation served to clarify and deepen my understandings. This entering and re-entering of the phenomenological texts for interpretation provides the very foundation for hermeneutical interpretations.

This final email conversation asked the participants to reflect upon three foundational questions:

1. In what manner is being-with a companion animal experienced as being-with a student? Are there places of similarity and difference?
2. In what manner does being-with companion animals influence meaning-making and reveal an alternate conversation within nursing pedagogy and nursing epistemology?
3. What are your reflections regarding the essences of emancipatory and transformative nursing curriculum?

These questions emerged from the theme of soul apparent within the lived experience of the participants with their companion animals. These questions are discussed in Chapter Five and serve as a basis for re-visioning curriculum in nurse education.

The Themes of the Heart: Courage, Caring, and Knowing—Hermeneutical Phenomenological Reflection

Van Manen (1990) writes, “The purpose of phenomenological reflection is to try to grasp the essential meaning of something, gaining insight into the essence of a phenomenon” (p. 77), without which “the phenomenon would not be what it” is (p. 107). I turn toward the need for a map of inquiry, a guide for reflection.

Van Manen (1990) offers a guide for reflecting upon essential themes or structures of meaning associated with a phenomenon: lived body (corporeality), lived other (relationality), lived space, and lived temporality or time. However, as

previously noted in Chapter Two, these lifeworld existentials cannot be separated, “only differentiated as together they form an intricate unity called the lifeworld” (van Manen, 1990, p. 105). Through my journaling and preliminary conversations with four nurse educators, the six nurse educators of my study, as well as other individuals throughout my life time, there emerged essential themes within the identity of animals as caregivers: teachers and healers. These themes traverse across all four lifeworld existentials.

The conversation regarding these lifeworld existentials was opened for review in Chapter One through the use of a text, *The Little Prince*. In Chapter Two, I sought to expose these themes of teaching, healing, and caregiving further. Using van Manen’s framework, I open these lifeworld existentials once again for contemplation, maintaining a philosophical grounding within the conversation. This philosophical grounding creates further points of connection, as well as tension within the phenomenon of animals as teachers and healers. The thematizing continues in Chapter Four as I carry on my exploration of companion animals as teachers and healers with the participants of my study.

In isolating specific themes, I employed an interplay of van Manen’s three suggested approaches: the wholistic or sententious approach; the selective or highlighting approach; and the detailed, line-by line approach (van Manen, 1990, pp. 92-93). I found that the tensions within the text were opened most easily by a combination of all three approaches.

Writing with the Great Oz: Hermeneutic Phenomenological Writing

Within hermeneutical reflective writing, I am called to the task of understanding through language. Writing allows the paradox of language to be understood within the body. I am transformed into the “Great and Wonderful Wizard of Oz” from my bodily being as Dorothy. However, like Dorothy, I also now know that which I had always known through writing, a re-collection of self. I answer to the re-call of animals as caregivers.

I am bodily present with my written words. Phenomenological writing extends an invitation to reflect upon the visibility of written language, as well as the silences of the heart. Within this language of the heart resides what van Manen (1990) terms, the “epistemological silence” (p. 113). In my writing and reflecting on animals as teachers and healers, I catch this epistemological silence, when my human knowledge does not seem to reflect my companion animal’s great immensity toward being. I sense a restlessness within myself, a need to traverse further. I feel confined within the language. My heart reflects a tugging notion of more than meets the eye.

Within phenomenology, this mode of silence can be opened through the use of poetry. Poetry reflects both the discourse of language and the “final silence which follows the said” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. xxx), bringing forth the notion of birthing a place where the invisible may become visible. This silence within phenomenological writing of companion animals as teachers and healers is opened through the echo of the words of the poet, Rilke:

The Panther

His gaze those bars keep passing is so misted
With tiredness, it can take in nothing more.

He feels as though a thousand bars existed,
And no more world beyond them than before.

Those supply-powerful paddings, turning there
In tiniest of circles, well might be
The dance of forces round a center where
Some mighty will stands paralytically.

Just now and then the pupil's noiseless shutter
Is lifted.—Then an image will indart,
Down through the limbs' intensive stillness flutter,
And end its being in the heart.
(Rilke, 1957/1977, p. 34)

In what manner does the panther's restlessness mimic my own? What images reside within the epistemological silence of the panther's heart?

Standing Beside Toto: Maintaining A Strong and Oriented Relation

A pedagogue etymologically is related to the word, page, emitting the sense of fastening (Ayto, 1990, p. 379). Thus, maintaining a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon I seek to understand and uncover necessitates a notion of fastening, affixing myself within the phenomenon of companion animal identity. Therefore, to “stand beside Toto,” emanates from my orientation as a teacher and a researcher, and most significantly my personhood. As Gadamer (1960/1998) states, “It is necessary to keep one's gaze fixed on the thing throughout all the constant distractions that originate in the interpreter himself” (p. 267). I find myself be-coming in the presence of my companion animals. Heidegger (1962) supports my affirmation as he projects the following statement, “Ontology is possible only as phenomenology” (p. 31).

The Footprints and Footsteps of Toto: Balancing the Research Context

Balancing the research context involves not only standing within and seeing the footprints of Toto, as painted within the narratives of the interviews and

conversations, but listening to the footsteps of Toto within the bodily sensations of the text. In the previous sections, I have noted the structure and context of the conversations and written textual sources for thematic analysis. Throughout my conversations, I sought to keep my research question prominent. Following thematic analysis, I consider the ways in which the insights gained from this study can contribute to an animal epistemology within nurse education. I venture within the ecotones (Krall, 1994) once again to embrace the Other. Having explored my map of inquiry for the phenomenon of animals as teachers and healers, I now venture into themes lived with the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR:
A JOURNEY OF SOUL SEEKING:
PAW PRINTS OF BIRTH, BEING-WITH,
TENSIONS, AND CONNECTIONS

With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling
We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
(T.S. Eliot, 1968, p. 58)

The words of T. S. Eliot hearken me to a sense of awakening, a birth, the experience of being-alive, and an alert wide-awakeness to the world. This alertness transpires as I dwell within the words and stories of my participants. As I ponder the conversations, I sense the embodiment of human identity in homesteading, a laying claim to a new terrain. I feel the paw prints, marks, and traces left upon my being through the conversations with my participants and their companion animals. I belong. I am branded by my conversations.

As a homesteader, I seek to “see” this terrain in its uniqueness, before me as well as within me. I open to being-with this terrain. I sense the notion of reciprocity, a giving and a taking, as I create the terrain and am created by it. I note the intimacy of the terrain within the presence of companion animals as the animals draw me into their unconditional love and call out to me with the echoes of my own longings for authenticity.

T. S. Eliot also beckons me to my own lifeworld of companion animals as I face the musings within my prologue. Through this re-turning, I traverse many terrains as I walk upon the hermeneutical horizons of understanding. I seek to embrace the poet within the very spirit essence of Angel Marie, my soul mate, as she translates the

poetic language of companion animal caring within the realms of teaching and healing embodied in our relationships with companion animals. I begin with my first steps upon this journey. I am called by the voices of my companion animals to join with them in conversation.

The Call to Conversation

Through my explorations with the six nurse educators, I greet my homeland once again. I am called to the conversation. To be called is to be invited to experience a sacred act of selection, a being chosen. This invitation embraces a daring to dream of meeting my heart's longings (Mountain Dreamer, 2000). Within my heart I answer the call. I experience a moving toward, a motility where once there was a sense of inertia and dis-ability of movement. I gain an entrance into my soul. This entrance into my soul exemplifies a bodily understanding, "a phenomenology of the soul" (Bachelard, 1994, p. xvi) that reflects "an existential awareness of a deeper inherence, my intertwining, in the vast topology of Being, a bodily sense of our true nature within-the-world" (Levin, 1985, pp. 101-103). My intertwining is reflected in the words of a poem:

The Calling

It came out.
he examined it.

It wasn't him
nor his.

A voice
without master;

I am a shepherd,
he said.

The flock has made me
what I am.
(Grossman, 1990, p. 21)

A reverberation within the words of this poem calls me out of myself toward a voice without master. What is revealed within this voice? With each word spoken by the participants, I strain to hear the voices truly within. As I commenced the conversations with my participant nurse educators, I was unprepared for the depth of my experience upon hearing their words. As I move into these words, I am captured and claimed by passage into a clearing, a silence, opening to a deeper felt sense of understanding. I need to listen to the silence. Within this place of silence, my body is suddenly alive as my skin strains to listen. The words of the participants call out to my soul. My soul responds with the joyful anticipation of homecoming and a kindred dialect. I embrace a knowing that indeed, “the flock has made me what I am” (Grossman, 1990, p. 21)

This kindred dialect of soul evolves from the inner terrain of the Self, an authenticity. This sense of authentic Self is formulated through the merging of the inner text of Self and the outer text of the Other. A new conversation is created. Gadamer (1976) notes this sense of merging conversation, whereby in “every conversation...something different has come to be” (p. 58), a continual formulation of “one true text” (Levin, 1985, p. 210). Through the soul-filled experiences of being-with companion animals, cradled within the words of the participants, I seek to explore this unknown territory of a new conversation.

Within this new terrain of conversation, however, my soul still continues to struggle with the constraints of the human language of the mind. The greater I try to dwell within this language of my mind, a language comprised of the words of analysis

and conceptual foundations, the greater the dis-tance and dis-ease I feel. I find a temporary solace within the words of Tagore as I seek this new terrain:

I thought that my voyage had come to its end at the last limit of my power—that the path before me was closed, that provisions were exhausted and the time come to take shelter in a silent obscurity. But I find that Thy will knows no end in me. And when old words die out on the tongue, new melodies break forth from the heart; and where the old tracks are lost, new country is revealed with its wonders. (as cited in *Heron Dance*, O'Shaughnessy, Ed., 2003, p. 2)

As these new melodies break forth from my heart and soul, the language of the spirit emerges. This language is a felt dialect within my bones. I open to the language of attunement, a bodily sense of understanding. This attunement is brought forth within the dis-course of my birth story.

A Dis-course of Birth

After much soul-searching, I realize I unwittingly have donned a ready-made pair of red shoes artificially fashioned. I call out to the whispers of my feral self, seeking my wildness. The voice within me beckons to the creation of a pair of red shoes to traverse this language. I collect pieces of a metaphorical red cloth, woven within the souls of companion animals. My soul commands a complete entrance into the world. The soul gives me birth. As I labor to give birth to myself, I seek the aid of a midwife, a weaver of red shoes whose alchemical touch transforms me.

Giving Birth

When a woman gives birth, there is a time of turning inward to focus on the task at hand. Birthing is a sacred time, a time of bringing forth, a crossing of the threshold (O'Donohue, 1999) when the unknown child comes into the world and greets the mother for the first time. With each birth, there is a subsequent death, as

new identities are formed and images are changed. This death follows as a natural circling of a new life.

A birth follows a time of introspection or gestation. The word gestation derives in English from the word, *gestacion*, “to be carried without travail” (Ayto, 1990, p. 253). I am carried by the words of Rilke in *Selected Poems* (Bly, Trans., 1981b) as he describes the surrendering of the Swan:

And to die, which is the letting go
Of the ground we stand on and cling to every day,
Is like the swan, when he nervously lets himself down into the water, which
receives him gaily
And flows joyfully under
And after him, wave after wave,
While the swan, unmoving and marvelously calm,
Is pleased to be carried, each moment more fully grown,
More like a king, further and further on. (p. 141)

I, too, surrender to the power of Rilke’s words like the Swan; I let go of the ground of familiarity and learn to dwell upon different terrain. Within my prologue, I evoke the spirit of Angel Marie, now emerging in an enhanced light of brilliance. Angel Marie, a cartographer, births me in a new understanding of Self. Angel Marie becomes my scared midwife who bears witness to my birth. Within Chapter One, I see with new eyes, the midwives of my *her-story* my companion animals both past and present, the ants of early childhood, fellow travelers within the profession of nurse education, students I have encountered within my identity as a nurse educator, my parents, my children, and my family.

A sense of contraction. Contractions are characterized in birth by periods of tension and release. As I struggle with myself, memories of my own experiences of physical birth come forth. I bear in mind my fears and fatigue as I struggled to bring

my daughter into the world, my fears stemming from the realm of not knowing. I sought to encode a knowing for which I had no prior body memory. I recall those memories of joy and pain, transversing twenty-four years. I acknowledge within my mind's eye, an image during these periods of tension and release. I struggled on my back until the knowing hands of a midwife entered the room, and through a gentle change in position, I found comfort and control. I recall setting eyes on my daughter for the first time, now a grown woman, and a mirror image of myself.

My memory flows to the birth of my son seven years later and the felt response of each cell of my body alive with the memory of my daughter's birth. My body spoke with a knowing during this second birth and my struggles were lessened. I had learned to breathe and dwell within the tensions. With each birth, there came a memory of those pregnant moments of silence until the first uttering of my children's voices were heard within the world.

Transition. Transition is a time immediately prior to a birth in which the most forceful sense of pain is experienced. Transition occurs enabling the body to initiate its final preparations for birth. Transition is an intense time of "being swept away," as the Self is lost and the focus resides within the act of birth. There is a sense of tearing away as a part of the Self is manifested within a new being.

Recently, as I waited for my daughter to give birth, I yearned for the ability to send the body memories of my birth stories into her body, encoding it and protecting her from my fears of the unknown. However, I realize the rite of passage during birth requires a sitting with the silence, experiencing those heavy moments of silence until a new voice emerges. I focus, as in natural childbirth. I slow down, breathing in and out,

intent upon each breath. I realize, I must re-turn to the place of my soul within and permit soul memory to devise my red shoes. I must simply learn to breath. Like Dorothy, I seek this respite from my travels. I, too, long merely to dwell within the poppy fields upon my journey home and rest.

A Labyrinth Birth

It was in the spirit of respite that I walked the labyrinth of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco following my initial conversations with my participants on the West Coast. I have walked this labyrinth three times prior to this experience. Each time entering the labyrinth has provided wonderful illuminations, pregnant with “new senses of sight” (Artress, 1995, p. 14) as I dwell along the labyrinthine path toward the center-resting place. I surrender simply to the power of the labyrinth. I want to just breathe.

On this day, as I enter the labyrinth, I carry with me the words of my participants and the eye images of their companion animals, alive with memory of paw touches and soul-full gazes. I walk with a new awareness. Levin (1985) notes that “To walk with awareness brings a new sense of disclosure or truth” (p. 276). I embrace questions birthed from the conversations. The body memories of my past birthing experiences of turning-toward companion animals nourish these words and soul images. At the center of the labyrinth, I sit in the silence and seek to make these words my own. I be-come a surrogate mother, a vessel of nurturance and soul-care. Later within my act of listening and re-listening, and transcription of the participants’ words, I *stepped* onto the labyrinth again, filled with body memories, as my finger traced the spiral path of the labyrinth upon my writing area.

Bear Tracks

In my initial labyrinth experience at Grace Cathedral, I re-turn to the notion of Artemis and the reverence for and sacredness of animals. At the center of the labyrinth, I seek a conversation with myself, reaching for voices to answer my questions. Within the pain of my muteness, I call out to Artemis. I see the Mistress of Childbirth and Animals, the goddess archetype, Artemis with a renewed stance. Artemis holds the bear as a sacred being.

I sit with this notion of the bear, etymologically encompassing two meanings, “one who gives birth and that which is carried” (Ayto, 1990, p. 56). I read that the bear gives birth during hibernation, literally within the period of sleep. The birth is a painless one because it is a letting be and letting go, a true surrendering of the Self. At this time, I be-come like the bear, altering my stance within the conversation, an authentic getting down on all fours, feeling the closeness of the world around me, a seeking of an introspective respite or hibernation.

Terry Tempest Williams (1994) writes:

I believe in the power of Bear, embracing the Feminine. I see the feminine defined as a reconnection to the Self, a commitment to the wildness within—our instincts, our capacity to create and destroy; our hunger for connection...the Feminine teaches us experience is our way back home. To embrace the Feminine is to embrace paradox. Paradox preserves mystery, and mystery inspires belief. (p. 53)

I, too, embrace the paradox of surrendering to the tensions within my soul. I open to the mystery of birth and a new sense of medicine, a remedy for pain.

Bear Medicine is described as one of great healing through connection with the soul (Andrews, 1994). The bear, a sacred being, embodies the ability to go within oneself, embrace the silence, and give birth to an alternate way of being, much akin to

the labyrinth walk. Levin (1989) notes, “Silence is our listening openness: in order to hear something, we must first *give* it our silence” (p. 232). Through silence we re turn to the realm of the feminine.

Bear-ing Witness

Through the power of the mythical bear, I be-come a homesteader within my cave. As a cave dweller, I sit enchanted in the silence within the words of my participants. Moore (1992) maintains, “The infinite inner space of a story is its soul and if we allow a story its soul, we discover our own depths through it” (p. 236).

Their words resonate within my soul being and echo within my heart. Soul, like the word, heart, originates etymologically from a similarity of source, the “*anima*” (Ayto, 1990, p. 277). Within my body, I feel the transformative power of this same source. I sense those secret, solitary places of my own mute voice, heart spaces wild and still covered, waiting to be dis-covered.

After this healing period of introspection, a language emerges. Within this language lie the written words of the soul, a shamanic poetry of heart, courage, and a deep knowing. My midwives reveal themselves in the guise of my fellow travelers, my participants and their companion animals. These midwives become the true poets, translating the language of their births intermingled with the story of my birth. Together, a new terrain is created. We celebrate these stories of our birth. An intimate reciprocity is produced. I turn toward the face of the Other. I bring forth the Other into this new conversation.

My Fellow Travelers In Conversation

At this time, I provide a brief glimpse of my fellow travelers, the participants and their companion animals, who so eagerly and willingly shared their souls with me. To travel together-with is to embrace an ethical stance. Within each conversation, the gifts of language, touch, joy and an outstretched paw are offered. All of my participants are nurse educators of varying life experiences, both professionally and personally. All participants are Caucasian females with the exception of one Caucasian male. Geographically, my participants are located at the polar ends of our country, residing on both the East and West Coasts. The geographical expansiveness serves not to make polar opposites of my search for themes, but rather reinforces the common threads connecting them.

The Human Traveling Companions

The following brief biographical sketches of my fellow human traveling companions are generated through both verbal and written accounts. In order to provide an authentic voice to each of the participants, an invitation to provide biographical information was issued. Participants independently decided upon the aspect of their identifying name to be used during the conversations. Two of the participants, April and Jams, elected to employ pseudonyms for their identification. The remaining four participants, Betty, Brigit, Steve, and Margaret decided to use their given names.

Jams is a nurse educator in her late fifties with doctoral preparation in medical anthropology. She has dwelled within the realm of nurse education for numerous years and currently has sought her teaching career, personally and professionally, within the

field of anthropology as opposed to nurse education. This turn away from nurse education is a relatively recent path. However, she has constructed this career path internally for many years due to an intense dis-ease with the paradigm of nurse education. Jams shares her life among the presence of numerous “four-legged beings,” as she terms companion animals. Within her words, one hears the voices of Jellico, Sapri, Maggie-Dawg, Shamus, and Atticus. Jams’ household, once comprised of three growing children, reflects the next stage of her life within the identities of “grown children who have embarked upon life’s journey.” I find the stories of Jams filled with the presence of these children as well as her husband. Within the human beings of her family, Jams constructs a history filled with stories of companion animals and their caregiving.

Betty is a current nurse faculty member at a private Jesuit-affiliated university on the West Coast. Betty, in her sixties, has acquired over thirty years of experience as a nurse educator. Betty’s clinical expertise lies within the realm of nurse education in relationship to community health and psychiatric nursing practice, predominately at the undergraduate education level. Betty is a seasoned counselor, as well, within the difficult terrain of companion animal bereavement, conducting support groups for the past twenty-five years within the community. Betty’s research interest in the identity of companion animals and pet bereavement begins with her own story of companion animal loss within an eloquently voiced book. Betty currently shares her life with Sarah Elizabeth, a fifteen-year-old mixed breed, rescued by Betty.

Brigit is a 38-year-old nurse educator at both the graduate and undergraduate levels of nurse education. Brigit, well-seasoned and well-versed within her identity of

a practicing pediatric nurse practitioner, is a novice within the field of nurse education as she has commenced her journey toward this identity within the past three years. Brigit dwells within the realm of conventional medicine, actively practicing as an advanced practice nurse, while simultaneously recognizing the identity of companion animals within her family and past life experiences. Brigit and her family currently reside with two dogs, Greta, a German Shepherd and Lassie, a rescued canine. Other members of Brigit's household include four cats who have made their way to Brigit, true homesteaders, by numerous methods.

Steve, a participant in his forties, is a doctoral student currently embarking upon his own journey in phenomenological inquiry. Additionally, he instructs at the undergraduate level of nurse education, focusing on the capstone course within the field of pediatrics. Steve, though licensed as a pediatric nurse practitioner, adamantly voices no identity with this group, noting he only traversed his ground as a stepping - stone to doctoral preparation. He notes discomfort within the identity of a health care provider in mainstream medical practices. For Steve, the profession of nursing has lost the elements of caring, as he describes "moving to a different voice" within his didactical experiences with students. Steve is involved, as well, in his past life experiences as a dog breeder and dog-show participant. Steve shares his life with two pugs and a special whippet, Barnum.

April, a 54-year-old nurse educator, is a family nurse practitioner who coordinates the graduate program of study at a state university. She has been a nurse for thirty-five years and a nurse educator for the past fourteen years. April voices a sense of dis-content with current practices of nurse education from personal and

professional life worlds and struggles to seek an alternate path for nurse education. She is a doctoral student with a research interest in the life world of graduate nursing students as they enter mainstream medical practices. April shares her home place not only with her husband, but also with Sam II and Hobbs, her feline companions of eight years. While Sam II and Hobbs are April's present animal companions, April's voice resounds with past animal companions and their continuing presence within her spirit.

Margaret is a nurse educator currently residing on the West Coast with her husband and daughter. In her early fifties of chronological age, she describes herself as a "learner who will never know enough" despite continued formal education.

Margaret's life education comes through her mentor, Tucker, her current animal companion. Margaret's world of nurse education is comprised of undergraduate student experiences within the realm of adult health nursing. She employs a "sense of the individual student" within her pedagogical practices using autobiographical methods such as daily journaling with her clinical students. At the time of our initial conversation, Margaret was a doctoral student studying the methods and efficacies of on-line, computer-based instruction within the context of medication calculations and the prevention of medication errors within nursing practice.

Margaret recently has completed her dissertation work and now finds herself in a somewhat foreign place of expectations for the doctorally-prepared nurse faculty. Continued scholarly practices and concurrent nursing research conflict with what she terms, "a current position level of functioning," workload. Margaret voices a strong sense of uncaring within the administrative world of nurse education. Her attempt to

find a “place within nurse education” is guided by Tucker’s unfailing presence.

Margaret notes that without Tucker, “she would not survive ‘being’ a nurse educator.”

The Four-Footed Midwives: Companion Animal Travelers

The voices within this dissertation would not be complete or whole without a brief introduction to the companion animals who also have shared their spirits and souls with me in many ways. At times, these companion animals verbally voiced their *agreement* with the spoken human language of conversation as if almost to validate and affirm their human companions’ voices. At other points and times within the conversations, these companion animals extended a gesture of spirit and soul, perhaps by the extension of a paw or bodily greeting, in times of happiness, comfort or joy.

Many companion animals extended their welcome as well to include a gift of a favorite toy or other priceless, precious *gifts* such as a recently plucked ripe strawberry, a partially chewed bone, or a favorite sleeping blanket cloth. Lastly, other companion animals, both living and deceased, while not physically present, seemed to traverse the boundaries of my physical life world within the voices of their human companions. In every meeting of each companion animal, the divine was reflected, that “wonder of presence which is the majesty of what it so subtly conceals; a sense of a radiant eternity...a restless artist who tirelessly seeks to make their presence real in order that the mystery we harbor may be-come known to us” (O’Donohue, 1999, p. 96).

My attempts at the biographical sketches of these companion animals below are comprised of both personal observations and the verbal and written descriptions of the participants. Truly, though, no biographical sketch could totally capture their

essence and presence. Here are the brief voices of the companion animals *heard* within the conversations.

Maggie-Dawg is an aging black retriever who came to Jams at the age of two years through a rescue from a humane society. Maggie-Dawg credits herself as being an influencer upon Jams' very dress, as her shedding perpetuated a change to the color black in the wardrobe of Jams, where "previously black was never worn." Maggie-Dawg emulates the essence of a gentle aging woman who dwells within the simple pleasures of life at an advanced age: eating (a "must" according to Jams, her guardian), sleeping, walking, and lying in the flowerbeds. She truly is an artist, in the very words of the verse, *When I am an Old Woman, I Shall Wear Purple* (Martz, 1996). At the time of our conversations, Maggie-Dawg was physically present, positioning herself carefully by Jams' side, directly on the couch. In the spirit of Maggie-Dawg, now deceased from complications of aging, her voice continues within the words of Jams.

Atticus is the companion of Maggie-Dawg, a true sight hound with the instinct to herd and care-for his flock of Jams, her family, and particularly Maggie-Dawg. Atticus, described by Jams as "all but 1/32 border collie," emerges from the borderland shadows of a Native American reservation in Arizona where Jams was employed for two years in the university instruction of Native American nursing students. Atticus enters Jams' and Maggie-Dawg's life as a feral puppy, trying to survive the elements of the out-of-doors. Atticus quickly acclimates to his new family and the indoors, assuming his position of caregiver to Maggie-Dawg; he continually can be seen grooming her which I am told is not reciprocated by Maggie-Dawg.

According to Jams, and through personal observation during the conversations, Atticus inevitably will position himself in direct contact with both Jams and Maggie-Dawg, paws touching both members of his *herd*.

Shamus is the new “canine kid on the block.” Shamus, a black Labrador puppy, is described by Jams as a “reincarnation” of Maggie-Dawg, awkward, gangly, a true connoisseur of food. Shamus joined Jams’ family after being found at a rest stop on an interstate highway. Shamus was not present during the initial conversations but has provided further text and life lessons as he “very clumsily” (as described by Jams), makes his way in the world and learns to be-come a part of the pack ruled by Atticus.

Jellico and Sapri, once-feral cats and the final physical animal members of Jams’ household, only cast fleeting glances during our conversations, as their presence silently was made known. Jellico and Sapri, however, are integral members of this group. They frequently are noted to position themselves above Maggie-Dawg and Atticus, a point of advantage, in order to see the terrain fully. Jellico and Sapri make their presence known to the dogs through a swipe of the paw at a passing canine body part! In their biographies, both Sapri and Jellico have learned to survive in a family after once surviving in the wild.

Sarah Elizabeth, a canine companion, dwells with her human guardian, Betty. Sarah Elizabeth’s early biography began as a stray, struggling to provide for nine puppies prior to being rescued and placed with Betty. Betty granted Sarah Elizabeth her name because the name for Betty embodied the very essence of courage. Sarah Elizabeth, now fifteen-plus years in physical age, spends her time sleeping and providing Betty with lessons on taking down-time, as Sarah Elizabeth dwells in each

moment of the day. Sarah Elizabeth's dining area in the kitchen is filled with caring gifts from Betty's friends: a statue of St. Francis of Assisi, a Judean star, a Buddha figurine, and a fan letter arranged around Sarah Elizabeth's eating arena. According to Betty, Sarah Elizabeth encompasses the very essence of spirituality with no formal religious boundaries. Sarah Elizabeth, due to her advancing age, is limited in her sight and hearing but continues to be a great listener. Sarah Elizabeth lays between Betty and I on the couch, touching both humans to *join* us in the conversation. Her human companion, Betty, notes, "Sarah seems to know you, she is so comfortable with you."

Greta, a German Shepherd, rules the household of Brigit and her family. Greta, the protector of ten years, stands guard over Brigit's children and a sleeping family at night. Greta projects so much caring toward Brigit's husband that she frequently defines her territory to even Brigit. Greta was suffering with a severe bout of Lyme Disease during our conversation that almost proved to be fatal. At this time of crisis, Brigit notes Greta's resilience and voices her "lostness" should the illness take Greta from the family. Greta's presence is noted, as well, with a story of Brigit's parents who, despite their desire for another canine companion in their own lives, refuse to embrace another canine being to avoid "hurting Greta's feelings!" Greta emerges as the true embodiment of a family member.

Greta's *sister* is **Lassie**, a stray canine who wandered into Brigit's backyard many years ago, was welcomed and decided to stay. Lassie's chore within the household is to comfort Brigit's elder daughter at night by co-habiting the bed with her. Lassie's presence continues within Brigit's final conversation despite her physical death three months ago.

Steve's family is comprised of **Barnum**, a whippet closely bonded with Steve and two pugs, **Reddy and Frankie**, who both share a perceived closer bond with Steve's partner. Barnum is described as a sight hound who literally engages Steve with his direct, adoring stares. Barnum joined Steve's family at the age of six months after being with two previous families, lending assistance to Steve's life journey over strenuous bumps of doctoral study and the work of being a nurse educator.

Another presence within Steve's life is that of **Dot**, a beautifully faced pug with arresting eyes. Dot sits in a photograph upon Steve's desk at the university. Dot, originally bred by Steve for dog show competition, was "given up for adoption" to a loving family who could spend more "quality time" with her. During the conversation, Steve casts a longing glance at Dot's picture and wistfully contemplates her "abduction or kidnapping" in order to bring her physical presence near once again.

The feline duo of **Sam II (Sam the Second) and Hobbs** are the *children* of April, whose very photos proudly are displayed within the baby photo album, along with the human children of April. Sam the Second and Hobbs are present during the conversations and are witnessed barking at the birds outside. When not in direct view, Sam the Second and Hobbs frequently can be seen during the conversation, hiding from view within a piece of furniture, tails betraying their attempts at total body vanishment. Sam the Second and Hobbs are noted to be quite verbal, joining in the conversation when directly asked for validation of the human words or when certain words are uttered. Sam II and Hobbs are *well-acquainted* with the language of the philosophers such as Heidegger after having lent a paw to April during her numerous

dissertation writing sessions. Sam the Second and Hobbs are aptly described fondly by April as “great listeners and translators of the language of phenomenology!”

A physically silent presence for April is **Sam I**, a deceased feline companion, whose voice resounds with soul as a continued spirit within April’s life. The legends and stories of Sam I span roughly twenty years. These stories project a timelessness, however, within the voice of April, as tears continue to flow with Sam I’s memories. Numerous other animal companions are given voice within April’s conversations as she displays large family photo albums where the pictures of these *companion animal children* dwell, right along side of her human children’s photos. April explains, “These photos of both human and animal children make me feel less lonely when I wander through these pictures.”

Tucker, named by Margaret’s daughter as a final puppy in a litter to be adopted, symbolizes Tucker’s mother who, indeed, was all “tuckered-out” as reminisced by Margaret after raising numerous litters! Tucker is a two-year-old yellow Labrador Retriever, joining Margaret’s household as a first dog in charge of assisting Margaret’s daughter through some trials and tribulations of adolescence. Tucker’s domain and the area chosen for our conversations was her kingdom of the backyard and garden, filled with Tucker’s possessions of a sleeping blanket for napping in the sunshine and various toys. Also in the backyard is Tucker’s snacking area, a patch of strawberry plants.

Tucker, according to Margaret (and interestingly enough witnessed during the conversations), knows just when the berries are ripe and chooses only to pluck these berries off for eating. This behavior causes Margaret to pause and consider the

proposed color-blindness equated with canines. Not only did Tucker give her great gift of presence during the conversation, but also extended a warm greeting through the retrieval and offering of a stuffed toy to me before the conversation began. Tucker is described by Margaret as the hidden composer of her dissertation due to Tucker's non-failing position by Margaret's side at her computer. Tucker, during the time of the conversations, resided in Menlo Park, California and has since moved her residence with Margaret to Sausalito where she engages in play with the seals at the beach and continues to enjoy her strawberries.

It is hoped that through these brief descriptive passages, some of the spirit and soul of these animal companions shine through to touch the heart spaces within each of us. It is also my hope that through these biographical meanderings, a clearing for an alternate conversation is brought forth as the ontology or very being of these companion animals is glimpsed, serving for each of us to *paws and consider* our past relationships with companion animals.

Conversational Places: Birth Passages and Sanctuaries

An opening into a birth passage is to gaze upon an intimate sanctuary. I felt this sense of intimacy while traveling in Assisi, Italy. For me, this leg of my journey was the cumulating of my birth as I entered into the tomb of St. Francis. The silence of this place, the simplicity as well as fortitude of the stone sarcophagus, the glow from the light of candles, and the absence of items of adornment, spoke to my soul of the true meaning embodied within his famous words of prayer, "a simplicity, an instrument of peace, a seeking to console, and a showing of love" (St. Francis of

Assisi Prayer, available on-line). These words be-came real. I suddenly *saw* these words in the faces and grace of movement of my own companion animals.

The words of this prayer carried me into the conversational places of my participants. True understanding and engagement necessitate an entrance or stepping into the places of my conversations. These places embody the spirit of the sacred, a bearing witness to the birth stories of my participants. It is important to note two major arenas of birthplaces: the body as a sacred place and the physicality of place. It is the merging of these two places “when the physical landscape becomes wedded to the landscape of the soul” (Basso, 1996, p. 55), that seeks to transform the terrain of the conversational place into a mysterious and magical domain. As with any nativity, there is a critical initial period of bonding immediately after birth. The places of the conversations served to crystallize meanings emitted within the elements of spoken language and the language of the body. The gathering in a garden or in a home, as my hands became enmeshed in the fur of a companion animal, served to voice the sacredness of the conversation. It is within these sacred places where those initial steps of a dance of attunement transpired between both my human and animal midwives and myself.

For five of my initial conversations, the home-place was selected. In one instance, the home space was that of the garden. A final place was the work space of one of the participants, Steve. Even within this space, there is an intimacy of place as photos and words bear witness to the exchange of birth stories between Steve and me. All of these places evoke the very spirit of intimacy, providing the grounding for a felt sense of bodily being-in-place, noted by the participants and myself. With this

intimacy emerges an intensity and deeper experience, “Within the being, in the being within, an enveloping of warmth welcomes being” (Bachelard, 1994, p. 7). Within this intimacy dwells a sense of safety, the sacred or profane, and beauty.

I acknowledge the beautiful within these birthplaces. This sense of beauty leads to deep bonding and imprinting upon my soul. O’Donohue (2004) describes this connection with the experience of the beautiful and place:

When we experience the beautiful, there is a sense of homecoming. We feel most alive in the presence of Beauty as it meets the needs of our souls. To experience Beauty, is to awaken and surrender in the same act. (p. 2)

Again, I surrender to the call of the question, “In what manner have animals made me the human being that I am?” I reflect upon the words of Kowalski (1999) voiced in Chapter One: “In a fundamental way, we need other creatures to tell us who we are” (p. 132). As I write, I mull over my own embodied changes, arising from the voices of my fellow human and animal travelers. It is with a sense of awe that I dis-entangle the threads of the participants’ conversations. With these biographies in mind, I open to the resounding silence of the themes within our conversations. I re-turn to the words offered by Levin (1989), “Silence is our listening openness: in order to hear something, we must first *give* it our silence” (p. 232). The echo of the silences resounds within the words of my participants.

A Being-With Soul

A being-with soul is to attend to the dichotomy and tension of both the immenseness of soul and the quiet unassuming beauty of soul. Again, I sense the notion of the profane and sacred, the mystery of birth. A midwife etymologically is a “with-woman” (Ayto, 1990, p. 347). For me, to be-with-the-Other, is to bear witness

to the stories brought forth or given birth. Like a midwife, I catch these stories as they emerge into the light, holding them tenderly as first breaths are taken. With these initial breaths, I am transformed. I seek to immerse myself more deeply within this soul journey of healing wherein the poet William Blake (as cited in Barasch, 1993, p. 320) honors the “Four Zoas” that comprise humanness: the flesh or body, the intellect, the emotional being or heart, and the creative spirit or soul. I heed the call of soul and its essence of beauty. I am called out from myself, a going beyond “the smallness of my limitations to experience new horizons” (O’Donohue, 2004, p. 20). These new horizons are dynamic “ontological movements” where I pursue a deeper involvement with the world (Levin, 1985, p. 103). In essence, I seek to be-long to soul. This belonging to soul is a venturing-in as I enter into a conversation of soul.

Entering the Conversation of Soul

To enter into the language of soul, is to entertain an authentic conversation, a conversation “fallen into, comprised of being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were” (Gadamer, 1960/1998, pp. 379-383). To enter into a conversation of soul is “to live in an ability consistent with our longing, an invitation to *dance*” (Mountain Dreamer, 2001, p. 1). This dance or ontological communion is manifested as an *attunement* to the Other. This attunement with the Other, the human and companion animal midwives, is noted through lived body or sensual connections, a lived language, and a felt connection to places. The conversation assumes a “spirit of its own, bearing a language of truth” (Gadamer, 1960/1998, p. 383). There is a lived temporality to this attunement as the dialogue of soul reflects a backward and forward hermeneutical circuitous motion, evoking a sense of a concurrent opening and

completing. I open this initial conversation of soul by forays into the naming of soul and a beginning dialogue around the experience of soul as heard in the words of my participants.

The Naming of Soul

To capture the essence of soul is to name the human experience of soul. I am filled with the sense of the ineffable, the unnamable. The ineffable calls out of the dark, as Dienske (2002) maintains through our bodily experiences, a rich dimension of our existence; the very entity of life within which we move. Furthermore, the ineffable, like beauty, exerts a healing medicine within its expressions of openness, a removal of duality and a brilliant shining through with meanings and indescribable joy (Dienske, 2002). The soul is an artist, “harvesting your deeper life from all of the seasons of your experience” (O’Donohue, 2004, p. 207). The soul is, thus, the artist of true beauty.

Therefore, this notion of soul brings forth many understandings, invocations, and dimensions of experience. Soul in its barest essence etymologically is linked with spirit (Ayto, 1990, p. 494); the “mystery we glimpse when we look deep within ourselves” (Moore, 1992, p. 267). Foundations of soul emanate from the very roots of spirit. Thus, from the notion of soul, one opens to other words of spirit: inspire, aspire, and transpire. Inspiration leads one to aspire for spirit as the soul transpires and yearns for connection.

These words of spirit are voiced by April as she describes Woody, a companion of fourteen years, “as seeking out people, for his one need was to be with people.” In a later conversation, April further notes that the presence of animals has

“pushed her” toward her life goals of doctoral education. Margaret credits, “more help to Tucker than any other being...as Tucker prodded me along the endless winding path [of life].” When questioned further regarding the meaning of her words, Margaret simply but profoundly states, “Tucker reminded me to take time for myself, a self-renewal, and to be with my loved ones.”

Clearly through the tasks of inspiration and aspiration, the soul calls us to transpire toward an alternate way of being-in-the-world. These words are reflected within the words of Zukav (1990) as he describes soul: “It is a positive, purposeful force at the core of your being that loves without restriction and accepts without judgment” (p. 31). It is this acceptance without judgment that shows itself in the very foundation of soul, love. This positive, purposeful care is given voice so aptly by Margaret as she describes Tucker’s love as being like “the moonbeam eternal.” Truly Tucker creates that light in the dark places of Margaret’s world. With Margaret’s words, I quickly recall a few words from a song in the film, *The Sound of Music*. I ponder the question brought forth in the film: “How does one catch a moonbeam in their hands?” I sense the ineffable in the seemingly elusiveness of Margaret’s language as she strives to name the experience of being-with Tucker.

The experience of being inspired is reflected within the soul’s connection or transpiration with beauty as O’Donohue (2004) depicts: “When we awaken to the call of beauty, we become aware of new ways of being in the world” (p. 7). This sense of being awake is, as O’ Donohue (2004) continues, not simply a process of growth, but a transformative experience as we embrace our deepest knowing of Self. Thus, by virtue of this soulful connection with companion animals, we open those deeply

present, but often-concealed parts of Self. During my conversations, these deep transformative experiences are given a silent voice through tears as stories are shared.

Soul is revealed by Moore (1992) as “a quality or dimension of experience of life and ourselves, encompassing the sense of depth, value, relatedness and personal sustenance” (p. 5). It is a point of intersection between the dimension of the holy and sacred found within beauty, truth and meaning (Kowalski, 1999): “a profound connection” (Moore, 1994); an “awakened awareness” (Ingram, 2003, p. xv) or a call to adventure where new experiences are sought. “A deep-in-the-bones knowledge of mutuality” occurs when two souls meet (Bolen, 2003, p. 32). The soul is the dweller of the “in-between” as noted by O’Donohue (1997), “the middle ground between the separation of the air and the belonging of the earth” (p. 97). As a homesteader within this middle ground, the soul shelters, seeking connection. These connections are revealed in the dimensions of soul: attunement, pathos, caring or nurturance, and the nature of soul.

The Nature of Soul

It is the nature of the soul to be wild. The very bodily being of a companion animal calls forth within our own souls, a heeding of a call to the wild. This heeding of the call to the wildness is eloquently described in the words of London (2001), “And not only did he learn by experience, but instincts long dead became alive again...the ancient song surged through him and he came into his own again” (pp. 20-21). When the ear is tuned to the ancient song of wild soul, we, too, “come into our own again,” dis-covering our true essences of soul. Margaret reveals this true essence of soul as she lets down barriers with students, “be-coming more empathetic and artfully opening

yourself up to someone else.” This experience of soul awakens us to chart the inner terrain of the Self, the wilderness, untouched and unexplored. Steve explores his inner terrain:

There are a lot of connections here between the relationships of nursing educators and their companion animals. I try to give it a language so that I could understand it better. I want to continue to work with younger people who are interested in nursing and relate to them on my level of caring.

Even within these wild places of Self, the soul seeks to nurture and care. “Each of us should travel inwards from the surface constraints and visit the wild places within us. Each of us needs the nourishment and healing of these inner clearances” (O’Donohue, 1999, p. 101). These extraordinary senses of the wild soul are manifested as our lives connect with the lives of the Other, our companion animals. Jams reveals her wild soul of care and attachment to place, as she remarks on the fact that Atticus owns a tail! Jams describes this importance of a tail in the stories of the Navajo:

Navajo dogs seldom have tails because tradition is to cut them off at birth and to bury the tail in the yard of the hogan (round dwelling). They [the Navajo] consider it inhumane to confine a dog, since theoretically he would never go far from his tail.

As Jams ponders the difference of Atticus, in what manner does she reveal her own innermost wild soul of belonging? April re-members her wilderness Self as she searches for the memories of a childhood safari with Duke as they embark upon an imaginative adventure. We be-come “a reflection of the whole” (Kowalski, 1999, p. 23). We join the herd or pack.

The wild nature of soul is reflected within a multitude of everyday life experiences as the soul finds its home within the ordinary details of life (Moore, 1992,

p. 4). The soul finds an “extraordinary” homeplace within the everyday “ordinary” as manifested for the participants through the bodily attunements of the senses, place, and the Self. This soul-full homesteading is witnessed in the eyes of companion animals, past and present.

Attunement: The Experience of Soul Dimensions

Attunement, in the most simplistic of terms, relegates a felt bodily sense. This felt bodily sense of connection calls. The call to soul is an experience of living deeply, through a profound spiritual and bodily attunement to the Other, a longing to be-with soul. Within our everyday terms, the experiences of being-attuned are manifested through the ontic everydayness of moods and feelings, a tuning into and turning outward to other beings. Margaret describes the tuning-in of Tucker as, “she listens intently, perking up and tilting her head.” April notes “the pacing and guarding” of Sam I as Sam I re-ponds to April’s tears. In the voice of April, “It was almost like she [Sam I] was saying, “Alright now! Who upset her?”

Heidegger (1996) describes this notion of attunement as one of the three disclosing structures of understanding. In essence, to be attuned is a significant ontological experience leading to understanding and care. Heidegger describes this notion termed, *Befindlichkeit*:

What we indicate ontologically with the term attunement is ontically what is most familiar and an everyday kind of thing: mood, being in a mood.... It is a fundamental existential mode of being, a being-there-with. And only because the “senses” belong ontologically to a being which as the kind of being attuned to being-in-the-world, can they be “touched” and “have a sense” for something so that what touches them shows itself. (pp. 126-131)

How do I make sense of the notion of soul that touches me? What emerges within an authentic attunement? Soul-filled meaning making is facilitated as Heidegger (1996)

notes through the senses, “the beings encountered accessible to it be encountered in themselves without being concealed, within a genuine realm of discovery” (p. 138). In what manner do I capture this essence? What are these dimensions of soul attunement?

Pathos. Through the pathic dimension, we are attuned within the world. Van Manen (1999) notes that the term, pathic, derives from *pathos*, a suffering and passion, a quality that arouses pity or sorrow. Thus, the pathically tuned body is closely aligned with the lived body. The pathic experience dwells within the temporality of the present; it is a means of making the human being whole, in that the body and the Self are re-united. The pathic experience of healing, therefore, is closely aligned with the process of attunement. The pathic healer guides the person to himself or herself, as the healer responds to vulnerability. The pathic relationship is one of individuality and uniqueness as “the senses intercommunicate by opening up the structure of a thing” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 229). Margaret offers support for this intercommunication of the senses: “Being listened to by Tucker is different than being listened to by a human, not all humans give me eye contact like Tucker.”

Throughout my conversations, the participants noted this unique healing, pathic relationship with their companion animals. The participants’ experiences of vulnerability are described as occurring not only at commonplace or everyday times, but at times of great life travails and crossroads. April voices a feeling of ‘being rescued’ by Sam I as she “is pulled up from the depths of despair when her life is turned up-side down” with the loss of her children. Margaret feels that Tucker paid very close attention to her daughter, Anne-Lise during her teenage years with their

trials and tribulations. This close attention was noted by Margaret in the “patience offered by Tucker” as Anne-Lise worked through her teenage developmental tasks such as caregiving. Margaret still fondly recalls, Anne-Lise’s caring as she dressed up Tucker in her school sports uniform after a particularly trying day on her school team. As Margaret shows a treasured photo of the dressing event, she validates the change in Anne-Lise as Tucker is dressed and Anne-Lise is seen smiling and laughing. Margaret fondly reminisces this seemingly rare mother-daughter bonding time facilitated by Tucker. Again, I am called to question the sacredness of the body of a companion animal as a conversational place; Tucker’s body bears witness to not only the touch of Margaret and Anne-Lise but a rite of passage. What lessons do companion animals give back to us as they bear witness to our humanness? Through this bearing witness, in what manner are we called to new understandings of the Self?

Caring. Heidegger (1953/1996) describes the soul or anima as “the being whose very nature it is to meet with all other beings” (p. 12). The soul is a calling to the Other. “The call is the call to care” (Heidegger, 1953/1996, p. 264). In essence, the work of the soul is to care.

The soul seeks to care and revels within caring. The soul cares for the elements of nakedness and vulnerability as our spirits are laid bare to embrace the caring offered. I am caught within the rapture, a sacred joining with the Other. These profound connections are shown in the depth of lived experience as Jams reflects upon this relevance to the bare (bear) bones of being. Jams explains:

I think of them more as companions, I take care of him and he takes care of me! I was thinking of it as a collaborative relationship, **but a very equal one** (emphasis added in tone). They communicate very simply and truly guide through the world. They are co-carers: a co-journeyer, the sense of co-caring.

Through the notion of co-caring, the very presence of our companion animals becomes clear. To embody the notion of co, a Latin prefix, is “to join together” (Skeat, 1993, p. 86). To come together in the act of caring is, therefore, a joining in spirit with, an attuning to the essence of the Other. To provide the equity of this prefix is to relegate validation to the being of a companion animal.

Steve reflects on his reciprocal caring relationships with his companion animals:

I am a healthy person, physically, spiritually and emotionally. I feel very healthy and blessed. And a huge part of it is my companion animals and my relationship with my animals. I feel that this enriches my life and keeps me healthy... I feel that what I give to my animals is very reciprocal. It is much more, what would you say...**unconditional** (emphasis added) from their side obviously.

What does it mean to care unconditionally? What is the nature of the experience of being held within our nakedness and vulnerability as human beings? This sense of reciprocity or being-together-with carries a notion of mystery. O'Donohue (1999) says, “It is poignant to remember that even the most intimate friendship cannot dissolve the strangeness between. The friend remains partly stranger...Real soul friendship acknowledges the mystery of the other” (pp. 48-49). I exist within the tensions as I seek to name the elusive.

Within the experience of being loved by a companion animal, one notes an absent word from the vocabulary of animal love, a three-letter word: *but*. The word, but, originally meant “outside” (Ayto, 1990, p. 88). Truly the experience of being loved by a companion animal allows for a feeling of being taken in, without conditions. Nowhere is there a holding back or sense of reserve, a part left outside.

There are no “buts” in or about the relationship. One is accepted for whom one is, within one’s nakedness and true sense of being. April experiences this sense of total acceptance within the presence of her cat, Sam I. She notes this freedom of acceptance in another conversation as she reminisces about a childhood companion dog who “accepted her awkwardness and braces.” In the words of April:

Cindy slept with me at night and I would whisper the difficulties I was having in school. She did not care that I was tall, skinny, and had braces. Cindy always knew when I was at my darkest point and would meet me at the door with a happy smile and yes, she did smile, and a wagging tail.

This loving without condition, is to embrace the Other through a heart-to-heart connection. The road to the soul is “through the heart” (Zukav, 1990, p. 44). Animals open to one of the deepest longings in the human heart, the desire to be loved for yourself alone (O’Donohue, 1999). When this longing is abated, healing occurs. Love is the “critical element in the lived experience of healing” (Engebretson, 1994, p. 40). What is the experience of being loved for one’s self-alone? What do companion animals see within our hearts that remains hidden from human view? Is unconditional love recognizant of authentic caring?

To experience authentic caring, one must be summoned to the Other, called into a discourse with the Other. This summoning is termed by Heidegger (1953/1996) as conscience, a being called:

And to what is one summoned? To one’s *own self*...But we shall not obtain an ontologically adequate interpretation of conscience until we can clarify not only *who* is called by the call, but *who calls*, how the one who is summoned is related to the called, how this “relation” is to be grasped ontologically as a connection of being. (pp. 252-253)

In what manner are we summoned to companion animals? How is their calling heard? Again, what makes their caring an authentic jumping-ahead-of, that assists us

with our quest for potential being? To answer the call of companion animal care giving is to be attuned to that being. To attune to is to recognize the invitation of our companion animals into a caring relationship. Jams relates a story of a sensual tuning in, a difference of ontology within her companion animals:

Even with him [Atticus] he was very attentive and focused. He is very visual. He is a herding dog and they are very visual. I mean with Maggie, she is a retriever. Her sense of smell is exquisite and she can go out there and boom locates just about anything by her sense of smell. She never could see worth a darn. She loves to be with you but yet she is not tuned into us in the same way. It is simply different. He [Atticus] watches (emphasis) everything and he never misses anything. He simply knows when people are in distress. I remember my aunt was driving and was lost and Atticus moved closer to her and comforted her. She felt cared for. He was rubbing up against her. He tuned into her distress and was there for her.

Companion animals invite us to caregiving through their presence. Jams further writes:

I do not know whether Atticus knows when someone needs caring. He is caring and he or she who need it responds to and accepts that. His canine persona is a caring one. His behaviors are those we recognize or interpret as caring. I appreciate his stillness, vigilance, and patience of study.

The vigilant presence of Atticus is emphasized by Jams. To be vigilant is to manifest states of being alert and watchful. In what manner does the caring of Atticus maintain vigil over the soul of Jams?

As noted in Chapter One, companion animals are portrayed as caregivers to embody the identities of both teacher and healer within their immense capacity for caregiving. It is these identities of teacher and healer within the human experience of being-cared-for by a companion animal that call out to us and lend themselves to expression. The stories and text below embrace **soul**, an ontology of caregiving, apparent within the being-with companion animals.

In-Tensional Stories of Soul Birth

These stories of soul birth bear witness to notions of tension or dis-ease and contention as noted in the following passages. These passages mirror the uniqueness of each birth story. I offer these twists and turns, the pains and pangs of birth as evidenced by *a getting-down on all fours* for the participants to embrace the power of Bear Medicine. These tensions evoke a true notion of shape-shifting as, like myself, the participants struggle within the confines of their bodily beings, as ontological boundaries are crossed and transversed toward an understanding of soul.

Bearing birth. During our conversations, my sense of vulnerability emerged in the act of listening to the participants. I experienced a momentary, tuning-out from the act of authentic listening, as words seemingly fell upon temporarily deafened ears. My heart could not carry the grief and suffering within the words of the participants. Flickinger (2002) opens my sense of vulnerability further as she, too, finds difficulty in bearing witness to another's suffering:

I often find that having access to a person's private suffering is kind of like being ushered into a sacred place, a kind of inner sanctum where the most valuable human secrets are kept. The sacred has an ambivalent effect in that it both repels and attracts. I am repelled because the sacred exposes my finiteness, vulnerability, and fragility. At the same time, the mystery attracts me like a giant magnet. (p. 2)

As with any transformational experience, I sit with the silence, embracing the ebb and flow of being. Within the inner sanctum of my soul, I surrender to the tensions. I offer a resting place for these birth stories. I re-listen.

True listening, as Levin (1989) notes, is a letting go of cognition, an alternation of our epistemological attitudes and ontological commitments. While I was listening with a sense of compassion and rudimentary reciprocity as noted in Levin's (1989)

stage of “Communicative Praxis” (p. 47), I found myself wanting to put up barriers to hearing that which was said. My soul was longing to hearken to and grasp this voice of a kindred spirit. I began to “be- with” the words of my participants; I commenced to hear my tears and sense of longing and grief. O’Donohue (1999) foretells of this sense of dis-ease: “In quiet moments of your love, even at moments of great intimacy that feel like absolute homecoming, a whisper of this longing will often startle you and prod you into unease and make you question yourself” (p. 10). As the participants speak, I feel my longing and vulnerability arise to the surface of my skin, peeling away the outer layers. I stand naked at the edge. I sense not the pain of the nothingness of the abyss, but rather, the comfort of a land of familiarity.

Interestingly enough, April, after giving voice to and describing her cat Sam, a physical presence absent for approximately twenty years, cared for me with a simple question, “So, how do you talk about your dog without crying?” As in a conversation, I, the questioner, had be-come the questioned. Gadamer (1960/1998) describes this experience as the manner in which “the hermeneutical occurrence is realized in the dialectic of the question as hearing is an avenue to the whole” (p. 462).

I belong to this question as I dwell within the hermeneutical significance of April’s words. Through the primacy of hearing, I am unable to “hear away” (Gadamer, 1960/1998, p. 462) the meaning within the language. As the question took hold of me and still continues to reverberate within my being, I pause to reflect upon these words, seeking a cathartic surrender to my tears.

Bear dis-ease. Steve commences the conversation of dis-ease in his birth dialogue with a very interesting observation of the language of “animal people.” For

Steve, to describe one's experience of being with a companion animal is literally to act "touched" in that all mental faculties are not present. Upon beginning our initial conversation when referring to the use of the language of experiencing a companion animal as a soul mate, Steve laughingly makes this observation:

And if you said that outside of the confines of this room right now, people would laugh at you and say you are crazy, you know. And it is great that you can write that. But, people would read that and say that woman is nuts and why doesn't she have a life?

While said laughingly, Steve opens the conversation at a slightly different level. What is the language of animal people and how do they, indeed, appear to others as "touched in the head?" Steve elaborates:

I felt, like perhaps, well, like you said the language, but we cannot help but use our human language, so I use human terms and some people would think that it is crazy. I know a lot of people would not understand this. But it had been a long time that I had that head over heels feeling of love, an experience like that.

What is the dis-ease Steve anticipates as he opens his conversation with me? Does the dis-ease stem from his own past experiences of being "head over heels" with a companion animal, or are these feelings rooted deeper within the very soul of Steve?

Margaret, as well, notes her dis-comfort during the conversation when she states, "I cannot believe we are talking about this!" What do these passages reflect regarding the turmoil within the Self? Are these participants engaged in a conflict for authenticity versus the foreign language of nurse education? Are these participants voicing their own venturing-into fears as they, too, turn to don more authentic "red shoes?"

Brigit voices an internal struggle of financial concerns and difficulties as an educator "on a tight budget" versus ethical choices when she offers insight into the

decision-making of providing enormous financial care for Greta following surgery and an illness. Brigit states:

To my husband and I, Greta's recovery was priceless. However other close family members saw our choices very differently. They [other family] made us feel very guilty for cutting corners elsewhere...I mean what other decision would we have made regarding Greta? After all, she is our first daughter!

Clearly, other family members do not understand "the walk and the talk" of "animal persons." Brigit, by fabricating authentic red shoes, dwells the only way she can feel at home in the decisions brought forth.

Lions, tigers, and bears. Within the language of the participants, there appear to be elements of what I fondly term, bones of contention. Bones of contention are those elements of tension where I struggle to maintain some common ground of understanding. Clearly for some of the participants, the lines of companion animal presence are drawn between the "dog-people" and the "cat-people." Rilke writes about the shaky foundations of feline existence but the trusting manners and the humanness of a dog's gaze (as cited in Grenier, 2000). As Steve notes, "I got a cat which for me was a substitute for a dog, not to offend people who like cats but I really prefer a dog and I feel that the relationship is much more reciprocal with dogs than with cats."

Margaret defines the elements of contact between cat guardians and their canine counterparts, "At least from my experience with cats, I think cats definitely tell you when they want to be petted and then they go away for periods of time and are inaccessible to direct contact, whereas a dog is always beside you. The dog is (long pause) she is always there (emphasis). Brigit reveals "her fondness for dogs...a slightly different feeling of attachment with a cat." When questioned further, Brigit

attributes this difference as one of space and distance as she replies, “Dogs are there. I mean cats are, too, but in a different way.”

While many participants throughout their life experiences have had the privilege of being guardians for cats, dogs, and other creatures, clearly the choice for a current animal companion lies within, perhaps, the “needs” of the individual person. Jams describes this well, “I think I have multiple personalities and part of me is a cat person and part of me is a dog person. In terms of caring, I have always thought about myself as a cat person, although the last few years, I have been more of a dog person.”

Within the participants’ stories clearly the theme of being an “animal person” arose regardless of feline or canine affiliations. Brigit identifies with “all creatures” even fondly recalling a childhood story of a raccoon. April describes herself as a companion animal person with no clear affinity toward any one animal grouping. She finds herself drawn to her companion animals on the basis of individuality and the “call” of an individual animal toward her.

Jams, when asked to elaborate on her “transition between cat persona and dog persona,” notes quite simply, a “large part of me is simply animal person.” Gender identification was salient for Jams in her preference for cats during childhood. Jams explains this connection, “Cats are associated with the feminine and her mother” within a “houseful of brothers.” Despite the stance toward “lions, or tigers, or bears,” all participants noted a sense of traveling within a foreign land and not understanding the language of “non-animal people.” As Margaret notes, “I find it hard to understand those not connected with animals. They are speaking a foreign tongue.”

It is important to note that attunement opens one to intense learning as long as *the eyes are open*. Taking the companion animal selection process one step further, is to assume the stance that the correct companion animal emerges upon our life journey at the needed time for certain life lessons. I ponder my own attunement to my canine companion, Barkley, as her life's journey so closely parallels the journey of my mother. With stark clarity, I see my struggle with ethical choices during my mother's illness. These ethical choices have traveled a circular path as I am faced with the choices regarding the welfare of Barkley. I open to the possibility of traveling an enhanced authentic path.

Dwelling: Soul Connections and Tensions

Through the conversations, the participants respond to the call of soul, dwelling in tensions and connections. In opening this conversation to a deeper level, I pause to reflect on the notion of dwelling. Like the thought of soul, the notion of dwelling brings forward a sense of depth or deepness and intimacy, an attunement. A dwelling denotes a sense of permanency. A dwelling offers points of departure and elements of re-turn.

These points of departure and re-turning assume the dialogue of authentic conversation, a re-membering. The essential structures of re-membering include: a reliving of the past, "an intimate getting back within ourselves" (Casey, 2000, p. 109); *reminiscentia*, aides to memories that embody elements of temporality such as photographs (p. 111); wistfulness, a wishful musing that entertains the notions of memories with both joy and painful longing or suffering (pp. 112-113); and the final characteristic of communal-discursiveness, a dialogue embedded within the notion of

the transformative power of reminiscing (p. 113). Within reverie, the soul keeps watch (Bachelard, 1994) and thus, cares for us.

I re-turn to face my original question of inquiry, **What is the lived experience of nurse educators being-with companion animals as teachers and healers?** What is the meaning of companion animal care giving within the life world of nurse educators? In what manner do nurse educators dwell along-side of companion animals? What are the manifestations of the practice of midwifery in our interactions with companion animals as they give birth to our human souls and spirit? Do companion animals emerge as Katz (2003) suggests with a greater work in the world? In what way is the “work” of companion animals a work of the soul? I open to the experience of soul within the conversations.

Animal Love: Embracing Soul

Tell me a story of who you are,
And see who I am in the stories I am living.
And together we will remember that each of us always has a choice.
(Mountain Dreamer, 2001, p. xiii)

The idea of animal love is to portray a connection of the soul to the heart. Indeed, etymologically, “the heart comes from the Latin *animæ* soul” (Ayto, 1990, p. 277). Love is an event of the soul (Moore, 1992, p. 78). As an event of the soul, love assumes a mode of activity, a reaching out. Love is the “force and energy of the soul” (Zukav, 1990, p. 231). The very thoughts of love emanate from depth. Through love, we are joined with “the deepest within us and wedded to the universal” (Kowalski, 1999, p. 101). This joining evokes thoughts of special, intensely intimate connections as love is the “only light that can truly read the secret identity of another’s soul” (O’Donohue, 1997, p. 14).

Steve responds to the reading of his identity as he notes the “heads over heels, euphoria” feeling in contact with Barnum. Steve later goes on to note the temporality of this euphoria, relegating its short shelf life to the realm of humans: “I can count the times I have felt that way with a human on one hand but with my dogs, the feeling seems endless.” Margaret fosters this belief as well as she tries to place this notion of animal love within the realm of human language. She describes this love as “immediate, euphoric and unconditional.” To feel the human emotion of immediate euphoria can be described as a stepping out of the body as one experiences a sense of elation, “a being elevated in that moment,” indeed, a “head over heels” feeling! As we step out of our body in that moment, what is this experience of being accepted for the beings that we are? In what manner are we embraced soul-to-soul with the Other? What is this notion of animal love?

Soul Mates

A soul mate, as previously described, is that being with whom one shares an intense connection, a notion of love, a “setting one’s cap for.” Within Celtic lore, a soul mate is embodied within “*anam cara*, a soul friend” (O’Donohue, 1997, p. 13). The *anam cara* embodies the identities of teacher, spiritual guide, and confessor. Within the presence of a soul friend, “we come to be known in a deep of detail and love” (Palmer, 1993, p. 11). This showing is described by Merton (1979) as the task of education, “a revealing of the way in which a human defines himself to the world, authentically and spontaneously” (p. 3). Jams describes the soul-mate qualities of Atticus:

Atticus, as you know, is the world’s most wonderful dog. He is truly a soul-mate. He is the most sensitive and attentive animal I have ever known. He is a

healer. He takes total care of Maggie, who is thirteen now and dying from a tumor in her chest that presses both her trachea and her heart. He cleans her ears and her teeth. He is so gentle.

Within the words of Jams, I am struck by the depth of attachment between Atticus and his herd of Maggie-Dawg and Jams. Does Atticus know that Maggie-Dawg is no longer able to care for her own daily needs due to failing breaths and an ailing heart? What is the connection that calls Atticus to care for Maggie-Dawg, giving her breath back as it were by allowing her to rest and be? I open to this mystery of connection.

The connection to a soul friend is an ancient one. The experience of encountering a soul mate, the *anam cara*, is to open to the human experience of a love that “transcends and endures time” as brought forth within the voices of April, Brigit and Steve. April in her opening description of Sam I notes, “their paths had crossed before,” “a being together in another time.” An *anam cara* is that “once in a blue moon” connection. A soul mate encompasses a realm where we “love at first sight” as described by Jams in her conversation about Maggie-Dawg as Jams rescues Maggie-Dawg from a humane society pound.

A soul mate is a connection never broken but remains felt within the very beings of the participants. This lived experience of intense connection or soul-mate is described by Merleau-Ponty (1948/1968):

Their landscapes interweave, their actions and their passions fit together exactly (p. 142)...With the first vision, the first contact, the first pleasure, there is initiation, an opening of a dimension that can never again be closed, the establishment of a level in terms of which every other experience will henceforth be situated. (p.151)

Clearly for each of the participants I find a sense of this continued connection as the participants most profoundly describe their stories of childhood animal companions. I hear the voices of Margaret's Tahanne and Chop-Chop, April's Duke, and Steve's Dot. These stories are vividly portrayed with elements of freshness and clarity as if they had just happened yesterday. These animal soul mates embody intense connection, not only through our everyday existence as human beings, but at times in life's crossroads.

This sense of deep connection comes forth for April as she stood at a life crossroad between her decision to continue her life or end her life. April credits being able to choose life through her immense continued connection to Sam, a deceased cat. Most profoundly, April opens this soul-mate language by a basic statement regarding her cat, Sam, as she states, "He was my lifesaver, my guardian angel" as she describes a time of intense depression following a divorce, a time "saved" by Sam as Sam offers his love to April and a sense of caring to her life. To Sam, April attributes a reason for existence, "a need as a human being to care for someone." Sam joins her in caring as he greets April at the door each evening after her arrival home from work, creating a caring hearth, a home fire, for care.

A soul mate is manifested as present over time, a temporality manifested without the notions of objective time frames. April continues to feel the sense of connection as she notes "feeling Sam's presence" within her present life. A soul mate is the experience of "being committed, a putting together" (Ayto, 1990, p. 172). This sense of being committed or put together is prevalent within the words of Jams who

notes that “We [my companion animals and I] are in this together for the long haul. We have a commitment.”

Heads and tails. The physical bodily remembering of companion animal presence seeks to make the participant whole or “makes heads or tails” out of life experiences. The soul friend, the *anam cara* is noted by O'Donohue (1997) to possess those special abilities to enhance understanding of our souls through connection with our soul friends. The *anam cara* brings an epistemological integration and healing” (O'Donohue, 1997, p. 16).

Margaret relates a story about Tahanne, a cat named by a deceased sister. Tahanne was present to Margaret during the times of coming home as a child to an empty dwelling. Margaret further illustrates:

I can still feel her fur, if I reminisce about it, I can still feel it. It was very silky, kind of silky. Elegant. Well I think it has a lot to do with not feeling alone. I think that she definitely filled up lonely moments of my life as a child growing up pretty much on my own.

To fill up the lonely moments embarks upon a feeling of belonging and being cared-for. Perhaps it can be said that even the utterance of Tahanne's name conjures up connections for Margaret with her deceased sister, a sister who named Tahanne because “my sister as an adolescent was acting so very Hawaiian at the time, enthralled with learning the Hawaiian culture and the exotics.” Does Margaret recall through the story of Tahanne a sister she describes as “a surrogate mother?” In what manner does the memory of Tahanne continue to provide a sister's lost caring through physical death? Margaret's current animal companion, Tucker and the “softness of her fur,” brings forth similar feelings of being cared for: “She [Tucker] would come into

the bed in the middle of the night and she would get along side of me and sleep. It was very comforting, extremely comforting, warm and soft.”

Brigit finds herself in a place of “being buried” in Lassie’s fur. Steve belongs within the gaze of Barnum as “peacefulness washes over him.” Jams re-turns to the soul land of the Reservation in Arizona, a geographical place of deeply felt belonging, as she strokes the fur of Atticus. April’s hand intertwines the tail of Sam II during a conversation, seemingly lost in an ancient realm of comfort and safety. Through Sarah Elizabeth’s stretch of her body, Betty notes her own sense of trust and being at ease within her own bodily boundaries as a nurse educator as she gathers Sarah’s spirit seemingly into her own body.

Re-membering the Self. Animals bring forth bodily memories (Masson, 1997). Body memory refers to the means in which we remember in and through the body (Casey, 2000). I reflect upon my own notions of body memory as I touch the face of one of my companion animals, Francois, a canine originally designated for and belonging-to my daughter, now long gone from our home through marriage. I write:

As I touch Francois and stroke his head and fur, I am taken back to other points in my life. I catch fleeting glimpses of my daughter, her smile, her laughter...a time of her holding Francois as a puppy...Francois’ greetings of sheer joy at her arrival home at the end of the day from college. Looking into his eyes, I see her once again and realize how very much I miss her at these quiet times. (Personal Journal)

These bodily memories stored with my animal companions serve to re-member those lost, deeply hidden parts of the Self. April re-members her daughter’s caring gift of a cat named Sam II to somehow re-place a long-gone Sam the First within April’s life, in the words of April, “Mom, I thought you needed another Sam!” Margaret reflects on a time at the beach with her daughter and Tucker, a time described as

laughter and the ceremony of naming Tucker, a time fondly re-membered as Margaret prepares to send her daughter to the East Coast for college. Brigit recalls a time of great lostness during her childhood when, following the accidental death of the family dog, Brigit “loses her mother to overwhelming depression.” Brigit states:

I was so frightened that my mother would not even get out of bed for days. I did not know what to do. I now understand how she must have felt to lose her [family dog]. But when you are young like I was, it was quite scary to my child’s eyes.

Steve “sees the person he used to be,” a dog breeder, within the photos of past companion animals. Steve now openly ponders his past connections to the world of dog shows and senses notions of dis-ease within the fluidity of their ethical boundaries. Steve notes this dis-ease within his body as he changes his bodily position, quickly moving onto another part of the conversation, a part comprised of a temporal, present-day safety within its borders. These ethical boundaries are contrived, as he notes, upon laws governing the safety of animals. Despite this safeguard, Steve finds himself in “another place” comprised of an altered and perhaps more encompassing stance in ethics. In brief, Steve, is re-membered through his companion animals as he opens to all parts of the self.

Jams catches glimpses of her son within the tale of Uncle Roosevelt, a cat of childhood. Uncle Roosevelt by connotation of his rank of “uncle,” provided Jams’ son with early lessons on caring as he [Uncle Roosevelt] cared for a stray kitten, “taking the kitten into himself through gathering.” Jams’ denotation of the title of “Uncle” within the language grasps at this familial caring connection. What body memories of Jams’ family strive to emit this connection? Jams comments upon a memory she perceives within the eyes of Atticus as he watches Maggie Dawg receive a bath. Jams

laughingly asks, “Is Atticus thinking this is a form of torture?” This memory for Jams is reminiscent suddenly of her daughter’s own look of torture during annual school pictures in nursery school.

Interestingly, in another conversation, Jams notes a total remembrance of childhood animal names but a lack of clarity regarding some stories of her brothers’ antics. Perhaps, as Jams notes, “my animals are just more distinct.” Again, I pause to question and ponder this notion of distinctness. What makes these animal stories much more prominent? How has their clarity survived over time while other family stories have declined and become lost? What is this connection of soul, the silent part of Self that manages survival in a world inundated with sights and sounds?

As can be noted, the presence of a companion animal completes the participant through the act of physical remembrance, soul remembrance, and childhood remembrance. Through the great capacity of caring, companion animals emerge as the creators of our lived bodily experiences of caring. I re-turn to the words of Beston (1928/1977), “a living by the gifts of the extensions of the senses” (pp. 24-25). In what manner do companion animals open our senses to our hidden parts of Self?

Twin Souls

Twins share a very unique, *sole* attachment. Twins unite their souls even prior to the moment of actual birth. Twins within the womb share secrets of their beings, apparent throughout their lives. The etymology of the word, twin, is “a common thread, a twine” (Ayto, 1990, p. 546). The notion of inter-twining is further noted within our conversations.

Complementary twins. To complement is to balance, harmonize, complete. In the film, *Jerry McGuire*, there is a very poignant excerpt in which the main character makes a heart startling confession as to the identity of his wife, simply facing her with a gesture and uttering the words, “You complete me!” With the gestures brought forth, this character gathers the essence of his wife toward himself, a final sense of being whole and complete. The body becomes the conduit for the activities of the soul. Within this wholeness exists a union of all aspects of the person: body, mind, and soul. Within this completeness, our souls do not feel the longings of loneliness, but rather rejoice and revel in a connection of hearts and souls.

This sense of completion announces itself within our conversations. The language brings forth my assumption as to the greater part of humanity embodied within the identity of our companion animals. These acts of completion reflect a temporality of both past and present as participants share their stories of completion of Self, soul, and spirit. Through our bodies, we catch a glimpse of the soul’s true meaning and that of our hidden terrains. The conversations about companion animals open to reveal the being of a companion animal as “a body poetic,” a vessel for completeness of Self by the joining together of body, mind, and soul.

Among the participants, a completion of Self is noted through the soul connection within the form of their present companion animals and future companion animals. April relates:

I do not feel that I am complete unless there is an animal. I do not know what we are going to do when the boys die. You know a house to me doesn’t feel complete unless there is an animal there...no one to sit beside you...no one to talk to and particularly if you are talking to yourself...

Margaret describes her sense of never being complete again without the presence of a companion animal, “No! I will never be without a dog. And I told my husband that and he has learned to accept that. She [Tucker] refills my cup.” Steve recognizes a sense of completion as well, a touching down within his very fiber (O’Donohue, 1999), a sense of prominence or euphoria when he is in contact with certain companion animals both past and present. Steve describes his intense connection to his present companion animal, Barnum, as Barnum gazes into Steve’s eyes, while snuggled with him. April notes a sense of temporal and eternal completion as she relates, “Heaven would not be complete without my companion animals.” Brigit adamantly voices a life “incomprehensible” without the presence of Greta.

Conjoined twins. Conjoined twins share a common body or parts of a body. This notion of shared bodies is paramount within the commitment to a companion animal and with a companion animal. One being blends into the body of the Other. This shared space is noted by Brigit who maintains, “Greta is always so close next to me that I almost forget that she is there!” I, too, sense this notion of “being joined at the hip,” suggesting an identity of a conjoined twin as I struggle to move a limb in bed at night, without disruption of the “pack.” My movements and gestures seem to be anticipated among my present companion animals. Like a school of fish, we move in sync in a dance of perfect harmony, “a choreographic symphony of mutual felt sensing” (Levin, 1989, p. 151) akin to the relationship of a mother and child. The bodily borders blend, creating an intimate space of shape shifting. O’Donohue (1999) suggests the foundation of this experience is simply one of love: “When you love someone, you are no longer single. You are more than yourself. It is as if many of

your nerve lines now extend outside your body toward the beloved, and theirs reach toward you” (p. 241). I am in a communion, a sacred union with my soul mates. We share a common heart.

This sense of union is taken to a slightly different level as Margaret notes the “similarities” of her health with the health of Tucker as she recognizes the “interesting fact” that both she and Tucker required knee repairs within a year of one another! At first glance, I note the seemingly incongruence within this connection. As a nurse, I recall the notion and documented evidence of the sympathy pains exhibited by significant others during pregnancy and birth. Again, the mystery of this connection calls out to me, not to solve the premises of the mystery, but rather simply to embrace the mystery and wonder of the connections with companion animals.

Separated twins. This parental notion of continued caring and commitment is evident as well with other participants as they share stories of grief over memories of companion animal separations. For Jams she notes the remembered struggle in placing her companion animals with her parents before being stationed by the military in Hawaii, a state where animals are quarantined for six months despite records of required immunizations. Jams states, “I could not bear to put them through that, being in a cage.” Margaret recalls the placement of childhood rabbits as dis-placement: “Where did these tears come from? I have not thought of those rabbits in years.” As a soul mate, we mold into the “universal flesh” (Levin, 1999, p. 228) of the invisible and visible across time and place.

This sense of commitment is evident with Steve. In opening further his thoughts about those “particularly special” companion animals, he gazes longingly at a

photo upon his desk of Dot, a past companion animal placed where she would “obtain a higher quality of life” due to Steve’s time commitments during this time of his life.

When questioned relating his continuing contact with Dot, Steve states:

I kick myself every time that I think about placing her. She lives with a wonderful family and two kids who just love her to death and they have given her a better life than I could ever give her. It had been five or six years since I had really felt that connection. It was really brought home when I placed her and it was six months later I was crying one day. I was saying to myself, “How could I have placed her?” I missed her so much (much emotional emphasis).

What hidden parts of Steve’s soul have been opened through his experience of placing Dot in another home? I sense notions of selfless parental caring as Steve struggles with the choice of giving Dot “up for adoption,” and like a parent continues to rationalize his choice. Steve’s longing for Dot speaks to his continued sense of belonging to Dot. Like Margaret, Steve’s caring transcends the boundaries of time and place as he continues to “care-for” Dot many years after his contact with her.

Intuition: Twin language. Twins speak a particular language, seemingly only understood by them. I have evidenced this tonality of specialness in the language of my goddaughters, Rachael and Nicole, who as infants made gibberish translatable among their exclusive meeting of two! As linguistic abilities developed, I observed the manner in which Rachael and Nicole completed sentences for one another, smiling at their unspoken comprehension of “reading each other’s minds.”

The common language of the human guardian and companion animals could best be described as a speaking in soul, a knowing without the notions of a formal language. Heidegger (1953/1996) expresses this language “as intuitive cognition, a kind of behavior of the soul, a way of grasping what is real” (p. 188). This sense of simply knowing by intuition is manifested throughout the conversations. Intuition is a

sensing by heart and soul, a bodily sense of connection. Intuition is brought forth within the language of soul, portrayed in elements of a special language, a kindred dialect, and a mystical connection of simply knowing despite words.

Within the Biblical story of the Pentecost, the Holy Spirit provides the Apostles with the innate ability to speak numerous languages, comprehensible by all who heard them. This opens to an alternate way of hearing. April opens a segment of one of her conversations with a physical description of Sam I, her cat, and the attachment experienced by April upon their meeting:

She was lively. I think it was the color of her eyes--she had a little blaze on her forehead. She had a little blaze. She was tiny but so very lively. She was in the cage with her brothers and sisters. It was like she was saying, "Pick me! Pick me."

April notes the hidden language of the eyes and the intuitive knowing of a felt sense of a "destiny of selection." Clearly, speaking in tongues reveals a universal language within the senses. We *hear* the focus of our companion animals' gaze, we *listen* for the upturn of ears, we pause for a tuning into the deep rhythm of the thump of a tail. We attune to the Other.

This speaking in tongues emerges within a later conversation for April as she recognizes this intuitive connection with Duke, a childhood dog, who "spoke and understood German" just like her. Duke understood many languages in addition to German as further described by April, "English, Dutch and baby babbles." April further notes that the same sense of attunement was not present with Misty, a cat. Misty, according to April, also spoke German but "was very particular with whom she [Misty] shared knowledge." When further questioned for clarification regarding this

distinction, April notes the difference of felt connection as a sense of “being listened to,” a trait less apparent with Misty than Duke.

Jams comments on the language of Uncle Roosevelt, noting his “fondness” for conversations with humans: “Roosevelt was so (emphasis) people dependent. He would wait by the door. He would hear the car come up and he would be there. He always needed someone to talk to. He was like a dog.” In a later conversation, Jams describes her instant attachment to Atticus as “something about him said he was different.”

Companion animals mirror this intuitive connection in response to another companion animal as well. In a later conversation, Jams expands upon the intuitive caring of Mosi, a stray cat who seemed as well to entertain the notions of Atticus’ being different. Mosi was noted by Jams to stride into Jams’ Arizona home and begin to tend to Atticus, ill after numerous immunizations:

Mosi acted like he lived there. Mosi was by his [Atticus] side and licked him once in a while. I laid him [Atticus] on this pillow and Mosi took over. The next morning Atticus was fine. I could hardly believe he survived, he was so sick, let alone perked right up again.

I reflect upon the lesson of letting go and letting be so apparent in the intuitive teaching and caring of Mosi. What is this knowing as one soul connects with another soul, despite not having a common language? As human be-ings in the process of human be-coming, what can be gleamed from this lesson?

Steve speaks of this significant language of the heart within the following passage: “I almost feel like he reads my mind and I can read his mind that I do not, I do not know what sixth sense dogs have but I do feel that they have some kind of sixth

sense. I really do and um that they are able to really pick up on your feelings. Much more than any human could do.”

Intuition, like a soul commitment, additionally is manifested through the exemplars of the companion animals of the participants. Atticus displays his “knowing” of the physical death of Maggie-Dawg through his mourning. Jams notes the grief of Atticus as a “being beside himself,” portrayed by his lethargy and loss of appetite: “You had a really rough time of it, didn’t you?” Jams takes up again with her thoughts as she strokes Atticus continuing: “I think you had a rougher time than even Bill or I. Your mourning seemed to last so much longer.” Shamus pays homage to the spirit of Maggie-Dawg through his reverence of her [Maggie Dawg] toys. Previous to Maggie’s death, Shamus would fondly chew everything in sight. Shamus continued to chew everything in sight, as Jams notes, with the remarkable exception of Maggie’s toys. Greta is noticed by Brigit to relax visibly following Lassie’s death as “if a weight was taken off of her shoulders.” Brigit notes the intuitive knowing of Greta regarding Lassie’s death, despite a difference in geography. In the words of Brigit, “I did not have to tell Greta that Lassie was not coming home. She already knew.”

Lastly, within our conversations, companion animals were noted to approach their human companions “just when the time was right” for the touch of a paw or a face lick. April reminisces about Cindy, a dog who met her at the door following a day at school as a child. Cindy always “knew” when the day had been a bad one for April. Steve observes Barnum inching closer to him when he [Steve] is stressed.

I, too, have experienced these acts of healing and caring as I grieved openly for my mother at the time of her physical death. As I sat alone with eyes shut to the

world, I was embraced by the quiet presence of Francois, Barkley, and Milton, my animal companions. I opened my eyes to witness the formation of an unspoken circle of caring, a protection from the world. Again I embrace this mystery. This language of intuition lends itself to a deeper knowing, a knowing by the heart and within the heart.

Senses of Animal Soul: A Knowing by Heart

Sit beside me in long moments of shared solitude,
Knowing both our absolute aloneness and our undeniable belonging.
Dance with me in the silence and in the sound of small daily words,
Holding neither against me at the end of the day.
(Mountain Dreamer, 2001, p. xiv)

To be known by heart is to be known intimately by the soul. A knowing by the heart is a profound attunement to the Other. Throughout our conversations, companion animals were noted to connect us, make us aware of their presence through the basic premise of sensual engagement. Through the senses, one “passes through the Other, re-turning to oneself, a retrieval” (Levin, 1989, p. 160). This dialectic of retrieval guides the development of Self and authenticity. Engagement through the senses creates sacred spaces and places for ontological growth as voiced by Brigit, “as we learn to grown into our skins.”

Opening to Soul Sense: The Myth of Narcissus and Echo

Within the myth of Narcissus and Echo, a Cartesian view of the Self and the Other is embraced. In this version of the myth, there is a movement propagated by withdrawal as Narcissus removes himself from the world and Echo is isolated within her own voice. A story offered by Margaret describes an alternate version of this myth as Margaret is called to respond to Tucker. Margaret elaborates on Tucker’s attunement to her after a long, particularly tiresome day as a faculty member:

And I think that it is over that period of time of greeting, during that time of greeting is a period when you really expend a lot of the stress that you are carrying. I just cannot (emphasis) imagine my life and the stress that I am under the majority of time with teaching school and my work without having Tucker. (Long pause, looking at Tucker.) **You are definitely special. That is for sure. Absolutely.**

Margaret's story leads into the elements of attunement with our companion animals, a discovery by my body of the other body, "a miraculous prolongation of my own intentions, a familiar way of dealing with the world" (Merleau Ponty, 1962, p. 354). There is an intertwining with Tucker as Margaret hears herself echoed and sees herself mirrored within the soul of Tucker.

Tucker practices what one would name as echolocation. The practice of echolocation is commonly reserved for mammals in the sea such as whales and dolphins. Echolocation by definition is "a bouncing of sonar waves within the interior of another being" (Peterson, 1995, p. 145). Through this process, internal bodily changes or soul alterations are diagnosed, through the interior reading of another being. The interior is transformed into an intimate place. Tucker's echolocation embraces a reading of one soul to another. O'Donohue (1999) describes this process of echolocation:

Their style of presence evokes an affinity and calls them toward a voyage of discovery with each other. The echo of their outer presence calls them nearer and nearer so that they can begin to reveal the depth of inner presence that illuminates their physical presence. (p. 59)

Within Tucker's knowing exists a deep intimacy. The very core of Margaret's being is known by heart. Tucker's presence traces the places within Margaret's sore heart, tending and mending. Margaret finds respite in the heart of Tucker and there is *love*.

The Touch of a Paw

The feeling of “being touched” reveals the pathic notion of touch. As a nurse, I touch the Other with my hands. My hands emerge as a seeker of being, of life, as I touch the very places alive with life and the flowing of blood. As I sit quietly, the paw of one of my companion animals comes over to enclose my wrist. I entertain the notion that somehow in some manner, my companion animal senses my own life force and seeks to join with me in the creation of a new life force. I am in the moment and feel attended to by this touch of a paw. The touch of a paw calls me out of myself.

To be touched is to be beckoned into a closer relationship through the feeling of wanting to be closer, as well as the physical act of touching with the body. Masson (1997) notes, “One of the most touching things about being in a deep relationship with a member of another species is the experience of mutual trust” (p. 43). Touch is paramount for getting to know the world through our bodies. Through touch, more so than any other of the senses, we can justify our beingness (van Manen, 1999). Through touch, we not only lessen the distance between the Self and the Other, but we come to know ourselves, “a physical reflection” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 166). Touch involves an intense sense of intimacy. An intimacy or a getting closer speaks to authenticity.

To speak of being touched by a companion animal, is to open to this possibility of intimacy. “Intimate occasions are those in which we allow ourselves to become passive and vulnerable, open to the possible sting of new experience” (Tuan, 1997, p. 137). Steve relates his response to being touched by his companion animal, a whippet named Barnum. Steve experiences a very intimate relationship:

It is the same for Barnum and me. It is just really weird, this sounds so weird (voice trails off). But to just look (**emphasis**) at each other and I stare right at him and he stares at me. Barnum sits right with me, always, always with me and puts that long slender head, right here in my chest and just stares at me (demonstrates) for the longest, longest period of time. Well he is looking at me and I am looking at him and we love each other!

The physical touch of Barnum touches those places of deep connection for Steve. This sense of “being touched” speaks to the tactile sensibility of our eyes (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 223) in which through the union of sight, we are touched with the phenomenon at a distance.

April, through tears, goes on to relate her own experiences of being touched in spirit and soul, by the physical touch and presence of a companion animal:

After I got divorced, I was very sad. I was very depressed. I got Sam. Sam was my buddy. She always knew when I was sad and she would always come and sit by me. I felt that if I am going to be depressed then I did not want to be alone. She always knew when I was sad. I would start to cry and she would pat my face. A constant companion, I mean a constant companion. Always there. (Much emphasis added in conversation)

Sam’s pats upon April’s face reveal a form of caress. Indeed the very notions of the word, pet, evokes a link to the intimacy of a caress. To be caressed is to be cared-for. When one embodies a felt sense of being cared-for, one is brought back to the Self, both in spirit and body. The soul is rescued and restored. The caress is a giving back of the Self and an opening to possibility of being as described by Irigaray (1993):

Touch makes it possible to wait, to gather strength, so that the other will return to caress, reshape, from within and from without, a flesh that is given back to itself in the gesture of love. (p. 187)

Margaret is cared for by the presence of her companion animal, Tucker.

Following surgery, Margaret relates Tucker’s “bedside manner:”

She would start off on her bed, you know. Her bed would be beside my bed...I thought that this was very polite of her. However, she would come into the bed

in the middle of the night and she would take up the whole bed, lying horizontal rather than vertical. Then she picked up on the fact that I really could not move that much with the knee and the twin-size bed and so we would figure it out and she would get along side of me and sleep. It was very comforting, extremely comforting.

Clearly Tucker *attends* to Margaret, caring for her through the attention given to her. Tucker's presence reassures Margaret of her safety. Their relationship is reciprocal, however, as Margaret describes the Tucker "tuck-in," "and as I also cover her up at night. It is a caring moment with the dog." This reciprocity is based upon elements of trust as both Margaret and Tucker display their vulnerable sides to the other. This sense of trust is an opening to a deep love and notion of beauty.

Betty relates a similar story of caring with her nighttime tuck-in experience by Sarah:

And she [Sarah] just comes and climbs up and puts both hands, just like this (demonstrates Sarah's hands on Betty's shoulders) and I feel that—I do not know—I do not know what it is. A maternal thing? Is she being a mother? Because she had nine puppies. I do not know what it is. And I asked her. It is so tender and so soft. And sometimes I wonder if it is just her way of saying, I am tucking you in bed.

Betty asks the question of Sarah's motives for the rituals at nighttime. Has Sarah provided Betty with childhood memories of being cared-for? Tuan (1997) notes that this intimate place created by Sarah does indeed "carry one back to childhood as intimate places are places of nurture where our fundamental needs are heeded and cared for without fuss" (p. 137). As importantly, Sarah emulates the being-ness of a child, as she relates with "a directness and intimacy based upon the knowing of her own frailty and yet remains open to the world" (Tuan, 1997, p. 137). Perhaps both Margaret and Betty during their tucking in sessions have felt what Merleau-Ponty (1962) calls "communication within intentionality, a reciprocity of beings:"

The communication or comprehension of gestures comes about through the reciprocity of my intentions and the gestures of others. It is as if the other person's intention inhabited my body and mine his. The gesture presents itself to me as a question, bringing certain perceptible bits of the world to my notice, and inviting my concurrence in them. (p. 185)

As Betty goes on to state, she experiences these sessions as Sarah Elizabeth's lesson of slowing down within the world, being present to the moment. Betty relates, "I think she is trying to tell me to savor this time. That is the message that I get. I am moving too fast, thinking still about this afternoon and tonight. And I need to take that time to slow down."

Jams relates a fifty-year old story, still fresh within her mind, of a childhood cat whose gesture reached out and gathered her aunt within the circle of caring:

I remember Aunt Helen distinctly sitting on the edge of the bed one day; she was speaking about something that had happened the night before and how bad (emphasis) she felt when she got home. I had no recollection about what happened to her. What I do remember is her cat coming up and patting her on the back and I just for some reason, how many years now...fifty years later I still remember this story about this cat caring for her.

Again, I embrace the sense of the timelessness in this story. The image of the touch of a paw has managed to dwell within the soul of Jams for half of a century. What is it that creates the searing of this image upon the soul?

With the touch of a paw, a companion animal brings forth "a hermeneutical gesture" (Levin, 1985, p. 164). The hermeneutical gesture seeks to call to us, pulling us out of ourselves, welcoming and gathering us into a whole. Through the embrace, as it were, of a companion animal's paw, we are encircled and deeply cared for. To be gathered is to be "protected or mothered" (Levin, 1985, p. 163).

Betty notes the gathering gestures of Sarah Elizabeth and experiences "a synchronous, empathic flow" (Levin, 1989, p. 151), lending to Betty's development of

soul. Betty voices her own questions regarding the meaning of mothering and Sarah Elizabeth's seeming task of caring for Betty in the same manner as a mother would her puppies. We are attuned at a deep level. This attunement commences through a reciprocity of intentions as "if the gestures of the Other inhabited my body" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 185). There is a lived feeling of letting go and letting be as evidenced within the conversations of the participants. It is within this notion of letting go and letting be that a clearing is created, a clearing comprised of ontological realms of what it means to be human. It is a circular path of self-completion.

The Eyes: Windows of Soul

The metaphorical image of the eyes as windows of the soul opens the experience of being-with companion animals as an instance of clarity and entrance. An entrance is sought within the refuge of an animal's eyes. Sightedness allows for the continuance of touch as noted by Merleau-Ponty (1962) and the visual caress of Levinas (1987), whereas "one sees and hears as one touches" (p. 118). For the participants, the sense of sight provided initial openings into their relationships and lived experiences with companion animals. This sense of sightedness serves, as well, to re-member the Self by venturing into the eyes of both present and past animal companions. Vision is important for the response-ability and responsibility to the relationship with the Other. In our relationships with companion animals, Merleau-Ponty notes a responsibility toward the Other that extends into the non-human world to include animals (Levin, 1999).

I have previously alluded to the eyes being the mirror of the soul in Chapter Two. The following excerpts from conversations show evidence of this entrance into a

soulful relationship with animals. How is engaging in sightedness with a companion animal different from another being? In what manner does a companion animal *see* us rather than notice us? What distinguishes this *look*?

Wise eyes. To be wise, etymologically, is to be able to “see” and further derives from the ability to “know” (Ayto, 1990, p. 575). What do I know within the wise eyes of a companion animal? In what manner are we truly seen within these wise eyes? I re-turn once again to my prologue and the eyes of Angel Marie and find this sense of knowing. Margaret relives childhood moments and her sister’s death with a cat named Tahanne, a cat interestingly enough, named by Margaret’s deceased sister as previously noted. Tahanne fills the void created by a single parent home and absent family members as Margaret notes, “I think that she definitely filled up lonely moments of my life as a child growing up pretty much on my own.” What is this connection for Margaret?

Margaret describes an entrance into Tahanne’s eyes in the following way:

She was a very elegant cat. She was very elegant and I think with that elegance came a wisdom within her eyes. She had very wise eyes, beautiful aqua green/blue eyes. These eyes followed me around a room....Her eyes showed patience, delight, and a genuine care for me.

In what manner do the eyes of Tahanne know Margaret differently than other eyes?

Indeed, the etymology of the word, elegant, stems from the notion of “careful selection” (Ayto, 1990, p. 197). In what manner do the wise, knowing eyes of Tahanne carefully select the healing experiences for Margaret? Beston (1928/1977) creates this language as I turn once again to his words:

Gifted with extensions of the senses we lost or never attained,
Living by voices we shall never hear. (pp. 24-25)

Margaret sees herself with the eyes of Tucker as she is drawn to her wonderfully soft eyes, “beautifully-lined brown eyes.” Beauty emerges as the home of true soul.

Margaret pauses to rest within Tucker’s eyes, finding peace and a sense of renewal.

Jams recalls the eyes of a childhood cat, as well, “green eyes that had a couple of specks of brown on them...He lived forever but I always thought of him (long pause) as that unconditional positive regard.” To have a positive regard is to indeed show caring, a caring that shines forth from the very depths of being, “an illumination of the soul” (O’Donohue, 2004, p. 15). The seeing of color also evokes a sense of beauty as O’Donohue (2004) upholds, “color brings about vulnerability, a Being-Seen-ness” (p. 86). The eyes are truly windows of the soul.

Seeing the best in me: The best in show. In what manner are we *seen* by a companion animal? How does being seen open up to reveal our authenticity? This felt sense of attunement and connection is explored through Steve’s sense of “being looked at.”

But that is when the connection started because every time I sensed his being there and I would look down and he would look up at me and we would start this eye connection thing and he never budged (**emphasis**). I mean he would just always be there and he made me feel very comfortable and um, safe and well-cared for psychologically, and that was a stressful period.

Through the “look” of Barnum, Steve notes that he is pulled into the physical space that exists between and within the field of vision with Barnum. However, it is not simply an entering into this space that creates a sense of attunement, but rather, the sense of evolvment or transformation of this space into a pedagogical place. As Steve relates, he feels “totally there, well-cared-for,” in essence, whole. As Steve becomes

open to the question of the presence of Barnum, the question echoes within him, opening his own possibility for being.

This pedagogical space is opened for April within the “stare” of Woody. April notes the uncanny ability of Woody to “halt you in your tracks” by giving you “the eye.” April notes that inevitably Woody would project “the staring eye” at times of intense disapproval. Brigit “knows” by looking into Greta’s eyes when her eldest daughter, Alex, is “up to something.” Brigit notes that some of her mothering skills have immigrated from Greta, “She [Greta] makes me a better ‘Mom’ in that I am calmer and less reactive.”

Betty relates a nighttime ritual of looking into the eyes of Sarah as Sarah stands upon Betty:

I feel very loved, very taken cared of. It is and I do not get it from others, this feeling. I try to think, did she do this with her puppies? Does she think of me as one of her puppies? Just like the Mommy dog does with her puppies...Am I one of her puppies? And once she is finished tucking me in, she just kind of plumps down. She is ready for her night sleep.

Do Sarah Elizabeth’s bedtime behaviors dwell in Betty as reminiscent of her own childhood? Betty further gives voice to her sense of lostness when this ritual is not performed. Betty conveys:

Some nights I am aware and I will go into the bedroom, and I do not know why it is but she will stay out here and I will go in and turn off the lights and try to go to sleep. I am very, very aware that for whatever reason, she has chosen to stay out here. I don’t know if she doesn’t hear. But sometimes very soon afterwards, she comes in and climbs into bed but I am aware that she is not there and I really miss it. I am aware of her absence.

Betty notes that even with Sarah Elizabeth’s physical absence, there is a felt sense of soul presence. Sarah Elizabeth continues to be Betty’s home as she attunes Betty to the present moment and, thus, attunes Betty to be bodily present to herself.

Lending An Ear

To have an ear lent to us by a companion animal, is to open to an enhanced form of being, a sound being, one healthy and whole. Heidegger (1996) maintains that hearing is the primary way that *Da-sein* is open to its own potentiality for Being. Thus, as the conversations below reveal, in the most simplistic of terms, as companion animals listen, we embrace our potential as human beings. When we have an ear lent to us, we listen with the body as a “felt sense of the saying” (Levin, 1989, p. 22). Sounds resonate within and without, bouncing off the interior terrain of the Other and re-turning to us, entering into our interior terrains. Through listening, we seek to embrace our Being in totality through the “re-collection of the feminine” (Levin, 1989, p. 32), the power of the Bear. To listen is to be held within the soul of the Other.

This bodily sense of hearing, thus, emerges with our sense of understanding. Dwelling in the words of the participants evoked many turnings upon this arc of understanding. Within their words, I am called to venture into the ontological realm where I note my own lack of connection and felt sense of personal suffering. Again, re-visiting the words of the conversations through taped modalities, constitutes a means to open my powers of introspection as I invoke the power of the Bear for the great gift of silence. This silence emerged as a letting-go and letting-be. Levin (1989) notes that this circling back is a needed pathway for understanding. Only through introspection, was I truly able to listen. The themes below reflect this hermeneutical circling as I struggle to hearken to the language.

Tuning-in. The felt sense of being tuned-into was evident in our conversations with companion animals. Companion animals listen *deeply*. To listen deeply is to

connect at a soul level, a listening with the passion of the soul. Within our human experience, we sense this listening deeply through the gaze of the soulful eyes of our companion animals, the inching closer of a companion animal's body, or the tilt of a head or the twitch of an ear. Listening deeply is to hear that which is left unsaid within the silence, listening with the whole body, without hearing the word, but. To listen deeply is a reflection of a deep loving.

Betty relates this sense of bodily listening by Sarah, who due to her advanced age of fifteen years, is described by Betty as deaf. Clearly during our initial conversation, Sarah Elizabeth was listening as noted in the following passage. Betty maintains that Sarah Elizabeth is a perfect example of everyday caring, following a stressful day as a faculty member:

Because it is really like that everyday I feel so cared for by her. And I just come home stewing about a lot of things and she is here. I come up those steps and she comes to greet me and I say, "Sarah, Sarah, it is so good to be home with you!" (Much emphasis and rising voice.) I have been thinking about coming home with you and I am so happy and glad to see you finally. And I just start telling her about the day (pets Sarah and speaks to Sarah). I just start telling her about the day and she just, just like she is doing now, she just listens (Sarah gazing at Betty's face) and I just find that I just start calming, I just start calming down and unwinding. I just tell her that and that just feels wonderful and so good and she really listens. It is not just her presence but it is like this when I am sitting on the sofa (gestures toward Sarah) and I say, "Do you know what happened today?" And she is just sitting there listening.

As Sarah Elizabeth listens during our opening conversation, I only can surmise that Sarah is tuning-in to the resounding vulnerability within Betty's voice as Betty brings forth her story. This tuning-in is witnessed within Sarah Elizabeth's gaze. She listens with what Levin (1989) would describe as hearkening, *Gelassenheit*, a just listening, a letting-go and letting-be:

Gelassenheit is a playful listening, a joyful listening, a listening opened by joy, a listening playing freely in the presence of that which sounds forth, the resonances which they set in motion can reverberate freely...When these resonances are received, they consequently return to us a sound much richer and deeper than under standard ego-logical conditions they would, altering our ontological differences. (pp. 232-234)

Therefore, when a companion animal hearkens to the conversation, providing an ear for listening, we are open to the Self more freely and our ontological possibility for being.

Silent echoes. What are the echoes heard within the silent presence of our companion animals? This silent presence of companion animals is expressed in the words of O'Donohue (1999), "Silence is a fascinating presence...it is patient and never draws attention to itself" (p. 206). Levin (1989) describes the echo as "a hermeneutical metaphor that carries us back from the ontic world into an ontological field, teaching our hearing the presence of absence and the absence of presence" (pp. 237-238). Like the notion of being deeply listened-to, the echo in our hearing engagement with companion animals opens a path for traveling with the echo as we embrace those missing parts of ourselves and dwell within their absence. As previously noted, companion animals bear witness to our vulnerabilities and sufferings within our silences. A companion animal be-comes a patient listener for our souls as revealed by Jams:

But, it seemed like animals were a way (pause)...to spend time, and I always liked spending time with them I guess. Just spending time. I loved spending time with them, the silence, and companionship, literally, and likened them to a guide.

Keepers of secrets. Companion animals are keepers of secrets, our confidants. To embody the identity of a confidant is, etymologically, to show "trust" (Ayto, 1990,

p. 130). Similar to our notion of being-taken in and embraced by the gesture of touch, our companion animals create a sense of trust within ourselves. Through this creation of trust within the Self, we open to the unexplored territory of the soul. Secrets have pedagogical significance because they are able to create numerous layers of the self and inner and outer space that contribute to the formation of personal identity (van Manen & Levering, 1996). The telling of secrets is personal and unique. Companion animals as other parts of ourselves engage us within this symbiosis of secrecy. They are a safe haven, as April notes when she tells a childhood dog her deepest secrets of adolescence. April explains, “Cindy alone knew about my first kiss, my first broken heart, and my first time in love.” Again, I am called to the ontological presence of a companion animal that calls forth a bearing witness of our *safe* passage over significant human thresholds. Additionally, Betty states:

I can say whatever I jolly well want to say, it doesn’t matter. She [Sarah] won’t judge it or me. I can also tell her my dark side, tell her things I would not dare to tell others. There is no raised eyebrow or “tsk-tsk”—just total acceptance.

I open to the expansiveness of the soul of a companion animal. This very openness and experience of not being judged serves to open our own hearts and souls to others. What secrets are guarded in the gardens of the heart and soul? In what manner are they cultivated? How are these parts of ourselves tended and mended?

Animal Courage: Soul Tending and Mending

Show me how you follow your deepest desires,
Spiraling down into the ache with the ache,
And I will show you how I reach inward and open outward
To feel the kiss of the Mystery, sweet lips upon my own, every day. (Mountain Dreamer, 2001, p. xiii)

Animal soul courage is reflected within animal compassion. Courage originates from the heart, the home of compassion. Levin (1985) notes that “By opening ourselves to others in need, we are opening to the essence of Being” (p. 97). Passion relates etymologically to suffering (Ayto, 1990, p. 385). To suffer is to reflect the human condition of vulnerability. To suffer is to be-come vulnerable within our bodies and souls. Perhaps there is nothing more poignant in healing our vulnerabilities than the touch of a paw. Animals bear a silent presence as a witness to our vulnerability. Within their presence, we are not afraid to look into their eyes and bear witness to our own vulnerability. We open our hearts, exposing our essences within their presence. This opening of the heart is a pathic experience, a lived dimension through the senses. Levin (1985) states that to answer the call of compassion is to entertain a guardian awareness, a pre-ontological sense of caring. How are we invited through companion animal displays of compassion toward a renewed sense of self-care and a caring for others?

The Curious Soul

To be curious etymologically derives from the word, cure (Ayto, 1990, p. 150) and further comes from a similar source of “a caring after the soul.” Thus, to exhibit curiosity is to emanate a sense of healing. Atticus is depicted by Jams as a “curious” healer in a later conversation as he tends to Maggie-Dawg by cleaning her teeth and grooming her at a time when Maggie-Dawg, due to illness, can no longer do this for herself. Margaret notes the curiosity of Tucker, a trait acquired as Tucker has grown older, tending to all aspects of her garden space. Margaret explains:

As she [Tucker] is getting older, she is more of a watch dog and that is interesting because a year ago, she wasn't so much of a watch dog, but...as she

grows older she becomes more in tune with the environment, and I take it as a sign of curiosity.

Margaret's description of Tucker as a "curious watch dog" opens the conversation once again to caregiving of the soul. To be curious, as Margaret notes, is a different state of being, a being more attuned to the environment. In essence, this idea of being more attuned to the environment opens the premise of an enhanced soulful watching, as Tucker's soul "stands watch" over Margaret.

The Vulnerable Soul

Within companion animal circles, it is common knowledge that to show your belly is to trust enough in the presence of the Other to show your very soul and vulnerable sides. Margaret, at a later point in the conversation, further describes this sense of attunement, a true heart to heart connection with Tucker at a time when she feels her own heart "barely beating:"

I think there are moments in my life when I am stressed...In this past year of writing my dissertation and working full time...or certain relationships were not going as I would have liked them to go, I was stressed. And I would just plop myself down on the floor with her and everything was much better after that. And I do not know exactly what it is about that, but she definitely waits there and understands me. I will do some deep breathing and listen to her breathing and her heart rate and definitely that brings my stress level down. There is that healing quality of having her. There is that healing quality of putting my head on her abdomen and upper chest and she will let me do that with her on the floor. There is something about getting down with her on the floor that is really comforting for me and definitely has helped me throughout this last year.

Margaret experiences an intimacy with Tucker as she, too, assumes a stance of being down on all fours. Through this stance, Margaret experiences a synchronicity of spirit, the very breathe of life, as her soul speaks a kindred dialect with the soul of Tucker. They are at that very moment, two hearts beating as one. Like a mother, Tucker

nestles Margaret and cradles her within her body. It is important to note, perhaps, the physical death of Margaret's mother in the preceding months of our opening conversation.

Sarah Elizabeth calls Betty through her silence, sensing Betty's vulnerability and need for a listener. Sarah Elizabeth readily attunes to Betty:

I just start telling her about the day and she just, just like she is doing now, she just listens (Sarah gazing at Betty's face) and I just find that I just start calming, I just start calming down and unwinding. I just may be walking around or I may be just getting ready for bed, changing clothes and dropping stuff and then I get into bed and I am still talking to her, "Sarah, Sarah, Sarah (voice rising) and I just tell her that and that just feels wonderful and so good and she really listens.

In closing, this dance of attunement continues throughout the conversations. It is within the spaces of attuning to the Other, a place opens for healing to occur, a true ceremonial arena (Feld & Basso, 1996). These healing spaces become the place for poetry of companion animal ontology and hermeneutical understandings of what is meant by truly being-with-the-Other within this soul-to-soul connection.

The Patient Soul

Etymologically the word, patience, means, "to suffer" (Ayto, 1990, p. 386) and finds its roots within the very language of the feminine of *forbearance*. In what manner does our human beingness "suffer" in our quest for authenticity? Does our suffering cry out in a voice of vulnerability? If so, in what manner does a companion animal hear our vulnerability and respond to us? In what manner do companion animals, bear witness to our suffering as they patiently attend to us?

Throughout the conversations, companion animals were described as “being patient.” The patience of Duke is described by April. Margaret relates Tucker’s patience upon waiting for her as she tends her garden:

I find that to be quite interesting. So animals must teach us patience, and certainly Tucker has taught me to be more patient through her patience. She will go to the very end of the gate with paw and snout under, cannot get any closer, sometimes pawing for twenty minutes. She just wants to be with me and she is very patient.

As Margaret tends her garden, she is at points filled with the memories of her mother as she embraces her mother’s gardening tools. In Margaret’s hands, she sees her mother within the tools. Again, Tucker bears witness to Margaret’s vulnerable inner being.

The patient body of stillness found in companion animals provides us with a lesson in quiet being, opening us to a healing space. As Mayerhoff (1971) states, “Patience is an important ingredient in caring: I enable the other to grow in its own time and in its own way” (p. 23). This letting go and enabling growth is reflective of a soulful connection. A space for lived bodily memory emerges, a hermeneutical realm of temporality, as we experience being responded to through the presence of our companion animals. Within the being of a companion animal, our voices of vulnerability echo back, resonating with healing. This place is a felt space of safety, as is revealed in this story offered by Jams:

I had this patient in the 1980s on a psychiatric ward who was so unresponsive to medications and other interventions, all he did was pace frantically up and down, hour after hour, day after day with an anguished look on his face. All of the physicians felt that sooner or later, he would simply expire, for want of a better word from his continual pacing. Everyone always steered clear of him as he was known to be quite violent when his path was inadvertently crossed. One day, however, Blueberry, a companion dog of one of the volunteers stepped in front of him. We all held our breath and anticipated a swift kick at the dog

from this frantically pacing person. However, unbelievably this patient stopped and began to stroke Blueberry's fur, which Blueberry allowed. This patient stayed there for two minutes; quite a long time for him.

What sacred place for human vulnerability was created by the presence of Blueberry? In what manner was Blueberry able to connect with this tormented soul as Blueberry's soul greeted him in this special place of healing?

The Grieving Soul

Like the being manifested in current companion animals, soul and spirit are brought forth in the memories of deceased companion animals as well. Mourning is a form of re-membering and a felt temporality. In each of the conversations, elements of past companion animals resonate throughout the voices of the participants. These stories of past companion animals reach out to the soul as they continue to "give voice" in the present-day lives of the participants. Remembered stories speak to the reverence for a continued dwelling within the heart. These stories open those spaces of the human heart and soul, perhaps untouched by any other being.

To grieve is a form of commemoration (Casey, 2000). Closely related to lived memories of mourning is the experience of caring. Jams recalls such a time of mourning: "Promise died and we were outside for burial (crying). And during his funeral this fog rolled in and we buried him (long silence). We have had a lot of critters who died (long pause)."

Companion animals provide lessons of grieving as well, as can be seen in Jams' reflection:

Roosevelt became Uncle Roosevelt. He devoted his life to taking care of this kitten. We would come home and he was no longer waiting by the door. He snuggled up with this little kitten in the middle (demonstrates). And he, you know, months later, I guess a year or so later when Friday got run over and

Uncle Roosevelt was tragic-stricken (emphasis). It was horrible, horrible. We all were tragic-stricken, I mean I was, Gregory was, but Uncle Roosevelt was the worse...for weeks. He grieved for weeks. For weeks, he searched (tearful).

In a written narrative, Jams shares that animals teach us much about life as well as death, relating the impact on her remaining companion animals of the physical deaths of Jellico and Maggie-Dawg:

When Jellico died, Atticus looked for her much as Roosevelt did for Friday. After her death, Atticus was careful not to get up on the couch in the garden room as Jellico had routinely curled up there. But when Maggie died, Atticus did not look for her. He knew she was gone and grieved for her like Bill [husband of Jams] and I did. It took him two months or more to return to his old self.

As I read these words once again, I am faced with a memory of one of my canine companions following the death of Angel Marie. I will never forget the look in his eyes when we returned from the emergency visit to the veterinarian without her. He (Milton) became frantic and ran from room to room howling and looking for her. He, too, was not his old self for weeks following Angel's death. Milton commemorated in his very soul, the death of Angel.

Betty also notes this act of commemoration as she describes Sarah Elizabeth's first encounter with the grave of Sunshine, located in Betty's backyard. Betty states, "Sarah was running joyfully around and all of a sudden, she stopped as if she had come up against a pane of glass. I would not have believed it if I did not see it myself, but Sarah stopped directly in front of Sunshine's grave as if she paid homage to her, almost asking her permission to stay and take care of me."

Perhaps, it can be said that one of the missions of our companion animals is to give one permission to grieve. Their own evidence of love and vulnerability, allows our souls to pay homage as well, showing this permission. When Milton's grief was

made known so honestly and without reserve, I, too, felt my heart tear open, allowing my grief to come forth. Milton's grief gathered me in. This was a deeply connecting time for me as I began my healing process buried within the fur of Angel's brother, Milton. I re-membered myself.

Grieving also creates a space many years later to re-member the Self, as noted by Brigit as she reflects upon the death of a childhood dog. Brigit remembers this grief, brought forth when Greta was diagnosed with Lymes Disease. Brigit states, "Life would not be the same without her. She is irreplaceable." Greta is to Brigit, that forever companion, that being who like Angel, creates a raw, empty space in the heart that can never be filled by another presence, reflections of a true soul-mate.

Margaret opens her initial conversation with a story regarding two childhood rabbits, Goldie and Chop-Chop. She speaks of these two long departed companion animals within the context of her grief over giving them up. However, Margaret also brings forth in the same conversation, the meaning of Chop-Chop's name, which came about because of his preference for eating the items in Margaret's mother's garden. I sense the connection of Margaret's continued struggle to acquiesce her mother to a physical death, as Margaret affirms:

That is a difficult story because we had to take the rabbits to the arboretum after my parents divorced. That was a very heart wrenching experience for me. I remember these rabbits were allowed out in the garden and having some real connection with them.

What is brought forth from the recalling of this heart-wrenching story? As Margaret re-members herself in her words, hidden parts of her Self are revealed. In what manner do companion animals tend and mend our hearts once so forcibly

wrenched out of our body? Steve cries as he recalls the continued grief of his partner following the physical death of a pug many years ago.

Animal Presence: A Lightness of Soul

Dance with me in the infinite pause before the next great inhale
of the breath that is breathing us all into being,
Not filling the emptiness from the outside or from within.
Just take my hand and dance with me.
(Mountain Dreamer, 2001, p. xv)

Animal presence is simply about be-ing and letting be. Presence opens to “an ontology of being-with and being-there, a mode of caring of deep connection” (Covington, 2003, pp. 304-305). Animal be-ing is an opening to the essence of soul. Within this essence or spirit dwells a sense of timelessness and simplicity, embracing not only life but a being-ness in death as well. Through the presence of a companion animal I open to the essence of being.

Heidegger (1953/1996) notes, “Being is all about the being of a being” (p. 7). “Insofar as being constitutes what is asked about, and insofar as being means the being of beings, beings turn out to be what is interrogated in the question of being” (p. 5). Thus, to question the being of a companion animal is to provide the very essence of that entity, the essence is soul, “something not seen or measured, the very marrow of our being” (Kowalski, 1999, pp. 22-23).

A lightness of being suggests an ontology of authenticity and de-light in which a companion animal is noted to travel lightly, a stepping lightly in the world, a walking with rhythm and a joy of soul. Through their provision of joyful experience, companion animals open humans to a greater possibility of being, enabling human beings to care.

An Opening to a Lightness of Being

When I am open to the being of soul, I open myself to lessons in healing and hope. I, too, travel lightly upon the earth. Recently, while scanning a magazine, I took note of the title of an article, “Faithful Friend” (Lattin, 2000). These two words simply uttered within my soul brought forth a myriad of visual images of faithful friends and companions. In brief, this true story entailed the manner in which the soul of a dog, Shep, waited at a train station for the human companion’s return. This wait was in vain, however, due to the physical death of Shep’s human companion. Shep, as the story goes, waited faithfully for over five years. I was held in a trance by the eyes of the dog, Shep, in the picture. The eyes of this soul being or presence were indeed the eyes of a faithful being, ever watching and ever vigilant. These were the eyes entrenched in caring. In my heart, as I gazed at the picture, I was taken back to a time sitting by my mother’s bedside in the final days of her life. I, like Shep, sat waiting for a miracle and my mother to be present to me once again. The miracle that was given to me was not the miracle I prayed for; rather, the miracle came from the voice of my mother, a voice silent for days, as she called out to and reached for a childhood dog named Shep. Shep, too, like a midwife, waited for my mother.

Through this healing miracle, I sensed the faithfulness of our companion animals, even in death. I gave my soul work of waiting to Shep and whispered to him to care for my mother. Tuan (1997) depicts the difficulty in bringing forth the correct language to portray such intimacy as I somehow struggle to find the words to reflect my sense of grief. Again, I can only ponder the powerfulness of the notion of animal presence. I embrace the lessons of healing and hope offered.

Traveling Light

To travel light, is to make one's way within the world by virtue of simply "being." When one simply is, one accepts and reaches out for the Other, embracing the Other within this sense of unconditional love. With our companion animals, this world of simply being is suffused with innocence, purity, and a lack of self-deception (Masson, 1997). There are no strings or leashes attached. There is an openness similar as Masson (1997) contends, much like that of a child's being. Quite fundamentally, our companion animals are there in their spirit or essence. From them, we receive a sense of joy in the everyday aspects of living. We find joy in being there and being next to our companion animals.

April shares this sense of joy about Woody, a dog whose only need in this world was to be with people and listen to human conversations. Woody is proposed by April "to have been a clown in a past life as he brought that much joy with him." At the time of the conversations, I see Tucker reveling within her strawberry patch, attending and cultivating her crop. I see aliveness and joy in the smiling faces of Lassie and Greta as Brigit's husband prepares to take them for one of their many daily walks. As I re-listen to our conversations, I envision Tucker's tail wagging through Margaret's descriptions of his daily display of excitement. Within the cloudy, aging eyes of Sarah, I catch a glimpse of the soul who embraces the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, "seeking to console rather than be consoled."

I feel a nudging at the borders of animal ontology as voiced by Jams within one of our conversations:

They [companion animals] are all about being. Atticus is certainly about being there. He does not examine the world, he lives it! Shamus is a lesson in being

as he sleeps with his head under the dust ruffles of my bed. Ostriches have sand and people have their blind spots, but Shamus has his dust ruffle. He is as real as they come.

Being “as real as they come” speaks to animal ontology as animals approach us and engage us with their pure essence, an unconditional self. In brief, animals present themselves as stripped to the bone. Being stripped to the bone brings forth their very vulnerability, thus allowing us to be open and exposed within our human vulnerability. Tuan (1997) addresses this notion of realness, “The real is a familiar daily round and involves our whole being, all our senses” (p. 146). Thus, to be real, opens to a bodily attunement and sense of attachment. Being real is exhibited with joy and an effortless being within our companion animals.

Being Hopeful

Hope is the sense of a renewed soul, opening to a temporality of transcendence as one strives to overcome present constraints and seeks the caring connections with the Other (Marcel, 1962). The words, “cross my heart and hope to die,” speak to a notion of hope. In childhood, promises are elicited through the rituals of the speaking of these magical words or through the quick crossing of fingers behind the back. Within our humanness, we are gathering the Other into a circle of hope, an embrace into a promise of being trustworthy. Trust requires faithfulness and a betrothal, a connection. Within the love of a companion animal, we experience *hope*, manifested in the notion of being worthy. In essence, we hope that we are everything our companion animals think that we are. Hope is found within the eyes of companion animals where one soul greets another.

A few years ago, I witnessed this same sense of hope during an encounter with a stray dog, lying in a grassy patch along an interstate highway:

Clearly he was used as a bait dog during dog fighting. He wore the scars of past battles won and lost. The thinness of his frame and the ability to count his ribs spoke of his uselessness to his “owner” and his status as an outcast. Upon first glance, he looked at me with a blank expression. I questioned within myself how like a child, long abused, retreats and the very soul and spirit of the person “hides” within until a sense of safety or *hope* creates a space for emergence. After a brief time, I could almost see this sense of *hope* coming forth. His eyes seemed brighter and slowly his tail took on a characteristic back and forth motion, the proverbial tail wag. Within his eyes, when he looked at me, there was a sense of *hope* and trust, an anticipation for a future. This sense of *hope* and trust emanated within a change in his posture, a coming toward me ever so slowly. How easily he trusted me and *hoped* with me as he followed me into the police car for transport to the animal shelter. I was to visit him at this “shelter” once, actually to be-with him on death row as he was deemed not *hopeful* for re-entrance into society...too many battle scars to ever be trusted within a family unit again. I will never forget looking in his eyes as he sat within his confinement. Where once was *hope*, now the blankness had re-emerged. I sensed that he would never *hope* again. I prayed in my heart for him to forgive me for allowing him to *hope* every so briefly. My soul tried to connect with his and somehow, within my self, I know he forgave me my humanness and thanked me for my gift of *hope* ever so fleeting in his paws, for he was “seen” by me and cared for in my heart. It is perhaps my touch as I patted his head was the only kind human touch his life was to know. (Personal Journal)

What is the essence of this hope? In those brief moments of encounter, I had been loved unconditionally in the eyes of this stray, nameless dog who had no reason to love me unconditionally. Through his example, I learned that the elements of hope are eternal and ever present, despite the circumstances in which one finds oneself. Even now as I write, I struggle with his namelessness.

Jams alludes to a sense of “blind hope” within the gaze of Atticus as he allows himself to be taken home to reside with Jams. With this hope emerges a sense of ending to his existence as a stray. Atticus is filled with the sightedness of unconditional trust. Midgley (1984) maintains that hope emerges within the realm of

belief; she recognizes animal hope made ever evident within the dual emotion of disappointment. I, too, witnessed this sense of disappointment in the eyes of the stray dog as realization filled him regarding his fate. Unlike Atticus and his new found sightedness, this stray being shows blindness as his eyes cloud over, sealing off connections with humans, a true sense of a wounded soul.

The presence of hope creates the human experience of needing forgiveness. There is an enduring quality to both hope and forgiveness, a timelessness. There is hope in the voice of Margaret as she seeks forgiveness for choices and decisions made regarding the “placement” of childhood companion animals within another setting. There is a seeking of forgiveness as Betty writes of her experience with a past companion animal, a dachshund named Rocky, with whom she seeks closure following this animal’s accidental death during a rafting mishap. Betty describes this experience:

I made the split-second decision that we should all stay together. I grabbed Rocky by the collar and pulled him overboard with me. I have thought about the wisdom of that decision countless times. I am not a swimmer and I was struggling to keep afloat while holding Rocky with my right hand. At some point in the struggle, I could no longer hold on and I remember the moment of having to let go of his collar. The image of him floating down river will stay with me forever. I never learned what happened to him but I need to believe he drowned so I have some explanation. My life was forever changed at that moment.

As Betty ponders her choices, so clear after almost twenty years, she perhaps notes the spirit of forgiveness and hope in the story of Rocky. It has been said that to forgive is divine. To forgive is to love unconditionally. Rocky’s plight was to give Betty hope later as she entered into a new life’s work of pet bereavement counseling.

Being Celebrative: Tail Wags and Whisker Twitches

O'Donohue (1999) notes that celebration is the joyful gift of presence, an attending to the quiet moments of miracles. A celebration calls us to the present moment when one soul calls out to and embraces the soul of another. Our souls acknowledge one another. This sense of soul contact is vital to human being-ness. Bollnow (1989) describes soul contact as "a moving out of the isolation of everyday existence into a situation of great bliss to find oneself in a new communion" (pp. 69-70). This communion not only provides happiness, but also the sacred space as created by mood. Thus, our companion animals create this joyous space for celebration, creating a place for being. Their joy be-comes their very be-ing.

Through celebration and this soul greeting, we treasure and revel in our notions of uniqueness and authenticity. Companion animals join in the celebration of Self through their acts of authentic caring. Celebrations or ceremonies embody a particular language of special-ness in which we are called to pay attention to that which is said. Celebrations are further defined in this attention-seeking capacity by their creation of mood as the companion animals *de-stress* the participants at the end of a day.

Margaret feels the celebration in Tucker's eyes when she is greeted after a day at work. Her soul "feels special" as she is greeted each and every time with a sense of newness by Tucker's unfailing presence and position at the garden gate. Tucker "celebrates" Margaret's return by the unfailing gift of a treasured toy. Through Margaret's physical return home, the greeting by Tucker re-turns her to herself, feeling at peace despite the activities of the day. Sam II and Hobbs, the feline companions of April, celebrate and comment upon her accomplishments of writing by

purring “more loudly than usual” following the reading of a passage of writing out loud. Does Jams note a hint of joy in the playful taps and swats Jellico and Sapri offer Atticus as he passes by? In essence, opening to celebration and joy allows our souls to smile and laugh. When we embark upon laughter and smiles, we note a sense of new alertness, new vision, and heightened hearing—our souls are alive!

A Nose Knows

To go nose to nose with another being is to create a space for knowing and for caring. The touch of a nose is perceived very lightly almost wistful in nature. There is a gentleness that emanates. Going nose-to-nose is to create a place for worry as one soul seeks to encounter another. April notes this going nose-to-nose with her cat, Sam, “assuming the worry position.” April shares this story:

Sam would be pacing the room. Sam would be like saying, “Who upset her?” Pacing and pacing. And she purred all of the time. From the minute I walked into the house she purred.

The space for knowing up close is foreign to the notion of threatening. It is a place for a deep knowing. It is a stance of being, an opening to the world. This is particularly true in the story of Maggie-Dawg who goes nose-to-nose with numerous other creatures including a wild ram in Arizona and a rattlesnake in West Virginia! Jams notes that “a sacred space” is created, one in which perhaps one soul simply hails another soul. Within this space there are no threats to territory; rather, elements of simply being present to the Other are manifested and displayed. In a later conversation, Jams describes the sacred space of sacrificial offering created by Fatah, a cat who daily provided gifts of dead rodents outside the back door. Jams notes “the careful, arranging of these bodies, so artfully placed.” Tucker creates this sacred space

as her nose portrays a knowing of ripe strawberries. Tucker, as Margaret notes, emulates a sense of simply reveling in a “good snack,” a “kicking back and letting be” lesson in living.

The Flow of Soul

A going with the flow is in essence a sense of being in harmony, a sense of the effortless (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Companion animals go with the flow within all activities of life. To flow with soul is simply to adapt to what presents to oneself (Weinstein & Barber, 2003); a flowing soul is an inner state of contentment. Jams speaks of Sapri and his obsession with sock sorting, completely oblivious to all other activities within his world. As Jams notes, “Sapri simply is, is simply being Sapri.” Margaret notes the Zen-like character of Tucker as she “sleeps when she is tired” and “plays when she wants.” Truly the soul of a companion animal emulates true freedom and joy of simply being.

Going with the flow connotes a surrendering, a giving over. To surrender is to be open to a timelessness, a fallow time of the in-between. In the words of Betty, I hear her surrendering to the attentions of Sarah Elizabeth. To go with the flow brings about an easy birth. Only through surrendering can one be open to the possibility of healing.

Animal Havens: The Soul at Home

Take me to the places on the earth that teach you how to dance,
The places where you can risk letting the world break your heart,
And I will take you to the places where the earth beneath my feet
And the stars overhead make my heart whole again and again.
(Mountain Dreamer, 2001, p. xiv)

The word, home, births many murmurings. Home embodies the very notions of a place to truly *be*, a dwelling place of belonging (O'Donohue, 1999). Therefore, home is a place that allows for a certain mode of being that is not experienced anywhere else, in any other place. Home as a mode of being is an opening to one's soul within the presence of a companion animal. To open one's soul is not only to embrace the Self but also the Other. When the soul is exposed, all parts of the Self are laid open to reflection. There is a true bearing witness.

Home is a temporal dwelling (Baldursson, 2002) where witness is sacrificed to modes of transition such as dis-ease or life changes, the place where human vulnerabilities shine forth. Within this temporality resides a time experienced as more personal, an inner temporality of the Self. Within this inner temporality, home is conducive to a re-turning to the Self, a mode of being not emanated in any other place.

Home emerges as a place to dwell, a resting within oneself. As all parts of the Self are witnessed, a felt sense of being and belonging emerge. Home is simply the soul-being and the body of the Other and myself. Home as a sacred, soulful place is birthed through the presence of a companion animal for all the participants.

The Body as Dwelling for Soul

Home is experienced through the lived body (Casey, 1993). As such, the body becomes a place of passage (Bergson, 1959), a point on the in-between. Casey (1993) notes, "The body mediates me between one place and another, creating a milieu of awareness" (p. 128). This awareness denotes a *being-with*, an existence of soul. The body emerges as the instrument of soul (Zukav, 1990) as our skins emerge to echo the soul of the Other. In what manner does the body of a companion animal open us to an

experience of soul? This experience of soul is witnessed within the very bodily presence of a companion animal. Connelly (1986) writes:

If we are willing to take another being with us to our secret places, to the places where we deny or do not recognize ourselves, then in the moment of arriving at our “secret” we enter ourselves newly. This person we allow to come with us, the intimate traveling companion, comes without adding anything or taking anything away, comes silently, empty. This is the healing of the Self. It is the homecoming, the returning home, and the restoring of all lost parts. (p. 24)

As noted within earlier writings about the ontology of being with a companion animal, I open once again to the premise of Levinas and the face of the Other. Levinas (2001) maintains that the Other calls us out of our “at-homeness” within our ontology to an encounter within the Face of the Other (p. 81). Most significantly, we are seen within the eyes of a companion animal. Within the eyes we sense the human presence of our being against the darkness of anonymity (O’Donohue, 1999). Our being is validated and acknowledged. In short, in the presence of a companion animal, we have a face. Betty elucidates:

I feel that I really matter to her. I am not sure again if it is a matter of cleaning me up. But I matter (emphasis). And that moment matters to her (emphasis in tone of voice). What we are doing, it is like--it feels like it matters to her and I feel like I really matter to her.

April notes the life-saving capacity of Sam as she contemplates suicide following the loss of her children in a painfully traumatic divorce. April, like Betty, feels she has a face as Sam pats her cheeks and “dries” her tears.

Within the eyes of a companion animal, we seek to find a homeport of safety. A companion animal develops and models a *no-holds barred* approach to our very being. This giving gift of soul is found. Within the conversations there is a sense of wanting to return home to safety, to escape anonymity experienced as a nurse

educator, and perhaps as well as a human being. As noted previously, there is a sense of completion within our relationships and encounters with companion animals.

Without this sense of completeness or wholeness, we experience dis-ease. There is an experienced “homesickness,” a desire to re-turn home and a need to re-turn to an intimacy (Winning, 2002), found within the eyes of a companion animal. Betty notes her feelings of loss and separateness during the nighttime when Sarah is not physically present with her: “I am aware of her absence. I know when she is no longer here; I miss those moments because they are such significant ones for me in our relationship.”

True intimacy brings with it a strong sense of absence. It can be said that Betty “warms herself at the hearth” of Sarah’s soul (O’Donohue, 1999, p. 226). Betty’s sense of loss at Sarah’s absence entails a sense of the not-taken-for-grantedness of Sarah’s presence, or as Sartre suggests, “a taken-granted body passed over in silence” (as cited in Bleeker & Mulderij, 1992, p. 2). Truly, Sarah completes Betty during this special time of day.

Thus, to re-turn home is to be healed as Connelly (1986) notes, “All sickness is homesickness” (p. xii). Steve speaks of his continuing ailment of homesickness when referring to Dot: “Actually when I first placed her, it was far too hard to see her. I know that sounds strange. It was like, I felt like I was going to kidnap her back.” Homesickness is a heart of the home that is missed. The soul senses the absence and longs for the kindred spirits missing.

Home is Where the Heart “Is”

The heart of home is the presence of a companion animal. Home emerges in the presence of a companion animal as the place to hang my leash and collar. Most

evidently for the participants, the experience of home is the place where their companion animals are found. Literally, the leash and collar may be hung anywhere! Levinas (2001) supports this notion of home truly being where the heart is as he writes, “Concretely speaking, the dwelling is not situated in the objective world, but the objective world is situated by relation to my dwelling” (p. 153). Home is a felt place of caring, a realm where one learns to be-come human. Home assumes an air of intimacy as those moments of true caring exchange are brought forth. Jams notes the home is a “communion,” a sacred union in the presence of her companion animals.

Home as a Safe Haven

Home bears silent witness to those subtle events of everyday existence as well. To experience the caregiving of a companion animal is, indeed, to enter “home,” a place to be. The metaphor of home opens within the conversations to encompass these notions of ontology and temporality, a safe place, and a place to be with others, a place within the family story as noted by the expansiveness of childhood stories from each participant.

A place to play with soul. Through elements of play, our companion animals reflect a total joy of being. Play is a pristine and wild preserve that begins an inward adventure and expands out into the wider world, where we “include others in our imagination, our invitation to play” (Peterson, 1998, p. 437). Playing takes place within “the in-between” (Gadamer, 1960/1998, p. 109) and thus, reflects “a sacred seriousness” (p. 102). This sacred seriousness is a manifestation of the ontology of being, a caring, and reflects an experience of temporality through dwelling within the imagination. The word, play, while having obscure etymological roots, relates

distantly to the notion of “dancing about wildly” (Ayto, 1990, p. 398). Margaret describes a “typical” day of homecoming from work:

Yes, every, every, every homecoming, every time I come to the gate or back door. She goes and she gets a toy. She brings a toy, usually a stuffed animal but yesterday, it was a tennis ball. She had the tennis ball in her mouth and she likes to play. The game is, “I know you want the ball but I am not giving you the ball. It is a game.”

This special greeting by our companion animals notes our own sense of being special. This greeting also makes the entrance into homecoming, a home place.

Heidegger (1958/1996) notes this essence of a home place when he refers to *Einraumen*, “a making room, an arranging of objects in place” (p. 103). I open to the sense of ontology as Tucker’s soul makes room for Margaret’s being to emerge.

Companion animals seek to remind human beings of the importance of taking time for play (Weinstein & Barber, 2003). This time of play, however, is not always greeted by enthusiasm by the human players, as Steve conveys:

I mean I am human and sometimes I just do not want to deal with them, I mean I come home and feel very stressed... Yes, when I come home I feel stressed and then I feel very guilty. If I am stressed they immediately pick up on that. They immediately know if you are stressed.

Steve feels a sense of guilt for not engaging the Other (his companion animal) through sight, a departure of an ethical responsibility to the Other (Levinas, 2001). Turning once again, I find this dilemma reflected in the poem, *Arrival*, written by Rilke (1981): “Suddenly faced with you, I am born, in the eye” (p. 113).

A place in the world. Companion animals open the participants to the significance of place within their own geography and biography. Jams describes this connection to place where she feels she can “be.” This connection is emulated through

her cat, Sebastian and his “need” to traverse the out-of-doors frequently, despite the dangers:

Part of me understood Sebastian’s need to go outside. During a group exercise, I was envisioning a safe refuge of place. Of course for me, the notions of a green space of woods amongst trees was my refuge. The woods were where I escaped from home and brothers who were too much when I was young. I still “see” them that way. I am sure that Sebastian’s past was more outside than in...That’s where he learned to be.

In what manner does the lesson of Sebastian speak to Jams’ need to escape, perhaps from a perceived safe place to an authentically safe place, both within herself and nurse education? What is the call of the wild in the soul that seeks to create our humanness?

Steve, as a nurse faculty member, finds a place among new nursing students and other faculty members, as he notes:

To me, you know, I go around and introduce everyone the first day of class and everyone has to say something about themselves and someone will say, “Oh, I have two dogs!” There is an immediate bond with that person and I know that is just the way they are. That I know something that they feel important to announce...three kids...and oh, I have two dogs. So there is an immediate sense of a bond when someone announces they are a dog person...they are a more caring person, a much more caring person.

For Jams, Jellico and Sapri (once-feral cats who continue to exist dichotomously in the family as outsiders and family members) teach her to dwell within the tensions of a dichotomous existence. This sense of tension also is manifested within the story of Chop-Chop and Goldie, childhood rabbits who are displaced following the divorce of Margaret’s parents. Margaret tearfully shares her suffering at this time as she and her siblings find a new home for Chop-Chop and Goldie at an arboretum as she, too, finds a new home. Margaret also voices, “giving

them freedom” but this freedom lies within the realm of tension, as noted by Margaret’s tears.

Family. A family is an incredible intertwining of multiple streams of “ancestry, memory, shadow, and light” (O’Donohue, 1999, p. 37). A family is the first experience of soul. Companion animals are simply family. Due to the very ontology of companion animals, it is not difficult to ascertain that companion animals embody the very essence of family identity. These identities within the family reveal the hidden pedagogical moments inherent in parenting, care giving, and teaching. The following manifest a few of these identities.

Jams describes growing up around the caring presence of her companion animal, Ebenezer, a cat who acted as a surrogate mother, caring for Jams as she notes her mother’s busy responsibilities of caring for Jams’ numerous siblings. Jams was later to be-come a surrogate mother, herself, as she describes the head position of Atticus upon her chest and the statement of a friend noting, “Well Atticus certainly knows you are his Mom.” Jams aptly describes surrogate siblings in the form of cats, pigs, and dogs during her childhood, for within these animals, Jams notes “fairness, trust, good dispositions, and no elements of cantankerousness.”

Margaret emulates Tahanne, who filled the empty hours in childhood, as she remembers empty hours as a child coming home after school. She chooses to parent by physically being there for her children after school. Margaret describes this experience and choice:

There were moments of not having a human in the house when I came home from school. And I think that is why when I became a parent; I wanted to be home when the kids got home from school. There was always that sense that if I had to work, I would always choose a shift that I could definitely be at home

here when they got home or if I worked a day shift and they went to the on-site day care center. When they went to the day care center whether I picked them up or they rode the bus I was home with them, I did not want them to have that empty space.

For various participants, companion animals serve as “children” surrogates.

Like children, companion animals are noted in the participants’ language to embody certain attributes equated with being a child. Margaret continues with her language of Tucker as being innocent and full of trust. To be innocent is to be pure or untouched. Margaret, as a soul mate, has come to know Tucker’s gestures as she comments on the “Tucker stretch” during a conversation. Steve describes this innocence in his participation within the very act of their birth:

They are very hard to whelp, very hard to whelp particularly with those large heads. Physically helping to get these puppies out...and being there, I sleep on the floor, next to the whelping box so I can make sure they get fed every two hours on the clock and I set my alarm. It is an incredible process and it is a real bonding period. I want to make sure, this sounds crazy, but I want them to see me first when they open their eyes.

In what manner is Steve’s soul renewed as he bears witness to be-ing the first human, *seen* by his puppies? In what way is the gaze of the puppies pure and untouched like the gaze touches Steve’s soul? What pedagogy is named in these companion animal children?

For April, photographs of her companion animals are stored within the same albums as those of her human children, a dwelling right-along-side. April notes her frequent conversations with Sam II and Hobbs in baby talk as she recalls the picture of Sam, running toward her for a hug. Greta emerges as a surrogate mother as she stands guard along side the bassinette of Brigit’s new daughter, a position she assumed almost unceasingly for one week! Brigit goes on to describe further the large cost to

make Greta well following Greta's encounter with Lymes Disease. Despite the creation of a financial burden on the family, Brigit emphatically maintains that "she would do it all again as she cannot imagine a life without Greta." Brigit continues, "She is priceless."

For Margaret, Tucker is there providing a sense of belonging and caregiving as she dresses Tucker with the clothing of her children. This act causes one to pause and glance toward the notions of anthropomorphism in this act. However, below the surface lies a realm of caregiving as Margaret provides nurturance for Tucker. This act facilitates a reciprocal caregiving for herself as she explores her own intimate need for nurturing the Other and herself. This kind of parental caring is bestowed on Tucker, and Tucker responds to this cherishing by Margaret. Midgley (1984) notes this premise of reciprocity in parental caring.

For Jams, her cat Sapri emerges as a common ground of understanding and communication "medium" for Jams' daughter, Lai, from Vietnam. Lai, who had difficulty in understanding some of the most basic everyday tasks of living, found understanding when these life lessons of dressing or grooming were put into a story of Sapri. Jams voices a situation when Lai insisted upon wearing a non-matching outfit to school. When Lai was questioned if she thought Sapri would wear these two colors together, understanding dawned in Lai as to her error. In every sense, Sapri's body is transformed into a living dwelling for learning and stories.

Sapri's greatest accomplishment, though, is her motherly tasks of incessant sock-sorting, a real lesson in "simply being," as Jams describes:

Sapri developed a pattern of collecting socks...an uncanny ability to locate socks no matter how far they got shoved under the bed or the drum set or

soccer equipment. He would tug them out of shoes or out of clothes baskets. Sapri always leaves his tended sock-flock in the dinning room...

Thinking more about Sapri's sock-tending, Jams remarks:

It is refreshing within this world to see someone so totally focused upon their objective...How does he care for us?...by simply doing the Sapri things...very predictably, very present and just as ready to scold us if he is feeling neglected...He lets us take care of him while he tends his crop of socks...He lets us anthropomorphize him as he gives everyone funny gifts at holiday time. He cares for us. He is Sapri.

Through our companion animals and reminiscing around childhood, we open to the intimacy of the homeland, our original nesting place. This original nesting place emerges as a place of intimate experience, a sense of rootedness. To nest originates from "to sit down" (Ayto, 1990, p. 363). In re-membering the Self through the recollection of childhood companion animals, we find comfort in a sitting down and a beginning from our inner source of Being. As it were, we feather our nests, seeking a source of comfort and home.

Homecoming. A homecoming is a re-turn to home, an act of coming full circle to that place from where we started. Sapri's story is perhaps a good home place to stop and truly ponder what Katz (2003) would term the "new work of dogs" (as well as other beings), a work comprised of assisting people through such human experiences as alienation and depression. As Katz notes, "Dogs are wondrous in their own right but in different ways than people are. We are with our dogs as we were shaped ourselves. We bring to them the emotions we encountered—our deepest longings, fears, needs, frustrations, and angers, and most universally, our instinctive desire to attach to entities that we love and who will love us" (pp. 214-215). Truly we are home.

Together we respond to the call (Connelly, 1986). We travel together home....*There is no place like home.*

A Homecoming to Beauty: Re-turning to Companionship

In what manner do I find a sense of cohesiveness and common ground for these themes of companion animal soul? How do I enter and come to a final homecoming in this conversation? To open to the essence of beauty is to open to a homecoming (O'Donohue, 2004). Beauty opens to an intensification of the world of the senses as noted in the voices of the participants. Similar to soul, "Beauty inhabits the cutting edge of creativity—mediating between the known and unknown, light and dark, masculine and feminine, visible and invisible, chaos and meaning, sound and silence, self and others" (O'Donohue, 2004, p. 40).

Beauty reveals the element of wonder. An encounter with the beautiful, companion animal soul, opens to the experience of being enraptured by wonder. Beauty and wonder, like soul, call and entice toward a closer distance, an intimacy, while paradoxically providing a drawing out of the Self. Beauty and wonder are the creators of sacred circles in circles. Hove (2002) speaks to the creation of the circle of wonder:

In the moment of wonder things come to life; it may even be that the life they always possess is revealed and appreciated. Wonder places us in contact with an enlarged or enriched world of relations and experience. Wonder calls us. In this way, as an experience of compelling openness which reveals and propels us into new possibilities, wonder naturally draws us into relations with the world...In doing so, the appealing wonder of the Other calls on us to respond. Wonder urges us. The call of wonder is in the imperative...Something becomes open to us in the same moment that we become open to it...The Other is open for us as it is open to us, as itself; and we are open to and for this as we are open to ourselves. (pp. 20-21)

Wonder allows for beauty as a sense of newness and mystery is connected in the soul.

Beauty and wonder create spaces and places in the heart as beauty “induces atmosphere and spirit; wonder, delicious turbulence, love, longing and a trembling delight” (O’Donohue, 2004, p. 29). I have walked beside companion animal soul, humbled by its simplicity and purity of heart. I have felt the pull of heartstrings as I gazed into the eyes of my companion animal travelers. My heart has been opened in places long closed as I embrace this wonder and beauty of the simple act of companion animal soul—compassion and love. I am home. I have found my ruby slippers of companion animal soulful caring, compassion. “Compassion is the key to wonder and beauty” (O’Donohue, 1999, p. 197).

As I bring forth beauty and wonder to reveal the complexity of companion animal soul, I open to alternate questions of compassion. For me, compassion and love open as to the notion of a sacred *being-with*. This sacred being-with is the very essence of companion animal soul. As such, compassion and love have taken me in and held me close. I am called forth into this sacred union of souls. I am engaged, promised to the face of the Other.

Within this embrace, I ponder the opening of a pedagogy of engagement founded upon companionship. I turn to the voices of the six nurse educators as I invite these nurse educators to continue upon the yellow brick road. I contemplate the connections between the presence of a companion animal and nurse education epistemologies and pedagogies. I seek to cultivate “a third ear” for listening (Bollas, 1995, p. 171), an opening to *being-with* and “the aesthetics of the pedagogical relationship” (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 71) in which ways of knowing and places of epistemological silence are explored.

Within Chapter Five, I strive to continue further with these notions of beauty, compassion, and love as soul connections opening to a deeper level of companionship. I reveal my insights and understandings brought forth in this study. In my language, I evoke the feminine voice of the Bear. In essence, I will open to the entering question of, **“In what manner does being- with a companion animal open one up to an alternate conversation within the terrain of nurse curriculum and pedagogy?”** What is this terrain of this alternate conversation? Is it a seeking with new eyes or a quest of exploration of new terrain?

I seek an entering point and a point of departure, “the end is where we start from” (Eliot, 1968, p. 57). I turn toward the words of Oriah Mountain Dreamer (2001) as I continue to engage in my quest of soul:

If we cannot hear the music of our own sweet nature calling to us, if we cannot remember that the intention is to live who we really are, it’s hard to know how to move, where to begin, how to dance. Sometimes we need to just stand quietly together, hand in hand, until one of us hears the music and begins to dance. (p. 15)

With paws in hand, I enter the last dance in the next chapter as I continue to hear the voice of soul.

CHAPTER FIVE: A HOMECOMING TO COMPANIONSHIP: SACRED CIRCLES OF BE-ING-WITH ANIMAL SOUL

But in conclusion, having learnt so much,
I'll simply watch the animals, that something
Of their own way of turning may glide over
into my joints; I'll have a brief existence
within their eyes, that solemnly retain me
And slowly loose me, calmly, without judgment.
(Rilke, 1957/1977, p. 69)

I allow the words of Rilke to encircle me, inviting me to a homecoming. I write these words today in the watchful presence of a flock of Canadian geese, fellow sojourners seeking respite on a journey homeward. I feel something of their need to continue this path toward homecoming. In their language of honking and through the beating of powerful wings, I, too, take flight. I join them in silent formation, made buoyant with the words of the poet, Mary Oliver, “The world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—over and over announcing your place in the family of things” (*Wild Geese*, available on-line). Yes, it is time to come home again!

The experience of homecoming brings with it a notion of reconciliation, a merging of the longing to travel further and the need simply to stop and belong to a place. I have chosen to call this place, home, the end of this journey. I stand in my ruby slippers offering gifts, gifts given to me in my brief existence within the presence of the companion animals. As Rilke (1957/1977) writes, “Something of their way has glided into my joints” (p. 69). I stand differently. I see with different eyes, as I embrace once again my original question of inquiry, **What is the lived experience of nurse educators’ being-with companion animals as teachers and healers?**

The very language of this question beckons my gaze toward a further revealing or dis-covering as I re-turn to the language of companion, etymologically revealed as from the Middle English *compainoun* and the Latin *com* + *panis*, meaning food or bread (Merriam-Webster, on-line, 1998). Might not the words of Rilke (1957/1977) suggest the very essence of companionship? When one pauses to break bread with the Other, one engages in a sacred ritual of nurturance and replenishment, a caring ritual. To care is to sustain the Other. I entertain the notion of communion, a sacred union, “a solemn retaining” (Rilke, 1957/1977, p. 69), a *being-with*. This sacred retaining is an authentic way of be-ing held in the circle of companionship. This circle of companionship be-comes a sacred place of ritual where as Kowalski (1999) suggests, we co-create “a window through which our souls can hail and greet one another” (p. 84). Companionship emerges as a ritual of be-ing in lieu of simply doing. This circle of companionship is the dwelling place of soul, the in-between, a discovery of the amorous exchange, the embrace of not only bodies but also of hearts” (Irigaray, 2004, p. 201). For me, in essence, companionship is to nurture *with soul*.

I reflect upon my thoughts regarding this sacred place of *being-with*. This felt sense of being-held in union with the Other denotes, for me, a true dwelling in the eyes of the Other, “a brief existence within their eyes” (Rilke 1957/1977), a bearing witness to this journey. I find this ritual of breaking bread or nurturance as foundational to a sense of homecoming. In this respite of companionship and dwelling in the eyes, I seek and find refuge and rescue. I ponder and muse regarding this felt sense of rescue. Rescue etymologically emerges from “*quash*, a shaking off and driving away” (Ayto, 1990, p. 425), a deliverance.

I take another hesitant step upon this homecoming journey of language. I open to a deeper possibility of meaning in my study. In what manner might a companionship with animals shake off or shatter our current ways of being-in-the-world as in the words of Breathnach (1998), “We yearn for Something More?” (p. 3). I am re-called to the words of Kowalski (1999), “We need other creatures to tell us who we are” (p. 132). In what manner do companion animals deliver us back to ourselves? In the sacred act of delivery, many musings emerge regarding birth and the notion of saving.

In the joining of these notions of companion and rescue, new questions are delivered, revealing the sacredness of being-with a companion animal. What is shown in a companionship of souls? What are the insights into the elements of an animal companionship pedagogy voiced by my participants? In this companionship, what rituals speak to this showing? In what manner might these rituals of rescue promote a different way of being-in-the-world? In what manner might this showing create a place for conversation regarding nurse education?

I welcome you further into this conversation as the companion animals have invited me. I offer this nurturance of companion animal soul as I reveal the insights from my study and thoughts of my personal transformational process of be-ing and becoming, my surrendering as it were, as my own sense of beingness is “shaken off or driven away” (Ayto, 1990, p. 425). I invite you to listen to my stories of rescue and reflect upon your own tales of rescue. I summon you to consider the possibility of a pedagogy of companionship as a way of being in the world. I invite you to enter the

circle. Let us share the bread of beingness and accept the paw offered as we join together. Please sit with me around the hearth.

Circles of Life: The Council of Beings

The circle of life in which we stand encircles and includes everything and everyone [everybeing] we have ever known. (Matthews, 1999, p. 313)

The circle is a timeless embodiment of the whole. Within the circle lies the notion of the extra-ordinariness of the circle. The words of Black Elk reveal the powerful essences of the circle. Black Elk writes:

The Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round...The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars...Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves. (Neihardt, 1932/1961, pp. 198-199)

Through these words, I embrace the profane and sacred in these circles of life. I see a timelessness and beauty to these everyday blessings. “The most consistent feature of all ritual for all time has been the circle” (Achterberg, Dossey, & Kolkmeier, 1994, p. 23). A chant foretells of this ancient form of ritual:

It's the blood of the ancients
That runs through our veins
And the forms pass
But the circle remains the same.
(Metzger, as cited in Achterberg, Dossey, & Kolkmeier, 1994, p. 23)

As I ponder these words, I am reminded of the rituals of the participants' companion animals. Betty notes the “nest making” of Sarah as Sarah turns round and round, seeking a comfortable haven of a “home place.” We learn from Tucker's joy of celebration as Margaret relates Tucker's circular dance: “Tucker will do her dance, her circular dance, of greeting and I make a big deal over her. “

I feel a sense of bodily lightness as I see in my mind's eye Tucker's *taking on* and *moving toward* Margaret's dis-ease following her experiences of the day. Tucker, tunes into Margaret, creating this sacred space for dancing. Steve notes "the circle of vision" between his eyes and the eyes of Barnum as Barnum lies at his feet. Atticus creates an opening for conversation as he circles within the clearing space of the room. Greta creates her ecotone along side one of Brigit's family members, sensing a need for healing time. Sam II and Hobbs engage in tail chasing, creating their own special ritual of circle. Sapri "is" through her sock-sorting regime.

Within each of these stories is the ritual of the circle as caring circles of *soul* are formed: eye-to-eye, tail-to-nose, and paw-to-hand. Through ritual, sacred moments are given to us even in the seemingly mundane, of waiting for a treat or a greeting at the door. By their gifts of sacred moments, we, as human beings, are allowed to witness and embrace that which is sacred within ourselves. Through these companion animals, I, too, am invited to the companion circle and the essence of circular ways of be-ing: teaching and healing.

These stories of everyday circles lend an entrance into an ancient ritual of companionship. The Council of Beings is an ancient ritual of humans and animals gathering together around the council fire in a circle. The purpose of this ritual is to seek an alternate language through the perspective of the Other (van Vleck, 2001). This is the hearth of questions, as in traditional lore, where the human seeks answers to unspoken ponderings. I take my place in this circle, seeking insights.

This council circle is a sacred place, "a broken circle" (O'Donohue, 1999, p. 12), a place of companionship where soul flows as love, creativity, and joy. As a

broken or open circle, this flow of love, creativity, and joy is constant, replenishing our own sacred vessels of being through experiences of wholeness, unity, and meaning. It is an arena of sacred communion “where one world flows into the other—the visible and the invisible” (Artress, 1995, p. 155). The visible and invisible encircle me as the animals bear witness to my unspoken questions. I reflect upon my insights from my study and the stories of rescue as I strive to create my circles of be-ing-ness. The animal council speaks...

Casting the Circle: A Call to Be-ing

A new circle begins with the idea or yearning to *be* in a circle.
(Bolen, 1999, p. 21)

The entire space of the circle becomes our sphere of inner working—it becomes a sacred area in which, like a magic carpet, we can travel to other states of being. (Carr-Gomm, as cited in Matthews, 1999, p. 189)

To cast a circle is a ritual designed to create a sacred space either through the physical act of walking forward, creating a circle configuration or through the act of meditatively visualizing the creation of a circle. Through the act of casting a circle, a realm of protection is formed. In this manner, the circle is a refuge or place of rescue. In this arena of refuge and rescue, I bring forth my thoughts of be-ing and be-coming in the presence of the companion animals. I embark upon a notion of companionship as revealed through my themes of animal soul.

I opened these notions of animal soul at the commencement of this study. The lived language of companion animal soul was brought forth by the participants in the conversations. I re-turn to my thoughts regarding *anam-cara* or soul-friend (O'Donohue, 1997) suggested as I entered this study. Matthews (1999) makes a strong connection between a soul-friend and a companion:

The task of a soul-friend was not to sit in judgment or condemn, but to witness the person's soul and its journey through life. The role of a soul-friend also included offering suggestions and setting tasks that would help correct the person's imbalances. (p. 359)

I am re-minded of the words of Rilke (1957/1977), "without judgment" (p. 69). I continue to question this essence of animal soul. Reflecting once again on the conversations, I am struck by the circularity of the meanings generated in animal soul. I am held in the embrace of the *beautiful*. The beautiful is relegated "an ontological function of mediator between ideas and appearance" (Gadamer, 1960/1998, p. 481). Companionship is a venturing into the realm of the beautiful.

While this companionship with animal soul or beauty cannot be grasped fully by human language, I open my thoughts revolving around animal soul as quite simply an embodiment of the alpha and the omega. Animal soul speaks to wholeness and totality. Animal soul, as the beautiful, is simply the pure essence that remains when all dogma is removed. The soul stands naked in its brilliance, like a beacon beckoning me home.

Akin to companionship, beauty or soul gives one an opportunity at intimacy that satisfies a great longing. Beauty as the bridge between the Self and the Other forms a kinship. It is the essence of the mystery of transformation, for as we are called to beauty, we are called to grow in our humanness. During these moments of thought, I tentatively traced the outline of the collar of Angel Marie as it lay upon my table. As my fingers traced the collar, I suddenly realized that a circle had been created and molded as our two spirits once again travel together.

As I write these words, I see the elliptical path made, aiding my knowing and understanding of this new vision of a ritual of companionship as I sit around the hearth

of the Council of Beings. Through my conversations, I have glimpsed the beautiful, the faces of the divine. Through encounters with these faces, I see with new eyes. I see the divine in myself and the Other. I take refuge in the face of the Other as I am called into the sacred circle of companionship. I am rescued by opening to alternate ways of be-ing.

It is All About Be-ing

I find companion animals to not only reflect the round hearth in their wholeness of presence, but they also help us to discover and tend the fires of our own personal round hearths. As the sacred center, companion animals are artists of the uniqueness in the circle. Through them, we are able to bring out our unique abilities as human beings. They guide us in the finding of our circularity of being and allow us the courage to embark, perhaps, on the proverbial path least traveled. Levin (1985) notes this as balance, “a question of centering” (p. 274). Balance is a foundational notion of ontology. When we are centered, we can begin to let things be. There is no need for control. This attribute not only sustains us in our humanness but also opens us as educators to a different mode of being with students as I present later. This is noted in the words of April: “They [companion animals] have helped me my whole life to become the person I am.” I recall reading a slogan that simply stated, “I hope to become everything my dog thinks I am!”

There is a beauty in the vision of a companion animal taking the time to practice what I like to refer to as the Zen side of life. Companion animals sleep when fatigued, eat when hungry, and play when joy ensues! Companion animals allow humans to not only care authentically for themselves but for others as well. To reflect

upon this vision of co-caring causes me to recall a sense of being fussed-over by a companion animal, or as Jams notes, “a doting upon.” To be doted upon makes one feel like the center of the circle! As the center of the circle, my companion animals coax out my sacredness. I dwell in my own memories of times I felt doted upon, through the washing of my face wake-up call in the morning or the touch of a paw extended upon my leg. I feel my bones exposed and tended by my companion animals. I reflect upon the manner in which this caregiving has contributed to my humanness as a human being and a nurse educator.

Be-ing in Community

As my participants and I are connected to our centers, we are embraced in the sense of community or companionship created. In short, companion animals create the sacredness of community. I find a sense of community. They are companions. This creates a place of knowing and a place where there are no strangers. I experienced this notion of community throughout this study with the participants. The participants and their companion animals were like ports in a storm, pulling me back from the abyss upon which I had found myself in Chapter One.

Participants sought soul connections through their companion animals, which transferred over in their interactions with students as well. I hear this once again in the voice of Steve as he bridges initial gaps in the circle with students through companion animals. Margaret writes in an email: “I think the closeness I feel with Tucker allows me to be close to students.” April notes that “Staying centered, lets me think through my interactions with students.” She further remarks that this act of staying centered “allows for a sacred place in the classroom setting where there were silences and

spaces to 'be'." I, too, can give voice to the subtle changes in the atmosphere of a teaching circle when the conversation turns toward companion animals. Even by their voiced unseen presences, I see strain resolve and melt into smiles.

By staying centered, caring is enhanced. In what manner might this presence call forth a *different mode of caring within ourselves*? Jams states, "Animals are mutually respectful which is why it is my ideal...human relationships are seldom authentically mutually respectful." For Steve, authentic caring is revealed in the very language spoken as he describes Barnum as "the most benevolent being ever." Benevolence is a form of "wishing well" as noted within its etymological roots (Ayto, 1990, p. 60), reflecting this caring blessing bestowed upon Steve by Barnum. Barnum is a true companion as he seeks to nurture Steve, offering the very bread of be-ing.

Be-ing Different

Companion animals allow for a safe place within diversity of voice. Companion animals bear witness to the stories told around the hearth fires. By bearing witness to the stories, caring is portrayed. These divergent narratives are noted in stories of suffering, joy, and everyday being. Companion animals open us to alternate ways of speaking and hearing. In the language of the spirit, there dwells the voice of the soul. This voice of the soul is a true "howling together" as joy, wonder, and integrity dissolve the walls erected between the mundane and the sacred. In this language of spirit, companion animals teach that words stand in the way through their silent presence. Touch and silence serve as the true language of spirit. There is a living outside of words, a listening to other forms of consciousness, a tuning into other rhythms. Animals teach us that there is a language of companionship, which may be

understood as a universal tongue. As educators, we, too, translate this kindred dialect comprised of mutual understandings.

By dwelling in the circle with companion animals, we are embraced by silence. In the silence, nurturance is sought. We are rescued. Irigaray (2004) speaks to this companionship of silence and rescue:

They [the birds] accompany persons who are alone, comfort them, restoring their health and their courage. Birds lead one's becoming...The birds' song restores silence, delivers silence. The bird consoles, gives back to life, animates breath, the pathway to restore but also transsubstantiate the body, the flesh. (p. 197)

Companion animals reveal their identities as empathetic listeners in our lives—unconditional listeners. Empathy allows us the space and place to *be* and *be-come*, unlike sympathy or feeling sorry. Empathy allows companionship as the attention is focused upon the sufferer in lieu of the self. A “living with increased empathy” is noted by Brigit in one of her conversations. The safe place is created, and once again, there are no strangers.

Simply Be-ing

A pedagogy of companionship is founded upon a simplicity of soul. A simplicity of soul is heralded by awakening to elemental possibilities, the potential of a being-with in each and every present moment. Jams notes the unconditional positive regard offered by Atticus and Shamus and their response to the simple gift of a walk after being-with Jams for an indeterminate amount of time. For the companion animals of April, it is “simply following a patch of sunlight streaming through the window” as time is “clocked.” It is to open to the ordinary, a seeing of beauty within our everyday existence. Companion animals emulate this simplicity by virtue of their true presence

within the present moment. The quiet simplicity of companion animal presence attends to teaching and learning.

Patience is fundamental to companionship and a simplicity of soul while attending to the present pedagogical moment. There are elements of patience in throwing oneself on the good mercy of our companions. Companion animals exhibit patience, a willingness to wait perhaps longer at our thresholds of being in the scared circle where the unknown waits for us. When we are patient and wait for the unknown, learning arrives. We need to move with patience as growth takes time.

Margaret describes this attention to the importance of the moment. In an email communication, she describes a technique of waiting she employed to instill patience in the classroom and clinical setting. Margaret attributes her willingness to wait patiently for students to Tucker's lesson in patience:

That was hard for me as a teacher. And I tried it out of the blue; it was nothing I had planned. It just happened. I decided that I would not unzip the craniums for information. I thought, "Hey, wait a minute...you are the active learners here!" So, they really felt uncomfortable and the silence was uncomfortable and a student raised her hand and I do not recall if the answer was correct, that really does not matter...but the waiting and the patience that is what I remember. I wanted them to see that I was not simply going to give them the answer. And I will also do that in the clinical setting. (Personal Communication)

Through Margaret's approach and patience, she models a definition of teaching, *a bringing out the best in other beings*. Margaret authentically cares as she resists a "jumping-ahead" and "a doing for" in lieu of simply waiting. April learns this simplicity of space from Sam II and Hobbs as they "patiently keep her centered, allowing spaces for silence in which to Be." In this space of patience, a simplicity of the pedagogical moment dwells within the wilderness terrain, as there emerges a

“letting go and letting be” of learning. Brigit, as well, opens herself to these moments of patience as she credits Greta for lessons of patience in her daily activities of living. Companion animals teach us to dwell in serenity. When we are quiet and listen, we see things not previously noticed. In a fashion, we open to a fuller degree to uniqueness of the Other, a true companionship. In the words of O’Donohue (2004): “The call of the wild is a call to the elemental levels of soul, the places of intuition, kinship, swiftness, fluency and the consolation of the lonesome that is not lonely” (p. 240). To respond to the call of the wild, is to answer the voice of companionship.

Be-ing Vulnerable

Inherent in a companionship is the sense of the vulnerable. The vulnerable soul is one of connection. Connectedness emerges through a shared sense of vulnerability. As companion animals emit a simplicity of soul, their own vulnerabilities emerge. Vulnerability is nurtured and constructed so as to provide an opening for dialogue. Steve notes, “The students are relieved to know that it is alright not to practice in the same manner as others. It is alright to make mistakes.”

Betty eloquently notes her lessons of vulnerability from Sarah Elizabeth:

I see the fragility of life—the vulnerability. There is something about her [Sarah] vulnerability that causes me to feel softer, to be more caring, more nurturing. There is a new gentleness in me, an increased softness, and a more willingness to work with students to resolve challenges that come up.
(Personal Communication)

The vulnerable teacher invites a sense of openness, an exposure of soul. A movement toward the Other further opens the vulnerable teacher. When I seek to open to the Other, I emit a line of rescue as I open alternate ways of be-ing through virtue of my own vulnerability. This sense of openness is founded upon the principles of trust

and an equality of power. Trust emerges as a sense of “something more profound and powerful” (Daloz, 1986, p. 127) as the educational arena is viewed as a safe haven. Congruent to trust is the notion of power. In this notion of power, it is a sense of trustworthiness, a “power that relies on mutual respect and consent of the learner” (Bevis & Watson, 1989, p. 169). I need to be open to myself, care for myself before I can authentically engage in the care of the Other. April attributes this openness to the Self as a sense of feeling comfortable-with the Self as she asks a simple question, “Do you know anyone who is more comfortable with themselves than the boys [Sam II and Hobbs]?” When I am comfortable with myself, I easily break bread with the Other. I give freely without reserve or holding back of soul.

Be-ing Authentic

Authenticity is directly related to the experience of caring as Noddings (1984) writes: “The one-caring sees the best self in the cared-for and works with him to actualize that self” (p. 64). Companion animals as compassionate teachers tend our human beingness “in the gap between what we are living through in our present and what survives from our past” (Greene, 1995, p. 21). In what manner do animals do this? In the spirit of openness as previously discussed, companion animals as true teachers invite questions, guide us to explanations and open our souls to meaning construction. Companion animals are the forums of our life’s dramas played out before us. As true mirrors, they at times emulate these life lessons. Margaret speaks of Tucker’s reverent presence as she gardens using her mother’s gardening tools. Tucker’s presence allows Margaret the permission to be human and dwell in the delicious ambiguity that that entails.

I embrace a major lesson of my healing, the lesson of faithfulness. Faithfulness emanates from a foremost sense of being true to the Self, and there is a joy in this choice. Kristen von Kreisler (2003) speaks about her own turning toward this authenticity of Self, taught to her through the presence of her Beagle, Bea:

As a freelance writer, I admitted, I had been frittering away my time and chasing all the wrong things for all the wrong reasons. Bea helped me to see that I would never be successful in any ultimate sense without being true to myself, just as she was true to her loving beagle nature. This includes being faithful to our abilities and deepest concerns. I promised Bea I would align my heart with my career. (p. 150)

I, too, am determined to be faithful to my heart's desire and deepest concerns. I recognize that the path of the wounded healer is one of shared suffering, for without this suffering, healing would not occur. I hear the shared suffering in the voices of my participants. Jams voices a profound stance, "Without them [companion animals], I would leave nursing in the dust."

Recently, while in San Francisco, I visited my participants briefly. As we spoke, a small community of three around our own council fire or hearth, I was struck by the feelings of passion for nurse education residing in the group. This passion was clearly fueled by the presence of Sarah Elizabeth and Tucker as fur was caressed and canine heads tilted at the human laughter. Again I am held in a felt atmosphere of spirituality. Spirituality has to do with the transfiguration of distance as the Self and the Other meet. Additionally, spirituality brings together all parts of the inner terrain.

Be-ing the Same

Companion animals allow the bringing together of all parts of ourselves by linking us to a lived his/her-story and lived place. This lure of the circle is witnessed not only in the call, but within the context of a larger story, a mythic journey. It is in

essence to answer the call of the wild. This call of the wild is the re-sponse to the true nature of the soul, a “blood-longing born of patience” (London, 1995, p. 78). It is the presence of a unique gift as O’Donohue (1999) points out, “calling with courage and humility, beckoning a following” (p. 62); an ancient soul connection, “a song of the pack” (London, 1995, p. 87). Akin to the dog, Buck, in *The Call of the Wild*, I recognize the wild nature of my soul story. I listen to the call, feeling it run through my veins. I rejoin my ancient lineage. Elements of the archetypal journey of the hero and heroine are found within the conversations and language of the participants.

In reflecting back, I am entertained by the idea that I have tried unsuccessfully to contain or negate such a significant part of myself. The very pedagogical moments of grace are brought about through an embracing of the feminine side of teaching and learning. This feminine side embraces the notions of the *dance*, a different form of movement; instinct, wholeness, dance and spatial time. These offerings reveal the very essence of the feminine, part of the whole to be embraced and welcomed into being. As I stated in my assumptions, nurse education reveals a patriarchal practice, and as such, has transpired and created a chasm for being.

I reflect upon this chasm of be-ing as I re-turn once again to my identity as Dorothy and my initial feelings of lostness in my Self and in nurse education. As I ponder, I feel rescued by my own companion animals and the companion animals in my study as I see a companionship offered founded upon foundations of rescue: a simplicity of be-ing based upon authenticity, a dwelling in the tensions of be-ing the same and be-ing different, and a safe sense of be-ing vulnerable. I traverse deeper into

this circle of companionship as I reflect further on the beingness of teaching and healing.

Gathering the Circle: Be-ing Together in Teaching and Healing

To gather denotes a coming together in the spirit of companionship.

Companionship shows the rituals of companions. What are the rituals of companionship in the circle? The rituals of companions are the rituals of caring. What are the rites of a caring relationship? In my study, the rituals of caring are the circular ways of being in the world: healing and teaching. To embrace animal soul and ultimately dwell within a pedagogy of companionship is to be called to this circular way of being. A circular way of being is an attunement, a living deeply. It is to dwell authentically. A circular way of being is to birth a language of caring that teaches and heals. Companion animals as teachers and healers emulate circular ways of being in the world, as part of the circle of life. Through their identities as cartographers who lead the way on the circular path of life to the midwife who gathers us into the eternal world of belonging, companion animals are circular beings.

Circular beings are sacred vessels. Companion animals, as sacred vessels, create a haven of safety for human vulnerabilities and creative endeavors. Through their presence, companion animals invite us into their hearts and hold us there while they tend and mend our vulnerabilities and sufferings. As they embrace us, this ontology of the soul of a companion animal becomes the sacred center of the circle. They warm us at the hearth fire.

In previous chapters of this study, the ontology of companion animals as cartographers and midwives is addressed. While certainly encompassing teaching and

healing in these descriptions, I now give way to a greater sense of *be-ing in* teaching and healing. I must open to different, more deeply felt notions of teaching and healing as I bear witness to their *choosing to be-with* us in caring. To choose to care is founded upon be-coming aware of the need for caring and choosing to act upon this need. This choosing to care emanates from a passion for being, a simplicity of soul and love—growing out of compassion. It is a profound decision to engage in companionship. This companionship is as Palmer (1998) maintains, “done in a teacher’s heart: a holding of the tensions of opposites is about being, not doing” (p. 85).

Companion animals show us our own circular paths in life in the simplicity of their everydayness, “as the daily round of movement is where to look for the wonder of life” (Connelly, 1986, p. 4). In the course of my study, I have come to know the extra-ordinary everydayness of companion animals. In the themes of soul, I have created concentric circles that have joined me together with my participants and the companion animals. By this joining together with companion animals, I have extended my own potentiality for being. I am rescued. Therefore, the potentiality for our being is created within the circles we embrace.

Companion animals have emerged through the conversations as “mystics or awe-inspirators” (Connelly, 1986, p. 34), practices reflective of the divine. The mystic as a source of inspiration

Lives at the edge of life as a creative act, continuous and evolving...Open now in this moment, here in this place, not some other day, not some other where. This is the holy moment, the holy place, the holy you...The teacher-healer calls us home again to this is it, life is now, right here, through me, through you, and not just where our skin begins and ends...The teacher summons us to remind each other of the unconditional holiness, wholeness, intactness of our

lives, our history, our knowings, our seeings and listenings away. The teacher imparts a body of distinctions to empower the student to live, and to live not so much by helping, but by giving herself away...For the teacher, life manifests as dance, as walking the circle in daily steps familiar and unfamiliar...The teacher calls us awake beyond the readily apparent and points us all, including herself, homeward. (pp. 35-37)

Thus, as the words above suggest, in a companionship pedagogy, we are called into a relationship not only with the Other but also most profoundly with the Self. This calling into relationship or community with ourselves is as Palmer (1998) maintains, “the first step toward understanding the community of truth” (p. 97) as “to teach is to create a space in which the community of truth is practiced” (p. 90).

Thus, being-with companion animal soul lends to a felt sense of healing or wholeness in the Self as the Self and the Self in community. By being-with companion animals, our potential lived bodies are transformed, bringing forth the potential for our beingness through the presence of the Other. Perhaps it even could be said that notions of the community viewed by Boyer (1990) of caring, celebration and openness, are reflected in animal soul. Companion animals release our ability to find passion, a living deeply, in the presence of the Other.

This community of truth emerges from a companionship pedagogy as we are summoned and invited to live deeply. This living deeply reveals the notion of surrender, a giving over when one allows the true inner artist to be revealed. When the true artist shines forth, beauty and soul are revealed. In this manner, companionship dwells in the realm of beauty. This call to living deeply is brought forth in the words of Rilke (1993):

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves...Do not seek the answers, which cannot be given to you because you would not be able to live through them. And the point is to live everything.

Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer. (p. 35)

In what manner does this pedagogy of companionship with animals offer a feeling of safety to dwell in the questions now? Throughout my conversations, companion animals have emulated this living deeply. I have not only observed these acts of living deeply but have borne witness to the testimony of these acts in the voices of the participants. I find the circle alive with these caring experiences, the divine rituals of rescue. These sacred rituals of rescue emanate from a home in the divine practices of companionship. These divine practices are moments of enchantment or introspection, moments of beauty and grace.

It is from this notion of living deeply that I open my thoughts to the manner in which one is protected. What protection emanates from companion animals? What are the symbols of living deeply, created by companion animals that offer refuge? As I muse regarding these thoughts, I am struck by a simple but profound sense of being in the circle as I attune or live more deeply. I turn to embrace the very embodiment of protection, initially revealed in my opening chapters of this study and further brought to light in the words of my participants. These are the symbols of protection or refuge in the senses: the wise eyes, a hearkening to voice, the touch of a paw, and the scent of a companion. Startled, paramount revelation comes forth: Companion animals are in essence *the living curriculum*.

Closing the Circle: Protection

When it becomes time to return to life, we unwind our circle by walking round it in the opposite way, announce that our circle is concluded for this time, and return to our lives, refreshed and empowered with the help, wisdom, and blessing that we have experienced within the circle's protective space. (Matthews, 1999, p. 189)

The notion of traveling in an opposite direction brings forth thoughts of the hermeneutical circle as understandings are gleaned through backward and forward movement. When I re-trace my steps, I see an alternate direction. I note those aspects of the study that were perhaps concealed from my full view previously. In my initial ventures into this study, I found a stance for myself in my metaphorical ruby slippers. In what manner might I now traverse the circle?

Dorothy as the Wounded Healer

The wounded healer is “a being who has arisen from a crisis resulting from a personal transformation or spiritual awakening” (Achterberg, 1988, p. 117). I marvel at these words that seemingly jump with a mind of their own unto this page. Do I dare to own them, stake a claim? These words have lived inside of me as I suffered their silence. But there is a beauty to this woundedness, infused with feeling (O’Donohue, 2004). I question the last time I saw myself as a healer rather than a curer? What has been the impetus for my change of seeing?

Companion animals not only emulate and mirror the sacred journey through life, but also embrace their identities of attendant spirit, a guardian or companion as previously noted. As such, companion animals seek to assist us in this circle of life. As I further embark upon my meaning-making journey, I am called to re-visit the myth or fable of the red shoes or retrieval of a life of soul (Estes, 1995). I am a traveler whose *hambre del alma*, “a starved soul” (Estes, 1995, p. 228) has found respite. I open an ontological question, As a human being with a *starved soul*, in what ways do I keep that hunger and dwell satiated within the world?

I ponder the experience of fashioning and creating my unique red shoes. The path of the heroine is not complete, however, until Dorothy travels a circle within herself, exposing all parts of being. In essence, Dorothy must be rescued. Dorothy does this in the presence of Toto, her companion animal. It is my contention that Dorothy's journey is hastened and understood only in the presence of Toto as Toto emerges metaphorically to encompass all meaning.

For me, the external manifestations of soul--heart, courage, and knowing, are portrayed in the beings of Tin Man, Lion, and Scarecrow. It is the magnanimous work of Toto that allows these lessons, long lying dormant in my soul, to be exposed, nurtured, and cared-for and therefore, incorporated into Dorothy. Their accumulation is expressed in a final sentence, "I will search no further for what I want is already inside of me!" The greatest testimony to her travels with Toto lie within these words.

I see my soul within the explanation offered by Estes (1995) regarding the red shoes:

The symbol of the shoes protects and defends what we stand upon—our feet. The feet represent motility and freedom. In that sense, to have shoes to cover the feet is to have the conviction of our beliefs and the wherewithal to act upon them. (p. 221)

In the original screenplay of the Wizard of Oz, Dorothy gains release from her captivity by crossing a rainbow bridge (Langley, Ryerson, & Woolf, 1989). The rainbow is a circle, encompassing all hues and spectrums of color. However, in this original screenplay, it is not Dorothy alone in her ruby slippers who finds the courage to transverse the rainbow; rather, it is encouragement of the Other, her companions of Toto, Tin Man, Lion, and Scarecrow who ultimately persuade her to cross. Through

the beckoning of eyes, voice, and the outstretched hand of the Other, Dorothy is rescued.

At this moment, I stand emulating Dorothy at the rainbow bridge. The rainbow bridge traditionally has come to mean that final crossing from one life to the next, a transformation of body and soul to spirit and soul. In the poem, *The Rainbows Bridge* (Available, on-line), there is a sense of re-union, of one soul to the soul of another. Like Dorothy, my soul greets not only the soul of the Other, but finds itself glowing with the joy of the un-covering of all places within my soul. In the beginning of this study, I was positioned at a certain place called an abyss. I was at that place that some would term the point of no turning back. Being in conversation with my participants has caused me to indeed turn back, to re-turn toward the profession of nursing. Where once I felt quite an aloneness of being, I now am finding a deeper sense of community and companionship.

When reflecting upon a rainbow, I experience a sense of beauty and wholeness, a companionship of colors, suggesting the coming together of the whole. I open to a further insight into my sense of protection, my ruby slippers. As noted earlier in this writing, my ruby slippers have served me well and offered transport into realms of discovery. I, too, have engaged in the ritual clicking of my heels in seeking home. It is my metaphorical Toto, however, who presents me with alternate modes of protection and travel by *being-with* in companionship. Palmer (1998) suggests that “We cannot know the subject well if we stand in our own shoes” (p. 106). Indeed, in what manner has Toto brought forth alternate texts of protection, taking me beyond my ruby slippers?

These diverse senses of protection are elements of deep companionship and sacred rescue as I am held in companion animal presence. These elements are the sacred rituals of circularity and caring, a sharing and co-partaking. Rituals commence with the notion of the sacred as a space is carved for being. Rituals invoke the sacredness of language as chants are voiced and blessings invoked. Through these voices, a special way of hearing or hearkening is founded and given a place. In essence, a ritual is what is done to hold meaning in place while we continue a dialogue with the soul.

These sacred rituals of protection are held in the body as texts for reading, calling us together toward a knowing, a teaching, and a learning. These openings are called forth through the companionship of eyes, a common dialogue of voice, an attunement toward the ear of the Other, the touch of a paw, and the scent of caring as breath is taken in full of the beingness of the Other. These elements open to a greater feeling of companionship as once again companion animals emulate these foundational ways of being-in-the-world. We are held in the arms of these texts, cradled into beingness. What are the texts of rescue read in the circle? In what manner do these texts close around me and envelop me in a felt sense of protection? I reveal these felt senses of protection or sacred rituals as I open further the premise of companion animals as the lived curriculum.

Concentric Circles: A Pedagogy of Companionship

We are one, not only with those gathered about the circle with us, but also with beings in ever-wider concentric circles of relationship that set the universe in a different order and break the old hierarchies forever. (Matthews, 1999, p. 119)

By their circular presence, companion animals have revealed a lived landscape of circularity, *a lived curriculum*. They have provided insights into not only my circles of life but also the circles traveled and embedded in the participants. Through their circles, they have bridged the human circles, creating companionship. As Aoki (1996) suggests, a lived curriculum is reminiscent of a bridge between the Self and the Other. Aoki (1993) positions the teacher as the bridge between the language of the curriculum-as-lived and the language of curriculum-as-planned. They are, as Jams notes, “the glue in the landscape.” Through their presence, the participants and I have found our circle centers, our home hearth fireplaces of insight.

To open this conversation to a deeper level, indeed, to live more fully in the text and embody the teachings and healings of the companion animals, I need a bridge of soul between the animal and myself. I turn toward a companionship with the wild. I evoke the feminine voice of the bear once again as I bring into view this passage:

From time older than memory, the bear has been a special being: humanlike, yet close to the animals and hence to the source of life (p. xi)...Above all animals, the bear is considered to be the supreme physician of the woods...Not only is he/she the animal of beginnings but also of re-beginnings—of recovery from spiritual malaise and physical illness and metaphorically, revival from death...Spiritual healing requires agitation and movement underground, in the soul’s dark caves. (Shepard & Sanders, 1985, pp. 102-103)

As the animal of beginnings and re-beginnings, the bear opens my thoughts to the possibility of traveling my own circular path. From a pedagogue of companionship, I create a new mode of travel: *companion-ing*. In the act of *companion-ing*, akin to Bear, I dwell in the circularity of companionship as the gerand etymologically denotes “a bearing or carrying” (Online Etymology Dictionary, Available on-line). I reflect upon this notion of holding the landscape together,

embracing a sense of totality. I seek my own glue of the landscape. I draw upon the foundation once again of the lived existentials described by van Manen (1990).

The lived existentials create an opening to this conversation of insights for me as well as a forum for possibilities in nurse education. They emerge as a tensional text for discussion and questioning akin to the woven cloth, a tapestry that holds human experiences together. The lived existentials additionally provide a cornerstone of support for my preunderstandings and assumptions regarding companion animals brought forth in the beginning of this study. The lived existentials support animal ontological pillars of caring, reciprocity, sacred space, and context for human learning. Insights regarding companion animals as lived curriculum are opened through reflection upon the lived existentials offered by van Manen (1990). Again, these insights are those rituals of rescue and protection that comprise the very essence of a pedagogy of companionship. While revealed separately, the lived existentials are constantly in conversation and connection with each other as they are opened to reveal not only companion animals as teachers and healers but to suggest elements of protection for nurse education as well.

The Body as Lived Curriculum

Companion animal soul is brought forth in the notion of the companion animal body. As brought forth in the conversations, the heightened awareness or soul attributed to companion animal senses is reflected upon by the participants as they dwell within animal eyes, are listened to by companion animals, and are physically embraced by companion animals. The bodies of the companion animals are the lived place for learning and healing. I recall from one of my conversations when Sarah

Elizabeth gazed at me, seemingly to read my face. In her gaze, I be-came an individual soul, rather than a soul among many. There is a beauty in this act of discovery as I learn something more of myself in the eyes of the Other. As I learn more of myself, I question my ability to read the faces of my students as masterfully as companion animals have read my face. What lessons do I learn?

Through their bodies, companion animals as harbingers of soul create the experience of the divine as they engage in rituals. A ritual is a sacred, creative act of the beautiful that fills our being with wonder. As dwellers of the sacred center of the circle, ritual strives to create the sacred through ceremony. Teaching and healing allow for the most ancient of rituals or sacred acts. These sacred acts open to beauty and wonder. Beauty and wonder, as aesthetic experiences, call and beckon toward transformation, growth, and possibility. As such, a ritual transcends and creates. I turn to the language of soul, a sacred union of beauty and wonder offered in my study.

Companion animals reveal the sacred music of our souls, the hymns of our very being as they embrace us with their bodies born of unconditional love. We hear the sacredness of the music voiced by the eyes. We strain to hear the sweetness of companion animal soul through the silence. These songs and silences create a symphony for be-ing. Unconditional love is the very hymn of our being. Unconditional love is self-communicating; when one receives it there is an ability to give it away at the same time. Like a circle, this unconditional love grows and grows and gathers us all within its bounds. From the acceptance given by companion animals, can we as nurse educators give a notion of that same acceptance to students? Unconditional regard for students and others lends to a reciprocal wanting to give

more back to that person. Like our companion animals, we give more and do so very willingly.

A Dialogue of the Eyes

The grace of the gaze reveals what it is like to dwell in the eye of the Other and to be called into conversation or a dialogue with the eyes. It is a dialogue of intimacy in which meaning is brought forth without words. The eyes were described by many means in my study. However, it is the language of wise eyes that calls me to a different place of intimacy as I open to other words of a pedagogy of companionship based upon wise eyes: likewise and otherwise. Likewise reveals a *being-with* and otherwise holds in its grasp the possibility of rescue as I open to other ways of being-in-the-world.

What occurs and transpires when the eye of the Other is revealed in the artificiality of a computer screen? What is lost in the encounter when my eye gazes upon the eye of the unreal Other? These are questions that spring to my mind as I revel in the eyes of my own companion animals. I reflect upon the lessons revealed in the eyes of the companion animals in this study. How are these lessons different than the human eye? What is allowed to reveal itself in the eye of an animal? Perhaps that which is revealed is a simplicity of soul beyond no other. In the eyes of a companion animal, there is a sense of being stripped, no dogma, and no doctrine, only the profound grace of encounter.

In this grace of encounter, I am seen-by the-Other as I see-the-Other. There is a notion of give-and-take as I break bread with my companion. I find a ritual of rescue as I am held in the openness of this sacred space. The very openness of this sacred

space creates a passage of rescue as I am truly seen by the Other. Yeu (2002) speaks to the openness of the eyes

As the truly open place where we can see and meet the Other, where we can encounter her or his invitations of us, that leads towards endless dialogue between us. (p. 5)

Thus, wise eyes are open eyes that create a dialogue that invites the Other to participate in our world. The wise eyes of a companion animal invite us to rest and be rescued. These eyes invite human vulnerability. I am watched over. Levinas (as cited in Kearney, 1984) notes, “Love is the incessant watching over of the Other” (p. 66).

In the realm of nurse education, there is a sense of eyes that are closed. Gone are the truly Platonic dialogues of one on one. What would it be like to return to these dialogues, and be lost in the eye of the Other in a student-faculty interaction? What would be revealed and what would be found when we fall upon good grace and simply dwell in the silence? Are we afraid of that which may be revealed? Are we afraid of truly showing our human vulnerabilities and shortcomings? Do we find the words, “I do not know but let us discover this together” difficult to voice? With companion animals there is no sense of frailty showing. We willingly reveal ourselves to this ontology of soul. There is no disgrace in these revelations. There is an honesty revealed like no other.

A Listening with the Heart

With companion animals, I allow myself to sit in the silence of the sacred circle. Silence is itself a circle that surrounds us and embraces us with its very being. In silence, I dwell and I simply am. What would it be like to sit in the silence of suffering with a student? What would a curriculum be like to reveal our sufferings as

faculty members and embrace the help and healing offered by students? Why are walls created that prevent these revelations? Why as faculty are we afraid to simply say, “I need help. I need an ear?” With companion animals there is a silence filled with grace. In this silence, the answers to our questions dwell. By sitting in this silence, we reveal these answers. These answers are not found in the written text but rather are revealed within the music of the soul and the songs of the Self that pour forth from this silence.

The Art of the Paw

For me, there is no purer touch, a touch of no reservations, than the touch of an animal paw upon my being. It is the true work of an artist! There is a grace of movement beyond words, a grace of embrace that heals the soul like no other touch can. In this age of liability and zones of personal space, companion animals are the safe vehicles to transect these spaces. They are the in-between ones, the living text of a lived curriculum. What happens when we allow the human Other this space? What can be gained in a touch upon the arm of a student, struggling with issues of humanness of being and becoming? What voice do we as educators give to the human struggles of coming to terms with grace and suffering? As we throw more and more technological facts at students, what happens to the dialogue of being and becoming?

As nurses, one literally holds human beingness in their hands, from the wonder of a human birth to the passing of a human life into another dimension. How can I give voice to this when I live in a liability shadow of touch? How can I bridge this chasm for being? Can it be bridged by the touch of a paw upon the arm? Can companion animals provide those moments of grace by example? Is this part of their true work of being in this world, to teach us humanness about the utmost gift of human

touch? How is it that I can allow for my witness of human tears for animal eyes, but not for the eyes of my students? As I write these words, I recall a scene of chaos during televised visions of September 11, 2001. Vividly, as we all can, I recall the very instant of first seeing and bearing witness to the tragedies of this day. I happened to be with clinical students that day, in the midst of procedures and technical tasks. As we scattered with our doing, how isolated we all became. But at the moment of the televised visions, there was a sense of community during the tragedy.

However, I looked at one student, standing alone, with tears streaming down her face, not approached by other students. Going to her, I embraced her as she murmured that her husband was scheduled to go to the Pentagon that day as a military photographer. She dwelled in that terrain of doubt and unknowing. How does my embrace lend to caring and a falling on God's good grace? What transpires in this touch? How do I become the terrain of caring, a lived curriculum with my very being?

More recently, a student in the clinical arena appeared distracted. When approached and questioned, regarding this, she quickly assured me that her distractedness had nothing to do with her level of preparation to care for this child safely. I sensed a deeper story, however, as she averted my gaze and became busy with a task at the child's bedside. I sensed an untold story. I silently approached her again, and as she turned, her vulnerabilities were written all over her face. Now gazing at me full in the face, she simply stated, "I am distracted because my husband is in Jamaica during this hurricane and I have not heard from him in two days. I am very worried." Tears welled up in her eyes, threatening to be shed. What has become of the humanness of nurse education when another human being is afraid to tell this story

and seek assistance? The fear of clinical failure was paramount—written upon this student’s face! How can I write another text with my presence, a text of safety and concern that allows this story to be told without the ramifications of failure or fear of failure?

I seek an answer in the good grace of my companion animals as they read the text of my body. When I am down, as evidenced through my conversations and my participants’ words, they seem to read me and provide a safe haven. How can we as educators also become this safe textual bodily being as text? What is translated in this space of one human being to another that becomes lost in a world of nurse education? Part of the answer lies in power-over rather than power-with. How can I be beside a student and be with a student, in lieu of being-over a student?

The Gracious Approach

The gracious approach emanates a humility in being-with. There is a humility of soul when a companion animal approaches us. To move with grace is a *movement toward compassion*. This movement toward compassion is “the response to the calling—the sufferings and needs—of other sentient beings” (Levin, 1985, p. 98). Betty notes that her interactions with her past and present companion animals allow her “to air on the side of compassion.” Brigit voices an attitude of “the benefit of the doubt” that she attributes to her relationships with Greta and Lassie. Margaret notices the out-pouring of compassion from her students following her mother’s death, recognizing connections with those students who have voiced a relationship with their companion animals.

Compassion is in essence an emancipatory praxis, as Levin (1985) contends:

Compassion is a calling which lays claim to our motility from the very beginning...compassion is the way Being, which ‘needs’ us, calls us out of ourselves and into its enriching openness; it is through movements taking place in the openness of compassion that Being first touches us and moves us to sense its still deeper, and much more mysterious, claims on our guardian awareness. (p. 98)

In a poem by Rilke, the animals come to drink when night holds sway and the forest is free from strangers (as cited in O’Donohue, 2004). What does a pedagogy of companionship entertain when the night holds sway and the forest is free from strangers? In what manner does compassion protect us and create safety? What can be learned from the presence of a stranger in the guise of a student? What would a curriculum look like when teacher and student are in dialogue with one another, followed by a reflective or meditation time? We need time to experience not knowing, to dwell in the lessons of companion animals that reflect an ambiguous and delicious not knowing!

Gathering Gestures

Gestures that gather quite significantly decrease distance and bring the Other into a closer place of proximity. These gestures are founded upon thoughtfulness and “gracious humility” (Levin, 1985, p. 165); “emanate from the feminine” (p. 150), “open the spirit” (p. 153) and are “moved by a deeper love” (p. 153). A gesture of thoughtfulness is the opposite of a gesture birthed within a technological ontology of ego and willfulness (Levin, 1985). In what manner does the offering of a paw or other animal body part gather us closer to the Other and to the Self? As Levin (1985) asks, “Can we learn to enjoy being empty-handed?” (p. 134). As nurse educators, can we lend a hand, being open to the questioning of our motivation? In what manner can a hand be lent in a gesture that gathers rather than controls?

For Jams and Margaret writing embodies those gestures that gather. This need to write emerges from a felt sense of caring displayed by their companion animals. Jams writes to reach out to students and ask new questions. She describes this writing and questioning as modes of caring for herself and her students. For Jams, companion animals have taught her that *this really matters* (emphasis added in text); her companion animals are the only beings present in this writing journey with her. Jams states:

They are there with me. They do not do things for or to me; they are present with me. They do not have to be aware of the process to do it. They are just there—present, ready-to-hand, welcome diversions but also willing to be quiet, tolerant and undemanding friends. (Personal Communication)

Margaret describes a narrative pedagogical practice of reflective journaling in which she makes a promise to respond to each individual student in a time period of twenty-four hours. This response is private, and in an email she compliments the students on issues that went well that day and provides feedback and mentoring for growth. Margaret notes that her sense of feeling special in Tucker's gaze prompts this practice of promptness in her turn around time.

This gathering gesture is tempered with elements of caring and “essential humanity” (Levin, 1985, p. 148) as Margaret voices concern about the students' lack of time. She finds that perhaps all of “these creative things” such as journaling may actually interfere with the needs of the students and the multiple lives they live. As Margaret notes, “It is different now than previously when one's only job was to go to school.” In this gathering gesture, there are elements of connection.

Lived Time as Lived Curriculum

Companion animals emulate spatial time, a feminine sense of lived time. In spatial time, companion animals simply do what feels right in the moment.

Companion animals are open to the intuitive realm of knowing, humanly experienced as be-ing guided by bodily cues. In essence, they connect in this task of knowing, reflective of the feminine (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tartle, 1986). As such, companion animals are true connoisseurs of caring as they allow human beings to grow in their own time, by clocks measuring be-ing in lieu of preordained tasks or anticipated paths of becoming. This grasping of the moment was given voice in my conversations as patience. With patience, companion animals turn fully toward us, rescuing us with the gift of wait-full time. We are free to *be* in these moments. This sacred waiting is, in itself, a ritual, as companion animals celebrate our be-coming through endings and new beginnings. Companion animals allow this freedom to be through their humbleness and vulnerability.

To live in a time embracing being-ness is to dwell in the present moment, seizing that gift of the present. It is to capture that ray of sunshine as it pours through an open window or to be captured totally in a moment of play. In nurse education, as knowing embraces an ever wider and wider amount of information, nurse educators are constantly running to catch up, engrossed in the next portion of knowledge. There is an exhausting re-sponse to dwindling time to cover enormous amounts of information. In nurse education, curriculum as planned reigns supreme to the detriment of the lived curriculum of the faculty and learner. What would the

experience be like to stop and wholly engage in the moment when a learner grasps a concept, having lived the teachings through a personal story?

A pedagogy of companionship revels in a sense of pedagogical openness. It is in celebration of this openness that true freedom emanates. Again, there is a letting-go and letting-be. A pedagogy of openness reveals the sacred circle of the Other. By allowing openness, I am taken into this circle and embrace a felt notion of rescue.

Lived Place as Lived Curriculum

Through the conversations, companion animals reflect their ability to transform the mundane into a sacred circle by simple virtue of their physical or spiritual presence. Margaret reflects upon the notion of Tucker's physical presence in the classroom. In what manner would the classroom be transformed? Margaret writes:

I think bringing Tucker to the university with me is an example of an implication for improved student learning and understanding. I think sharing aspects of "our" world with nursing students would work in an emancipatory nursing curriculum. It would be interesting to find out the actual effects Tucker would have on student learning. They [the students] would build wonderful memories of her and apply what they learn from her in their future practices such as compassion, caring, and empathy. (Personal Communication)

Again I muse regarding the possibilities for nursing practice both within the clinical setting and the educational arena. What would it be like to be in the company of the ultimate model of caring, kindness, and compassion? What walls are worn down and bridges created? Is Tucker the educator within Margaret?

I re-call and am called back to a point in my recent past, in the weeks prior to my mother's physical death. During one of those times while I sat patiently and quietly with her, I saw her unfaltering gaze look toward the window, a window whose view was comprised of a field and drive-through banking facility. Seeing this view

once again in my mind's eye, I contemplate the dichotomy of this view so apparently synchronous and synonymous with nurse education. Oddly enough, I see rudiments of this scene upon my inner terrain of being.

After some period of silence, my mother speaks. She says, "It is hard to leave one's home." After her words, I looked at my mother. I ponder her gaze directly at my face, feeling her words penetrate me slowly, ever so slowly. This space of the gaze becomes fragile; a crack forms, breaking into my soul. Wounds long hidden are uncovered. I question in my soul my mother's ability to *see* in me. Perhaps my mother, my first midwife to provide me with both the elements of physical birth and a lifetime of births, sees me as no other human being has ever purported to the same sense of sight. Within her eyes, I catch a glimpse, ever so transient of my companion animals.

I muse regarding the place of this new sight. I open to this story as a reflection of a moment "in which we come face to face with who we really are...we stop outside of time and know the essence of our being" (Koerner, 2003, p. xix). These wounds I had initially reflected as I stepped into this study now have begun to heal at the edges. I now know without a doubt that my home is the field. *I no longer choose to participate in the drive up banking system.* I am a field dweller, content to open to the synchronous rhythm and flow of seasons of being. I be-come Artemis once again.

Following this brief conversation with my mother, my mother naps, seemingly tired from her journey. As my mother sleeps, I see from the window, within the bush, the presence of a fleeting peek of yellow and black. I catch a glimpse of the presence of a goldfinch, the bird of the threshold of the in-between, according to lore (Andrews,

1994). My mother, as the hermetic voice of the goldfinch, emulates a dweller of the field, inviting me to a new home, despite the pain of leaving another place. I feel safe to embrace this emerging new home as I realize this place can no longer be home. My mother and I bore witness to our mutual movements into alternate homes. I am blessed to witness her movement, now so clearly my own.

These insights, guided by the lived existentials of body, place, and time, reveal immense possibilities for the healing and teaching identities of companion animals in our lives. Through this exploration, I catch notions foundational to a pedagogy of companionship, birthed through an embodied sense of rescued beingness. These foundations are creativity, openness, response-ability, integrity, love, compassion, intentionality, and appropriateness. What can now be said of joining all of these parts together and fashioning an alternate pedagogy, an authentic lived relationality? What would a pedagogy of companionship and animal soul reveal? A conversation around the lived relationship of companionship opens a place for be-ing.

Lived Relationality as Lived Curriculum

I think it was from the animals
That St. Francis learned
It is possible to cast yourself
On the earth's good mercy and live.
(Hirshfield, as cited in Moore, 1996, p. 1)

How does a pedagogy of companionship open to nurse educators and an alternate way of being in the world? These words open to the possibility of a pedagogy crafted through the art of companion animal soul and an opening to the earth, while God's good mercy is revealed. What would a curriculum look like when both teacher and student throw themselves upon each other's good graces and simply "be" and "be-

with” the other? What happens when masks and armor are removed and we allow the signatures of our individual souls to be shown? What are the possibilities revealed? Historically, the original intent of pedagogue is derived from the Greek, *paidagogos*, a slave whose custodial nature of relationship was one of safety, stewardship, and security, a be-ing in place for parents (Hatt, 2002). The paramount issue with this person was the intensive one-on-one relationship with another individual. Truly as Levinas (2001) would contend, it was a being engrossed in the face of the Other. A pedagogy of companionship would surely reflect this intensive engrossment with the Other. However, in nurse education, when a pedagogue be-comes prescriptive entailing a practice of skills, the whatness of doing replaces the fine art of being. How does a falling on God’s good grace open to inscriptive being as our souls are inscribed by the individual face of the Other?

To fall upon God’s good grace is to open a conversation of possibility, to be held in the heart of the Other. Irigaray (2004) states:

It means learning to meet the other and to welcome them in their difference, to be reborn thus in a fidelity to ourselves and this other. Toward this accomplishment we must force ourselves along the way with the aid and friendship of animals, of angels, and gods who agree to accompany us in a course toward the accomplishment of our humanity. (p. 201)

A pedagogy of companionship therefore opens to the notion of “the grace of great things” (Palmer, 1998, p. 106), “the subjects around which the circle of seekers has always gathered” (p. 107). A pedagogy of companionship encompasses a sense of slowing down, a living to a different rhythm, a true falling upon good mercy. By falling on God’s good grace, intentions are abandoned. There is a notion of discovery and surprise. New openings of the senses are manifested and uncovered. There is a new aliveness and a new sense of soul.

Curriculum becomes lived, unplanned with a sense of unfolding. By simply being, we are more authentically called to care. By relying on the Other and the words offered, caring evolves. Outer layers of the Self are removed and we are surrounded by an authenticity of God's good grace. A new language of soul is opened in the circle, a sacred circle comprised of surrender and loss, awakening and union, and the soul of the Self and the Other.

Like companion animal soul, the casting of oneself upon the earth's good mercy is to reveal a living with *grace*. Like beauty and animal soul, grace has its own elegance. O'Donohue (2004) writes:

It [Grace] is above the mechanics of agenda or operation. No one can set limits to the flow of grace. Its presence remains immeasurable and unpredictable. There are no compartments, corners, or breakages in the flow of grace. It suggests a compassion. (p. 228)

This compassion or pedagogy of beauty “gets right in there—in your body, your heart, in your sense of self, of the world, of others, and of the possibilities and impossibilities in those realms” (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 6). These possibilities open to creativity. This creativity emerges not only through creative endeavors, but also through the opening to individuality. It is a pedagogy of art, a freedom of letting go and letting be, a joyfulness and playfulness. It is not a pedagogy of practice that revels in a sense of the pre-ordained. Like the earth's good mercy, beauty envelops an autonomy and unpredictable path.

There are elements of authenticity in this pedagogy of companionship. However, within nurse education, there is a trend or fondness for technology. Perhaps this trend partially is founded upon the dwindling numbers of nurse educators and the expansiveness of the size of classroom teaching. Or perhaps, has technology taken on

a far greater place as technology replaces the sacred rituals of caring? The sacred rituals of caring carry our human beingness beyond the mundane and into the profane realm.

While with utmost certainty, technology beneficially allows for a traveling beyond the Self, as it creates virtual excursions. Technology calls into question our relationship with ourselves and with the Other. In these ways, technology allows for an enhanced mode of sightedness. However, in diverse respect to a pedagogy of companionship, technology may create a pedagogy of isolation. Technology, while paradoxically creating a circular path, leads this circular path back to the Self, thereby allowing an inward turning to the Self. This inward turning contradicts caring rituals and with certainty negates a need to engage in rescue. In what manner, might a pedagogy of companionship open a new relationship with technology and connect to this enhanced pathways of sightedness?

This question of technology is an old one in nurse education. Carper (1978) cautioned approximately twenty-five years ago that a risk of embracing technology would deter the profession of nursing from humanistic caring. Technology creates the mechanical eye, a seeing without grace or openness. The mechanical eye allows for no sense of rescue or human failings. Technology turns a deaf ear. We be-come diminished by voices we cannot hear. Technology turns us away from rituals toward routines, from art to practice.

However, by bringing forth these very issues, I am called as Hultgren (1994) maintains into a different relationship with technology as the technical summons me to a mode of caring that goes beyond the mechanical eye and the deafness of ear. I am

summoned to reflect upon alternate ways of being-in-the-world. Through these openings to alternate questions of be-ing, I permit a notion of rescue. I ponder my experience of technology in a hermeneutical manner, questioning the possibilities (Heidegger, 1977).

As we throw ourselves upon the earth's goodness, we embrace who we are and who we might be-come. In nurse education, there are the elements of sameness. How do we transform this wound of sameness into a pedagogy of companionship? The key to this transformation lies in the simple gift of compassion, for when I am hurt, I can identify with the suffering of the Other. When I suffer, I embrace my flaws as evidence of the beautiful. I learn to sit with my flaws. How do animals embrace our flaws and allow us to sit with our suffering? Companion animals embrace our flaws by simply *being-with*. As an educator, in what manner do I create a space in which students can embrace their flaws and celebrate their uniqueness? I turn, once again, to the immense power of the senses and the fine-tuning provided by the lessons of the companion animals. In what manner do the senses open this pedagogy of beauty and allow a lived meaning of grace, a falling upon the earth's good mercy?

In closing, a pedagogy of companionship serves to create a very fertile ground for those pedagogical moments of engagement or caring. Companion animals hearken us to this pedagogy as they embrace the joy of their own circular beings and circular paths. In short, companion animals dance! As human beings, we, too, are invited to join in the dance of circles and spirals, a pedagogy of beauty and companionship.

Levin (1985) writes:

The round dance is the original geo-graphy of our placement on earth, the original geo-metry of ontological space...the gift of a sacred space into the

hermeneutical circle of human awareness...the round dance is an enactment of pre-ontological understanding: our most radical knowledge of sacred space and the geology of Being. It is our decisive initiation into the wholesome space of the ontological difference. (pp. 346-347)

Thus, the dance invites us to move toward an alternate way of being in the world, a sacredness of Self. The circumambulatory movement as Levin maintains, “seeks to remind us of the ontological fulfillment of this very motility of the round dance which essentially consists of an attitude of caring” (p. 166). I invite you to join in this dance of attunement and celebration of one’s very Being. I summon you to dwell within these points of intersection, the spirals within the hermeneutic circle or round dance of animal love, animal compassion, animal places, and animal caring. The round dance is a re-turning to the Self through an embracement of a pedagogy of companionship. I turn toward a final question, “Can nurse education embrace this round dance of be-ing, or as Jams suggests, will nurse education continue to “chase its tail as it goes round and round in circles?” Is nurse education ripe for rescue?

Nurse Education: The Broken Circle or the Millionth Circle?

At the beginning we choose to trust what might be questioned; at the end, we choose to rest content with what might be pursued further.
(Boenokoe, 1999, p. 2)

Bolen (1999) entreats women to create a millionth circle, “to throw a pebble in a pond” (p. 84) and gaze at the wonder of its far-reaching effects. Having brought forth a pedagogy of companionship founded upon companion animal soul and beauty, I, too, challenge other nurse educators toward the creation of concentric, pebble-in-the-water circles of soul in nurse education. In order to see these circles authentically, however, I must uncover soul as it currently exists in nurse education.

To enter into a conversation regarding nurse education is at times to enter into an unknown terrain without set points of connection. This lack of set points of connection is heralded in the writings of the nursing profession, writings that reflect soul as the art and craft of nursing. In the literature of the nursing profession, soul is described as an empowerment (Peplau, 1988), a transpersonal experience (Watson, 1985), meaning and mystery (Cody, 1992), healing energy (Quinn, 1992), beauty (Boykin, Parker, & Schoenhofer, 1993), and harmony (Jacobs-Kramer & Chinn, 1988). This diversity of definitions alone creates the broken circles.

However, despite the *appearance* of the soul in nursing literature, there is little authentic *presence* of true soul. The truest description of soul I retrieved was the one posed by Watson (1988), where soul is described as

the *geist* or spirit, the inner essence or inner self of a person that opens to elements of transcendence, allowing and opening to higher consciousness and miraculous experiences, modes of thoughts, feelings, and actions that a scientific paradigm or culture dis-allows. (p. 46)

Clearly, Watson alludes to alternate forms of meaning making inherent in a lived curriculum. Watson (1988) points out, “This notion of a spiritual self and inner power requires a different starting point” (pp. 46-47) for the actual viewing of life. When this different conversation is entered, human beings are transformed and become more fully engaged in their human potential. Watson (1999) maintains that this opening to an alternate conversation is the opening to a deep ontological shift comprised of an emancipated stance of ethical caring. This ethical stance invites a pedagogy of companionship.

An absence of soul opens to many questions and the possibility of rescue. Why has nurse education turned away from this possibility of transcendence as Watson

(1988) suggested, almost twenty years ago? Clearly, the answer lies in both the personal realm of gender and the political realm of society. As with any notion of curriculum, nursing curriculum emerges out of the interplay of three dominant elements: conceptions of knowledge, conceptions of human beingness, and conceptions of social order (Greene, 1993). These three mainstays of curriculum are noted in the extensive history of nurse education and the nursing profession, a history reflective of “many stories of culture, gender, education, medicine, ideological change, social processes and public imaging” (Kavanagh, 2003, p. 59).

To many nurse educators, this task of soul retrieval is too immense in a system already over-burdened by dwindling faculty resources and a current demanding societal need. However, I pose a single question, “Can nurse education truly afford not to begin the journey toward creation of the millionth circle?” I throw a pebble into the water and reflect briefly on the dialogue to follow upon the far-reaching circles of ontology, care, ethics, and pedagogy.

The ontological shift is revealed fundamentally in a lived curriculum. As in the premise of a lived curriculum, a curriculum of God’s good grace, I propose simply to allow the power of the circles to lead. Inherent in this letting-go and letting-be are elements of fear. Cowan (2003) speaks to this fear and the power of the circle:

Standing in the open center stimulates feelings of vulnerability for the circle is also a lure, calling to something deep in our souls to expand and to fill that space. Such a call can be terrifying, and we instinctively seek protection. (pp. 97-98)

Perhaps it is only through the opening to vulnerability, a lesson so finely practiced by companion animals, that nurse education will paradoxically lose its fear and reclaim the inherent powerful present.

Perhaps this call to nurse education for the millionth circle is one of seeking a new terrain. Through this study, I have mapped previously unclaimed personal terrain. The ontological wildness in me has revealed another place. I now embrace this new place as the wilderness. The wilderness is not a terrain of lostness but rather a homeland for nurse education. The human construction of the experience of being lost in the wilderness is in essence a lack of ontological opening, a refusal toward authenticity, a “not allowing the land to lead” (Casey, 1993, p. 260). Within this new home place is a notion of the authenticity of soul as the wilderness leads one in a new direction, “a fully being beside the Self, creating a heightened awareness and attunement” (Casey, 1993, p. 262), a pulling. It is a surrender.

Again, I propose that nurse education surrender, let go and let be. I offer this premise founded not upon the obliteration of all that currently resides in nurse education curriculum, but rather a mosaic curriculum, a curriculum designed as it were, by the Muses to reflect the aesthetic and feminine principles of knowing. This curriculum entertains both present and future possibilities. These future possibilities lie in the opening to alternate forms of meaning making.

Meaning making is a turn away from the de-contextualized structure current in nurse education, and a turning toward content co-created by both teacher and learner. In essence, it is a re-storation (re-storying) of the sacred rituals of nurse education. It is a re-turning to the pathic experience of care. It is a giving voice to the personal stories and narratives of caring. Fox (1985) contends that rituals are the very fabric needed to pass values and meanings to the next generation. Rituals are a necessity for survival. Has the profession of nursing paused in its busyness long enough to wonder the simple

question of “What is being passed on?” A critical question is formed, “What occurs when the profession of nursing meets its needs for rituals outside the realm of caring?”

I recall the most traditional ritual of all in nursing, the passing on of a lighted candle, commenced by Florence Nightingale (1860/1969). This caring ritual was created as a sharing, in essence to pass on beauty. What beauty is passed on or transferred by a pedagogy of companionship? What meanings are generated and birthed? This meaning making is heralded through the creation of different connections to meaning. For me, I see the beauty of companionship and the pillars of a rescue ontology as embodied in the very foundations of beingness as I am rescued and dwell within the wise eyes regarding me, feel the soft paw upon my body as I feel gathered together, and listen to the voices emanating from the silence. I catch this beauty in my very breath as I breathe in the spirit of the Other. Companion animals open those spots of rawness within us. Companion animals are those “critical friends” (Taylor, 2000, p. 74) who open channels of creativity in a non-biased, non-judgmental manner. A critical friend is a “sense-maker.”

Levin (1985) calls for “making-sense,” as he opens to the use of play as a vehicle for teaching morals and how to be-in-the-world. I recall the lessons of play offered in the joy of a bone well chewed or a ball fetched for the hundredth time! Is there a moral to this story? Or, more importantly, is this a lesson in simply how to be-in-the-world? Are companion animals in their beings, the very constituents of praxis as they deal with the real world; act with us but not upon us; and allow for reflection and action (Grundy, 1987)? When these hidden places of our souls are revealed,

healing is facilitated. When healing is contrived, there is an enhanced openness to learning.

There are a number of ways to invite meaning making, such as meditation upon artwork, painting, sculpture, pottery, dancing, the arts and humanities (Chinn & Watson, 1994), journaling or writing (Vaught-Alexander, 1994). What would it be like to introduce students to the artwork of Susan Seddon Boulet, an artist who defies the borders of both the ontic and ontological body, portrayed in her paintings that blend human and animal beings? What is this stance of openness? Boulet, as well, evokes the sense of the feminine spirit as she celebrates the feminine goddesses of creativity and connection. These visual metaphors open to a pedagogy of possibility.

Meaning making is enhanced when the place of learning is endowed and infused with care. Chinn (1990, 2001) offers a supportive manner of dialogue founded upon the idea of speaking well of others. Again, I reflect on the language of Steve as he describes the “benevolence” or wishing well of Barnum. I re-turn to the soul of companion animals to teach us about authentic wishing well or caring.

Companion animals seek to guide us to all parts of the Self. A pedagogy where time is provided for dialogue with a student would create a pond for reflection, a being-with. It opens a language of connection rather than alienation. Clearly, in closing, this foray is an attempt to make a clearing for an alternate conversation. This alternate conversation creates the clearing of the pond where currently algae, stagnation, and muddy waters prevail. This alternate conversation promises the millionth circle. These circles reach out to gather the seekers. Will nurse education

join the circle of life or continue to engage in circling life? This is a fundamental question.

The Prayer of St. Francis: Final Blessings

In the end, there is nowhere to go, nothing to do, there is only being and the infinite movement of life that flows from the deep stillness at the center of all that is. Awareness of your essential nature, waking up to what you are, begins with a willingness to be with what is. There is no trick, no complex methodology. There is only the practice of bringing yourself to the present moment and being with all that present moment holds. (Mountain Dreamer, 2003, p. 209)

As I come to the end of the journey, I re-join the geese in their quest for home. These words of Oriah Mountain Dreamer invite me to rest and ponder, allowing the deep stillness to embrace my being as I surrender to being with what is. I open to my felt sense of transformation, birthed through my being-with the conversations and my midwives. I sense this ontology of soul in the presence of companion animals. I find that home is, indeed, where the heart “is.”

I, too, throw myself on the earth’s good mercy as I re-turn to the words uttered in my prologue as I bear witness to this love: “For all those times you stood by me...For all the truth that you made me see...For all the joy you brought to my life... You were my voice when I could not speak... You were my eyes when I could not see...You saw the best there was in me...*I was blessed because I was loved by you.* I offer a final blessing:

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is discord, union;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

Grant that we may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
(*St. Francis of Assisi Prayer*, available on-line)

Mitakuye Oyasin
“We are all related.”
(Ross, 1994, p. 210)

Coda

The newest member of my family, Rocky, a rescued dachshund puppy, sits by my feet, “catching” stray words as they fall from my computer screen. Like his adopted “writing muse-brothers,” Milton and Francois, Rocky, too, is a writing muse for these words that I write. I ponder at this time, what it really means to be rescued as I gaze into Rocky’s eyes, eyes filled with softness, joy, and an acceptance of his own visual impairments. I wonder what existence will be like for him as he descends one day into total darkness.

I see no remorse for his condition in those eyes, only joy and a true being and living in the moment, accompanied by the deep rhythm of a thudding tail, a sound that carries me back home to myself. I reminisce with Rocky about another rescued dachshund, Miss Grace McPiddle, whose brief presence in my life showed me the grace of a physical death with dignity. How was I ever to know that Grace’s lessons would enter my life at a time that would in a sense, foreshadow my own mother’s physical death six months later? How was I to know that my mother’s physical death would precede Rocky’s own birthday by a mere twenty-four hours?

Once again Rocky stares at me, engaging me with his eyes. He approaches and gestures for some snuggle-time. Again, I ponder the ultimate question, “What does it mean to be rescued?” as I encircle my arms around Rocky and we revive in our snuggle time.



Appendix A

CONSENT FORM

Research Title:	<u>Companion Animals as Cartographic Teachers and Healers</u>
Purpose:	The purpose of this study is to explore the essential nature of the phenomenon of animals as teachers and healers within the lives of nurse educators. The participants and this researcher will be seeking to reveal the meaning of companion animals within the identities of teachers and healers as well as implications for nursing education pedagogues.
Procedures:	As a participant, I agree to meet with the researcher three times over a three to four month period of time. These meetings will be comprised of both written accounts of the lived experience of companion animals as teachers and healers as well as tape-recorded conversations. These meetings will be held individually or among dyads (2) of nurse educators, depending upon the availability of the subjects. The meetings will be held at a variety of locations including schools of nursing and home environments to facilitate accessibility.
Statement of Age:	I state that I am over the age of 18 years and that I agree to participate in a study conducted by Debra L. Goulden, a doctoral student in the Department of Education Policy and Leadership at the University of Maryland, College Park.
Confidentiality:	I understand that I will be identified with a pseudonym throughout the text to provide confidentiality. I also understand that I may choose to provide specific written permission to use my name. I understand that I have the right to request that specific written information or conversations not be used in the study. I understand that I will be informed of any tape recorders present during the recorded conversations and that I may request that recorders be turned off at any time. The content of the conversations will be held in confidence and the names of the participants will be omitted from the report of findings. All tape recordings of the conversations will be kept within a locked area and destroyed after a five-year period.
Risk:	I understand that there are no known risks to participation in this study.
Freedom:	I am aware that I am free to ask any questions throughout the study and to withdraw my participation at any time without penalty.

Graduate Researcher Information:

Debra Goulden
19 Bernadotte Court
Baltimore, Maryland 21234
(410)-529-4159

Faculty Advisor Information:

Dr. Francine Hultgren
College of Education
University of Maryland, College Park
2110 Benjamin Building
College Park, Maryland 20742
(301)-405-4562

Conversant _____

Date _____

Name to be Used

Appendix B

March 11, 2003

Dear Betty,

Betty, you will find enclosed a copy of the transcript from our conversation. I have listened and re-listened to the tapes and have begun to make connections with the phenomenon of companion animal care giving as well as certain themes within the text. At this time, in order to further my understandings of our conversation and the identity that companion animals hold in our lives, I would ask you to do the following:

1. **Please read over the transcript and feel free to expand upon or clarify any part of our conversation.** Please feel free to write directly upon the transcript (as the transcripts will be mailed back to me) or you may write out in longhand on a separate sheet or type any additional information you would like to share. Many times additional thoughts will come such as I wish I would have added this or that...or why didn't I think to mention...I need to clarify exactly what I mean there...etc. Any additional "conversation" via your written responses is most welcome for me to further uncover the presence of those wonderful companion animals in our lives!
2. **Please expand upon those conversational areas I have selected below.** Again, your response(s) may be directly written on the transcript or written separately. As I have mentioned, I have listened numerous times to the tapes. Through this process of re-listening, I have sought to deepen my understandings of our conversation that may assist me in uncovering the phenomenon of companion animals further. Your response may entail narratives or a metaphor or poetry if you would like as metaphors and poetry sometimes give a "voice" to that which might appear to be unnamable or indescribable in our human language. Any text you would like to bring forth would be wonderful and appreciated!

In response to this furthering of understanding, I wish to open certain areas or parts of the conversation further to an enhanced level. Within our conversation, I am particularly intrigued by the following:

- a. **The experience of being listened to by Sarah Elizabeth.** What feelings or thoughts did you experience when you really felt listened to by Sarah Elizabeth? What is it like to look at Sarah Elizabeth and speak to her? In what manner perhaps, Betty, is this experience different than being listened to by a human being?
- b. **The experience of being tucked in by Sarah Elizabeth.** What are the bodily sensations and feelings when Sarah Elizabeth tucks you in?

How is Sarah's touch on your hand again different from a human touch?

Opening these two experiences deeper may bring additional thoughts or alternative stories to mind to either another part of our conversation/transcript or "travel" down a totally different "path". Again, please feel free to write any additional thoughts or feelings down and return them to me.

Betty, I would like to once again offer many thanks for your wonderful supportive presence in my life and my study. I have been truly blessed to find such kindred spirits in you and Sarah Elizabeth! Please email me with any questions to: redshoes26@msn.com. At your earliest convenience, please return the transcript and any additional writing to me. I have enclosed a postage-paid envelope for your return of the transcript and any additional materials. I look forward to "speaking" with you further. As my study progresses and I continue to clarify and write the final two chapters of my dissertation, I will be in touch as the need for deeper meanings and connections arise for me within the text. Take care of yourself and special blessings to Sarah Elizabeth!

Debbie

Appendix B

March 10, 2003

Dear April,

Greetings! April, you will find enclosed a copy of the transcript from our conversation in July. I have listened and re-listened to the tapes and have begun to make connections with the phenomenon of companion animal care giving as well as certain themes within the text. At this time, in order to further my understandings of our conversation and the identity that companion animals hold in our lives, I would ask you to do the following:

1. Please read over the transcript and feel free to expand upon or clarify any part of our conversation. Please feel free to write directly upon the transcript (as the transcripts will be mailed back to me) or you may write out in longhand on a separate sheet or type any additional information you would like to share. Many times additional thoughts will come such as I wish I would have added this or that...or why didn't I think to mention...I need to clarify exactly what I mean there...etc. Any additional "conversation" via your written responses is most welcome for me to further uncover the presence of those wonderful companion animals in our lives!

2. Please expand upon those conversational areas I have selected below. Again, your response(s) may be directly written on the transcript or written separately. As I have mentioned, I have listened numerous times to the tapes. Through this process of re-listening, I have sought to deepen my understandings of our conversation that may assist me in uncovering the phenomenon of companion animals further. Your response may entail narratives or a metaphor or poetry if you would like as metaphors and poetry sometimes give a "voice" to that which might appear to be unnamable or indescribable in our human language. Any text you would like to bring forth would be wonderful and appreciated!

In response to this furthering of understanding, I wish to open certain areas or parts of the conversation further to an enhanced level. *I recall that you said that it was difficult to choose which photos to talk about.* As you read the transcript, if you could think about and share as you wish, perhaps, some of the reasons behind the choice of those pictures. Surely, you choose pictures that were felt by you to entail a sense of being cared-for by companion animals. All of your stories and related photos are intriguing; but as a beginning point, I have included below some paraphrasing from the transcript and some tentative questions to explore further. Within our conversation, the following particularly calls out to me and invites an opening for further questioning:

- a. **Your cat, Sam.** Your recollection of Sam evokes much understandable emotion. In fact when I re-listened to the tape once again, I was struck at my intense reaction to this story. Through hearing your story of Sam once again, I caught “glimpses” of my own Angel and Gracie. Paraphrased from the text, “This cat was my original...my original Sam. But she was my lifesaver. She always knew when I was sad.” How did it feel to be touched on the face by Sam? Can you speak to “Sam’s knowing” of your need for her to be with you? Thoughts and feelings when you recall Sam’s touch?
- b. **The boys and “study hour”.** You speak of Sam and the boys as present with you when you are reading or studying. How is this “felt”? What is it about their presence(s)? Can you recall any further thoughts or stories around a time you were studying with a companion animal? You state that the boys are “your” cats...despite the fact that Pat tends to them. What creates “the space” for the boys to be your cats?
- c. **Woody and Brandy.** You commenced with Woody as the first companion animal named (aside from the boys) (smile). Can you recall further stories of Woody and the choice to begin with him? What made Brandy a “fabulous” dog?

April, in closing, I would like to once again offer many thanks for your wonderful supportive presence in my life and my study. I have been truly blessed to find such kindred spirits in you and your companion animals! Please email me with any questions to: redshoes26@msn.com. At your earliest convenience, please return the transcript and any additional writing to me. I have enclosed a postage-paid envelope for your return of the transcript and any additional materials. I look forward to “speaking” with you further. As my study progresses and I continue to clarify and write the final two chapters of my dissertation, I will be in touch as the need for deeper meanings and connections arise for me within the text. Special thoughts to you and hugs to the “boys”. Take care!

Debbie

Appendix B

March 10, 2003

Dear Margaret,

Greetings! Margaret, you will find enclosed a copy of the transcript from our conversation in July. I have listened and re-listened to the tapes and have begun to make connections with the phenomenon of companion animal care giving as well as certain themes within the text. At this time, in order to further my understandings of our conversation and the identity that companion animals hold in our lives, (if you would be so kind), I would ask you to do the following:

1. Please read over the transcript and feel free to expand upon or clarify any part of our conversation. Please feel free to write directly upon the transcript (as the transcripts will be mailed back to me) or you may write out in longhand on a separate sheet or type any additional information you would like to share. Many times additional thoughts will come such as I wish I would have added this or that...or why didn't I think to mention...I need to clarify exactly what I mean there...etc. Any additional "conversation" via your written responses is most welcome for me to further uncover the presence of those wonderful companion animals in our lives!

2. Please expand upon those conversational areas I have selected below. Again, your response(s) may be directly written on the transcript or written separately. As I have mentioned, I have listened numerous times to the tapes. Through this process of re-listening, I have sought to deepen my understandings of our conversation that may assist me in uncovering the phenomenon of companion animals further. Your response may entail narratives or a metaphor or poetry if you would like as metaphors and poetry sometimes give a "voice" to that which might appear to be unnamable or indescribable in our human language. Any text you would like to bring forth would be wonderful and appreciated!

In response to this furthering of understanding, I wish to open certain areas or parts of the conversation further to an enhanced level. I have included below some paraphrasing from the transcript and some tentative questions to perhaps explore further. Within our conversation, the following particularly intrigues me:

a. The experience of being listened to by Tucker. What perhaps feelings or thoughts did you experience when you really felt listened to by Tucker? What is it like to look into the eyes of Tucker and speak to her? In what manner perhaps, Margaret, is this experience different than being listened to by a human being? Paraphrased from the

transcript: "...There are moments in my life when things are not going so well, I have been stressed out and I come home and plop myself down on the floor with Tucker. I do not know exactly what it is about this but I get into synch with her heartbeat and her breathing and the stress gradually melts away. I put my head on her abdomen, getting down on the floor with her. Once again, she feels that **empty space** (emphasis here)...." (What is this experience like, bodily felt? Bodily sensations?)

b.The experience of being cared for by Tucker's presence after your surgery. What are the bodily sensations and feelings when Tucker tucks you in? How is the presence of Tucker's touch beside you again different from a human touch?

c.The experience of Tucker waiting for you. Paraphrased from the transcript, "...She is always waiting for me in the backyard...Tucker then brings me a gift for homecoming, a present such as a toy, a ball to engage with...Tucker's other ritual, the circular dance of greeting. I make a big deal about her and in those moments, a lot of stress is expelled. I cannot image my life without Tucker..." What is the feeling of truly being welcomed? What might the sensation of homecoming be like with the presence of Tucker?

d.The experience of being patient. What is it like to be in the presence of a "patient" companion animal? Margaret, you mention numerous times the sense of learning patience through Tahanne, the cat and Tucker. In what manner, perhaps do you recognize patience within the eyes of your companion animals and how is being patient with another, perhaps truly caring for the other?

Opening these experiences deeper may bring additional thoughts or alternative stories to mind to either another part of our conversation/transcript or "travel" down a totally different "path". Again, please feel free to write any additional thoughts or feelings down and return them to me.

Margaret, I would like to once again offer many thanks for your wonderful supportive presence in my life and my study. I have been truly blessed to find such kindred spirits in you and Tucker! Please email me with any questions to: redshoes26@msn.com. At your earliest convenience, please return the transcript and any additional writing to me. I have enclosed a postage-paid envelope for your return of the transcript and any additional materials. I look forward to "speaking" with you further. As my study progresses and I continue to clarify and write the final two chapters of my dissertation, I will be in touch as the need for deeper meanings and connections arise for me within the text. Take care of yourself and special blessings to Tucker!

Debbie

Appendix B

Dear Jams,

Greetings! Jams, I have listened and re-listened to the tapes once again and have begun to make connections with the phenomenon of companion animal care giving as well as certain themes within the text. At this time, in order to further my understandings of our conversation and the identity that companion animals hold in our lives, (if you would be so kind), I would ask you to do the following:

1. Please read over the transcript and feel free to expand upon or clarify any part of our conversation. *Please feel free to write directly upon the transcript (as the transcripts will be mailed back to me) or you may write out in longhand on a separate sheet or type any additional information you would like to share.* Many times additional thoughts will come such as I wish I would have added this or that...or why didn't I think to mention...I need to clarify exactly what I mean there...etc. Any additional "conversation" via your written responses is most welcome for me to further uncover the presence of those wonderful companion animals in our lives!

2. Please expand upon those conversational areas I have selected below. *Again, your response(s) may be directly written on the transcript or written separately.* As I have mentioned, I have listened numerous times to the tapes. Through this process of re-listening, I have sought to deepen my understandings of our conversation that may assist me in uncovering the phenomenon of companion animals further. Your response may entail narratives or a metaphor or poetry if you would like as metaphors and poetry sometimes give a "voice" to that which might appear to be unnamable or indescribable in our human language. Any text you would like to bring forth would be wonderful and appreciated! All of your stories are intriguing; but as a beginning point, I have included below some paraphrasing from the transcript and some tentative questions to explore further. Within our conversation, the following particularly calls out to me and invites an opening for further questioning:

- a. **Caring as a Cat-Person and a Dog-Person.** When one describes oneself as a cat person or a dog person, *how is caring different or similar?* What lessons, perhaps has one learned from cats or dogs that reflect one's interpretation of oneself and one's caring? As I reflected upon this, within myself, I can see certain aspects of caring authentically that emerge from all kinds of companion animals while other aspects of caring such as empowering or self-care, I have learned in different manners from both dogs and cats.

b. Meaning of Place. Many of your stories reflect the journey of an animal. What are some thoughts upon an animal's meaning of place? How does an animal engage us within a place? How is this "felt" within our bodies? You talk as well about domesticated animals and wild animals being different in that in the former, animals come to us while in the latter, we "go to them", encountering them within a different place. What is it about their presence(s)? Can you recall any further thoughts or stories around a time you were in a particular place with a companion animal?

c. The notion of co-caring (p. 7). You describe animals as "co-carers" through simple guidance and communication. Can you reflect more upon this aspect of co-caring? One difficulty I have had within my philosophical foundations is the notion of the ontology of an animal as a care-giving being. As you are aware, unfortunately, our Western "civilization" (using the word loosely) ☺, negates our companion animals to a lesser identify. You state "they are about being" (p. 15)...What does it mean to be "about being"?

d. Ebenezer's Story. You mentioned within Ebenezer's story, the descriptors of positive regard and learning through the silence. Can you expand more on the aspects of positive regard and silence within the presence of Ebenezer? Can you recall your bodily sensations when you were with Ebenezer as a child?

e. The "caring styles" of Atticus and Maggie. Your stories of Maggie's caring through being there and Atticus' caring through touch and sight (pp. 11-12). How does Atticus "know" when someone needs caring? What are your bodily sensations of looking within Atticus' eyes? Caring is such a bodily notion and I have made connections within some of Merleau Ponty's works. How does Maggie's presence care for you, even now despite her transition into a non-physical being?

f. Jellico's story. Within your words about Jellico, I sensed myself and my attempts to "live within the tensions" of my world in nursing education. Are there any further thoughts regarding lessons, Jellico may have imparted to you about dwelling within the tensions?

g. Your story of the burial of Thomas in San Francisco. Jams, if you can, there are a lot of lengthy pauses within this story and within the pauses, elements of the story remain unsaid or emotions

remain unvoiced. Would you feel comfortable in imparting any further thoughts about Thomas?

Jams, in closing, I would like to once again offer many thanks for your wonderful supportive presence in my life and my study. I have been truly blessed to find such kindred spirits in you and your companion animals! Please email me with any questions to: redshoes26@msn.com. At your earliest convenience, please return the transcript and any additional writing to me. I have enclosed a postage-paid envelope for your return of the transcript and any additional materials. I look forward to “speaking” with you further. As my study progresses and I continue to clarify and write the final two chapters of my dissertation, I will be in touch as the need for deeper meanings and connections arise for me within the text. Special hugs to Atticus! Take care!

Debbie

Appendix B

March 12, 2003

Dear Steve,

Greetings! Steve, you will find enclosed a copy of the transcript from our conversation in July. I am sending this out now rather than after receipt of your narrative. I have listened and re-listened to the tapes and have begun to make connections with the phenomenon of companion animal care giving as well as certain themes within the text. At this time, in order to further my understandings of our conversation and the identity that companion animals hold in our lives, I would ask you to do the following:

1. Please read over the transcript and feel free to expand upon or clarify any part of our conversation. *Please feel free to write directly upon the transcript (as the transcripts will be mailed back to me) or you may write out in longhand on a separate sheet or type any additional information you would like to share.* I have enclosed a blank computer disk for your writing if you desire to type your further clarifications and responses. Please mail back the disk along with the transcript even if you did not write upon the transcript. Many times additional thoughts will come such as I wish I would have added this or that...or why didn't I think to mention...I need to clarify exactly what I mean there...etc. Any additional "conversation" via your written responses is most welcome for me to further uncover the presence of those wonderful companion animals in our lives!

2. Please expand upon those conversational areas I have selected below. *Again, your response(s) may be directly written on the transcript or written separately.* As I have mentioned, I have listened numerous times to the tapes. Through this process of re-listening, I have sought to deepen my understandings of our conversation that may assist me in uncovering the phenomenon of companion animals further. Your response may entail narratives or a metaphor or poetry if you would like as metaphors and poetry sometimes give a "voice" to that which might appear to be unnamable or indescribable in our human language. Any text you would like to bring forth would be wonderful and appreciated!

In response to this furthering of understanding, I wish to open certain areas or parts of the conversation further to an enhanced level. Within our conversation, the following particularly intrigues me:

1. **Your use of the naming of your companion animal as "kids".** Certainly, I, too, have used this title and the words

- evoke a different sense of care giving. How does this kind of caring-for companion animals differ from human caring-for?
2. **The experience of being cared for by a companion animal during physical or emotional illness.** What is your bodily sense of this? Feelings? Emotions? Thoughts?
 3. **Your discussion of personal space.** How do animals know when we humans need some personal space and how is this personal space changed or altered by the presence of a companion animal? You spoke of this as an adult and needing space when you arrived home after an exceptionally long day but you also spoke immediately thereafter regarding childhood family dogs who “choose” a child to sleep with. Can you recall a story when your childhood dog chose you? Were there outstanding events regarding this time that perhaps the dog might have chosen you, knowing by their sixth sense (another common term we share) that you needed care-giving? What is a companion animal’s sixth sense?
 4. **Barnum.** Your eloquent story of choosing Barnum and the connection that developed during studying for your GRE’s. How was the place of your desk and computer transformed by Barnum? How did Barnum receive his name? You describe Barnum as a *sight hound* and later in the conversation, provide a moving description of Barnum connecting with you and looking into your eyes. Can you recount any visceral responses to looking into Barnum’s eyes? (I realize that during our conversation, I already asked you this but perhaps in written format, you might be able to describe the experience of looking into Barnum’s eyes.)
 5. **Dot.** When I re-listened numerous times to the tapes, I could see what you described as Dot’s sweet expressions and I could hear your inflection in your voice regarding “wanting to kidnap her” if you saw her again. Do you have any further stories about Dot and her caring for you?
 6. **Care-giving aspects of nursing.** How does caring for and by companion animals intersect or run parallel to caring we emanate within nursing education?

Opening these experiences deeper may bring additional thoughts or alternative stories to mind to either another part of our conversation/transcript or “travel” down a totally different “path”. Again, please feel free to write any additional thoughts or feelings down and return them to me.

Steve, I would like to once again offer many thanks for your wonderful supportive presence in my life and my study. I have been truly blessed to find such a kindred spirit in you! Please email me with any questions to: redshoes26@msn.com. At your earliest convenience, please return the transcript and any additional writing to me. I have

enclosed a postage-paid envelope for your return of the transcript and any additional materials. I look forward to “speaking” with you further. As my study progresses and I continue to clarify and write the final two chapters of my dissertation, I will be in touch as the need for deeper meanings and connections arise for me within the text.

Debbie

Appendix B

March 14, 2003

Dear Brigit,

Hello! Brigit, you will find enclosed a copy of the transcript from our conversation. I am sending this out now rather than after the receipt of your narrative. I have listened and re-listed to the tapes and have begun to make connections with the phenomenon of companion animal care giving as well as certain themes within the text. At this time, in order to further my understandings of our conversation and the identity that companion animals hold in our lives, I would ask you to do the following:

1. Please read over the transcript and feel free to expand upon or clarify any part of our conversation. *Please feel free to write directly upon the transcript (as the transcripts will be mailed back to me) or you may write out in longhand on a separate sheet or type any additional information you would like to share.* I have enclosed a blank computer disk for your writing if you desire to type your further clarifications and responses. Please mail back the disk along with the transcript even if you did not write upon the transcript. Many times additional thoughts will come such as I wish I would have added this or that...or why didn't I think to mention...I need to clarify exactly what I mean there...etc. Any additional "conversation" via your written responses is most welcome for me to further uncover the presence of those wonderful companion animals in our lives!

2. Please expand upon those conversational areas I have selected below. *Again, your response(s) may be directly written on the transcript or written separately.* As I have mentioned, I have listened numerous times to the tapes. Through this process of re-listening, I have sought to deepen my understandings of our conversation that may assist me in uncovering the phenomenon of companion animals further. Your response may entail narratives or a metaphor or poetry if you would like as metaphors and poetry sometimes give a "voice" to that which might appear to be unnamable or indescribable in our human language. Any text you would like to bring forth would be wonderful and appreciated!

In response to this furthering of understanding, I wish to open certain areas or parts of the conversation further to an enhanced level. Within our conversation, the following particularly intrigues me:

1. **Your naming of Greta as your "first daughter."**
Certainly, I have numerous times alluded to Francois as my first "grandchild" and Milton and Barkley as "my

children.” Does this kind of speech or language reveal a different kind of caring? Do you see elements of the same between caring-for Greta and caring for your human children?

2. **Your own sense of feeling cared-for by Greta.** What feelings or thoughts are created when you sense Greta’s presence in both your immediate space and the space of your children? **You speak of Lassie and her unfailing “job” in sleeping with one of your daughters at night.** What spaces are created at these times? How are you feeling?
3. **Your conversation revolving around personal space.** What boundaries are created for you and Greta as Greta, as you describe, “defends her territory of your husband?”
4. **During our conversation when Greta was gravely ill from Lyme Disease,** you display non-verbal behaviors during our conversation not apparent in previous conversations. These nonverbal behaviors such as less eye contact and clasping of your hands together tend seemingly to manifest sources of tension for you. Am I correct in this interpretation? Can you further reflect on sources of tension in yourself that our conversation may have created?

Opening these experiences deeper may bring additional thoughts or alternative stories to mind to either another part of our conversation/transcript or “travel” down a totally different “path”. Again, please feel free to write any additional thoughts or feelings down and return them to me.

Brigit, I would like to once again offer many thanks for your wonderful supportive presence in my life and my study. I have been truly blessed to find such a kindred spirit in you! Please email me with any questions to: redshoes26@msn.com. At your earliest convenience, please return the transcript and any additional writing to me. I have enclosed a postage-paid envelope for your return of the transcript and any additional materials. I look forward to “speaking” with you further. As my study progresses and I continue to clarify and write the final two chapters of my dissertation, I will be in touch as the need for deeper meanings and connections arise for me within the text.

Debbie

Appendix C

We store memories in our bodies. We store passion and heartache, joy and moments of transcendent peace. If we are to access them, if we are to move into them and through them, we must enter our bodies to do so. Entering our bodies, we enter our hearts. **Our bodies are our storytellers.**
(Julia Cameron, *The Right to Write*, 1998)

Dear _____,

As Julia Cameron suggests, we write because as human beings it is our nature to write. Through the grounding act of writing, we open our inner world to the outer world. We reveal ourselves and bear witness to our stories. Within this tension of writing and bearing witness to ourselves, the hidden becomes known through the written word. As van Manen (1990) states in *Researching Lived Experience*, "Writing distances us from lived experience but by doing so, allows us to discover the existential structures of experience" (p. 127).

In order to progress to the next step of my dissertation research process, I am requesting a written narrative or stories of a personal lived experience of companion animal care giving. Through the written stories, I seek to further uncover the meaning of the lived experience of being cared for by a companion animal. I invite each of you to engage in the act of writing, to discover that which is stored in our bodies.

It is my intent that these narratives or stories encompass another recollection of a lived experience of companion animal care giving. This step, as previously described during our initial conversation and in my introductory letter, is a continuation of the conversation commenced during our first meeting. This written narrative may be reminiscent of present companion animals or a re-membering of a past companion animal. It is my thought that through the written stories and narratives, the phenomenon of companion animal care giving may show itself additionally and reveal that which may have been previously hidden from view.

Through the writing of a story of companion animal care giving, I attune my search to your written words. Having dwelled in the authenticity of your words during our initial conversation regarding the phenomenon of companion animal care giving, I have been transformed into a more authentic listener, one truly present, hearkening to and hearing the voice of companion animals manifested through our human language.

To facilitate this act of writing, I have enclosed a blank floppy disk for the written narrative. Included in the envelope is a pre-posted, self-addressed bubble mailer for the return of the disk. If feasible for you, please download a hard copy of your narrative and send the disk or email a copy of the narrative to my email: redshoes26@msn.com. If you would prefer to write without the use of a computer, please feel free to do so as some people believe that the act of pen to paper reveals the

truest part of ourselves. You may return this text in the same bubble mailer provided. Please contact me for any questions or concerns.

Once again, I thank you for your sharing of yourself through your stories of companion animals. I look forward to reading them and authentically dwelling once again within the language of your stories. I look forward to engaging the soul and spirit of the stories with my own heart stories of companion animals.

Best Wishes,

Debbie

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