

Cowgirl as Goddess:
An Inquiry into an Archetypal Image of the
Instinctual Feminine in Texas Culture

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Michelle's First Horseback Ride, Family Photograph, 1970

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the aftermath of the end of the author's 21-year marriage, initiating an investigation of its complexities and revealing the commonality of such experiences within Texas culture. Her shift in perspective is illuminated by an exploration of the goddess myth across time and highlights the constraints of the Western, masculine-oriented ideology that continues to dominate the zeitgeist of the Lone Star State. The healing potential of nature, examined through earth-based wisdom and complemented by Jungian dream analysis, and personal reflections and insights, reveals the archetypal image of the Cowgirl.¹

The inquiry unravels the Cowgirl's historical identity through her role as a pioneer woman who breaks free of Victorian social constructs, investigates the origins of cowboy culture and its influence on the Cowgirl, and follows the emergence of the Cowgirl as an independent and courageous figure. Comparisons made to ancient Celtic culture, which embraced women as equal to men, unveil shared connections with horses and the historic and archetypal figure of Boudica, the Warrior Queen who embodies the goddess under imperial rule. The dissertation also examines the dark facets of the feminine, which represent crucial elements for a woman's wholeness, as exemplified by the Black Virgin.

The authentic Cowgirl is ultimately defined as one who lives in connection with land and animals. It is through her relationships with dogs, horses, and cows that her instinctual intelligence is fostered as an essential grounding reflex rooted in the material world, while challenging the distorted notion of matter as separate from spirit, this

¹ Cowgirl will be capitalized throughout the dissertation to emphasize the Cowgirl as an archetypal image and not as a noun describing a woman as a cowhand.

dissertation concludes with a depiction of the Cowgirl as an archetypal image of the feminine surpassing her roles as a feminist and Western icon, an image for contemporary women as a role model for wholeness and healing.

DEDICATION

To my female lineage of brave and holy women,

My unknown ancestors,

My stoic grandmother,

My courageous mother,

My soulful sister,

My sensual niece,

My spirited daughter,

And those yet to be born from us.

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In closing, I pay tribute to my grandmother, Mema, and my mother, Shirley. Their trailblazing spirits and unwavering courage flow through my very being. Both of them

believed that I could achieve anything by setting my mind in the right direction and riding through my fears.

*This willful shouting identity is dissolving.
A deep, wild, redeeming voice is rising.
Naked, I am listening.
The standards of others applaud,
Yet, it is fakery, a trick.
I find my voice of truth in my bones and blood.
It is the only valuable I can offer,
For there is no worth in the nobility of others' mediocrity.
My shameless life flames
Without apologies.*

—Michelle Blair, 2018

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

I was born because of a dream. On a Monday, my mother had her last doctor's appointment before she was to give birth to me. All was well. But that evening the doctor had a dream that something was wrong with me; he called my mother, who was shopping, and said he must deliver me immediately. On Tuesday, August 9, I was born blue-skinned; the umbilical cord wrapped around my neck. Forty years later, I would learn that at birth I had died, but was resuscitated, going on to live a normal life. I would then come to understand why I exhibited traits associated with those who have had near-death experiences. I believe my consistent and constant seeking for light in all its reflected and concealed aspects is also rooted in the circumstances of my birth.

Years later, I would discover in my astrological birth chart a spiritual dictum that I was destined to bring something forward, as signified by a Chiron archetype,² also known as the Wounded Healer. The body of the horse and the body of the human being are both aimed at the stars, the galactic center of truth. And my *tikun*, a Kabbalistic term used to denote a soul's correction, was to learn to be a good mother and learn to "to see"³ from the unconscious realm.

My personal story is the anchor of this dissertation and has influenced the choice of the topic. It grew out of a desire for freedom, or as Jung (1969) called it, "individuation" (Abstract), a process whose objective is to achieve ultimate wholeness by

² Archetypes are psychic forces of being that live a life of their own. They influence us, and if we bring them into awareness and come to understand them, they may lead us to wholeness.

³ Years later as a student of the Kabbalah, I would study the Torah section called Re'eh, Vol. 22, to develop this aspect.

unifying the opposites of the psyche—good and evil, high and low, and masculine and feminine. This involves bringing the darkness into light, liberating the shadow.

I am not only a Texan but also a Fort Worthian. I was born and raised in this Cowtown; its slogan is “Where the West Begins.” Fort Worth and the State of Texas are laced with mythic stories of cowboys and Indians through which the film industry has propagated a male heroism and branded the state in the male image. Additionally, Fort Worth has a split personality: one side is connected to the ranching industry and rodeo, the other a hub of Anglo ideals of culture evident in its world-class museums. For me, these represent two intelligences—the Cowgirl, who is connected to animals and the land; and her opposite, a woman who often conforms to the masculine ideal. The latter woman, whom I know well because I have embodied her, is unconsciously geared to achieving a cultural image of perfection often based on materialistic factors such as her body shape, hair color, and status. An instinctual quality and the capacity to relate to the goddess within—present in the Cowgirl—are necessary for the personal integration of these two female opposites.

Through my own process of self-examination, I began to see patterns emerge. While recalling the building blocks of my life, I realized my early childhood traumas were often mitigated by healing experiences in nature. I had neglected looking into my history because I thought I could transcend it. Unbeknownst to me, a living archetype resided in my own backyard, and it began to speak to me: the Cowgirl, born of the myths of Texas and the Wild West.

Throughout this dissertation, I will demonstrate how the Cowgirl, a recent historical image, emerged during the last 2 centuries and may serve as a guide to achieve

wholeness for women of Texas and beyond. Although this dissertation is fueled by my personal story, it also presents a universal meaning, especially for American women, because the Cowgirl reflects everything ancient about the feminine world. She “throws off her corset” to embody and model aspects of the eternal feminine, a woman’s instinctual self.

The wound that propelled this dissertation happened 10 years ago, when my marriage of 21 years erupted. It felt like an agonizing death, but in reality, it heralded the shattering of my seemingly perfect mold into a plethora of fragments. It left me without a familiar identity, unattached to a man, and lacking a sense of societal belonging. I did not know at the time that this “death” was an invitation to remember and reconstitute the unique material that comprises Michelle, the human being.

Texas has many bloodlines running through its rivers, and so do I. My familial history weaves together the DNA of people indigenous to North America and European immigrant pioneers: my mother’s family of Cherokee and English descent mixed with my father’s Germanic heritage. Like my ancestors, I have embarked upon the exploration of a new frontier—albeit a psychic, rather than a geographic one—concealed by societal constructs. By delving into the history of my ancestors, the very soil of Texas, I gained new insights from native perspectives countered by lingering, distorted ideologies of the Victorian era.⁴ I came to see how the imported Judeo-Christian belief systems, oriented toward abstraction, thwarted the embodiment of the divine instinct rooted in human nature that is so crucial to authentic development.

⁴The Victorian era was the period from 1837 to 1901 during Queen Victoria’s reign in the history of the United Kingdom and the British Empire.

I now understand the Cowgirl is a modern version of the feminine archetype described by scholars Baring and Cashford (1993) in their work, *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*. I learned humanity was once contained by the Great Mother, the feminine aspect that births the world. Embedded in that feminine principle is an impetus toward freedom and a reflex of purpose.⁵ I began to recognize that unrelenting forces of the light and dark aspects of life, both facets of the Goddess, resided within my psyche and wanted to emerge. Part of the struggle was encountering and countering the pervasive Neo-Darwinist⁶ view of reality of the 19th and 20th centuries, based on a mechanistic and reductionist perspective that emphasizes only material science.

The sensitivity of our human nature affords us the inherent ability to respond to the environment. I came to believe through engaging with the image of the Goddess—the Cowgirl of my hometown—that access to the supernatural can be discovered through grounded movement and engagement. This prompted me to ask deeper questions and find greater insight into the causes of my personal traumatic experiences. Living with and integrating the results of that inquiry evolved into an inner activism to encourage fellow humans to do the same. The unexpected arrival of the archetypal image of the Cowgirl brought forth for me a new quality of freedom.

⁵Reflex of purpose refers to teleology, the inherent purpose in matter.

⁶Neo-Darwinism is a term conflating Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection and Gregor Mendel's theory of genetic determinism. These theories counter holistic and ecological viewpoints that foster revitalization.

Michelle, the Human Being

Humans learn through storytelling, and many women inherit this way of relating, as seen in the work of author and Jungian analyst Clarissa Pinkola Estés (1996).⁷ To contextualize my dissertation, I will now tell a snippet of my life and the factors that led to this heuristic inquiry.

I was a “good” woman—a devoted wife and a dedicated mother—who worshipped a societal and moral standard that I had to abandon in order to study my own soul. In hindsight, I can see my life’s events as the warp and weft of the meaningful tapestry of my being, one that can be recognized only in retrospect. After my divorce, I wandered in the desert through many different types of experiences, yearning to understand how I had mistakenly created and believed in a false reality. One of those experiences was a pilgrimage to study the divine feminine that ended in walking the labyrinth at Chartres, France (see Figure 1). It was there that I learned about The Wisdom School and decided to return home and apply for its doctoral program.

Chartres was not the first labyrinth I had experienced; a close friend’s family, the Joneses, had replicated the Chartrean labyrinth in the small West Texas town of Albany (see Figure 2). Instead of being contained by Gothic arches, this labyrinth was nestled in nature amid a grove of trees. Little did I know that these two labyrinths would become connected for me, like invisible satellites guiding the feminine from the ancient world of the Druids to the land once inhabited by the native peoples of Texas.

⁷Clarissa Pinkola Estés is a Jungian psychoanalyst, author, and spoken word artist known for her book *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*, which explores the feminine psyche through fairy tales, myths, and folktales from various cultures.

Figure 1

Chartres



Note. Personal photograph.

Figure 2

Albany



Note. Personal photograph.

What I believed to be a breaking of my soul morphed into a shamanic, dark, meandering journey into the cave, requiring an inner capacity for illumination and a faith of following the ley lines. I began to formulate relevant and meaningful questions rather than the scapegoating and superficial ones I had been pursuing. The central question that emerged was, “How did I live in a false reality, cut off from my instincts, my own knowing and self-value?” What I was seeking was a deep liberation, a power rooted in the ground of my being, one not arrived at through rationalization, an untouchable “God,” or the imitation of the masculine. I was seeking a freedom and a connection to a primal source of purpose: what it means to be an embodied woman.

My dissertation has evolved through many forms. Seeds of a new understanding began with three women communing over lunch at Le Serpent in front of Chartres Cathedral. Gyorgyi Szabo⁸, Brenda Crowther,⁹ and Anne Baring¹⁰ listened, then challenged and invited me to see that my dissertation was embedded in my own life experience, and it was there that I would access something worthwhile. I started by researching my ancestral roots and the history of Texas, through which I later rediscovered my instincts. I discovered the personal and collective myths that reside in the soil of my birthplace, Texas, and in the myth of Michelle.

⁸Gyorgyi Szabo, Ph.D., is a Hungarian-born educator and dean of the Wisdom School. She graduated from the Sorbonne in Paris, France, with a degree in sociology, and later went on to work with renowned philosopher and systems theorist Ervin Laszlo.

⁹Brenda Crowther is a renowned Jungian analyst born in England of Celtic origin. She received her training from the Research and Training Centre in Depth Psychology according to C. G. Jung and Marie-Louise von Franz in Zurich. Crowther’s expertise lies in the area of dream analysis and the relationship between psychology and spirituality.

¹⁰Anne Baring, Hon. Ph.D., is a Jungian analyst, author, and lecturer known for her work on the divine feminine and the cultural shifts needed to restore balance to humanity’s relationship with the earth. With Jules Cashford, she co-authored the book, *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*, which explores the significance of the Goddess archetype throughout human history.

The process has been a spiraling spiritual experience. It has driven me continually into the dark and back to some enlivened awareness of my culture and myself, a woman wrestling not only with her personal life events but also with the collective imprints of thousands of years. It was not until I embraced the darkness—which at times felt like an overwhelming source of shame rather than an ascended brightness—that I began to unravel and defrost the undervalued intelligence of my feelings. Some would call this process a “dark night of the soul,” but I prefer to characterize it as a dark night *to* the soul. My challenge was how to respond to life from a different source of power, something that mystics, alchemists, and early Christians wrote about—yet those were *their* experiences, mere abstractions to which a modern Texas seeker could not relate.

So, it is here I tell my story, the myth of Michelle and the integration of the Cowgirl archetypal image—she who, much like the Black Virgin, became a force to help me recover my instinctual nature, that vital aspect of the human life, and a new relationship to my own homeland of Texas.

My Story

Muriel Rukeyser¹¹ wrote in one of her poems: “What would happen if one woman told the truth about her life? The world would split open” (Ostriker, 2013, para. 1).

Great growth comes from great pain, whether inflicted by broken bones or a shattered heart. I know both: the first from riding a horse at full speed and crashing, the

¹¹ Muriel Rukeyser (1913-1980) was an American poet and activist who wrote extensively about Judaism, equality, feminism, and social justice

other from a marriage to a “Bluebeard”¹² man. Bluebeard is a fairytale¹³ symbolizing the cruel negative *animus* living in the woman who attracts a cruel man. It was natural that I would marry a Bluebeard because of the violence I had experienced with my father. The psyche acts independently of consciousness, and it showed me both the goodness and the darker side. I had to reconcile myself to this uncomfortable dark side, as I had been conditioned to seek only the light. This required a soul reckoning, causing me to investigate this aspect of wholeness.

Broken bones are relatively easy to heal because you can identify the pain and apply some sort of medicine to assuage the aches. But the intentional wounding of the soul caused by another human is a deeper violation. My victimization and rationalization of it could not awaken the atrophied part of my being.

Some say that the soul speaks to us in whispers. Mine felt like a heavy-metal band practicing for a concert. From this drive to understand my experience arose the topic for this dissertation. Initially it felt like an odd match, the Cowgirl and me. I felt there were no similarities between us, that she was the antithesis of my classically educated and cultivated self. Over the years, I had eliminated the common Texas twang in my voice, convinced that it made me seem like a “dumb blonde.” This erasure included the suppression of instinct; my “lower,” animal qualities were to be controlled. All those societal ideals were scaffolding an image of happiness and positivism based on external conditioning. But those constructs crumbled when I began to ask deeper questions such

¹²Bluebeard is a fairytale collected by Charles Perrault and first published in 1697. The verb “bluebearding” has become a term to describe the crime of killing a series of women. Clarissa Pinkola Estés includes a psychological interpretation of the fairy tale in *Women Who Run with the Wolves*.

¹³Fairytales are stories reflecting the structures of the psyche.

as, “What factors existed in my culture that contributed to my unknowing? What does it feel like to know ‘truth?’ Is there a fundamental purpose for my earthly life?” And, of course, “How do I access and come to know the sacred?”

Like the historical Cowgirl, I entered a chaotic arena in order to confront the personal and collective traumas I had experienced. During the 6 years since I entered the doctoral program, I have felt as if I was reshaping my destiny, like a catgut string always trying to recover its proper tension. This road of change was not smooth, and it was certainly not linear. Like most humans born in the Western culture, I have had my share of such “rodeos.”

My parents divorced when I was 10 years old. I knew my father was an alcoholic but did not understand that it was his alcoholism and philandering that led to their separation. After my parents’ divorce, everything changed. My father decided to try on the persona of a ladies’ man, like a small-town Hugh Hefner,¹⁴ and my mother and her two daughters (my older sister and me) were left financially unstable. My mother had not been allowed to go to college because my grandparents, the children of Baptist homesteaders, saw no value in educating a woman, since she could get married. Thus, she was taught that her value was contingent upon a man.

I remember my mom’s determination, courage, and survival instincts. She borrowed money to go to college and started an interior design business, all from our eight-by-eight-foot-square laundry room. The sewing machine was moved, and piles of fabrics appeared in its place. I was her helper in sorting the textiles and folding laundry. I

¹⁴Hugh Hefner (1926-2017) was the founder of *Playboy* magazine and the contemporary archetype of a ladies’ man.

learned to make my own lunches and ride my bike to the store for groceries.¹⁵ I asked my mom years later what inspired her, and she responded, “There was no inspiration, dear, it was a matter of survival!”

While mom was focused on trying to secure a better life for her girls, my father was a troubled man, looking for love in all the wrong places. My visits with him usually took place at his favorite bar, the Rangoon Racquet Club. Growing tomato plants on his porch and sexy women were his two hobbies.

Amid all the chaos, I did have grounding influences in my earlier years. I attended a small college preparatory school with Catholic teachers; it felt like a large family. It was such a hard and difficult school that mischief was rare. My maternal grandparents, “Mema” and “Pepa,” provided stability and a connection to the earth through their unmanicured backyard. Almost every week I went to their small home, with its one-car, dirt-floored garage. I knew they were considered to live on the poor spectrum of society. But like the pioneer settlers of Texas, they grew a garden that provided their sustenance, and Pepa, a carpenter, spent his days in his woodshop next to the corn stalks. His saw sounded like a gritty violin that in a weird way was soothing; the flat tunes reassured me of his presence.

Those days playing aimlessly in nature were crucial for me and had a lingering imprint on my being. My grandparents had little education. My grandfather was a quiet man, with almond-shaped eyes and a dark complexion. He came to Texas like the children of many settlers, his parents seeking land and hoping to escape the law. The

¹⁵My older sister was involved in teenage life, then off to college, and less involved in what was occurring on the home front.

family legend was that his grandmother who had raised him, Maw Cheetham, was a full-blooded Cherokee. Both my maternal grandparents were Southern Baptists and took the Bible literally. Over at their house, playing their favorite game—dominoes—I would ask them to tell me stories from the Bible, such as how God made the earth in 7 days. Or to explain why someone had to be fully dunked in a tub of chlorinated water to be saved from Hell. And why, in my innocent state of youth, at bedtime did I always need to ask the angels to bear my soul away, “if I die before I wake?”

Salvation was a hot topic throughout my early years. But my best childhood friend was Jewish, and I loved being at her home. Everyone was always yelling at one another, and Mama Carol made sure their cupboard was loaded with all the necessary kid food items like Cheetos.¹⁶ My favorite events occurred when my mom was out of town working and I would spend a weekday night at the Goldman home. It was my favorite because Carol made my lunch and wrote on it with a Sharpie, “Michelle.” I still get tickled by the memory. I never realized how such a simple act of declaration could make me feel so loved, and that I belonged.

The question of salvation emerged again when my mom married the Jewish man living next door. She converted to Judaism, and now we were lighting candles on Friday evenings, and I was wondering why every prayer began with the same, “Baruch atah Adonai. . . .” I entered a new culture, and it was then I began delving into the deeper questions about “Heaven above” and why the teachers of unconditional love gave out conditional hall passes for salvation. And, of course, what would happen to my mother

¹⁶Cheetos™ are a crunchy, orange-colored corn puffs. They are iconic American “junk” food.

after her death? That question became imprinted on my psyche and fueled an evolving search for God.

The first death I experienced was that of my Pepa, who had the traditional Baptist service and burial—including embalmmnt—which to this day unnerves me. Still, death happened “out there.” But when I was 16, I experienced a 2-year-long dance with death.

While my mother was still married but separated, my father had acquired a price on his head that turned into a nightmare. The first major event in this tragic narrative was that my father and his longtime girlfriend were shot. Thought by police to be the result of a domestic quarrel, the event became just one of many violent incidents in my father’s life. Six months later, on a Sunday night, a second “hit” occurred. Sunday was the night I typically joined my father and his now-wife for a “family” dinner. But I had decided not to go that evening, angry that they had married without telling me. Nor did I call, which was highly out of character for me. That night, after dinner, my father was shot through the window while walking through the living room. He survived, but my world began to unravel even more than it already had. By now, the police realized the violence was not “just a domestic.”

Time reveals. We soon learned that his wife was connected to the underworld through her half-brother, and she had been having an affair with her drug dealer, a man named Louis. My father and his wife rented and moved into a townhome just a few miles from my home. Six months later, I came home for the weekend from Austin, where I was attending college and trying to be “normal.” But normal was not my reality. I felt split, singing happy Kappa Kappa Gamma songs with my sorority sisters during the day, but at night, alone in my bed, often feeling afraid. As the child of an alcoholic, I had already

developed hypervigilance, always sensing others' moods and being acutely aware of my surroundings. Now that hypervigilance extended to a greater environment. Death seemed to be always lingering nearby, in the dark.

There was a rhythm to my father's shootings. Another 6 months later, I met my father for dinner at a local Chinese restaurant. Again, it was a Sunday. Afterward, we got into our respective cars, and I felt gloom in the air. My father was driving in front of me, and while stopped at a traffic light behind him, I pondered whether I should follow him home to ensure his safe arrival. I still remember the feeling of a force, like an internal voice coming from my right shoulder, saying, "TURN RIGHT!" It felt like a magnet; I would later describe it as being pulled by a guardian angel. I turned right to go directly home, and minutes after I pulled into the driveway, the police called, saying a hit man had been waiting in the townhome parking lot for my father and had shot him.

Incredibly, my dad again survived, but my stable reality did not. It further disintegrated when I decided to go into hiding with my father for the summer. I had developed into a caretaker and felt my father needed me. The bullet had shattered his right elbow before entering his intestine, necessitating a colostomy. He was unable to take care of himself. We went to his brother's home in Lindsey, California, where he grew weaker. There I wandered through the orange orchards, seeking solace and the sacred in nature, while also feeling vulnerable and exposed. After 2 months in hiding, I returned to college. With my father now on the run and my mother deciding to file for divorce and move out of what had been our house, I had no real sense of home, no outer stability. I turned to Jesus and scripture, seeking relief.

Six months later, my father drove from California to his condo in Colorado. Nobody knew of his arrival but two people: his business partner and my sister. The next evening, my father invited his neighbor, a single mother, and her two small children for dinner. The hitman was waiting outside the dining room window. He shot and killed both the woman and my father while the kids were watching a movie in the living room. Police never found the killer.

I felt ashamed of my family—the divorces, the violence, the drugs, and more—and transferred back to Fort Worth to finish college. After graduation, yearning to escape the turmoil of my parents, I applied to the Master of Fine Arts in architectural lighting program at Parsons School of Design. My mother's thriving interior design company had exposed me to this element of the design process. It was magical. I was seeking light in all its expressions, in my spiritual quest and while learning how to light museums, hotels, and retail stores around the world.

I moved to New York, hoping to leave behind my past and start anew. I not only entered the Parsons' lighting program (there were only two in the world at that time), but I also simultaneously worked at the foremost lighting design firm in the world. I was bathing in the world of light. It was exhilarating to be exposed to novelty at every corner of New York City. I was gaining a new independence. Unfortunately, that process was short-circuited, and I followed a man back to Texas. All the signs of his character flaws were evident, but I failed to see them; I had not overcome my desire to save others instead of saving myself.

In Fort Worth, I began a long marriage that is reminiscent of the story of Bluebeard. I married potential, was attracted to an image, and played the societal role,

though I had been engaged in my creative life prior to becoming a full-time mother and volunteer. Our life had its illusionary highs but was also punctured by events that cracked the shell. The premature death of our daughter and the difficult birth of her twin, our son—born weighing only one pound, twelve ounces—brought me back to the question of my spiritual life. While I shepherded my son through multiple surgeries, I made daily gratitude lists and read self-help literature, but they did not heal my pain. Eventually, my husband and I went down a road of “clearing” our past, both drenched in the addictions of our respective fathers. We engaged in a 12-step program for those impacted by others’ habits. For 18 years, I would learn the language of Alcoholics Anonymous through the Al-Anon program and practice its traditions and principles. A program whose origins derived from the spiritual foundations of Judeo-Christianity, there were no creeds in Alcoholics Anonymous, but in retrospect, it is clear to me that its slogans had patriarchal tones, for example, “feelings are not facts.”

Initially, I assumed by knowing the language of recovery, I had fully internalized and embodied its principles. Today, I understand something is not truth unless and until it is embodied—a concept proposed by Jim Garrison¹⁷ to the class at Chartres in 2017. Embodied truth refers to the idea that understanding or knowledge of truth is not simply a mental or intellectual pursuit but requires an integration of that truth into one’s entire being, including one’s actions, attitudes, and lived experiences. Garrison emphasized the importance of aligning one’s beliefs and principles with actions and behavior.

¹⁷James Garrison Ph.D. serves as president and chairman of The Wisdom School of Graduate Studies and is the president of Ubiquity University. He served as the convener of the State of the World Forum (1995-2004) with Mikhail Gorbachev.

Although I was dedicated to breaking the grip of codependency, I was simultaneously exposed to the teachings of the Kabbalah. I was strongly drawn to its metaphors of light. I still felt I was missing an aspect of spirituality and began a dedicated Kabbalah path, working with a spiritual teacher. I was ridiculed by many for studying the Zohar,¹⁸ the *Book of Splendor*, because I was a woman and not born Jewish. I spent many years learning the deeper meanings of Biblical literature. There was a saying within the Kabbalah community that once one becomes a student, all incongruencies will be shattered. It was like an omen; I knew this to be true.

During that time, hints that something was “off” with my husband emerged. The more I probed these feelings I was receiving in my body, the greater was the gaslighting by my husband and our assistant, who handled our finances and travel. My instincts conflicted with his words; he had placed framed signs of propaganda throughout our home saying, “We versus Me.” I also turned to my spiritual teacher for answers, expressing my agony; he told me to trust the light. My husband and I shared the same teacher, the same counselor, and the 12-step rooms. I felt like I was going insane.

One afternoon, I was cutting a head of iceberg lettuce with a black plastic knife. The same powerful feeling that I had experienced the night of my father’s third shooting came to me, again from my right side. It told me everything in an instant. I suddenly knew that my husband had been having an affair with the assistant, who had a dark side, but I was so afraid I was paralyzed; I denied the experience through rationalization. But

¹⁸The Zohar is a collection of books including commentary on the mystical aspects of the Torah, or Books of Moses. It includes mythical cosmogony and mythical psychology and covers the origins and structure of the universe and the nature of the soul. It is speculated to be a recording of the teachings by Simeon ben Yochai (circa 100).

eventually the house of cards crumpled. I was confronted by the fact that my husband was engaged in a dark double sex life with other women and was controlling me by denying me access to our money. I stepped into an arena of the unknown to save my children and myself.

Divorcing a sociopath is like living in a land of snakes and coyotes; one learns to respect strong negative forces. Divorcing from the materialistic world and its perceived meanings was even harder. After the dissolution of my marriage, I prayed that the Creator would provide whatever “lesson” I needed for my soul’s growth and not stop the pressure until that lesson had been fully integrated into my being. It heard me! In Kabbalistic terms, this was the “proactive” approach. The result? In a matter of 2 years, I had lost everything that represented family and my own identity—including my two homes and their contents—as well as my position in society.¹⁹ I remember living in a hotel with only a few clothing items and feeling a kindred bond with Job.²⁰ As I was praying for strength to an outer God, I was unconsciously learning that Christ wields a “discriminating”²¹ sword.

Divorce did not end the battle of light and dark. I eventually entered into a lawsuit necessary to protect my claim to the material settlement of our divorce; it also

¹⁹During my marriage, we had two homes. One by the sea, which my husband received in our divorce; the other was our main residence. A few years after the divorce, that home suffered a major leak from a windstorm. It was improperly mitigated by the insurance company. It caused mold and all our contents had to be cleaned, stored, or thrown away. Ultimately, I would have to negotiate a settlement with one of the largest insurance companies in the world. I was learning to fight.

²⁰Job is presented as a good and prosperous man who encounters horrendous disasters that test his faith in God.

²¹In Jungian theory, the word “discrimination” refers to the psychological process of differentiating between different elements of the psyche or the external world. This process is crucial in the individuation process, in which the individual learns to recognize and integrate her conscious and unconscious aspects.

symbolized the noble task of motherhood. I began to understand societal messages to “let it go” or “rise above it” as questionable memes. What I recognized was a different aspect of evil, not the one that had lingered in the dark during my childhood, but one that swaggered in broad daylight, legitimized by the concept of “higher consciousness.”

I have gained many insights during the last 6 years by asking myself penetrating questions. “Why did my spirituality fail me?” “What does authentic power and freedom feel like?” I found the answers in the archetypal image of the Cowgirl, who showed me the way to my own embodied salvation through her instinctual life and her “unknowing,” the “virginal” aspect of perpetual creativity.

The imaginal Cowgirl now lives within me, in my psyche; she is my myth. I developed a symbiotic relationship with her. One day while sitting quietly in active imagination, I waited for her to arrive. I knew it was her from the changes in my body. I felt expansive, and flowery images of light appeared in my mind. My heart beat like the rhythm of a horse walking down a path. I followed her on my horse, and when I asked, she pointed me in the direction of my next step. Dirt from the dusty trail, substance of Mother Earth, washed over my face, and she said, “Start here, with the soil that holds the memories.”

Chapter Synopses

As a Texas woman, I turned toward my own cultural myth to discover what Anne Baring (personal communication, 2019) calls the “deep feminine ground.” The Cowgirl became an obvious choice. Cowgirls were married to men, but they were not only wives.

In the first part of this dissertation, I establish the container from which the Cowgirl emerged (Chapters III–VIII). Chapter III is a brief historic account of Texas from

the Ice Age through European colonization. It addresses how the primary founding cultures impacted the psyche of Texas.

Chapter IV describes the role of myth and a description of the goddess and hunter myths of the Paleolithic period. Before colonization, the goddess myth resided in the Indigenous cultures of Texas. I will describe two Texas tribes: the Caddo, an agrarian culture, and the more infamous Comanche, a warring people. In Chapter V, I expound on the impact of human separation from the ensouled world versus the wisdom of the Indigenous peoples and the spirit of the land. These principles of living with nature and land provide the foundation later for understanding the Cowgirl's instinctual nature.

In Chapter VI, I highlight the conditions of frontier life, especially for women, and explain how pioneer women had to abandon societal constraints in order to survive. The story of Cynthia Ann Parker offers an example of a woman who lived in two opposing cultures, those of European-American and Indigenous peoples. Chapter VII provides the origins of the cowhand culture and how the cowboy, or the *vaquero*, was a common worker who morphed into an iconic image as Anglo values increased. This provides the cultural framework for the emergence of the Cowgirl. In Chapter VIII, I unveil her pioneering spirit as seen from a man's and a woman's perspective. This chapter includes the historical emergence of the Cowgirl from cowboy culture and how she underwent a rebranding influenced by commercialization based on masculine values.

In the second part of the dissertation (Chapters IX–XI), I delve into the timeless wisdom of the ancients, providing a foundation for understanding the Cowgirl's mystical nature—of which she may not have been consciously aware. While the previous section

explored the cultural influences that shaped her, this section focuses on the hidden aspects that have impacted her psyche²².

Chapter IX examines the ancient Celts and their cultural and spiritual values. Despite being a warrior culture, the Celts revered the divine feminine, as evidenced by their symbols, gods, and goddesses. One notable figure is the horse Goddess Epona, also known as “The Lady of the Horse.” Like the Indigenous cultures of Texas, the Celts embraced gender equality, with women assuming roles as warriors and leaders. In Chapter X, I provide an example of this in the myth of Boudica, a Celtic warrior woman who rose to power in opposition to Roman rule. I also explore how culture shaped her image to align with national ideals, paralleling the transformation of the Cowgirl, whose image also was molded over time according to increasingly masculine values. Understanding this dynamic is crucial, as the absence of the relational quality of the feminine perpetuates the repetition of history.

In Chapter XI, I delve into the hidden mechanisms at play with the Cowgirl as an archetypal image. Archetypes, representing universal and infallible energies, manifest through images shaped by specific cultures. Western culture, characterized by overemphasis on masculine values and extroversion, has neglected the dark side of the feminine; this lack fractures a woman’s nature. I include a description of the Black Virgin, who embodies these feminine qualities, allowing a woman to embrace not only her goodness but also the elusive dark qualities essential for wholeness. Without this integration, a woman becomes an object or a mere reflection of the *anima*, the feminine

²²The Greek word “psyche” refers to the soul.

aspect projected by men. Embracing the dark aspect nurtures her ability to connect with her inner freedom and *eros*, tapping into the creative potential that resides in the darkness.

Next, I explore Jung's (1969) understanding of instincts and their relationship to intuition. The historical Cowgirl exemplifies the richness of instinct, which is deeply embedded in Indigenous cultures. Conventional religious laws and ethics proved insufficient to guide the Cowgirl on the frontier. Instead, she embraced an orienting reflex rooted in her innate connection with animals and the land. Animals transcended their roles as mere objects to be controlled and became symbols that informed the Cowgirl's inner world.

Furthermore, I examine the relational quality by delving into native peoples' profound relationship with horses, as well as featuring insights from Cowgirls regarding their perspectives on horses and cattle. The feminine qualities of relatedness, intertwined with dreams, insights, and journal entries emphasize my personal individuation process while presenting a stark contrast to the dominant ethos of the Anglo culture. The archetypal image of the Cowgirl, I began to see, had the potential to recover the instinctual intelligence necessary for a woman to become wholly herself.

CHAPTER II: RESEARCH PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGIES

Statement of Purpose

The impact of the demise of my marriage of 21 years sparked a desire to understand that experience more fully. What were the deeper issues that had caused the breakdown, and why had I constructed a false reality for so many years? As my awareness grew, I began to see that my experience was common, a phenomenon embedded within Texas culture. After engaging in my coursework at The Wisdom School of Graduate Studies at Ubiquity University, it became clear that my Western, masculine-oriented lens had refracted my perceptions and hindered an intimate connection with my feminine ground of being. I learned that humans are nature itself, and to connect with earth-based wisdom became a nourishing portal into my own healing. Although I had made pilgrimages to foreign places and turned to the Virgin Mary for strength and inspiration, I still had not felt my own embodiment. Through the spiritual framework of Jungian analysis, I learned to turn to my own backyard, and what stood there before me were images of the Cowgirl.

The purpose of this inquiry was to explore the mystical side of the Cowgirl's nature and how she became distorted and devalued over time. For example, the glamorized narrative of "cowboys and Indians" has dominated the world's perception of a male heroism that has branded the State of Texas in the image of a man. As a result, women have remained in the shadows of the male, blinding society to the remarkable and necessary feminine principle in its creation. As I began my literature review inquiring about the Cowgirl as goddess, what emerged was a plethora of lopsided images that have confirmed my own experience with her. She was depicted as the icon of feminism with a

tough, masculine edge; as a “goddess” performing a peculiar pageantry; and as a sex symbol. A working definition of a real Cowgirl would be a woman that tends livestock and lives with nature’s elements, typically on a ranch. Her true feminine power is one that emerges from her relationship with nature in all its diverse forms. Thus, the purpose of my dissertation is to explore whether the Cowgirl may emerge—not as she has been branded commercially—but as a deep, archetypal image of the eternal goddess.

Methodologies

As mentioned, the seed that prompted this inquiry came from my personal experience. Although it served as the catalyst for a deeper questioning of the historical and cultural factors that caused the disintegration of the feminine, my personal narrative is not the emphasis of this dissertation.

The methodology I used was heuristic inquiry because my personal experience was the seed that prompted this dissertation. Heuristic inquiry is a process used to discover or solve a problem that is deeply meaningful to the researcher in terms of understanding the relationship between oneself and the world.

The other method I applied was organic inquiry, approaching the dissertation as a sacred act and engaging in rituals to honor the unfolding of what desired to be revealed. This feminine-based methodology includes the elements of the sacred, the personal, the relational, the chthonic, the transformative, and the numinous. The model emphasizes entering into the liminal realm to collect information and returning to integrate it. I gathered this data through dreamwork analysis, active imagination, and journaling about my experiences.

My research included collecting historical analyses to explain the impact of the colonization of Texas on women. To understand the goddess principle of my inquiry, I considered the archetypal perspectives on the feminine and masculine principles as expressed in the writings of Carl Jung. Analysis of wisdom literature, specifically Celtic mythology, was used to examine eternal symbols such as the horse that have been embedded in the human psyche throughout time.

Literature Review

In this dissertation, I investigated the feminine archetype and the Cowgirl that can inspire and assist women to become whole. Renowned as a cultural icon from her historical origins to the contemporary era, the Cowgirl has been consistently lauded for her valor, adaptability, and self-reliance. The National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame in Fort Worth, Texas, stands as a tribute to these exceptional women. However, while the Cowgirl's persona has been extensively analyzed within cultural contexts, her potential embodiment as an archetypal image of the goddess remains understudied.

Research revealed one notable exploration of the Cowgirl's association with the goddess: the artistic works of Donna Howell-Sickles (Streep & Howell-Sickles, 1997). In her vibrant Cowgirl paintings, adorned with symbolic and mythological elements, Howell-Sickles makes a connection between the Cowgirl and symbols of the goddess. Nevertheless, a comprehensive understanding of the Cowgirl as an image of the goddess archetype mandates an exploration of her luminous and shadowy facets in order to capture the entirety of her nature (Streep & Howell-Sickles, 1997).

Integral to this archetypal image is the instinctual intelligence of the goddess, intricately entwined with her profound communion with the natural world—an

intelligence integral to indigenous cultures and known by the ancients. This aspect forms a vital component of the Cowgirl's potential embodiment of the goddess archetype. To fully illuminate this connection, an examination of her relationship with nature, her intuitive bond with animals, and her resonance with the earth's rhythms becomes imperative.

The foundational insights into the goddess myth and the enduring presence of the feminine archetype across various epochs and societies were obtained from Baring and Cashford's (1993) seminal work, *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*. This book was key to comprehending the complex tapestry of the goddess myth and her image's manifestation throughout history.

In Chapter III, to contextualize my exploration, I initiated my literature review by surveying the history of Texas—the geographical and cultural backdrop through which I perceive and interpret the subject matter. This historical journey spanned the epoch of the Ice Age through European colonization.

Extensive literature on the history of Texas exists, and my initial approach involved selecting specific works authored by Fehrenbach (1974, 2000), an esteemed American historian recommended by Will Taegel, PhD. Through personal correspondence with W. Taegel (October 24, 2020), a crucial observation emerged: History often neglects the perspectives of those who inhabited Texas during its colonization, including native peoples and women. This realization instigated the need to incorporate supplementary resources in my exploration to better comprehend these alternative viewpoints.

To broaden the historical narrative, I included a diverse array of works by archeologists and ethnohistorians, as well as personal accounts. O'Neill's (2005) *The Last Giant of Beringia: The Mystery of the Land Bridge* highlights archaeologist David Meltzer's research into the origins of indigenous peoples in the Americas; many migrated into what is now Texas. Foster (2008), anthropologist and ethnohistorian, contributed to this inclusive view with his work, *Historic Peoples of Texas*.

To provide a firsthand account of Texas's early days, I integrated the letters of pioneer settler DeWees (1852), compiled by Cara Cardelle in *Letters from an Early Settler of Texas*. Historian Nackman (1974) examined the resolute bonds formed amid adversity in his journal article, "Anglo-American Migrants to the West: Men of Broken Fortunes? The Case of Texas, 1821-46," published in *The Western Historical Quarterly* and based on his book *A Nation within a Nation: The Rise of Texas Nationalism* (Nackman, 1975). This gives further credence to the nationalism that has shaped the Texas identity.

Moreover, the perspective of historian Woodard (2012) in *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America* provides a significant aspect. Woodard's exploration delves into the influences of various founding immigrant cultures, elucidating how they altered the indigenous communities and impacted the region's psyche, thus contributing to the Texas myth.

In Chapter IV, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the goddess and hunter myths, I first defined the concept of myth. I drew insights from sources including Baring and Cashford's (1993) *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*, Campbell and Kudler (2004) *Pathways to Bliss: Mythology and Personal Transformation*, Campbell

and Rossi's (2013) *Goddesses: Mysteries of the Feminine Divine*, Joseph Campbell Foundation (2021) *Living in Accord with Nature*, and the lectures for the Theosophical Society by Gnostic scholar and Bishop Hoeller (2019). This was supplemented by conversations with dissertation advisor and Jungian analyst Brenda Crowther.

Parallels with Paleolithic shamanism emerged, not just in France but also in Texas. This portrayal of the goddess in the context of Paleolithic shamanism in Texas was found through the work of Foster (2008). The author cited the discovery of a cave filled with rock art of the Paleolithic era in the Lower Pecos Canyonlands region of the state.

I studied two distinct native tribes of Texas, the agrarian Caddo and the nomadic Comanche, to tease out any threads of the goddess myth. Historian Carter's (1995) *Caddo Indians: Where We Come From*, ethnologist Swanton's bulletin, "Source Material on the History and Ethnology of the Caddo Indians," and archaeologist Perttula's (2012) "How Texas Historians Write about the Pre-A.D. 1685 Caddo Peoples of Texas" describe the unique and advanced culture of the egalitarian Caddo tribe.

Cultural ecologist and anthropologist works, such as *View of The Role of Myth in Understanding Nature* (Pierotti, 2016) and *The World According to Is'a: Combining Empiricism and Spiritual Understanding in Indigenous Ways of Knowing* (Pierotti, 2011), offered insights into Indigenous people's interpretation of their experiences through myths and symbols.

Barr's (2007) book, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in Texas Borderlands*, provided a pivotal lens through which the contrasting ideologies of the Caddo and the Spaniards were examined, encompassing gender roles, rituals, and symbolism.

The Comanche data comes from a range of sources, reflecting their enigmatic culture. Literature about the Comanche—frequently originating with European and American colonizers and captives—presents conflicting narratives. These narratives portrayed the Comanche as a formidable and savage tribe. However, the Comanche viewpoint remains unknown, likely in part due to their clandestine lifestyle. The prevalence of Comanche warfare necessitates a more contextual comprehension. The nomadic Comanche lifestyle further hampers artifact discovery and a well-rounded historical overview. Cultural anthropologist and ethnohistorian Gelo furnished an ethnohistorical outlook in his articles “The Comanches as Aboriginal Skeptics” (1993) and “Comanche” (2002), and his dissertation, “Comanche Belief and Ritual” (1986). Ethnohistorian Jones (1984) documents the last recognized Comanche medicine woman, Sanapia, in his book *Sanapia: Comanche Medicine Woman*. Archaeologists Sullivan and Mainfort’s (2010) *Mississippian Mortuary Practices and the Quest for Interpretation* offer insights into native people’s mortuary practices, specifically the Caddo burial practices, and gender roles. This work included information on the Comanche’s intersection with colonizing cultures such as the French. Fehrenbach’s (1974) *Comanches: History of a People* supplements this information.

Anthropologist Trouillot’s (2015) *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* presents a vantage point on the impact of silence or omissions as a means to grasp colonialism and power dynamics within historical sources. Historical anthropologists Montgomery and Fowles (2020) conducted significant research to chronicle Comanche history in their article, “An Indigenous Archive: Documenting Comanche History Through Rock Art.” Their work explored Comanche rock art

revealing vivid depictions of Comanche life found along the Rio Grande Gorge in New Mexico. Social activist Proyect's (2013) article, "The Political Economy of Comanche Violence," in the journal *Capitalism Nature Socialism* sheds a perspective on how Comanche individuality was devoted to the collective. Comanche cosmology is explored through the tribe's creation myth, as recorded in the article, "The World According to Is'a: Combining Empiricism and Spiritual Understanding in Indigenous Ways of Knowing" by Pierotti (2011).

Once I established the contextual framework for this dissertation, in Chapter VI examined how Western culture has grown apart from nature and the goddess myth. Cultural historian Tarnas (2014) emerged as the primary source for this premise through his work *Cosmos and the Psyche: Intimations of a New World View*. This foundation was then juxtaposed with insights of native wisdom. Cajete, a Native American scholar, provided important information about indigenous knowledge and phenomenology in his book, *Native Science: The Natural Laws of Interdependence* (2000) and his essay *A Philosophy of Native Science* (2004).

I included briefly Abram's (1996) *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* and while not directly employed in this dissertation, my personal understanding of indigenous viewpoints was informed by additional works from my earth wisdom studies during my doctoral studies and Parry's (2015) *Original Thinking: A Radical Revisioning of Time, Humanity, and Nature* are illustrative examples. Additionally, I draw upon Jung's insights on the concept of *genius loci*, the spirit to a place, which holds significant implications for understanding the relationship between humans, animals and the land. These references were influenced by

the section “The Dreamlike World of India” in his book *Civilization in Transition* (Jung, 1970b), and *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self* (Jung, 1979). Jung’s work in *Aion* examines the concept of theriomorphic symbolism, i.e., psychic content that takes the form of animals (C. G. Jung, 1970b, 1979). This understanding of the intertwining of land and symbol is deeply embedded in the essence of the Cowgirl, as discussed in Chapter IX.

In Chapter VI, my focus narrowed to the history of women in Texas, a necessary step considering the central theme of my research. Throughout history, women and children have borne the brunt of the impact during times of conflict, including the era of American colonization. This reality finds its roots in indigenous cultures’ practices of consulting women’s circles to make the final decisions to engage in warfare. This understanding was attained through insightful communication with Taegel (personal communication, October 24, 2020), who suggested the book *Warrior Woman* (Thom & Thom, 2004). While a work of historical fiction, it evoked a feeling of this dynamic and shed light on the role of women warriors in indigenous tribes.

A significant source was *Women in Texas History* by historian Boswell (2018), the foremost authority on the study of women in Texas. Supplementary insights were drawn from Fehrenbach’s (2000) *Comanche: History of a People*. The story of Cynthia Ann Parker was included as an illustrative example—a woman who experienced both the rational Western world and the soul-infused reality of a native culture. The “Madonna” posture captured in the famous photograph of her holds symbolic significance, resonating with ancient mythology later explored in this dissertation, particularly in relation to the Celts. Taegel offered insights into Parker’s death, attributing it to a “soul sickness,” a

concept with parallels in contemporary society (personal communication, October 24, 2020).

To set the stage for the culture that gave rise to the Cowgirl, I outlined the roots of the cowboy culture in Chapter VII. The cowboy myth originated with the *vaquero*, a laborer far removed from the modern heroic icon. I established this foundation by drawing on the expertise of historian Dary (1989), renowned for his significant contributions to literature of the American West, and complemented by insights from Fehrenbach (1974, 2000). Additionally, I incorporated Hunter's (1923) *The Trail Drivers of Texas, Vol. 2.*, which documented stories of cowboys and pioneers. These sources collectively furnished the context for the emergence of the Cowgirl.

In Chapter VIII, the material concerning the myth of the Cowgirl was refined based on recommendations from Bethany Dodson (personal communication, January 11–12, 2023), director of research and education at the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame, as well as insights provided by contemporary cowboys and cowgirls. I followed the evolution of the historical cowgirl from the pioneering era through the performative realm of rodeos and Wild West shows, culminating in the Cowgirl's iconic representation. The initial segment of this chapter offers dual viewpoints on the essence of the pioneering woman. I incorporated perspectives from a male standpoint, utilizing Hunter's (1922) *Pioneer History of Bandera County, Seventy-Five Year of Intrepid History* along with the account of Evelyn Cameron's life in Lucey's (1990) *Photographing Montana, 1894-1928: The Life and Work of Evelyn Cameron*. Lucey's work encompasses firsthand narratives through diaries entries and Cameron's photographs recounted and portrayed by Evelyn Cameron, a posthumous inductee into

the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame in 2001. Cameron provides a rare women's perspective on the frontier's pioneering days.

I discuss the "performance Cowgirl" and draw on resources from the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame archives. Patton and Schedlock's (2012) work, *Gender, Whiteness and Power in the Rodeo: Breaking Away From the Ties of Sexism and Racism*, sheds light on how imperial ideology shaped the evolution of the Cowgirl. Notably, it challenges the narrative that the cowboy is exclusively a White male figure. For the purposes of this dissertation, I refrained from integrating their material on ethnic discrimination.

Rodeo historian LeCompte (2000), an inductee of the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame in 2011, contributes her insights through her book, *Cowgirls of the Rodeo: Pioneer Professional Athletes*. Additionally, Burbick's (2002) *Rodeo Queens and the American Dream*, chronicles the experiences of rodeo Cowgirls and rodeo queens.

In Chapter IX, I review the ancient roots of the Celts, a culture intrinsically linked with the horse Goddess Epona. The primary source material is from the works of British archaeologist and Celtic scholar Aldhouse-Green. Notable among her contributions are the books *The Gods of the Celts* (2004), *Celtic Goddesses: Warriors, Virgins and Mothers* (1996), and *Animals in Celtic Life and Myth* (1998). I further enriched this foundation with insights from Markale (1986), a specialist in Celtic studies at the Sorbonne, through his work *Women of the Celts*; Campbell and Rossi's (2013) *Goddesses: Mysteries of the Divine Feminine*; and Baring and Cashford's (1993) *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*. For an in-depth understanding of the

Goddess Epona, I relied primarily on Celtic historian MacKenzie Cook's (2016) book *Epona: Hidden Goddess of the Celts*.

Additionally, I interweave a personal anecdote involving my experience with a horse named Zuni and a horse trainer/whisperer, enhancing the narrative with a tangible connection to the equine world.

In Chapter X, I segue into the exploration of Boudica, the infamous Celtic warrior woman. I draw primarily on the work of historian Steyn (2019), who contributes significant insights through her article, "Iceni to Iconic: Literary, Political, and Ideological Transformations of Boudica through Time," in *Literator-Journal of Literary Criticism, Comparative Linguistics, and Literary Studies*. This body of work illustrates how cultural ideologies have propelled Boudica, a woman of history, into a contemporary icon.

The Celts faced subjugation under Roman imperialism, which offers a parallel to the historical Cowgirl, who defied Victorian societal norms and, over time, evolved into an icon as the cowboy's counterpart. Boudica and the Cowgirl emerge as archetypal embodiments of the feminine, transcending the influences of their respective cultures.

The Boudica narrative is supplemented by Manda Scott (n.d.), professor at Ubiquity University, whose course, "The Celtic Warrior and Queen: The Feminine Resistance to Empire," further enriches the exploration. Additionally, the insights from Aldhouse-Green's (1996) *Celtic Goddesses: Warriors, Virgins and Mothers* contribute to a multifaceted understanding of this subject.

In Chapter XI, the material encompassing "Archetypes, Instincts, and Symbols" of the Cowgirl draws from a multitude of sources. The Jungian dimension was guided by

my dissertation advisor and Jungian analyst Brenda Crowther; material related to the Cowgirl was provided by Bethany Dodson. One notable aspect explored in this chapter is the Black Virgin as a suppressed feminine archetype marginalized by the Christian church, which negates a significant facet of the feminine principle. Primarily, Begg's (2015) *The Cult of the Black Virgin* serves as the cornerstone for this section, with contributions from Baring and Cashford (1993), who further supplement this theme in their work on Black Virgins in *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*.

The instinctual dimension of human nature is often misconstrued as a lesser human quality. However, this very aspect of the feminine finds embodiment in the Cowgirl through her relationship with the land and animals, as defined by Jordan (1992) in her book *Cowgirls: Women of the American West*. I also referenced sources such as Jung's (1970a) *Instinct and the Unconscious* in *Vol. 8 The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*; Campbell and Rossi's (2013) *Goddesses: Mysteries of the Divine Feminine*; Donna Howell-Sickles' artistic expressions of the symbols associated with the Cowgirl in her book co-authored with Streep called *Cowgirl Rising: The Art of Donna Howell-Sickles* (Streep & Howell-Sickles, 1997); and gained further insight through a lecture by Howell-Sickles (personal communication, February 16, 2023) at the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame. Material about the Goddess Aphrodite, who symbolizes eros, a quality of the Cowgirl, came from Baring and Cashford (1993). Additionally, Jungian analyst Hannah's (1992) lectures recorded in the book *The Cat, Dog, and Horse Lectures, and "The Beyond"* and historian J.C. Cooper's (1987) *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols* has documented the evolution of symbols from pre-history to present day, both contributing to this symbolic understanding of animals.

Furthermore, this chapter is enriched through supplementary materials, including Baring and Cashford's (1993) aforementioned work, Jungian analyst Neumann's (2015) *The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype*, and various Jungian works such as *Visions: Notes of the Seminar in 1930-1934* (Jung, 1997) and *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung Vol. 9 (Part 1): Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (Jung, 1969).

The final section of this chapter centers on the relational aspect of the Cowgirl. I utilize quotes that capture that essence from Lanker's (2012) book, *Tough by Nature*, a compilation of art and quotes from Cowgirls. Lanker's artwork, the basis of her book, is exhibited at the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame.

Regarding native people's connection with horses, I draw from Running Horse Collin's (2017) PhD dissertation, *The Relationship Between the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas and the Horse: Deconstructing a Eurocentric Myth*. This source was found in the book *Flying Lead Change* by Wendorf (2020), a gift bestowed upon me by Mary Potter Vero, a Cowgirl horse-whisperer from the E Bar L Ranch in Greenough, Montana. Blanche's portrayal of the Cowgirl's relationship with the horse in Burbick's (2002) *Rodeo Queens* further illustrates this profound connection between animals and humans through the heart—a resonance akin to my own encounter with Zuni.

As expressed in the introduction, dream analysis implemented the material. Throughout history, dreams have been revered as a wellspring of valid information; a notable instance being the biblical Jacob's dream, sent to him by God. The spark that ignited this dissertation was a life-altering experience that triggered the inquiry, propelled by the heuristic methodology; I used Sultan's (2019) *Heuristic Inquiry: Researching Human Experience Holistically*. The organic inquiry process also played a crucial role in

which I used Curry and Well's (2013) *An Organic Inquiry Primer for the Novice Researcher: A Sacred Approach to Disciplined Knowing*.

The conclusion unveils how an archetypal image of the goddess—here, the Cowgirl—emerges and takes shape within a specific culture, embodying a facet necessary to a woman's wholeness: her instinctual intelligence. This exploration of feminine attributes through symbols scrutinizes the goddess myth across various eras and observes its transformation within the distinct cultural context of Texas. For women, the Cowgirl as Goddess can act as a catalyst for seeking wholeness, reviving a dormant aspect that has been obscured since the separation of the hunter myth from the goddess myth and creating a new, essential narrative that embraces and interconnects all aspects of life.

Research Questions

As I briefly describe the distorted cultural understanding of the Cowgirl, the research question is: Can an inquiry into the relationship between the Cowgirl and the goddess provide a means of healing for the women of Texas? Although this dissertation is grounded in my native soil, the objective research and methodology also may offer healing of the feminine values for all women. As all the trees in a forest are connected through an “underground” internet, so are humans. The healing of one culture contributes to the wellness of all the world's civilizations.

This inquiry is confined to the history of Texas, which birthed the Cowgirl. It includes questions of how colonization impacted the formation of her role; the effect of Indigenous cultural heritage; and a comparison of similar ancient cultures and archetypes that have remained hidden within her psyche.

CHAPTER III: THE GROUND OF TEXAS

Texas culture predates European arrival. The indigenous people, deeply connected to the goddess²³ form the state's foundation. Upon this, diverse colonial influences were erected. Before exploring the Cowgirl's goddess image, understanding this cultural context is vital. Texas's history reveals a feminine archetype interwoven with its narrative, illuminating her roots and transformation.

First, I will briefly describe the original inhabitants (expanded upon in the next chapter, "The Myth of Texas") and give an overview of Texas history up to the 1800s. Next, I will highlight three primary colonial influences that contrasted the native values, shaping the state's collective psyche and creating its shadow.²⁴

Texas Through Time: From the Ice Age to European Colonization

Over millions of years and through several ice ages, nature carved the earth's terrain, causing the demise and emergence of varying creatures. As these changes were happening in Europe and Asia, they were also happening in the North American region of 265,000 square miles known today as Texas. Texas historian Fehrenbach²⁵ (2000) says that the remains of the earliest known Texas inhabitants were found on the high plains, especially in their favorite hunting ground, called Llano Estacado (Staked Plains), which stretch roughly from Amarillo in the north to Odessa in the south and includes part of

²³"Goddess" refers to the feminine principle of life.

²⁴The concept of the shadow was first introduced by Jung (1991) in his theory of analytical psychology. Jung believed that the shadow was a natural and integral part of the psyche, and that failing to acknowledge and integrate it could lead to psychological distress and imbalance.

²⁵T.R. Fehrenbach (1925-2013) was historian and author best known for his extensive scholarship on Texas history. His works include *Lone Star: A History of Texas* and *Comanches: The History of a People* (Fehrenbach, 2000). His research and writings have significantly contributed to the understanding of the state's rich history.

eastern New Mexico. Carved tools and weapons of animal bones were discovered along with the remains of the Colombian mammoth, the mastodon, and the ancient bison, which was twice or more the size of modern bison (see Figure 3). Tradition claims that these animals died off as the last ice age ended (Fehrenbach, 2000).

Figure 3

Clovis Spear Points



Note. From “Texas A&M Expert: New Clues Revealed About Clovis People,” by K. Randall, 2020, Texas A&M Today, p. 1 (<https://today.tamu.edu/2020/10/23/texas-am-expert-new-clues-revealed-about-clovis-people/>). Copyright 2020 Texas A&M University. Fair Use.

One theory holds that these early human inhabitants were Asians who crossed the land bridge of Beringia—which stretched from Russia to North America over the Bering Strait—before that land bridge was engulfed by the ocean. Other accounts stem from oral Native stories that suggest Indigenous humans and horses arose in and populated North America, and never disappeared; their descendants are today’s Native Americans.

Archaeologist David Meltzer²⁶ says Native Americans come from a single ancestral stock in northeast Asia and genetically diversified prior to crossing the Bering Strait land bridge into the New World more than 20,000 years ago (O'Neill, 2005). These people²⁷ who migrated brought not only their genetic features and nomadic, warrior-centered culture, but also shamanism.²⁸ The theory that Native Americans' roots are found in Asia comprises accepted scholarship today.

Historians claim these peoples came into what is now Texas through a series of invasions for thousands of years that peaked in 5000 B.C.E. (Fehrenbach, 2000). The Indigenous peoples, commonly referred to as "native peoples," exhibited a high degree of cultural and linguistic diversity. They constituted a nomadic, warrior-centered culture of independent tribes that were constantly invading and defending each other's hunting grounds. Their societal structure has been described as "logical," with members functioning in discrete roles: men were warriors who fought and defended their honor to death, while women were laborers and gatherers.

The Native Americans were not only challenged by other tribes but by Texas' diverse natural environments (Although the state was not then established, I will use "Texas" herein to identify the land that now comprises the state). When the ice receded after the Archaic period (700-500 B.C.E.), highly diversified ecosystems emerged. In

²⁶David Meltzer (1947-2021 C.E.) was a renowned American archaeologist who made significant contributions to the understanding of North American prehistory.

²⁷The Ket people of Siberia retain a language pattern similar to both the Diné and an Athabascan dialect spoken by the Southern Apache (Morritt, 2011). The Apache called themselves Indé (which, like Diné, means "the people"). They immigrated from Asia to North America from the period of Genghis Khan of the Mongol Empire (1233-1300 C.E.) until approximately the 1400s. Like the Mongols, they were known as excellent horsemen (Morritt, 2011).

²⁸Shamanism is a spiritual practice that involves connecting with the spirit world through altered states of consciousness, often through the use of hallucinogenic plants or other ritual practices.

East Texas, the land is rich and dense with trees, contrasting greatly with the enormous prairies to the west and north. South Texas includes the coastline and inland, rolling limestone hills. Human congruence with the land was essential. The nomadic hunting tribes primarily roamed the prairies and plains, while agricultural settlements arose in the eastern part of the state. However, the native tribes' destinies were abruptly altered not by environmental changes, but by the force of colonization (Woodard, 2012).

The colonization of the region had a profound impact on gender roles, particularly for women, as they were shaped not only by social constructs, but also by factors such as the diverse terrain, religious heritage, and ethnicity of the colonizers. Texas, like much of America, was settled by immigrants from a wide range of creeds, cultures, and races, and their respective values and beliefs had a significant influence on the formation of gender roles in the region.

Texas history spirals with varying influences that impacted it dramatically, but none did so as swiftly as the Europeans. When the Spanish explorers arrived, the Indigenous culture of Texas was plentiful; hundreds of Native American tribes were present. Anthropologists and archaeologists agree that the early immigrants to the Americas carried with them not only their cultural traits and spiritual ways, but also a highly developed hunting culture and sophisticated lithic skills. They were very diverse and distinguished by languages and dialects and the landscapes in which they made their homes. In *Historic Native Peoples of Texas*, anthropologist and ethnohistorian Foster²⁹

²⁹William C. Foster (1929-2019) was an American cultural anthropologist who was a leading scholar in the study of Native American cultures and peoples of the Southwest. He was a professor of anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin and authored several important works on Native American history, including *Historic Native Peoples of Texas* (2008).

(2008) accounts for more than 200 Native American groups, which he categorized by cultural zones. One typically learns about the significant tribes of Texas such as the Apache, Caddo, Comanche, Karankawa, Tonkawa, and Wichita. The density of Texas' native population also included diverse, smaller tribes. To date, scholars acknowledge that only the Caddo and Karankawa peoples had ancient Indigenous roots in Texas. They assert the other tribes migrated to Texas for ecological reasons or to follow the bison herds seeking the warmer climate of the southern Great Plains (Foster, 2008).

Prior to the Europeans' arrival, Texas already could claim a multicultural character due to interregional and intracontinental travel corridors made by the native peoples who had crossed the land for a thousand years (Foster, 2008). These routes connected many native nations, for example, the Caddo of East Texas with the established Pueblos of the American Southwest; the Camino Reales (Royal Roads) connected trade between Mexican natives and the Mississippi River basin dwellers (Foster, 2008). These pathways indicate early native Texas inhabitants traveled great distances.

During the 1500s, the European chroniclers of the American Southwest described native peoples as either hunter-gatherers or horticulturists due to their detailed knowledge of the concentrations of wild plants and animals (Foster, 2008). Native peoples had highly advanced and sophisticated cultures. For example, the Texas natives of the Gulf Coast invented ways of communicating through an intricate hand-sign system that was common to all native peoples (Foster, 2008). This commonality enhanced their propensity for long-distance interactions. As a result, their cosmopolitan and vast

lifeways also contributed to the rapid spread of diseases during colonization (Foster, 2008).

The Historical Context of Texas: Early Years and Immigrant Settlement

This section provides an overview of Texas history from the early 16th century through the late 19th century. It covers the Spanish colonization and the French explorers' arrival in East Texas. I discuss the Mexican government's efforts to control Anglo-American settlement in Texas and the resulting Texas War of Independence, and Texas' subsequent independent nation status and eventual entry into the United States. Additionally, it offers insight into the experience of early Texas settlers and highlights DeWees (1852),³⁰ an early Texas settler, and his private letters describing his experiences.

Voices of the original inhabitants are notably absent in this section for several reasons. First, there are no extant accounts written by the Indigenous people of that era, and it is apparent their perception of history differed significantly from that of the Western immigrants. Rather than relying on written records, native peoples passed on essential truths orally, through myths and storytelling. This will be explored in greater detail in Chapter V, describing the intelligence of the native peoples.³¹

In the 16th century, Spain was the world's economic superpower and the most Roman Catholic of the European monarchies. In 1493, Pope Alexander VI issued the

³⁰William DeWees (1799-1878) was a pioneering settler in Texas who migrated from Arkansas. He ventured across different regions and gained recognition through the letters he wrote to a friend, documenting his experiences and encounters with frontier life. He played a significant role in the formation of the Texas Republic. He served as the first *alcalde*, or mayor, of the town of San Felipe de Austin in 1828 (Texas State Historical Association, n.d.).

³¹Native American Intelligence refers to the Indigenous perception of reality often associated with the concept of animism, which posits that all things, including animals, plants, rocks, and other inanimate objects possess spiritual essence or souls.

inter caetera papal bull, stating any land not inhabited by Christians could be justifiably claimed and conquered by Catholic rulers. This document supported Spain's claim to land 100 leagues west of the Azores and Cape Verdes Islands with the intent of conquering an area comprising an astonishing 16 million square miles. This land was home to a diverse population of more than 100 million Native people, some of whom had constructed complex empires. This "gift" of the Spanish crown was contingent on the conversion of the inhabitants to Catholicism, instilling in them "good morals." This religious ideology and the drive for acquisition of land and resources were the overshadowing motivations of Spanish colonization and became one of the grandest holocausts of human history (Woodard, 2012). From 1528 to 1536, the Spanish explorer Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca was shipwrecked on Galveston Island and lived and traded among Native tribes. His reports of rich land and "cities of gold" to the Spanish government caused the dispatch of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado to explore Texas and the Southwest to find the mythic Seven Cities of Cibola. After searching to no avail for nearly 3 years (1540-1542), the Spanish lost interest for more than a century (Fehrenbach, 2000).

When the French explorer and trader René-Robert Cavelier arrived in East Texas in the 1680s, the Spanish revitalized their mission in Texas. By the early 1800s, Texas was still the northern portion of Spanish Mexico and had a small Spanish population. Between 1810 and 1821, Mexico rebelled against Spain and ultimately won its independence (Fehrenbach, 2000). In 1822, Anglo settlers began arriving in greater numbers than before, primarily due to land grants issued by Stephen F. Austin to satisfy the Mexican government's desire for more colonization. Yet in 1824 a new Mexican

constitution was formed, combining Texas and the province of Coahuila. Instead of calling themselves “Mexicans,” this new merging defined the people as “Texians” (Fehrenbach, 2000). The Mexican government, concerned that the arriving Anglo-American settlers would lessen Mexico’s control of the land, refused entry to more U.S. citizens. This, as well as the Mexican-Spanish law banning slavery, caused an eventual rebellion between 1835 and 1836, called the Texas War of Independence or the Texas Revolution.

At the Battle of Gonzales during the Texas Revolution, the Texians defeated the Mexicans, causing the withdrawal of Mexican forces to San Antonio. In March 1836, Texas declared its independence from Mexico, resulting in the infamous Battle of the Alamo, which the Mexicans won. The following month, at the Battle of San Jacinto, the Texians prevailed, capturing Mexican President General Antonio López de Santa Anna. The Mexicans were forced to capitulate, and Texas was declared an independent nation (Fehrenbach, 2000).

Sam Houston was elected the first president of Texas in 1836, naming Austin its capital. It would remain the Republic of Texas until December 29, 1845, when it voluntarily joined the United States. In 1861, the U.S. Civil War began; Texas seceded from the Union and joined the Confederacy. The war and slavery—which by then was prevalent in East Texas—ended in 1865 (Fehrenbach, 2000). By the late 1800s, cotton growing in East Texas and cattle ranching in North and West Texas were booming due to historic slavery in the region and the acquisition of land.

Every part of the United States was a frontier at one time. However, nowhere was there any ongoing warfare between White-skinned people and Native peoples until

Anglo-Americans rushed into Texas to conquer the Aborigines and the strange and volatile land. The war frontier that existed only a few generations past is still imprinted on the collective psyche and memories of Texans.

The myth ascribed to early Texas settlers focused on perseverance and fortitude: If people are strong-willed and work hard, they will receive the blessings of the “American Dream.” According to scholar Nackman (1975),³² there is another, often untold truth. Most of the immigrants who fled to Texas were ordinary people in search of a new life, not settlers driven by idealism or grand visions. They were escaping debt, religious and social constraints, oppressive taxation, and various personal difficulties. Many were considered the “failures” of their communities, the misfits. Texas was settled by the poor, for whom it served as a sanctuary (Nackman, 1974).

Dewees (1952), an early Texas settler, wrote of his experiences in private letters to a friend in Kentucky, the state he left for Texas. They were not written for publication nor was he a historian; rather, he wrote from his own direct experience. Nevertheless, the missives were later published in book form as *Letters from an Early Settler*. On November 6, 1831, he wrote:

Here is a receptacle for people from all parts of one earth! Everyone who is driven from all other places flies to this country as a city of refuge. We are here united together. . . . We, the old settlers, are bound together by an indissoluble tie; we have fought and bled together, we have suffered together for want of food and clothing. . . . It is nothing uncommon for us to inquire of a man why he ran away from the States! But few persons feel insulted by such a question. They generally answer for some crime. . .they have committed.

³²Nackman (1975) traces the history of Texas from 1821-1861 in *A Nation Within a Nation: The Rise of Texas Nationalism*. He claims Texans are bonded through their common hardships creating a shared identity.

One day there were quite a number of these [would-be] aristocrats who seem to think they are better than those who are worn out by toil and hardships. . . . People in this country seem to have forgotten that there is [a Sabbath]. This day is generally spent in visiting, driving stock, and breaking mustangs. There is no such thing as attending church, since no religion except Roman Catholic is tolerated, and we have no priests among us. (Deweese, 1852, pp. 135–137)

The Founding Cultures of Texas: Spanish, Borderlander, and Anglo-Barbadian Influences

As a vast state, Texas has been shaped by numerous cultures, each leaving its mark on the land and influencing the state's character. Cattle droves, covered wagons, and railroads allowed these cultures to interpenetrate and further impact the state. In this section, I will focus on the three main founding cultures of Texas, as described by historian Woodard (2012)³³ in his book, *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America*.

Woodard examines how various groups with different values and agendas influenced the founding of America. Although states are defined by borders, they do not necessarily represent uniform or homogenous ways of being. Texas was colonized by a diverse range of ethnic groups, but the primary influencers of its culture and history can be traced to the Spanish, who established the foundation of the Texas cattle culture; the Borderlanders, who brought with them a clan-like social structure and Calvinist beliefs; and the Anglo-Barbadians, who brought their hierarchical social structure and Old-World European beliefs to the region (see Figure 4).

³³Colin Woodard is an American journalist, historian, and author. He has written extensively on topics related to American history and culture, including the Civil War, the history of the South, and the cultural and political divides that exist between different regions of the United States in his book, *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America*.

Figure 4

Map Adapted From Woodard



Note. Adapted from “What are the American Nations?”, by G. Gibson, 2021, *The Map Stack*, p. 1 (<https://mapstack.substack.com/p/the-eleven-nations-of-the-united>). Copyright 2021 by Geoff Gibson. Fair Use.

These influences came together to create a unique blend that infiltrated the psyche of the people and altered the original blueprint of the Aboriginal egalitarian culture. Although the historical Cowgirl emerged primarily from the Spanish cattle industry, all three groups of colonizers contributed to the creation of her myth through the religious and hierarchical values they introduced.

Vaqueros, Ranchos y Patronos: Spanish Immigrants From Mexico to South and West Texas

The European culture was introduced into the southern part of Texas in the 16th century by Spanish soldiers establishing Catholic missions. The Spanish brought the horse and cattle industry as well as a caste system with a *patrón* style of governance. Along with the *misiones*, *presidios*, and *villas*, the *ranchos* became important. The *entradas*, or exploratory sorties, brought livestock from already-established cattle ranches in Mexico, mainly for food but also to stock the missions for the long term. In time, the missions came to constitute the first important *ranchos*. Ranching equipment was imported from Spain. The unconverted Native Americans became what are now called “ranch hands” in the cattle industry. The traditional roles of the Native Americans were upended: the Spaniards demanded the men work the fields, a labor that previously only women had performed. Out of fear the natives would escape, Spanish law forbid Native Americans from riding horses. However, the friars eventually used the Native Americans as *vaqueros*, who mounted saddles to herd, round up, and drive livestock on the range. Thus, the Native Americans set the stage for the development of the Texas cowboy. In Chapter V, I will describe in depth the history of the cowhand culture to show the development of the ideology of ownership and how it impacted the land, livestock, and women of Texas.

Between 1598 and 1794, there were 26 missions in Texas. Indigenous people who moved to these missions were called “neophytes” and were not allowed to return to their Native lives. Whips were used to ensure obedience to maintain strict discipline in the tanneries, fields, and workshops; church service attendance was mandatory. The Native

people were not paid for their labor and could never expect freedom from this existence. After the neophytes were integrated into the new ways of Catholicism, the mission was to be turned over to the inhabitants of the mission (Woodard, 2012). However, this rarely happened due to the profitability of free labor and the resistance of the Native people to alter their cultural roles.

Once commanded by the government to settle an area, the soldiers, officials, clergy, and tradesmen were never allowed to leave these remote regions. Women traditionally did not accompany the men, therefore the Spanish men often married native women and birthed *mestizos*, people of mixed blood. This intermingling jeopardized the caste system, prompting Spain to constrict economic freedoms by limiting the transportation of goods by land only (Woodard, 2012). Due to the isolation of the settlements, ox- or horse-drawn wagons crossed hundreds of miles without natural water and food. The underdeveloped land had no self-government; military commanders served as leaders. Common people had to rely on the local elite figure called a *patrón*; the people were his *peónes* (literally, pawns). The *patrón* provided employment and protection in a manner similar to the lord-serf relationship of the Middle Ages (Woodard, 2012).

The arid landscapes and high-desert plains of Spain were comparable to those found in North, South, and West Texas. The Spanish established the cattle industry in Texas, utilizing a special breed of horse known as the mustang, raising cattle, sheep, and goats. Many of the symbols that now are associated with Texas and Western heritage originated in Southern Spain. Spanish attire and equipment became the basis for the cowboy's accoutrements, although the original *vaquero* wore simple work clothes.

Beginning in 1720, large *ranchos* developed in Texas, extending into the eastern and northern regions, with their rich grasslands. The required gear for the *rancho* included the lasso—*lazo*, lariat—*reata*, chaps—*chaparreras*, and the infamous 10-gallon hat—*sombrero*. The Anglo cowboys adapted these and other Spanish words to define cowboy culture and activities, including *bronco*, *rodeo*, *bandolera*—bandolier, and *estampida*—stampede (Woodard, 2012). See Chapter VII for a detailed description of the Cowhand Culture.

Borderlanders: Anglo-American Immigrants From Appalachia to North and Central Texas

The first generation of settlers were backwoodsmen and farmers from the trans-Appalachian West. After the financial crisis of 1819, Americans were attracted to Texas because Stephen F. Austin had negotiated land deals with the Mexican government. In 1823, an Anglo-American family that moved to Texas could be granted a league (4,428 acres) of grazing land plus a labor (177 acres) of farming plot. In exchange, the family members were required to become naturalized Mexican citizens and convert to Roman Catholicism. The Mexican government dismissed the Native people's claim to their lands and later, when Texas became independent, the Anglo-dominated U.S. Congress heightened the situation by instituting policies promoting killing Indigenous people to remove any hindrances to Anglo-American settlement. To further entice immigrants, Texas did not extradite criminals, allowing their debts to remain uncollected in other states. It was common in other states to see stores, banks, and businesses closed with a post in white chalk inscribed G.T.T—meaning “Gone To Texas” (Nackman, 1974, p. 450).

The settlers that Dewees (1952) describes were among those who emigrated from Appalachia. Initially concentrated in south-central Pennsylvania, they spread south down the mountains on an ancient native trail that came to be known as the Great Wagon Road. They were considered “little more than White Indians”—essentially, the “deplorables” of society (Woodard, 2012, p. 106). They carried with them an Anglo-Saxon/Celtic spirit that eventually would be expressed in near-mythic figures of the Old West era between 1865 and 1895, including Wild Bill Hickok, Buffalo Bill, and Annie Oakley,³⁴ and outlaws such as Jesse James. These immigrants to Texas from Appalachia have been described as the Borderlanders. They came to North America between 1717 and 1776 as a result of the travesty in the borderlands of northern Britain, including lowland Scotland, the adjacent Marches (border, or borderland) of Southern England, and the Scots-Irish area north of Ireland (Woodard, 2012). Droughts, sheep-killing, and unbearable taxes caused an exodus to America and a ruthless, violent, and lawless way of life.

The Borderlanders represented a clan-based warrior culture. As refugees, they had left their devastated homelands without governmental support. Thus, they abhorred government and thrived in the isolation of the 18th-century American frontier. Beyond the reach of the law, they learned to rely on themselves and their extended families to defend their homes, forming what were essentially new clans. Many took to the

³⁴Wild Bill Hickok, Buffalo Bill Cody, and Annie Oakley were all legendary figures of the American Wild West, known for their remarkable marksmanship, showmanship, and bravery. Hickok was a gunfighter and lawyer who gained notoriety for his role in several shootouts, while Cody was a scout, buffalo hunter, and founder of the famous Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show. Oakley was a sharpshooter who gained fame as a performer in Buffalo Bill’s show. Jesse James, on the other hand, was a notorious outlaw who led a gang of criminals in the late 19th century, robbing banks and trains throughout the American Midwest.

Calvinist³⁵ religious tradition, seeing themselves as God's "chosen" people and members of a biblical nation sanctified by blood. They valued individual liberty and embraced a mobile economy, since they had learned that fixed property items easily could be destroyed. They stored wealth in mobile commodities such as herds and whiskey to maximize and ensure their freedom. Their creed was "every man is a sheriff in his own hearth," thus the Scots-Irish took justice into their own hands (Woodard, 2012, p. 105).

While hostile to external demands on their behavior, the Borderlanders could not be swayed from acting according to their cultural norms. The upper 10% maintained most of the wealth, while the other 90% were barely surviving. Typically, the leaders were charismatic commanders who demanded allegiance from their large clans. However, the majority of Borderlanders, the 90%, were bandits, lawless groups gravitating to the backwoods. They wreaked havoc by stealing livestock, killing children, and destroying peaceful settlements of both Native peoples and settlers. As a result, leading Borderlanders formed a group called The Regulators to track down these outlaw bands. Over time, The Regulators' power expanded to include punishing and exiling anyone deemed lazy or immoral from their communities. These actions served as the origins of Christian fundamentalism in Texas, which stemmed from Calvinism and the influence of the U.S. military (Woodard, 2012).

³⁵Calvinism is a religious movement that emerged in the 16th century and is based on the teachings of the French theologian John Calvin. It emphasizes the sovereignty of God, predestination, and the importance of scripture, preaching, and the sacraments. Calvinism has had a significant influence on Protestant theology and has played an important role in the development of Western culture.

Anglo-Barbadians: Anglo-American Immigrants of the American Deep South to East Texas

By the late 17th century, the British island colony of Barbados had become one of the oldest, wealthiest, and most brutal plantation societies in the world. The Anglo colonists who established Barbados were known for their lavish estates, opulent lifestyles, and reliance on a slave-based economy. In 1670, Anglo-Barbadians first arrived in Charleston, South Carolina, eventually spreading their culture south to include Georgia, Mississippi, lowland Alabama, the Louisiana Delta, Arkansas, western Tennessee, northern Florida, a portion of North Carolina and East Texas. Today, this area, known as the “Deep South,” still evokes many of the Anglo-Barbadian cultural traditions (Woodard, 2012).

The Anglo-Barbadians came to the States with the intent of increasing their wealth through the cotton industry. With the expansionist orientation of an elite group of men, their emphasis was on status; they used symbols, such as coats of arms, to link them to British nobility and further spread their elitist viewpoints. They believed government and people existed primarily to support their own desires. Even their choice of religion, the Anglican Church,³⁶ was another status-signifier linking them to British society (Woodard, 2012).

In 1698, they instituted inhumane laws and draconian measures, declaring slaves were savage and wild (Woodard, 2012). Having African blood automatically made one a

³⁶The Anglican Church, originating in 16th-century England, was founded by King Henry VIII as a breakaway from the Roman Catholic Church. Also known as the Church of England, it combines Catholic and Protestant traditions, emphasizing scripture, sacraments, and historic creeds of Christianity.

slave. In this society, it was common practice to work slaves to the point of exhaustion or death, as they were regarded as disposable commodities. The Barbadian slave laws and the authoritarian culture they represented eventually found their way to East Texas, contributing to the development of an antebellum society. The rapid influx of migrants from the American South to Texas in 1850 caused the population of Texas to increase by 75%, solidifying the dominance of Anglo-Barbadian cultural ideology in the region (Boswell, 2018).

While studying this dark moment in history, I dreamt of being in a distinct scene with a sepia-like red-blood hue, amid violence and riots in the surrounding area. I am looking at an older world and trying also to escape to my home in Fort Worth. Eventually, I am relieved to find daylight, and realize this study has touched a part of myself that throws me between the two historical periods (See Appendix A).

CHAPTER IV: THE MYTH OF TEXAS

The archetypal image³⁷ of the Cowgirl is deeply rooted in the land of Texas, drawing inspiration from the cultural myths of the Indigenous peoples. The Native people possessed an instinctual knowledge of the sacred unity of life—the goddess principle—which was passed down through the spirit of the land and found a different expression in its new inhabitants, particularly those in the cattle industry. As Texas became colonized and Judeo-Christian values gained prominence, the myth of the Cowgirl evolved into a more external expression. However, the Cowgirl retained her feminine qualities, much as the Indigenous people had, through her connection with nature and animals.

In the foreword to *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*, Baring³⁸ and Cashford³⁹ (1993) quote Sir Laurens Van Der Post,⁴⁰ who asserted history is often told only in terms of its outer events, while ignoring the deeper, unseen “inner eventfulness” that influences societies and cultures (p. ix). The authors explore archetypal images of various civilizations throughout history to uncover the qualities associated with the archetypal feminine. The masculine and feminine principles are respectively associated with logic and rationalism and the relational and caring aspects of life.⁴¹ Throughout

³⁷See Chapter IX, p. 189.

³⁸See Footnote 10.

³⁹Jules Cashford is a British author, poet, and lecturer who is best known for her work on mythology, particularly the myths of the ancient Greeks. She has authored several books on the subject, including (with Anne Baring) *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image* (1993).

⁴⁰Sir Laurens Van Der Post (1906-1996) was a South African writer, farmer, soldier, and explorer. He wrote numerous books, including *A Story Like the Wind* (1978), *The Lost World of the Kalahari* (1977), and *The Dark Eye in Africa* (1966).

⁴¹To clarify, the feminine and masculine qualities are not gender-specific but rather universal “energies” that exist throughout all of creation.

time, humans have expressed their desire to understand themselves by exploring these principles through stories, myths, and images (Baring & Cashford, 1993).

Myths are a means of relating to the world and understanding how it functions. However, it is common for people to misinterpret myths as stories that became false over time, rather than recognizing them as expressions of inner truth conveyed uniquely in different eras and places. In this sense, myths are not necessarily literal accounts of historical events, but rather symbolic narratives that convey profound truths about the human condition and the natural world. As such, they can be understood as a kind of language that allows one to connect with the unseen and transcendent aspects of reality. Recognizing the influence of images and their relationship to myth became crucial to my understanding of the formation of the myth of the Cowgirl. The historical Cowgirl of the pioneering days shares a phenomenology that is also present in Indigenous cultures.

In this section, I will explore how myth functioned before and after the 19th century, tracing the origins of the goddess and hunter myths in the Paleolithic Period and how these energies were expressed in the nomadic and agrarian tribes of Texas. This will ultimately give rise to the phenomenological aspects of the Cowgirl (see Chapter V). To accomplish this, I will analyze the reflection of the goddess principle in the agrarian Caddo tribe of East Texas and the nomadic Comanche tribe of the Great Plains. Through analyzing their histories and cultural beliefs, I will explore both masculine and feminine values inherent in the land of Texas prior to the arrival of Western ideologies.

The Role of Myth

Myth has been used throughout history as a universal method of imparting the deepest truths of life, with fairy tales often serving as a related and valuable medium for

communicating these truths. According to scholar Stephan Hoeller,⁴² myth serves as the “regenerative” dimension that allows individuals to internalize and assimilate their unique primal experiences, thus enabling them to revisit them in the future (Theosophical Society, 2022, 1:42). In contrast, the traditional Western means of human engagement begins with an experience that is then recorded into sacred scripture that demands belief, resulting in rules and commandments.

Historians, anthropologists, and mythologists serve distinct yet interconnected purposes in understanding and interpreting human history, cultures, and mythologies. Historians delve into the past by analyzing historical records, documents, and artifacts to reconstruct events and narratives, shedding light on the trajectory of civilizations and societies. Anthropologists study human cultures, observing and analyzing societal structures, beliefs, customs, and practices, aiming to comprehend the diversity and complexity of human societies across time and space. Mythologists explore the realm of myths, legends, and folklore, unraveling the symbolic, psychological, and cultural significance embedded within these stories, offering insights into the collective consciousness and worldviews of different cultures. Together, these disciplines contribute to one’s comprehensive understanding of humanity, its past and present, and the rich tapestry of human experiences.

Without an understanding of myth, historians and anthropologists can sometimes misunderstand the deep meanings of symbols. For example, the Indigenous societies’

⁴²Stephan Hoeller, Ph.D., is a German-born scholar and religious leader who serves as the bishop of the Ecclesia Gnostica, a Gnostic church based in Los Angeles. He has written extensively on Gnosticism and esoteric spirituality and is known for his lectures and teachings on the subject.

connection to animals may be misinterpreted as worship, when in fact the people were connecting with the qualities the animals represent. Mythologist Campbell⁴³ explained myths were designed to put the mind in accord with the body and the way of life in accord with the way nature dictates, embedding the essential mysteries of life in the psyche (Campbell & Rossi, 2013; Joseph Campbell Foundation, 2021). Social symbols provide imagery to live by, denoting a central mystery that activates one's reality. The bison hunt of the North American Plains peoples served as a unifying social mythology that included rituals such as dances, symbols, and imagery based on the sanctity and harmony of life. According to scholar Will Taegel,⁴⁴ when the Anglo-Texans colonized Texas and slaughtered the bison to force Native peoples onto reservations, the Indigenous tribes lost the central myths that connected them to reality and meaning, resulting in a "soul sickness" (Taegel, personal communication, October 24, 2020). That same "soul sickness" can also be seen in the central myths of Western culture (see Chapter IV).

Deities are personifications of nature, images with which humans can connect (Campbell & Kudler, 2004). Paganism is built on this relationship, which is often misunderstood as idolatry by monotheistic cultures. Mistaking the symbol for the reference is idolatry, whereas Paganism recognizes the deities contain energies that reside in the outer sphere but also within one selves since one is nature (Campbell & Rossi, 2013). The ancient Celtic people, who share similarities with the horse culture of the

⁴³Joseph Campbell (1904-1987) was best known for his work on comparative mythology and religion. His most famous book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), explores the archetype of the hero and the journey of self-discovery found in myths and folktales across cultures.

⁴⁴Will Taegel, Ph.D. (1940-2022), was a scholar, psychologist, author, and the cofounder and director of the Earth Academy. He authored several books, including *The Mother Tongue: Intimacy in the Eco-Field* (2012) and *The Sacred Council of Your Wild Heart* (2010). He is former dean of the Wisdom School of Graduate Studies.

Comanches of the Great Plains, also grounded the complementary relationship between men and women and the human relationship to place or land through their feminine aspect, the goddess. Both cultures were damaged by conquests rooted in Roman ideology and value systems, providing insights into the evolution of the Cowgirl archetypal image and social constructs often evident in feminine iconographies.

The Paleolithic Period: The Blueprint for the Goddess and Hunter Myths

The image of the Mother Goddess has been present throughout various cultures and time periods, dating to the Paleolithic Period (2.5 million years ago–10,000 B.C.E.). She represents “the vision of life as a living unity,” and is known as the “Bearer of God”⁴⁵ who births all things visible and invisible, thus making them sacred “original blessings” (Baring & Cashford, 1993, p. xi).

Initially, images of the Mother Goddess appeared as voluptuous sculptures that reflected a specific myth prevalent during that time (Baring & Cashford, 1993).⁴⁶ These sculptures were created from durable materials such as bone and stone and were carved, chiseled, and modeled into three-dimensional forms. According to Baring and Cashford (1993), the hardness of these feminine images spoke to their infallibility. Similar, two-dimensional images have been found alongside cave drawings of animals, humans, and shamans depicted as animals. This essential meaning is embedded in the goddess myth, which upholds the “moral” vision that all life is sacred. This myth is the first organizing principle and an essential element in the structure of consciousness inherent in all people,

⁴⁵In ancient times, Mary was known as the “Bearer of God” and was considered a metaphor for the feminine principle, with an emphasis on fecundity, in both the Eastern and Western Christian churches.

⁴⁶The Mother Goddess as the creative source of life can be seen, for example, in the limestone sculpture of the Goddess of Willendorf of Austria (also known as the Venus of Willendorf).

regardless of the complexity of their cultures at any given time (Baring & Cashford, 1993).

During the Paleolithic era, the hunter myth was depicted on cave walls in contrast to the sculptural images of the Mother Goddess. These cave paintings conveyed the mythic relationship between humans, animals, and the hunt.⁴⁷ Animals were brought to life through these paintings, which described the hunt as a ritual killing that was necessary for human sustenance. In that time and reality, the interruption of disunity was required to provide sustenance to humans. The animals gave their lives in service to the nourishment and well-being of humans, and in return, humans offered blessings for their sacrifice. Baring and Cashford (1993) explained both the goddess myth and the hunter myth were prevalent during this era and necessary to the human experience. These myths demonstrate that life and death are recurrent phases, resembling the cycles of the moon, yet they are unified through an overarching vision of wholeness. Without the goddess myth, animals and humans lose connection to this encompassing unity and the sacredness of life (Baring & Cashford, 1993).

The hunter and the hunted are interconnected, and both are integral parts of the cycle of life. The theme of mortality is at the core of the hunter myth, which is encompassed by the goddess myth. However, over time, the hunter myth evolved to become the prevailing narrative, emphasizing competition and survival and leading to separation from the goddess myth, which was initially interwoven with it (Baring &

⁴⁷The Paleolithic caves of northern Spain and southwestern France were discovered beginning in the late 19th century; the best known are Altamira (1879), La Pasiega (1911), Les Trois Frères (1912), Tuc d'Audoubert (1914), and Niaux, Les Combarelles, Pech-Merle and Lascaux (1940).

Cashford, 1993). The hunter myth grew into the warrior-hero of the Bronze Age (3300-1200 B.C.E.), causing the goddess myth to gradually recede into the unconscious psyche of humanity. Yet even today we can still connect to the goddess, through her symbolic myths and images extant in every civilization (Baring & Cashford, 1993).

The tribal shaman was essential to Paleolithic people; he or she played a vital role in keeping the dynamic of interdependence alive. The shamans, performing rituals in darkness, acted as mediators between the physical and spiritual realms (see Figure 5). It was crucial for hunters to maintain the goddess as the icon unifying their vision. Art was created and rituals were conducted in dark, womb-like caves to serve this purpose (Baring & Cashford, 1993).

Figure 5

Shaman



Note. From “Overwhelmed by Wonder: Carolyn Boyd and Lower Pecos Rock Art,” by G. Fowler, 2017, p. 1 (<https://glasstire.com/2017/01/03/overwhelmed-by-wonder-carolyn-boyd-and-lower-pecos-rock-art/>). Copyright 2001–2023 Glasstire. Fair Use.

The goddess has manifested in various forms and symbols throughout history. In northern Spain and southern France, cave paintings dated to 30,000 years ago portray the goddess as “the moon, stone, serpent, birds and fish; the spiral, the meander and labyrinth. . .the wild animals such as the lion, bull, bison, stag, goat and horse” (Baring & Cashford, 1993, p. 16). Similarly, according to historians Foster and Thoms (2009),⁴⁸ cave paintings along the Lower Pecos River of Texas, dated 4,000 years ago, depict local birds, parrots, and shamans in red, white, and black paint, accompanied by series of white dots on the limestone cave walls (Foster & Thoms, 2009). Despite the vast difference in time and location, both sets of paintings highlight the goddess as the primary generative source, portrayed through various symbols and forms (see Figure 6).

As time progressed into the Neolithic period (12,000–6,500 B.C.E.), a new expression of the feminine emerged through agriculture. The process of growing crops required a learned participation and a new dynamic of cooperation that included the breeding and domestication of animals. Dwellings transitioned from caves to communal buildings. The invisible order of the goddess was expressed through vegetation, and rituals mimicked the regeneration of life.

⁴⁸William C. Foster and Alston V. Thoms, Ph.D., were historians from Texas who conducted extensive research on the impact of Anglo-Texan colonization on Indigenous cultures and are known for their work on the history and culture of Texas.

Figure 6

Mural



Note. From “Overwhelmed by Wonder: Carolyn Boyd and Lower Pecos Rock Art,” by G. Fowler, 2017, p. 1 (<https://glasstire.com/2017/01/03/overwhelmed-by-wonder-carolyn-boyd-and-lower-pecos-rock-art/>). Copyright 2001–2023 Glasstire. Fair Use.

Women’s roles were tied to this feminine sacrality as they tended to the fields and were owners of the crops for distribution. Baring and Cashford (1993) explained that with the emergence of agriculture during the Neolithic era, the horse image disappears from art. The decorative motifs used were not merely ornamental but conveyed deep metaphysical truths (Baring & Cashford, 1993).

As time progressed, the recognition of the goddess and feminine principles declined due to the increasing influence of nomadic and warrior tribes, and later the arrival of Euro-Christian values that emphasized male dominance. However, the archetypes of the goddess and her various forms remain deeply ingrained in our collective unconscious. These archetypes stem from the same primordial mother, who gives birth to all forms. As Jung notes, “The root matter is the mother of all things”

(Baring & Cashford, 1993, p. 34). The archetype of the goddess appears later in Texas culture as the archetypal image of the Cowgirl.

The Caddo: An Agrarian Culture

Prior to the arrival of the Spanish, French, and Anglo-Europeans in Texas, advanced civilizations existed in Middle America. According to Carter (1995),⁴⁹ a Caddo historian, the Caddo can be traced in Middle America for 2,400 years, and their Texas residence began around 800 C.E. The Caddo are an essential part of Texas history, despite being less renowned than warrior tribes such as the Comanche. Their interdependent orientation to life is reflected in their creation myth, according to archaeological findings and documents from the first European colonizers. The Caddo represented an advanced, complex, egalitarian Indigenous culture that existed in Texas prior to colonization; and the tribe's exceptional skills in diplomacy and economy were crucially important to the European colonizers in the late 17th century, playing a pivotal role in shaping the development of the state.

In his bulletin *Source Material on the History and Ethnology of the Caddo Indians*, Stanton (1996),⁵⁰ considered the father of American Indian ethnology and ethnohistory, provides significant detail on the origins of the name of Texas, often attributed to the Caddo. The European settlers used the Spanish word "Texas" to designate tribes of the upper Neches and Angelina valleys who originated from a single

⁴⁹Cecile Carter is an historian who has conducted extensive research on the Caddo people, a Native American tribe primarily located in present-day Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Louisiana.

⁵⁰John Reed Swanton (1873-1958) was an American anthropologist, folklorist, and linguist known for his extensive documentation of Native American cultures. He served as the ethnologist-in-charge of the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution for more than 25 years.

tribe called the Hasinai.⁵¹ The Hasinai means “our own folk,” and the *Kadohadacho* derived their name from “chief,” signifying “real chiefs.” These two names eventually narrowed into one homogenous name, Caddo, which included all the southern tribes and the *Kadohadacho* (Swanton, 1996, p. 5).

A more complete understanding of the Caddo derives from the discoveries of archaeologists and information from historians, including native storytellers (Swanton, 1996). Although there are several versions of the Caddo creation myth, there is a commonality that links the feminine principle as a vital quality of existence, as seen in their ceremonial rituals, diplomacy, urban design, and exquisite art. According to the Caddo origin myth, life emerged from the earth, in contrast to the Christian myth of creation originating from a “father” in heaven. The Caddo worldview starkly diverged from the Christian narrative, emphasizing a deep connection to the land and viewing it as the source of life itself.

In his bulletin, Swanton (1996) records various origin stories that refer to the earth as “mother.” The following is a paraphrase of one:

The Caddo reached the surface of the earth through a cave; the man carried fire, a pipe, and a drum, while the women brought corn and pumpkin seeds. Many of them came out until the wolf closed the cave, leaving humans and animals behind where they still remain. The earth is referred to as *ina*, “Mother,” and all return to her when they are deceased. (Swanton, 1996, p. 26)

⁵¹According to Swanton, the word “Hasinai” was derived from various spellings such as *Asinai*, *Assoni*, *Asehay*, *Cenis*, etc. due to the relationship between tribes who referred to each other as “friends.” The Spaniards recorded their own version of the term as *texas*, *texias*, *tejas*, *teysas*, etc. to describe Native peoples of Texas, which was later adopted by American colonists to refer to the Republic and eventually became the State of Texas (p. 4).

In 1933 archaeologists discovered along the northeast border of Texas habitats of grand earthen mounds filled with exquisite, dark black pottery (see Figure 7) decorated with intricate scrolls, vines, and circular patterns (Carter, 1995).

Figure 7

Caddo Pottery



Note. From “Documenting Caddo Pottery: The JEC Hodges Collection” by M. G. Trubitt, n.d., p. 1 (<https://archeology.uark.edu/learn-discover/current-research/hodges10/>).

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Caddo scholar Perttula (2012)⁵² stated prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the Caddo comprised a unique and advanced culture of stationary settlements organized in a complex network of mounds (see Figure 8), villages, hamlets, and farms. Their hierarchal

⁵²Timothy K. Perttula, Ph.D., is an archaeologist and cultural heritage specialist who specializes in the Indigenous peoples of Texas and Oklahoma, with a particular focus on Caddo culture.

system was reflected in the differential treatment of the dead according to rank, with the inclusion of exotic goods and expensive items in burials for the afterlife journey. They had a highly developed social and ceremonial organization connected with temples, but much of the meaning was lost as it was buried with the remains (Perttula, 2012).

Figure 8

Present Day Caddo Mound



Note. From “Caddo Mounds History,” by Texas Historical Commission, n.d., p. 1
(<https://www.thc.texas.gov/historic-sites/caddo-mounds/caddo-mounds-history>).

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Although archaeologists provide factual data, the written stories of the explorers provide a context influenced by the culture of the storyteller. A Caddo elder stated:

God gave special ways to the White man and special ways to the Indians—they are different . . .the White writes things down for others to read and learn; the Indian tells what happened and expects the children to listen and remember.
(Carter, 1995, p. 9)

The first known European description of the Caddo was written by Spaniards, who encountered the tribe during their travels (Carter, 1995). One such description by a Spanish explorer recounted a meeting with the Caddo in which the natives arrived weeping and the chief paid homage before addressing the governor, saying, “Very high and powerful Lord, whom all the earth should serve and obey” (Carter, 1995, p. 24). However, it is important to note the Caddo did not believe in a singular god but instead believed in multiple spirits that permeated all aspects of life. This serves as a profound illustration of how the feminine principle interwove itself into their profound connection with nature.

Cultural ecologist and anthropologist Pierotti (2011)⁵³ argued native peoples gained an understanding of their world through physical interaction with the environment, using myths and symbols to interpret and explain their experiences. Their emphasis was on living in balance, or equilibrium,⁵⁴ with nature and with one another (Pierotti, 2011). The Caddo myths and stories of their origins and evolution were embodied in the Drum Dance,⁵⁵ which narrated their history with every drum beat and bodily position. This type of historic recall was not found in written pages about the past, but rather enacted in a way that collapsed space and time, making the past present in the moment.

⁵³Raymond Pierotti Ph.D. focuses his research on how individual organisms become successful at reproduction and contributes to future generations. He specialized in genus *Larus* (gulls) and the mammalian genus *Canis* (wolves, coyotes, and dogs).

⁵⁴Pierotti questions the notion of “balance” as a Western myth without scientific basis and proposes that nature seeks equilibrium through dynamic relationships instead.

⁵⁵The Drum Dance was often the first dance in a series of night cycle dances. During the dance, male leaders would carry the drum in a clockwise motion to align with the earth's rotation, while the women followed behind.

The Caddo ideology was characterized by feminine relatedness rather than conflict and opposition. This was evident in their alliances with many tribes, including the Comanches, and their interrelated systems of religion and economic exchange of horses and goods (Smith, 1997). Unfortunately, the arrival of the Western worldview in the 18th and 19th centuries led to the destruction not only of the Caddo people, but also their culture, which valued the feminine principle. European epistemologies were rooted in war and the concept of superiority, creating a stark contrast with the Indigenous culture's balance between the feminine and masculine principles. This juxtaposition can be seen clearly in the interactions between the native peoples and Spaniards in Texas.

Most of the historical records of the Spanish settlement in Texas reflect the Spaniard's perspective. In *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in Texas Borderlands*, historian Barr (2007)⁵⁶ provides a glimpse into the native person's perspective during early contact with the Spaniards that can help balance one's understanding of Texas history. The Native peoples dictated the terms of contact and diplomacy and the structure of relationships, according to Barr. It was difficult to colonize Texas because of the context of the Indigenous cultural and political rituals, in which women's roles were vital.

The Spaniards failed to comprehend that for the Caddo people, gender roles and rituals were fundamental to maintaining reciprocity and order with the spiritual world (Barr, 2007). Caddo ceremonial symbolism, cosmological beliefs, and myths were reflected in their manner of forming relationships with foreigners. This also applied to

⁵⁶Julianna Barr, Ph.D., is a scholar in the history of early America, the Spanish borderlands, American Indians, and women and gender. Barr has published several books.

kinship, clan organization, and the spatial designs of homesteads, all of which reflected a cosmological order seen in mound-builder cultures. This foundation of interdependence was based on contrasting pairs such as order/chaos, human/spiritual, inside/outside, junior/senior, and male/female, explaining the actions of native peoples toward the Spaniards (Barr, 2009).

When the Spanish explorers arrived in the New World, they did not bring women or children with them, which was perceived as an act of aggression by the Caddo. In response, the Spaniards presented the icon of the Virgin Mary, and her image became symbolic of peace. However, the Caddo viewed her as a “female” rather than as a spiritual being. In Caddo culture, women and men had distinct roles and responsibilities. Men were seasonal hunters and thus dependent on the skills of women in the production and sustenance of food. Women also determined the socioeconomic units of food distribution, which was also intertwined with diplomacy (Barr, 2009). Women provided the means for giving as a channel of connection. The Caddo upheld their honor within the community not by accumulating possessions, but by giving them away. Women held an essential role in the creation and maintenance of society.

According to Barr (2007), Europeans believed all women were spiritually and emotionally weak and lacked control over their actions, particularly their sexuality. When they saw native women embracing and caressing European men, it violated their beliefs and led to the perception that native communities were heathen worlds run amok with licentiousness. This interpretation, rooted in patriarchal culture, was used to justify the rape of Native women by the Spaniards, as well as the subsequent objectification of

women and land as property. This ultimately led to the demise of the social order of the Caddo people (Barr, 2009).

The Caddo worldview affirmed human and nonhuman relationships and order through reciprocity. Rituals were a vital part of this order, serving as a “meta-institution” that underpinned the organization of economics, politics, and religion (Barr, 2009, p. 73). This helped solidify the tribe’s matrilineal kinship and the productivity of women’s work. For the Caddo, charity was a means of maintaining divine connection on behalf of the clan, rather than a moral obligation rooted in the self or a church institution.

The failure of the mission-presidios can be attributed to the lack of understanding of the interdependency and balance between the masculine and feminine principles in the Caddo society. The Spanish did not realize that each member of the tribe had a specific role and responsibility to fulfill in order to contribute to the well-being and survival of the tribe. For instance, a father’s duty was to protect and provide meat, and this self-sufficiency was considered sacred (Barr, 2007). However, the Spaniards viewed the Native men as lazy; that, in combination with the Native men’s refusal to convert to Christianity, led the Spaniards to force Native men to perform women’s work.⁵⁷ The Spanish limited Indigenous women to tasks such as sewing and cooking indoors to control their sexuality, or *eros*.⁵⁸ The impact of European colonization on Caddo culture, particularly regarding Christianity and disease, was significant. The Caddo culture valued

⁵⁷The traditional roles of Caddo women included building the homes, growing the crops, and caring for the herds. Additionally, they provided identity through kinship.

⁵⁸In Greek mythology, *Eros* is the god of love and sexual desire. It is often associated with passionate and romantic love. In psychology, *eros* is also used to describe the life instinct or the drive toward self-preservation and reproduction, as proposed by Sigmund Freud.

women's power and sexual freedom, which Christian missionaries viewed as immoral and pagan. This upset the balance of gender roles and the cosmic order from the Native perspective, ultimately leading to the failure of the mission-presidios.

The Spaniards arrived in Texas with two main objectives: to acquire land and to convert the Native peoples, whom they perceived as sunworshippers, to Roman Catholicism. Achieving these goals required altering the Natives' relationship to the feminine principle. One way the Spaniards did this was by giving crosses to the Natives instead of images of the female Virgin Mary (Barr, 2007). The Caddo perceived these gifts as an act of diplomacy rather than as icons for conversion. The Spaniards attempted to rebalance power according to their culture. However, the Spanish family role they imposed on the Caddo shifted men to a dominant position as providers of agriculture, while women and children became dependents. The Holy Trinity was also imposed as a doctrine of submission, with the Virgin Mary as the model woman. Kinship was changed from matrilineal to patrilineal, which put men in charge of the food supply, which caused women to lose their connection with the earth and their value (Barr, 2007).

During this examination of the conflicting cultures of the Caddo and Spaniards, I dreamt that I got into bed with a friend, Angela, whose values are opposite of mine. I got out of bed to look for a book titled *Interdependence* to give to Angela. I realize that I am trying to bring two aspects of myself together, which are in conflict, just like the Caddo and the Spaniards. As the Caddo receded from the Texas landscape, the Comanches became more prevalent, posing a challenge to other Native tribes, the Spanish government, and European settlers (see Appendix B).

The Comanche: A Warrior Culture

Despite being known as a warrior tribe, the nomadic Comanche maintained a prevalent goddess myth similar to that of the Celts. The Comanche, who referred to themselves as the Numunuu, or “true humans,” were the most notorious of all the native peoples in Texas (Fehrenbach, 1974, p. 140). Scholar Gelo (2002)⁵⁹ stated the name Comanche, which entered English from the Spanish, was derived from a Ute term meaning “enemy” or “other” (p. 1). The cause of the Comanche migration to the Southern Plains (see Figure 9) is still debated among scholars. Some suggest the Comanche were originally from the eastern part of the Great Basin near Montana and Wyoming and were part of the Shoshone tribe. Anthropologist Jones (1984)⁶⁰ and others, including Sanapia—the last Comanche medicine person who died in 1984, claim the tribe’s migration was prompted by a dispute about the division of a bear, or due to an illness, such as polio, that forced them to head south for survival. Archaeologists Sullivan⁶¹ and Mainfort (2010)⁶² stated that by 1743, the Comanche had entered Texas and interacted with French and Anglo-American horse dealers. They were known for raiding to obtain livestock and human captives for trade, adapting to a Great Plains

⁵⁹Dr. Daniel J. Gelo, Ph.D., is a cultural anthropologist and scholar of Native American studies. He authored numerous articles and books on the Comanche and other Native American groups, including *Indians of the Great Plains*.

⁶⁰Dr. David E. Jones, Ph.D. (1941-1991), was a cultural anthropologist researching the Comanche and other tribes of Texas and Oklahoma. He documented the life and teachings of the last known Comanche medicine woman, Sanapia.

⁶¹Lynne Sullivan, Ph.D., is an archaeologist specializing in native people’s mortuary practices and native gender roles.

⁶²Robert Mainfort is an anthropologist and scholar of prehistoric mortuary practices of Native American cultures in the southeastern United States. With Sullivan, he co-edited *Mississippi Mortuary Practices: Beyond Hierarchy and the Representationist Perspective*, which focuses on the mortuary practices of the Caddo people of the southern United States.

lifestyle while retaining their Great Basin customs. The Comanche economy evolved into a complex trading system with the Europeans that included not only goods, but also the sale of Indigenous people as slaves to the Spaniards and horses to the French (Gelo, 2002).

Figure 9

Comanche Map, 1849-1852



Note. From "Texas Frontier Forts," by Texas Beyond History, 2003, p. 1

(<https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/forts/images/frontier49.html>).

The Comanche material culture reflected their nomadic lifestyle and dependence on bison herds. All parts of the bison were used for their economy: meat for nourishment,

rawhide for teepee⁶³ coverings and clothing, and bones for tools and implements. Teepees, made of hides and wooden poles, were highly portable homes. Comanche traditional dress was heavily fringed and lacked the decorative elements found in other Native cultures such as beads, quills, and bone or shell ornaments (Jones, 1984). Feather bonnets were rare, while buffalo horn caps were more common. The Comanche had a particular division of labor, with women responsible for gathering plants and processing game into food and clothing. Women (see Figure 10) were also responsible for erecting, maintaining, and transporting the teepees, though men “owned” their habitats. Men’s (see Figure 11) work was primarily warring and hunting, along with maintaining horses and equipment. Polygamy was preferred as it provided more security for all tribal members, with sisters often becoming co-wives supervised by a primary wife (Gelo, 2002). Unlike the Caddo, the Comanche did not have a significant collective ritual paradigm, which left few avenues through which anthropologists might discover a portion of their history. They were adverse to outward displays of ceremonialism, and unlike other tribes, had no social organization, sun dances, or decoration (Gelo, 1986). Instead, their rituals were conducted individually, to acquire power. For example, the vision quest was part of a boy’s initiation to become a warrior and acquire a guardian spirit to assist him in life. The tribe also had shamans, known as medicine men or women, who accessed spiritual power and used it in combination with plant and animal medicine to cure various ailments. The

⁶³“Teepee” is used to refer specifically to the tent structure used by Native peoples made with buckskin. “Tipi,” or “tepee,” are alternative spellings that share a broader definition such as any type of structure that has a conical shape and covered with other materials such as canvas.

Comanches' power was tied to the natural world, and their spirituality centered on the idea of being in harmony with the environment around them (Sullivan & Mainfort, 2010).

Figure 10

Comanche Woman



Note. From “Minnie Black, Comanche in Regalia,” by E. Bates, n.d., p. 1

(<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph27768/?q=Comanches>). University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, Tarrant County College NE, Heritage Room. Fair Use.

Figure 11*Comanche Man*

Note. From “North American Tribal Family: Comanche Man,” by W. S. Soule, n.d.

(<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=270842845731497&set=a.177187231763726>).

Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin. Fair Use.

The considerable literature written about the Comanche provides diverse and conflicting narratives, often told by European and American colonizers and captives.⁶⁴ These stories have created images and myths that have influenced the perception of the Comanche as a fierce and savage tribe. However, the Comanche voice is missing in these narratives, and their nomadic and discrete way of life has made it difficult for historians to fully understand their culture. War is a common theme in human history, but the context of how and why it was conducted demands a deeper understanding. The lack of artifacts found due to the Comanches' nomadic culture has also made it difficult to fully uncover their story.

In his book, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, anthropologist Trouillot (2015)⁶⁵ argued every historical narrative inevitably includes a bundle of omissions. After studying the Indigenous culture's relationship with nature and animals, I realized the sensationalized narrative of the Comanche as "savages" is incomplete and biased. To tell the history of Texas exclusively from a colonial perspective and through masculine voices of rationality does not provide an accurate account. The prevalent warrior images of the Comanche and their depredations are found in historical archives reflecting a European and Anglo cultural consciousness that

⁶⁴The most popular tales of the Comanche have been told by historians such as Fehrenbach (1994), in his *Comanches: The Destruction of a People*, McCarthy's (1992) *Blood Meridian*, and Gwynne's (2011) *Empire of the Summer Moon: Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches, the Most Powerful Indian Tribe in American History*. These narratives have contributed to the image of the Comanche as a "lesser" race, but other scholars offer different perspectives, such as Hamalainen (2009) in *Comanche Empire*, Stannard (1993) in *American Holocaust*, and Deloria (2023) in *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*, which counters the savage image.

⁶⁵Michel-Rolph Trouillot, Ph.D., (1949-2012), a Haitian anthropologist and historian, contributed significantly to the study of colonialism, power relations, and history production. His book, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Trouillot, 2015), examines how historical narratives are constructed and marginalized voices are excluded.

includes private property, social hierarchy, and subordination of perceived inferiority (Fehrenbach, 1974).

Historical archaeologists believed that the Comanche “voice” would remain silent, but in 2008, markings on basalt rocks were found to be of Comanche origin (see Figure 12).

Figure 12

Comanche Basalt Carvings



Note. From “Petroglyphs, Comanche Gap, Galisteo Basin, New Mexico, 1994,” by Henley/Graphics Photography, 2013b, p. 1 (<http://henleygraphics.com/commnchegap-5.htm>). Copyright 2013 Henley/Graphics. Fair Use.

Anthropologists Montgomery⁶⁶ and Fowles (2020)⁶⁷ explored Comanche art in their book, *An Indigenous Archive: Documenting Comanche History Through Rock Art*,

⁶⁶Lindsay M. Montgomery, Ph.D., is an anthropologist who has documented and worked on the preservation of Comanche art.

⁶⁷Severin M. Fowles, Ph.D., is an anthropologist who has conducted extensive research on Comanche art, focusing on the intersection of art, power, and identity in Indigenous societies.

arguing that the rock art found along the Rio Grande Gorge in Northern New Mexico is not an “alternative” history but an integral part of traditional knowledge. The drawings, which mostly depict horses, riders, teepees, shield-bearers, bison, and geometric shapes, are not immediately apparent and require a certain angle of light to be seen. According to the authors, these rock art images recorded the extraordinary deeds of male warriors, to be recited in the future, while women, children, and others are mostly excluded. Although the voices of these groups may be considered “marginalized,” the authors suggest their absence may reflect a clandestine culture or a deeper meaning that is unclear due to the Western way of thinking (Montgomery & Fowles, 2020).

Montgomery and Fowles (2020) propose the scratched documentation of the Comanches served an autobiographical function that aimed to strengthen their position within their society. The Comanches’ way of life revolved around bison hunting, raiding, and acquiring many wives, facilitated by the increased hide production enabled by the use of horses. The Comanches’ documentation of their statistics reflects the values of autonomy and independence ingrained in their societal structure. Horses are prominently featured in Comanche rock art (see Figure 13), as they were vital to the hunt, embodying actualizing force, independence, and freedom.

Comanche headdresses, such as bonnets, feathers, and buffalo, were used to signify a man’s particular role or accomplishments within the community, rather than to subjugate others. Spanish people were rarely depicted in Comanche documentation, suggesting the archive was primarily focused on individual status attainment rather than domination over others. In his article “The Political Economy of Comanche Violence,”

Proyekt (2013)⁶⁸ stated the strength of the individual was seen as serving the community, as the acquisition of property was viewed as a collective endeavor that required sharing. Comanche culture was built on a clear set of shared values that guided individual behavior, with mutual respect for personal freedom serving as the bond that united the people, rather than loyalty to a single authoritarian figure (Proyekt, 2013).

Figure 13

Comanche Basalt Markings



Note. From “Comanche Gap Petroglyphs, Galisteo Basin, New Mexico, 1994,” by Henley/Graphics Photography, 2013a, p. 1 (<http://henleygraphics.com/comnchegap-1.htm>). Copyright 2013 Henley/Graphics. Fair Use.

Unlike the Caddo tribe, Comanche culture was pervaded by a warrior ethos. Boys began their training early, mastering horse riding and skills such as lance fighting. Boys were honored by not having any chores and were given gifts upon their first killing of an

⁶⁸Louis Proyekt (1945-2021) was a scholar, social activist, and writer for economic equality.

animal. Their value was contingent on their warring success. Sex play began early, and virginity held no value. Polyandry⁶⁹ was practiced between brothers without jealousy. However, women could not participate in sexual activities except with their husbands. The primary role of Comanche women was to provide hospitality for the men, while also gathering a wide collection of medicinal plants and possessing knowledge of their powers (Gelo, 2002). Despite their equal status with men, this changed with the introduction of the horse and the Western economic system.

The Comanche origin myth is composed of different metaphors that align with its nomadic culture. Furthermore, their creation story differs from that of monotheistic religions, which typically envision creation as a single event in time associated with the initial appearance of a singular deity. Instead, Indigenous people's creation myths are tied to a particular location or space where the environment is in constant flux (Pierotti, 2016).

Due to the Comanches' relational perspective, any changes to the system could cause unpredictability. The Comanche people believed the wolf, as a species that assists with these changing conditions, had special spiritual powers for survival and growth. In this tradition, the wolf is a benevolent creator who makes everything perfect and lives with his trickster younger "brother," Coyote. These *Canis* brothers do not represent "good" and "evil" as seen through a Western lens, but instead metaphorically describe and instruct ecological and evolutionary relationships (Pierotti, 2016, p. 10). For

⁶⁹Polyandry is a form of polygamy, involving one male and two or more females.

example, Pierotti (2011) quotes a Shoshone elder, C. Harney, in his chapter called *The World According to Is'a*:

You see, the coyote and the wolf were talking long ago. Wolf was arguing that we should all look alike, the rocks should be the same, the sagebrush the same, the humans the same, and all the living things on this planet should be the same. We should think alike and act alike and so forth. But Coyote always said, “No, we should all be different. We shouldn’t look alike at all.” And so today we look around us and nothing looks alike. Rocks are not alike. Humans are not alike. This is the root of why we don’t believe in each other. It’s just as Coyote said. There’s no use believing in just one thing. Let’s not believe it. Let’s all disagree, and everybody believe in different things. That’s why I always say, it’s easy to believe the bad things first, but the good thing is hard to believe and harder to come by. As Wolf said, “It’s going to be really hard that way, because [what] you’re saying is, let’s not believe in each other.” So today, what Coyote said is what we’ve got. (p. 68)

The creation myth of the Comanches serves as a precursor to the split from the goddess principle of unity, a recurring theme in the creation myths of various Indigenous tribes such as the Caddo. These myths are in direct opposition to the colonialist ideal of separation, which emphasizes a clear division between humanity and the natural world. The schism between these differing ideologies greatly impacted the myth of the Cowgirl, who possessed a heritage that embraced both the sacred and the rational. The impact of these differing ideologies will be explored in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V: DIVORCE FROM THE ENSOULED WORLD

Philosopher and cultural historian Tarnas (2014)⁷⁰ argued Western intellectual and spiritual traditions, despite their great achievements, have a shadow that causes spiritual distress. He stated humans have become torn between two myths: the myth of unity, or the goddess, and the myth of progress (or the fall), resulting in partial views in which each are perceived as if whole (Tarnas, 2014). This partiality causes repression, and the effects of this partial world view can be seen through societal formations such as disregard for the environment, fundamentalism, and an overly masculine ethos. When these partial truths are seen as complete in themselves, it hinders understanding the larger context.

The two historical myths of unity and progress are diametrically opposed and possess enduring archetypal structures of meaning that influence and inform the cultural psyche (Tarnas, 2014). In the context of Texas, these opposing myths are apparent. The myth of unity is exemplified by the Indigenous peoples, including the Caddo and Comanche, while the myth of progress is embodied in the cultures of the European and Anglo settlers.

Tarnas (2014) argued the shadow of the Enlightenment⁷¹ is self-destructive because its objective, or rational, orientation has caused a one-sided viewpoint of reality. Tarnas contends truth is not comprised of just one mythological construct, but rather the

⁷⁰Richard Tarnas, Ph.D., is a philosopher and cultural historian. He is best known for his books, *The Passion of the Western Mind*, and *Cosmos and the Psyche: Intimations of a New World View*, the latter of which explores the history of Western thought and its impact on modern culture.

⁷¹The Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason, was an intellectual and philosophical movement that originated in Europe during the 18th century, although its roots can be traced to the 17th century with the scientific revolution and the works of philosophers such as René Descartes and Francis Bacon.

two historical dramas of unity and progress complement each other. He asserts these two myths are simultaneously true and embedded in each other—underlying, informing, implicating, and making each other possible. My dreams reflected my own internal struggles and evolution with these myths. For example, I dreamt that I am navigating through various unsettling scenes from being in an expansive room to a flying Jeep, and then confronting emotional complexities with my husband and sister in a car. The dream included hints of my own internal power and eros as symbolized by the strength of a Black man and a pink suitcase (see Appendix C).

In the following section, I will describe Indigenous people's way of seeing the world compared to the Western perspective that reshaped Texas. This intersection is intricate and influenced by the state's diverse ecologies and migratory influences as explained in Chapter III. These two opposing myths are the ones encountered by the historical Cowgirl—a Western woman engaging with the spirit of the place as it was understood by the Indigenous cultures.

The Enchanted World of Indigenous Peoples

In the previous chapter, the Caddo and Comanche cultures were described as examples of agrarian and warrior cultures, respectively, both containing elements of the myth of unity, or the goddess. They embodied a primal mind characteristic of traditional Aboriginal cultures rather than one that was divisive. They saw the world and all creation as filled with meaning and purpose. Nature was abundant with signs and symbols expressing an interior essence, and humans were not separate but rather a microcosm of this vast world (Tarnas, 2014).

The primal perspective does not see absolute boundaries, but rather is contained within a “world soul.” Jung used the ancient Latin phrase *animus mundi* to describe the collective unconscious,⁷² a shared pool of universal symbols and archetypes⁷³ that exists within the human psyche and connects humans to the broader world (Tarnas, 2014). Humans are held within this unconscious, collective container, and directly participate in its divine complexity. This understanding is important because the Cowgirl engages in and with the spirit of the land and animals; they also become symbolic and archetypal forms that inform her instinctual life (see Chapter XI).

The Power of the *Genius Loci*: Connecting With the Spirit of Place

The concept of *genius loci*, or the spirit of a place, is deeply ingrained in many Indigenous cultures around the world. It refers to the belief that each place, be it a mountain, river, forest, or city, has a unique spirit or essence. This spirit is an active force that shapes the landscape, influences the local ecology, and impacts the lives of all beings who inhabit the area. Indigenous peoples have developed intricate systems of knowledge and practices to understand, communicate with, and honor the *genius loci* of their ancestral lands, which helps them maintain a harmonious relationship with the natural world.

Jung (1964, 1978) believed every place possessed an unconscious spirit expressed through its character, history, and symbolism, and influenced by the collective unconscious of the people who inhabit or have inhabited the land. According to Jung,

⁷²Unconscious is defined as the totality of all psychic phenomena that lacks the quality of consciousness.

⁷³Archetypes are primordial forms that are concealed. Plato argued they are the metaphysical paradigms or models of real things.

connecting with the *genius loci*⁷⁴ of a place is vital for gaining a deeper understanding of oneself and the surrounding environment. One's connection to the physical world of space and place is not direct, but one's connection to the spiritual realm is immediate and essential. Jung believed the effect of *genius loci* on individuals can be positive or negative, depending on the events that have taken place there. The European and Anglo pioneers entered into the spirit of the Indigenous tribes' place (though likely unwittingly).

Phenomenology and the Wisdom of Native Peoples

Cajete (2000, 2004)⁷⁵ has written extensively on the traditional wisdom of Indigenous peoples. Cajete's work emphasizes the importance of understanding Indigenous people's knowledge and perspectives in order to create a more ecological and just world.

In his essay "A Philosophy of Native Science," Cajete (2004) draws a comparison of the how the German philosopher and mathematician Edmund Husserl⁷⁶ believed the *Lebenswelt*, or "life-world," was similar to native peoples' perspective⁷⁷ that the life-world was the primary source of human knowledge and meaning (p. 45). It is when engaged in the present reality of everyday life that one experiences the world—before forming thoughts about it. However, the objectification⁷⁸ of the world through Western

⁷⁴In classical Rome, *genius loci* meant spirit of the place and was often depicted as a figure holding a cornucopia, a bowl of fruit, or a snake.

⁷⁵Gregory Cajete is a Native American scholar and author who has written extensively on Indigenous science and education.

⁷⁶Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was widely regarded as the founder of phenomenology, a philosophical method aimed at describing the essential structures of subjective experience.

⁷⁷Historical Indigenous people were not phenomenological *per se*, for this discipline was born of the Western philosophical tradition of questioning the Western/Cartesian viewpoint of objective reality, a viewpoint I refer to as "the Western lens."

⁷⁸Tarnas (1993) uses the term "objectification" to mean made into an object for human's use.

thinking has nullified this sensory experience. Underneath the life-world, Husserl posits a primordial, unitary dimension that is similar to the Mother Goddess myth of the Paleolithic era (Baring & Cashford, 1993). This animist view of creation, in which all things are alive and ensouled, is fundamental to all humans and not just a primitive notion. Thus, all things are interdependent, and the world is seen as a living, regenerating presence.

Cajete's (2000) perspective on the wisdom of native peoples is based on a holistic worldview that recognizes the interdependence of humans, the natural world, and the spiritual realm. This interconnectedness is reflected in Indigenous people's practices such as the use of medicinal plants, storytelling, and ceremony, which serve to connect people to their communities, ancestors, and the natural world. He contends by understanding and valuing Indigenous people's knowledge, people can gain a deeper appreciation for the importance of living in harmony with nature and with each other.

Cajete (2000) also emphasizes the importance of Indigenous people's ways of knowing, which are based on observation, intuition, and a deep connection to the natural world. He argues these ways of knowing are just as valid as Western scientific approaches, and they can be used together to create a more complete understanding of the world. In his book *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*, Cajete describes the interdependence of Indigenous peoples as consisting of the sensing body, the metaphorical mind, the symbol of the trickster, and the shaman as a mediator between the spiritual and earthly worlds.

The Sensing Body

The body serves as the foundation for the relationship between humans and the natural world, providing a means for thinking, sensing, acting, and existing. This sensing body is what connects the human with, for example, the horse. This sensing body also serves as a metaphor for the interconnectedness between tribes and groups (Cajete, 2000). Perception is crucial in orienting humans in nature, allowing them to adapt and adjust to their surroundings and terrain. Scholar Abram (1996)⁷⁹ adds to this idea that receptivity, coupled with creativity, influences one's perception. He describes the ongoing reciprocity between the body and nature as a "silent conversation" (Abram, 1996, p. 52).

Interaction with nature occurs continuously, involving all the senses, and precludes any real objective detachment. This participation enhances instinctual intelligence, as demonstrated in the vision quests of native tribes including the Comanche. The native worldview perceives everything as nature, vitalized by an enduring spirit that recycles itself through life and death. The body is a sensual manifestation of the same elements that comprise the universe and the earth, ultimately returning to replenish the earth upon death. When colonizers began taking land that had been inhabited by Indigenous peoples for thousands of years, it was as if they were taking the body, blood, and bones of the Native people. The Indigenous worldview did not perceive matter as dead, property as private, or resources as commodities.

⁷⁹David Abram, Ph.D., is an American philosopher and cultural ecologist. His book, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, was first published in 1996 and is considered a classic in the fields of environmental philosophy and ecopsychology.

Participation in collective activities such as dance, storytelling, ritual, and ceremony plays a crucial role in cultivating the body's perception and imagination. Native languages, which have a verb-based structure, encourage active participation and imagination. In contrast, Western language, with its noun-based structure, alienates one from their bodies and objectifies the world through language (Cajete, 2000).

Chaos, Creativity, and the Metaphorical Mind

Native peoples use metaphors as a way of perceiving the truth. For example, the body was a metaphor to describe themselves (Cajete, 2000). Metaphors encapsulate a person's lived reality and allow them to describe, imagine, and create based on the animate world. Emergence stories and dancing rituals embody the holistic nature of creativity and motion. They mirror the processes of life: chaos, creative participation, and the metaphoric mind. Chaos generates movement, creative processes that lead to new understandings. Images and symbols are infused with meaning and are central to this worldview.

The Western mindset often disrupts this innate wisdom by attempting to exert control over nature through objectification. This type of control is superficial and disconnected from the nuanced and intricate inner workings that give life its richness. Creativity, which is the driving force behind life, can be found in various forms of imagery, including the decorative motifs of fecundity in Caddo pottery, the shamanic animals found in cave paintings, and the moon-horned headdresses worn by medicine men and women. The nature of creativity is vital for gaining insight (Cajete, 2000).

Native myths include metaphors that illustrate nature's creative processes as well as the power of imagination and the connection between humanity and the ground of

being in the evolutionary journey. These myths describe the development of human beings and their relationships with the places they inhabit. They serve as sources of knowledge, offering insights that are ecological, spiritual, psychological, and creative in nature. Often, these myths teach interdependence; promote respect for plants, animals, the land, and tools; and encourage behaviors that support human survival.

The human mind is an extension of nature, and as creators of stories, one becomes fertile ground upon which myths and human perception of reality emerge. Stories, myths, and images inform the sacred feminine principle, which is expressed at the personal and communal levels (Cajete, 2000).

The Trickster as Disruptor

The trickster is an essential figure in Native American folklore. Often depicted as a mischievous and cunning character, the trickster is known for his ability to challenge authority and disrupt social norms. He is both a creator and destroyer, a figure who can bring about chaos or restore order. Trickster's actions are often used to teach important lessons about morality, humility, and the consequences of one's actions. Through his antics and pranks, the trickster serves as a bridge between the human and spiritual realms, revealing the interconnectedness of all things and the importance of maintaining balance in the world.

The Western perspective often views the trickster as a negative figure with devilish qualities. However, native cultures recognize the trickster as a necessary force that disrupts the universe in order to bring about new forms of life. Chaos is necessary to respond to the constant changes in the environment, and survival depends on instinctual awareness and adaptation to the new and different. This adaptation has the potential to

ignite the creation of individual and collective truths. Thus truth and spirit are not fixed but mutable concepts (Cajete, 2000).

The Shaman as Mediator

In historic Indigenous cultures, the shaman⁸⁰ played a crucial role in maintaining balance and harmony between the community and the natural environment (Cajete, 2000). The shaman possessed intimate knowledge of the ecology of the land, including the medicinal properties of plants, which required a deep understanding of the relationship between humans and the surrounding natural elements. Disease was believed to be caused by disharmony between the individual and the natural world, spirit world, community, or one's own spirit and soul.

Shamans used trance-like states to travel to different dimensions and communicate with spirits or deities (Baring & Cashford, 1993). They believed the manifest animate world rested on an invisible world, and animals possessed unique powers and wisdom. This is symbolically expressed in cave art, such as Les Trois Frère caves in France, where animal parts represent unique qualities. For instance, the shaman often wore doe antlers during tribal ceremonies celebrating the arrival of spring to symbolize the Great Mother and deer meat as a source of human nourishment (Baring & Cashford, 1993).

The Loss of Soul and Disenchantment of the World

In contrast to the intelligence of Native people, the Age of Enlightenment in Europe caused a split between the human self and the external world. The cosmos was

⁸⁰Note that shamans are still active among tribes still in existence.

seen as impersonal, a mechanistic and purposeless universe that lacked conscious intelligence and intrinsic meaning. The Western mind began to impose human paradigms onto reality, attempting to define what is “human” or “conscious” (Tarnas, 2014, p. 17). In contrast, the primal mind shares a permeability with the ensouled world; this way of thinking projected human qualities onto the nonhuman, as the subject observes and analyzes the exterior world. The Enlightenment worldview assumes nature and the cosmos are devoid of consciousness and intelligence, rendering them lifeless. This absoluteness creates a stark contrast between the scientific mind and traditional ways of understanding the world (Tarnas, 2014).

Tarnas (2014) further described how the primal world was experienced as alive, self-responsive, and saturated with various types of forces that the modern mind cannot fully recognize. This inability to perceive these invisible forces has evolved over thousands of years, further exacerbated by the use of language. The world of Indigenous cultures abounded with sacred and mystical forces, deities, and archetypes, which were conveyed through elaborate symbolic representations and imbued with profound meaning and significance. However, instead of aligning with these powers, humans have chosen to remove themselves psychically from them. Consequently, the Western mind dismisses these sacred dimensions of creation and sees the world, along with other humans and animals, as neutral entities to be measured, controlled, and manipulated. It has become disenchanted, denying the subjectivity of the world. To remove this quality is to miss the sacredness of life and the very essence of humanity (Tarnas, 2014).

Descartes’ (1984–1991) philosophy is greatly responsible for disconnecting the human mind from the body and denying the existence of the instinctual world. The

rational mind, influenced by this philosophy, has ignored the inner capacity of humans to define, revise, and determine themselves. This capacity allows individuals to shape the external world while also being responsible for their internal experiences, ultimately leading to a sense of autonomy.

The notions of self-determination and autonomy that originated from Descartes' (1984–1991) philosophy can be observed in the individualistic ethos of the Texas frontier. This mindset led to a disconnection from the primal meaning and a reductionist view of the world, objectifying both the environment and feminine principles. Tarnas (2014) noted this disconnection has led to a perspective in which the human self is considered the sole source of meaning and purpose, resulting in emptying the cosmos of its intrinsic nature (Tarnas, 2014). This disenchantment of the empirical world, along with the differentiation of the autonomous human self, also has been influenced by the historical evolution of monotheism.

Christian worldviews suggest a greater autonomy of the human will than did the primal mindset. Tarnas (2014) stated these two processes—constellating the self and appropriating the *animus mundi*—have a joint significant consequence: the emptying of the external world of its intrinsic meaning and purpose. In simpler terms, the world has lost its soul. This loss of soul causes a deep alienation that fuels the human to seek a relationship with a transcendent divinity separate from a sovereign, created world, a world that is increasingly perceived as devoid of meaning and purpose other than that associated with the human self (Tarnas, 2014). It is this transcendent paradigm of Christianity that the pioneer woman encountered on the frontier. The pioneer woman of the West, in whom the Cowgirl is rooted, had to “throw off her corset”—abandon the

rationality of Descartes (1984–1991) and religious laws—in order to survive and return to the primal world of enchantment, thus ensouling her being.

In Chapter VI, I describe the Texas woman and the ideologies and religions she inherited from her homeland.

CHAPTER VI: THE WOMEN OF TEXAS

This section offers a brief overview of women's experiences on the Texas frontier in the early 1800s, specifically the emerging distinct cultures of the ranching industry of West Texas and the farming culture of East Texas. Historian Boswell's (2018)⁸¹ *Women in Texas History* provides valuable insights into the diverse historical roles of women in Texas. This section will conclude with an examination of a woman of two worlds, using the example of Cynthia Ann Parker, who exemplifies the split between the Indigenous culture and colonized Texas.

Indigenous, Spanish-Mexican, and Anglo-American Women

Indigenous Women

As described in Chapter III, the original women of Texas were Native American (see Figure 14). To recap, the ecological diversity of the region played a crucial role in shaping food sourcing and gender roles among the Indigenous peoples throughout the state's early history. Consequently, Native American women held significant roles, culturally and politically, for thousands of years. Despite working in gender groups, Indigenous people of each gender were dependent on the other gender for the tribe's survival. Men were valued for their hunting and warring skills as well as their ability to protect the family, while women were responsible for meat preparation and food gathering and distribution, which were essential for the tribe's survival, particularly during times when game was scarce. Native American women also had extensive

⁸¹Angela Boswell, Ph.D., is recognized as a fellow of the Texas State Historical Society for her significant contributions to the study of women in Texas history. She is best known for her award-winning book, *Women in Texas History* (2018).

knowledge of agricultural cycles as well as the therapeutic and medicinal properties of plants. As such, women held social and political status and played roles as shamans, peacemakers, and predictors of the environment.

Figure 14

Comanche Women



Note. From “Research Topics at the State Archives: Subject Guide to Native American Resources,” by Texas State Library, 2019, p. 1

(<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/outofthestacks/research-topics-at-the-state-archives-subject-guide-to-native-american-resources/>). Fair Use.

The introduction of European agriculture by immigrants had a profound impact on the agrarian tribes. Native American women already had knowledge of the environmental conditions required to cultivate small crops. The European colonists introduced new crops, which expanded the tribes’ ability to farm (Boswell, 2018). Consequently, tribes in fertile lands abandoned hunting and herding and settled into

agricultural communities. With more time available unrelated to food procurement, Native women refined their skills in pottery-making, hide-tanning, and weaving. These techniques and products became essential items and commodities that could be traded with the colonists.

The settlement of Texas was far different from other American states, and the Indigenous women played vastly different gender roles than did European women (Boswell, 2018). Even 3 centuries after the Europeans' arrival, Native Americans still dominated the state, and Native women maintained their complementary gender roles, resisting the Spanish- and Anglo-American patriarchal ideals in which women were subservient to men. However, due to the significant influence of European settlers, the patriarchal viewpoint, typically based on Christian ideology, impacted the value of Indigenous women within their tribes. Centuries of European, masculine-oriented cultural beliefs exacerbated the growing imbalance of power between Native men and women, aided by the arrival of the horse, Christianity, and commerce. However, over time, with increased migration, all Texas women's roles were altered in some regard (Boswell, 2018).

The Indigenous peoples played a significant role in the settlers' success on the frontier. Prior to colonization, Native American property was held communally, but the introduction of the horse brought about changes to their culture. Horses and bison became valuable commodities, and men began to attach more meaning to their status in connection with them. The horse enabled men to kill more bison, which increased their standing in society. However, as men relied less on women for food, this shift also devalued women's role as head of food procurement and distribution. Native American

women adapted to these changes by participating in making products from bison, as well as being responsible for the transport and erection of their homes, or teepees, which was made easier with the use of horses. Unlike non-Native women, Native American women rode horses astride⁸² and became expert riders. This cultural shift in horse riding also influenced many Anglo women of the frontier to adopt the same riding position, challenging traditional gender roles (Boswell, 2018).

The West Texas frontier offered the last available homesteads of the 20th century in the United States. Women who moved there suffered from extreme isolation, lacking a sense of community in the vast empty spaces. Neighbors were nonexistent, and men were often away from home, either hunting, tending to cattle, or making long trips to settlements for supplies, leaving women to manage the homesteads alone (Boswell, 2018). The first West Texas settlers lived in tents, wagons, and eventually dugouts. Danger loomed everywhere—from wildlife, natural elements, bandits, and warring tribes such as the Comanche. Water was scarce and sometimes located far away, demanding conservation. Gender roles were abandoned as men and women could not survive by adhering to traditional roles, forcing women to develop their abilities and independence, and to become more resilient and adaptable (Boswell, 2018). However, Anglo women's psyches still held the cultural expectations of the masculine-dominated Christian culture in which they had been raised.

⁸²Anglo women rode side-saddle.

Spanish-Mexican Women

As the Spanish traveled north from Mexico into Texas, they brought with them a patriarchal paradigm in which men ruled all aspects of society. Women were subordinate and their greatest value was their chastity, which could only be lost, not gained (Boswell, 2018, p. 22). But frontier conditions in Texas gave women more power than they could have had in Spain, and Spanish women (see Figure 15), albeit scarce, were important to the building of the ranching industry.

Figure 15

Spanish-Mexican Woman



Note. From “The Legal System” by Washington on the Brazos, 2016, p. 1

(<https://wheretexasbecametexas.org/2561-2/>). Copyright 2016 by Washington on the Brazos. Fair Use.

Women were still responsible for agricultural production on the ranch, reflecting the gender roles of the Native Americans. However, the combination of the feminine-based native heritage and the Spanish ganancial⁸³ law, which granted women equal property and contractual rights, would prove crucial to the formation of the ranch and its influence on Anglo-American women seeking increased rights in the 19th century (Boswell, 2018). In 1821, Mexico gained its independence from Spain, and Texas' population of Spanish colonists decreased almost by half, leaving only 2,240 Mexican inhabitants, with women outnumbering men (Boswell, 2018). The Mexican pioneer women embraced the ideals of the Native Americans, adopting their methods of food preparation to ensure survival. Their work was brutal, yet they turned some of it into fun (e.g., they would strip and play in the water while they did their washing in the river). However, the greatest impact on Texas women came with the influx of Anglo immigrants, who brought with them Protestant versions of Christianity (Boswell, 2018).

Mexican land grants were given to Spanish-Mexican men who increased their land allotments by marrying Mexican women. This also helped maintain the state's Mexican heritage. However, Anglo-American culture discouraged intermarriage and had a very different viewpoint of "mixing blood," particularly with Native American women. Anglo-Americans considered themselves culturally superior and promoted the removal of Native Americans. This attitude eventually extended to other ethnic groups, including African-Americans and Mexican-Americans (Boswell, 2018).

⁸³Ganancial law was the Spanish system of law regarding marital property that served as the basis for the United States. It means something that belongs to both husband and wife; property acquired during marriage as community.

Anglo-American families who settled in Texas typically did not intermingle with Mexicans or Native Americans. However, with a shortage of Anglo women and the increase of land allotment to men with families, Anglo men had a strong incentive to change their viewpoint. Intermarriage was a well-accepted practice among the Spaniards, who believed their European blood still carried a superior breed. After the Texas Revolution ended in 1836, Anglo-American men took over politics from those of Spanish descent and “Americanized” the names of mixed-blood Anglo-Americans with Native American or Spanish wives. Despite these changes, some cultural consistencies remained; women still played a dominant role in decisions regarding their children’s education and religious upbringing, and marriage continued to be viewed as a matter of security for women (Boswell, 2018).

South Texas was settled through the mixing of Spaniards and Native Americans, while East Texas saw the arrival of Anglo-Americans seeking more farmland and, after the Mexican Independence, German immigrants, altogether creating a unique southern frontier (Boswell, 2018).

Anglo Women

Despite being considered more privileged than other female immigrants, Anglo-American women faced severe physical and emotional hardship in the foreign environment of Texas, including war, loneliness, primitive living conditions, and backbreaking labor. Resiliency would be required as they transposed their past values into the creation of a “New World.” German and African-American women would face additional challenges, living among Anglo women whose cultural values of hierarchical societies influenced the state (Boswell, 2018).

Women on the frontier (see Figure 16) faced potential violence by Native peoples whose land upon which they were trying to settle. The frontier was beyond the reach of any law enforcement, forcing settlers to defend themselves against warring Indigenous cultures, wild animals, outlaws, and disease (Boswell, 2018). Women learned to use shotguns for survival, and later in the century, some resorted to sex work in brothels.

During the Texas Revolution, women took on new roles supporting the Texian army, including espionage, bullet-making, and uniform-sewing, while their husbands and young boys fought in the army. Women often had to move quickly to escape from danger, their wagons frequently becoming stuck on the terrain or hindered by rivers. They learned that nothing was permanent on the frontier.

Figure 16

Western Pioneer Women



Note. From “Western Pioneer Women” [photograph], by Cattle Raisers Museum, n.d., p. 1 (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph44477/>). Fair Use.

Anglo women who settled in Texas had little choice about leaving their close communities and family support systems behind, because men directed the future of their families. Women who embraced settling in Texas did so with a dream of a better financial state, taking on the usual duties of cooking, cleaning, and caring for the children, as well as driving wagons and tending to livestock.

The first priority for settlers on the frontier was to establish a home. Often, the initial year was spent in makeshift cabins or tents. With no towns nearby in which to purchase ready-made items, women had to become resourceful and inventive. They had to learn to make forks from cane and cups from dried and scraped squash. Women's value to their families lay in being the economic producers of household items such as soap and candles, growing vegetable gardens, drying precious meat, spinning thread, and making clothes (Boswell, 2018).

In the 19th century, Texas was known for its ever-shifting borders, and those who survived the frontier era were greatly impacted (Boswell, 2018). As settlements began to take shape, civil structures started to form. The most prominent group of settlers in East Texas were the Anglo-American Southerners, whose roots laid with the Anglo-Barbadians. Their aristocratic and racial hierarchical systems had a lasting impact on the state's evolution, which differed from the more relational aspects seen among Native peoples and evident in Spanish heritage as well (Boswell, 2018).

The Southern male culture, which heavily influenced East Texas, was based on the culture of the Eastern United States. According to Boswell (2018), women did not challenge the institution of slavery, and White elite women worked to establish distinctions among White women (versus non-White women) that justified their wealth

and privileges. Women accepted the hierarchy that placed all men above women and were required to be submissive to men in return for protection and status based on family position. These ideals were reinforced by their Christian faith. African women were forced to submit to laws that gave masters and their wives power over them (Boswell, 2018).

As the frontier faded, women in East Texas created new societies based on aristocratic ideals. They expressed their status through the slave industry, and thus their values remained consistent. If women questioned the authority of men in the family, they could bring into question the legitimacy of slave ownership; thus, women's subordinate status was critical to the slave industry. Women established their family reputations through public displays of pageantry and parties (Boswell, 2018).

The Southern culture of the 19th century had a significant impact on the lives of women, particularly in Texas, where reputation, class, and family connections determined a woman's social status. This still can be observed in Texas society today. Southern women were expected to bear many children, which further enhanced their husbands' prestige. Elite families worked hard to ensure their sons inherited the land and their daughters inherited the mobile property, in the form of slaves. Although Southern women were given some power to choose their own husbands, marriage was crucial to maintaining the family's social status.

The influence of women on the moral development of children led to the growth of churches, which also provided social outlets and hospitality through auxiliary groups (Boswell, 2018). The aristocracy of the Anglo followed the Episcopal Church (the former Church of England, rebranded in the United States in 1789), while evangelical

denominations arose due to the absence of full-time clergy, weakening close connections with other, more established Christian denominations (Boswell, 2018). A woman's social world was based on her family structure, and her religious ideals demanded submission to masculine authority figures— including Christ, her father, and her husband—which created a constant inner struggle between expectations of superior moral behavior and her ability to know her true self.

Throwing Off the Corset: Pioneer Women of West Texas

I remember the first time I saw it. Tried to find words to describe it but I couldn't. Nothing had prepared me. . .no books, no teachers, not even my parents. I heard a thousand stories, but none could describe this place. It must be witnessed to be understood. And yet, I've seen it, and understand it even less than before I first cast eyes on this place. Some call it the American Desert, others, the Great Plains. But those phrases were invented by professors at universities surrounded by the illusion of order and the fantasy of right and wrong. To know it, you must walk it. Bleed into its dirt. Drown in its rivers. Then its name becomes clear. It is Hell, and there are demons everywhere. (Glasser, 2021, 1:01)

In contrast to Anglo-American dominated East Texas, West Texas was developing its own unique identity, inspiring mythic narratives of the lone cowboy fighting the elements. However, the cowboy never acted alone, as the number of men equaled the number of women, regardless of whether they were Native Americans or families immigrating to settle farms and ranches (Boswell, 2018,). Women on the West Texas frontier—where the landscape was vast and barren—faced different challenges than those in East Texas. While West Texas women were adapting to the wild and uncivilized life, East Texas women had the privilege of mimicking the social hierarchy of the American East Coast. Native American women participated in the buffalo hide trade to maintain their gender status, while women on the frontier ranches worked full time to raise children, prepare food, and manage the land and animals (Boswell, 2018).

The Christian ideology that took hold in Texas did not embrace the feminine principle except for the transcendent Virgin Mary of the Roman Catholic Church, who became another symbol of power. Religion had already become disconnected from the feminine qualities of life due to centuries of progressive dissociation. Pioneer women arrived in Texas already shaped by a patriarchal Father-God image and following the male head of the family. Yet the harsh realities of frontier life forced women to abandon traditional gender roles in order to survive, requiring them to *throw off the corset* literally and figuratively.

The Christianity that came to Texas featured an ethos guided by a Lone Star, a different type of monotheism that perpetuated a need for ownership of land to pin down and solidify the processes of life. The Anglo woman arrived with her senses atrophied due to the conditioning of a religious ethic that promoted the taking and owning of land. This imperialism was driven by a warrior-like culture and sanctioned by divine instruction. The Anglo woman who became the Cowgirl not only had the opportunity but was required by circumstances to reignite her instinctual, feminine self through encountering rattlesnakes, unforgiving land, and warring Native peoples. The Cowgirl had no guidebook, no authority figure to consult to know how to handle ever-shifting dangers from humans, animals, and the environment. The only remnant of her feminine nature was scant, evident in her relationships with others. Her husband was rarely present; her children were vulnerable to many of the surrounding life-threatening conditions. She was alone, confronted by herself. They were no men to inhabit nonexistent church pulpits, only a transcendent male God of biblical reference. The imagery of the frontier was filled with the feminine nature of wild vegetation,

meandering streams, gliding snakes, dirt of a thousand shades, and the sky as an infinite backdrop.

The historical Cowgirl, who emerged from the pioneer woman, unconsciously adopted the Indigenous people's way of being in the world, living with nature without guidance or security. She became a biophilic⁸⁴—her saving grace—forcing her to learn a wildness that seeks life. In many ways, she encountered precultural cosmology while also participating in the European-influenced settlement of the frontier. She had to engage with her humanness and develop empathic reciprocity, grounded in her instinctual physical body, with other living things. Like Native peoples, she had to learn the interdependence of the cycles of nature and develop a deep respect for nature's chaotic forces.

Cynthia Ann Parker: Woman of Two Worlds

The story of Cynthia Ann Parker is one of the most iconic in Texas history (see Figure 17). I am briefly including it here because her story has become a myth that is embedded in the state's culture. She was a woman caught between two worlds; an Anglo woman born into a culture of puritanical values who was then assimilated into a nomadic way of life.

In 1834, the Parker clan migrated from Virginia to Texas. They settled in an area close to the Navasota River in Limestone County, in an area bordering on Comanche territory. Several frontier families joined them, making a small fort called the Parker Fort. They were hardcore Baptists of a puritanical Protestant sect whose highest value was

⁸⁴A "biophilic" is a lover of nature and all living things.

strict adherence to societal rules, hard work, and morality. Adherence to these beliefs was considered the way to heaven. Like most frontier colonists, they believed they had a right to settle the untamed lands. Adverse to war, they brought their rifles only for protection or hunting. Driven by an inner authority, they were devoted to disciplining the lands by planting corn crops.

Figure 17

Cynthia Ann Parker and Prairie Flower



Note. From “The Die is Cast,” by S. Dial, n.d., p. 1

(<https://www.texasbeyondhistory.net/forts/dieiscast.html>). Fair Use.

The frontier population’s understanding of Native peoples prior to arrival on the land was mostly acquired from edited versions of newspapers, often quoted by historians,

which ill-prepared them for confrontations with warring tribes. On May 19, 1936, the Comanches attacked Fort Parker—which was located on the Native peoples’ hunting ground—and executed atrocities of killing, raping, and scalping, along with stealing several children. Cynthia Ann Parker, approximately age 9, was taken—then whipped, raped, and beaten. This could be seen as sadistic torture, however, it was a common Comanche rite of humiliation used to subordinate captives (Fehrenbach, 1974).

The raid became a “cause” known throughout the entire Southwestern frontier. The Parker family approached the recapturing of their family member as fervently as they practiced their faith. This ignited the hatred of Anglos for dark-skinned people across the frontier, and it sparked a larger tragedy, the attempted extinction of all the Native peoples of Texas, including sedentary, agrarian Native peoples of East Texas.

Meanwhile, Cynthia Ann had become a tribal member and a wife of chieftain Peta Nocona (“He Who Travels Alone and Returns”) of the most distant and strongest of the Comanche bands. She adapted to tribal culture and birthed three children – Quanah,⁸⁵ Pecos, and Prairie Flower. Like all Comanche women, she performed all the hard labor necessary for survival except hunting. At age 34, after 24 years of assimilating into the nomadic life, she was recaptured in 1860 at the Battle of Pease River⁸⁶ by the Texas Rangers⁸⁷ and militia. Her native husband, Peta Nocona, was allegedly killed by Ranger Captain Lawrence Sullivan “Sul” Ross; however, his son Quanah countered that

⁸⁵Quanah Parker (1845-1911) became a Comanche war chief and leader.

⁸⁶The Battle of Pease River was a violent conflict that occurred December 18, 1860, between a group of Texas Rangers and militiamen against a band of Comanches that resulted in the recapture of Cynthia Ann Parker.

⁸⁷The Texas Rangers is a law enforcement agency that has existed since 1823. It was originally created to protect settlers from warring Native tribes.

narrative, stating his father escaped and died several years later from old war wounds. The story⁸⁸ changed over time, becoming politically charged.

After being recaptured, Cynthia Ann Parker, or Naduah, meaning “Someone Found,” along with her infant daughter, Topsannah, meaning “Prairie Flower,” were taken back into the Anglo world. The Parker blood became a unifying force in the push to exterminate the Indigenous peoples, who were seen as hindrances to Anglos’ desires to develop the land of the Native peoples. The blonde-haired, blue-eyed Cynthia Ann begged to return to her “true” family—her Native husband and their two sons on the High Plains—and resigned from speaking the English language of her birth family.

However, Parker family members held her prisoner and she became a state icon, portrayed in an infamous picture mimicking the “Madonna and child”⁸⁹ pose (see Figure 17). There was little hope of cultural readjustment for her. When her daughter Topsannah died of a “civilized” disease, Cynthia Ann enacted a traditional mourning ritual of the Comanche by crying, howling, and mutilating herself. Eventually, her apathy for life and suffering led to her soul’s death and self-starvation (Fehrenbach, 1974; Taegel, personal communication, October 24, 2020).

The story of Cynthia Ann Parker serves as an example of a woman caught between two worlds. Her story reflects the clash of cultures and the tragic consequences of alienating oneself from nature. Her story impacted my psyche as I was struggling with the condition of passivity valued as a spiritual quality for women in Anglo culture. I

⁸⁸According to Quanah, his father, Peta, made the difficult decision to flee with his eldest son, Quanah, to ensure his safety. Capt. Sul Ross claimed the man who was shot was Peta, making Ross a hero for the deed. Ross became the 19th governor of Texas and a university was named for him.

⁸⁹This picture was taken in the stockyards of Fort Worth, Texas (see Figure 17).

dreamt I was riding a horse backward, sitting on its head and pulling the reins in the opposite direction to stop it. My horse continues as I face challenges such as a barbed wire fence. I push it over, onto the ground and head back to the corral with an inner determination (see Appendix D).

Cynthia Ann Parker's story does not end with her death. Her eldest son, Kwahnah (Quanah), or "Sweet Odor," would become the greatest Comanche chief of all time. His fierce leadership helped to protect the Comanche people and he negotiated with the American government for Native peoples' rights. He also was instrumental in the use of peyote and the creation of the Native American Church, affording Native people another way to access the spirit. Quanah, like his mother, was a man who lived in two worlds.

CHAPTER VII: ORIGINS OF THE COWHAND CULTURE

In this section I delve into the transformation of the Texas cowhand (today known as the cowboy) culture and its significant role in the emergence of the historical Cowgirl in the 1800s. I examine the origins of the cowboy as a *vaquero* during the Spanish colonization of the New World, particularly in New Spain (Mexico), where the cattle industry played a pivotal role, as livestock held economic value and served as currency.⁹⁰

The foundational myth of the cowboy is crucial to comprehension of the evolution of the Cowgirl myth. Thus, I examine the *vaquero*'s role as a humble laborer and consider how the progressive ideology of owning and commodifying livestock and land gradually shaped the image of the cowboy into a heroic figure. I also highlight the profound influence of the ranching industry's environmental advancements and innovative techniques in domesticating and managing untamed livestock. These transformative developments gave birth to enduring symbols that deeply influenced the culture and collective consciousness of Texas.

In Chapter XI, an examination of ancient symbolism, including the cow and its maternal nature, reveals profound meanings associated with the cow as a cultural icon. This examination of ancient symbolism illuminates the resilience of the feminine despite efforts to control animals and land. This is further illustrated in Chapter VIII, through the exploration of the myth of the Cowgirl.

⁹⁰The term "cattle" originally encompassed various forms of property, such as money, land, and income, until the 13th century (Harper Douglas, n.d.). Its roots can be traced to the Anglo-French word *catel*, meaning "property," and the Medieval Latin word *capitale*, signifying both "property" and "stock."

The Influence of Old Spain's *Rancho*

The “cowboying” way of life emerged from Spanish *ranchero* influence on the Texas frontier. Historian Dary (1989)⁹¹ described the *ranchero*'s early impact in his book, *Cowboy Culture: A Saga of Five Centuries*. He explains that before 711 C.E., Visigoths bred distinct horse bloodlines in Spain, blending Andalusian and Moorish elements, leading to a unique riding style. Post Columbus's voyage, there was a significant import of livestock to the New World, crucial for settlement. The Spanish introduced horses and cattle, including specific breeds like *Berrenda* and *Retinto*, to New Spain (Mexico) in the early 16th century, adapting to the Texas plains resembling Spain's climate. These cattle were primarily valued for their hides and meat. This amalgamation of livestock introduction, adaptation of riding styles, and the blend of cultures led to the emergence of the distinctive cowboy lifestyle in the region (Dary, 1989).

Cattle in New Spain: The New Gold

Originating with Hernán Cortés in the fertile Mexicaltzingo⁹² valley, the cattle industry in New Spain (Mexico) marked the beginning of ranching and cattle branding. This rapid increase in cattle population led to various issues including land rights conflicts and the practice of “mavericking,” the confiscating of unbranded cattle (Dary, 1989, p. 9). To manage and regulate the booming industry, an organization called the

⁹¹David Dary (1934-2018) was an acclaimed American historian and author renowned for his research and writings on the American West. His significant contributions to the field of history earned him numerous accolades, including induction into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame, and prestigious honors such as the Wrangler Award, Western Heritage Award, and Owen Wister Award.

⁹²Mexicaltzingo is a municipality located in central Mexico. Its name, from the Náhuatl language, means “place in where habits the honorable people.”

Mesta⁹³ was established in 1529 laying the groundwork for branding rules and membership requirements, which would influence contemporary ranching laws and cattlemen's groups.

The introduction of non-Spaniards, including Native peoples and African descendants, to horse-riding and herd management by Franciscan priests, led to the emergence of *vaqueros*. These *vaqueros* adapted a unique blend of Spanish and Native clothing, suited to the hot climate and the demanding nature of their work. The discovery of silver in Zacatecas⁹⁴ increased demand for cattle, leading to more territorial conflicts with Native tribes and the establishment of protective forts or *presidios* (Dary, 1989).

As cattle became abundant, the industry shifted its focus towards the value of hides and tallow, increasing reliance on *vaquero* labor and leading to the establishment of a ranching aristocracy. This aristocracy was characterized by expansive *estancias*, a hierarchical employment structure with *estancieros* overseeing the properties, and *vaqueros*, often of mixed heritage, playing a pivotal role in the day-to-day operations. *Vaqueros* typically owned basic equipment such as a saddle, horse, and small lance. He worked under challenging conditions, reflecting the economic and social stratifications of the time (Dary, 1989).

The Evolution of the *Vaquero*

The evolution of the *vaquero* and their lifestyle played a pivotal role in shaping cattle ranching in New Spain. In the 1500s, different saddles were developed, including the *jineta* saddle, designed for comfort during long hours of work. Most horses used by

⁹³Mesta refers to an historical system of land tenure and management that was prevalent in medieval Spain.

⁹⁴Zacatecas is located in central Mexico.

vaqueros were stallions, regarded for their perceived power (Dary, 1989). The abundance of wild horses and cattle facilitated practices like *rodeo* (“go-around” in Spanish), a precursor to modern rodeos, essential for branding and managing livestock. Innovations such as the use of *lazo* (lasso) emerged, enabling efficient cattle handling (Dary, 1989).

Vaqueros utilized various tools and techniques, such as the *cabresto*, a horse-hair halter, for controlling bulls during trail drives. By the 1560s, the increasing scale of trail-driving necessitated formal registration and branding checks, imposing additional charges and obligations on ranchers. This formalization of processes, including aspects of the Mesta structure, influenced the cattle industry in regions like Texas, though elements of frontier lawlessness persisted (Dary, 1989).

Dary (1989) reflected on how the presence of a structured authority like the Mesta could have altered the history of the American West, possibly preventing the emergence of iconic figures associated with cowboy culture and lawlessness. The Mesta maintained order but also upheld Old Spain’s patriarchal traditions. Regulations included prohibiting non-Spaniards from owning horses and imposing harsh penalties for violations, reflecting societal hierarchies and class distinctions (Dary, 1989).

The cattle industry experienced significant growth but faced challenges like insufficient labor and a declining Native population due to poverty and disease. Thievery and conflicts with Native tribes and criminal *vaqueros*, known as *bandidos*, led to the enactment of more stringent regulations and the establishment of arrangements with Christianized Natives. These Natives were provided with resources in exchange for adopting a settled lifestyle, aiming to establish a hierarchical structure and dismantle tribal cohesion. This approach to managing Native populations and integrating them into

the colonial structure was mirrored in later colonization efforts in regions such as Texas (Dary, 1989).

Expansion Into the American West

By the 1590s, the ranching frontier had expanded northward to the Rio Grande area, encompassing present-day El Paso, Texas. Juan de Oñate,⁹⁵ a wealthy silver miner, obtained the right to colonize this region from the government of Old Spain. His explorers ventured into the Great Plains of Texas and present-day New Mexico, while missionaries were dispatched to convert the Pueblo Natives. Oñate led 400 men and 130 families to establish San Gabriel,⁹⁶ the first Spanish settlement in the American Southwest. Accompanied by *vaqueros*, they brought 7,000 cattle, livestock, and food supplies with them to support the colony. By the 1600s, the ranching industry⁹⁷ thrived, with *vaqueros* spreading the cattle culture northward into Texas and throughout the American West, reaching all the way to California (Fehrenbach, 2000).

The Hacienda, a Blueprint for the Rancho

The settlement of Texas was influenced by Mexican culture, with the hacienda serving as a blueprint for the *rancho*. Primarily an income-generating enterprise, it played a pivotal role in shaping the region, as it aimed to generate profits for the proprietor beyond just cattle-raising. The term *hacienda* derives from the Spanish verb *hacer*,

⁹⁵Juan de Oñate (1550-1626) was a Spanish conquistador and explorer who played a significant role in the early colonization of New Mexico.

⁹⁶San Gabriel evolved into the present-day Pueblo of Ohkay Owingeh, north of Santa Fe, N.M.

⁹⁷In the 1580s, there was a great reduction of cattle due to the massive slaughtering of them for their hides. Approximately 75,000 hides were transported from New Spain to Seville, Spain, and 150,000 to other sites in Europe. This pattern would be repeated on the Texas frontier with the slaughtering of the bison in the 1800s.

meaning “to do” or “to make,” reflecting its primary purpose of generating profits beyond cattle-raising for the proprietor.

Established in the 1600s in New Spain due to the Spanish crown’s financial constraints, the system worked through land grants given to conquistadors and influential citizens. *Hacendados* had significant control over their properties, transitioning from the prior grazing-rights system. The *vaquero*, integral to the hacienda, passed down their role through generations. Given the extensive land required for cattle, *haciendas* resembled company towns, providing essentials and loans. A shift in trading and payment systems led vaqueros into debt, further binding them and their offspring to the *haciendas* (Dary, 1989). In many respects, the *vaquero* served as a prototype for the American cowboy.

Early Texas Missions to Ranchos

By the late 18th century, New Spain thrived in the cattle industry, contrasting with Texas’s slower development. The acquisition of Louisiana by Spain in 1761 eliminated French competition, highlighting Texas’s livestock potential despite the absence of precious metals. Spain unified territories including Texas under Teodoro de Croix,⁹⁸ declaring unbranded cattle as crown property and implementing a tax system. Missions established for conversion and cattle raising faced challenges, leading to system revisions by 1778.

Dary (1989) notes the 10-year tenure of Franciscan priests at missions was inadequate for converting Indigenous people who, despite prohibitions, possessed horses and raided missions. Challenges like taxes, *vaquero* scarcity, hostile natives, and

⁹⁸Teodoro de Croix was a French-born military officer who served as the commandant general of the internal provinces of New Spain from 1776 to 1783.

environmental harshness impacted the cattle industry, excluding South Texas (Dary, 1989). Post-1821, independent Mexico demanded Franciscan priests' allegiance, leading to mission livestock being abandoned or given to Natives. Despite challenges, the priests introduced the bluebonnet and honeybees to Texas (Dary, 1989).

As described in Chapter III, Anglo-Americans began immigrating to Texas in 1825 marking the inception of a unique blend of Spanish and Anglo influences in the region. The term "rancho" in Spanish denoted a small farm dedicated to livestock, a concept unfamiliar to the Anglos who were predominantly farmers and herded cattle on foot. Unlike them, the Spanish utilized horses for herding. Despite the initial focus on agriculture, Anglo settlers gradually embraced elements of Spanish hacienda culture and cattle raising. The settlers lived in modest single-room structures made from logs and mud. Due to the absence of effective law enforcement by the Mexican government, Texians⁹⁹ organized their own militia, eventually known as the Texas Rangers.¹⁰⁰ These men brought American long rifles with them, which were designed for use in wooded areas while on foot but proved less suitable for battling Native tribes (Dary, 1989).

⁹⁹"Texian" refers to the residents of Texas who were primarily of Anglo-American descent and supported the Texas Revolution and the establishment of an independent Republic of Texas. The term "Texian" distinguished them from the Mexican and Tejano populations of the region during that period.

¹⁰⁰The Texas Rangers, established in the 1800s, was a frontier law enforcement and defense organization. They played a significant role in maintaining order, protecting settlers from threats such as Native American raids and outlaws, and enforcing the law in the vast and often lawless frontier region. Today, the Texas Rangers is an investigative law enforcement agency.

Cattle, the New Currency of Texas

By 1830, Texas was home to approximately 100,000 cattle, including the distinct Texas longhorn, a hybrid breed descended from Spanish and Native herds. Due to currency scarcity, cattle became a form of transaction, with branding methods differing from those in New Spain. A hundred head of cattle signified independent success (Dary, 1989).

In the *Woodman's Guide of Boston*, cited by Dary (1989), cattleman William Wilson wrote about his frontier life with his wife Amelia. He described Amelia's aspiration to acquire 100 cows within a year and how she anticipated having more stock than they could handle in 5 years. Amelia endured the common hardships of the frontier, which required the participation of all family members. Dary also quoted Mary Austin Holley, cousin of Stephen F. Austin, who highlighted the remarkable feats of women on the frontier, including joining their husbands in hunting on mustangs and traveling long distances to attend balls—their silk dresses stowed in their saddlebags.

By the mid-1830s, Texas was home to approximately 30,000 people concentrated in East and southeast Texas. Cattle raising was pivotal, and Mexican *vaqueros* were crucial in livestock management, despite limited profits from poor meat quality. Consequently, the *vaqueros* innovated in taming wild horses for sale, employing large corrals with wings to select the best animals and releasing the rest back to the wild. They starved and continuously moved the horses to “break” them, making them accept saddles and bridles. Subsequently, colonists adopted these techniques (Dary, 1989).

While early Texans learned extensively from the Mexican *vaqueros*, the increasing Anglo population, with their Protestant values, brought stark cultural

differences to the Indigenous and Spanish cultures. The Anglos exhibited a sense of superiority, which ultimately led to the Texas Revolution.

The Power of the Six-Shooter

The introduction of percussion rifles and revolvers in Texas occurred approximately 3 years after the Texas Revolution, during a time marked by rebellion against government control and conflicts with native tribes. The Texas Rangers, entrusted with combating their primary enemy, the Comanche, obtained rifles and revolvers from Samuel Colt's Patent Fire-Arms Manufacturing Company. The initial model, known as "The Texas," revolutionized frontier warfare, and further improvements by Ranger Samuel Walker resulted in a heavier six-shooter that could be used as a club, loaded without disassembly, and featured a safety guard on the trigger (see Figure 18).

Figure 18

Six-Shooter



Note. From "The Colt Six Shooter: A Gun so Heavy, It Takes a Texan to Shoot It," by W. F. Strong, 2015, p. 1 (<https://www.texasstandard.org/stories/the-colt-six-shooter-a-gun-so-heavy-it-takes-a-texan-to-shoot-it/>). Copyright 2023 by Texas Standard. Fair Use.

This six-shooter utilized from 1847 onward, proved effective against the Comanche, surpassing their shields, and overshadowing traditional *vaquero* tools of rope and lance. Beyond its practicality, the six-shooter became deeply ingrained in the Texas psyche and later associated with iconic figures like Annie Oakley in Wild West Shows (Dary, 1989; Fehrenbach, 2000).

The Origin of the Word “Cowboy”

Raising cattle on the open range was customary in both Mexican *rancheros* and brush country *ranchos* east of the Rio Grande. As Comanche raids drove many Mexican ranchers away, their cattle turned wild. Texians later known as “cow-boys” rounded up these wild cattle for their own gain (Dary, 1989). Led by figures like Ewen Cameron, who gathered former soldiers and employed techniques borrowed from Mexican *vaqueros* (see Figure 19), they drove the cattle to locations like Goliad to be sold for meat and hides or drove them to Louisiana.

The term “cow-boy” originally emerged in Ireland around 1000 C.E., where it was associated with wranglers and horsemen, and later carried by Irish migrants to America. Initially viewed negatively, the term gradually gave way to the more accepted English word “drover” until around 1900 when the hyphen in cow-boy was dropped; the term “cowboy” was thereafter associated with a livestock laborer (Dary, 1989).

The early 1800s witnessed the concentration of cowboys in settlements on both sides of the Rio Grande where outlaws frequently raided ranches for livestock. To ensure safety, ranchers would gather their cattle and drive them together to trading posts in Texas or Louisiana. Families of ranchers would often live together to protect themselves against bandits and warring tribes (Dary, 1989). However, by the mid-1800s, the market

for Texas cattle shifted from the eastern and northeastern United States to the West, leading to a way of life in which cowboys drove hundreds of cattle through unrestricted trails on the open range. This demanding lifestyle called for a resilient and self-reliant spirit (Dary, 1989).

Figure 19

Vaqueros, Early 1900s



Note. From “Cowboys Through History,” by Traces of Texas, n.d., p. 18

(<https://texashighways.com/travel-news/a-visual-history-of-cowboys-in-texas/>).

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The End of the Cowboy Era

I believe I could walk along. . .any town and pick out a real cowboy. . .[h]e is not innocent of course; but living in the open, next to nature, the cleaner life is stamped on his face. His vices leave no scars or few, because old mother nature

has him [or her] with her most of the time. (Bulah Rust Kirkland,¹⁰¹ daughter of an early Texas cowboy). (Dary, 1989, p. 280)

Kirkland's "cleaner life" refers to the instinctual connection between man and nature.

Shaping Texas's culture were longhorns, land, Spanish ranching practices, and the development of cattle markets. Early Texas ranches, unlike Mexican *haciendas*, were not self-sustaining entities. However, during the Civil War when resources became scarce, ranching families had to become more independent. Women played a crucial role in this transition by establishing gardens to help feed their families and the workers. After the Civil War, as land became more accessible, the cattle industry experienced a resurgence, and cowboys adapted, utilizing routes like the famous Chisholm Trail, which led them to Abilene, Kansas, where cattle could be shipped east for higher prices. By 1869, an annual total of 350,000 cattle were driven to Abilene (Dary, 1989).

The cowboys of this cattle-driving culture developed unique practices that eventually became celebrated, as performance cowboy culture emerged. While on the trail, cowboys would form a circle around the cattle and sing, aiming to calm the bovines. This act resembled a mother humming to her baby or singing simple lyrics that depicted their daily lives. In the film industry's amplification of the cowboy myth, the cow was replaced with a woman, and the cowboy, with his guitar, would serenade her, not the cows (Dary, 1989).

The open range had a profound impact on the unwritten code of ethics observed by historical cowboys (see Figure 20), shaping the more structured model that exists today. Loyalty, faithfulness to the interests of employers and fellow cowboys, and

¹⁰¹Bulah Rust Kirkland was the daughter of an early Texas cowboy whose father remains unidentified.

selflessness were defining characteristics of the historical cowboy. They were willing to make sacrifices, even risking their lives to protect the herd. Additionally, perhaps because there were so few women on the open range, women were held in high-esteem, their virtue protected (Dary, 1989). As time progressed and ranching practices evolved, these principles were formalized, often through the establishment of bunkhouses as primitive shelters for cowboys to sleep in, replacing the need for constant herding. The advent of barbed-wire fencing further facilitated this change by allowing cattle to be contained, also reducing the need for round-the-clock herding.

Figure 20

Cowboys on the Open Range, Early 1900s



Note. From “Cowboys Through History,” by Traces of Texas, n.d., p. 4

(<https://texashighways.com/travel-news/a-visual-history-of-cowboys-in-texas/>).

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A cattle roundup was a coordinated event with an appointed boss to settle disputes. For short roundups, cowboys carried their own food, but on longer drives, mules or wagons transported rations. In 1866, Charles Goodnight introduced the “chuckwagon,” a retrofitted wagon made of sturdy bois d’arc wood with compartments for culinary and first-aid needs, which revolutionized food provision on extended drives. Ranchers hired chuckwagon cooks to ensure cowboys were well fed, fostering goodwill (Dary, 1989).

A horse was not only the cowboy’s closest and most constant companion but also essential to his way of life (Dary, 1989). However, the advent of the railroad brought a new form of “horsepower,” known as the “iron horse,” which significantly expanded cattle production in Texas, enabling the settlement of previously uninhabited areas. It also brought a distinction between the cowboy as a mounted laborer and the cattleman as the entrepreneurial figure. Increased demand from cattle markets such as Kansas elevated the cowboy to the position of a hired hand on horseback. The railroad also brought imports from the “civilized life” of the East, representing a contrasting way of existence compared to the cowboy’s open-range lifestyle (Dary, 1989).

The rise of the railroad industry signaled the end of the historical frontier era. Barbed wire, known as “the devil’s hat band,” emerged in the late 1870s and marked the demise of the open range, creating barriers and ending the traditional way of life (Dary, 1989, p. 312). While initially met with resistance, some cattlemen embraced the idea of enclosing grazing areas to protect their herds from drought, eventually making it the standard.

By the late 1800s, the number of real cowboys in the American West had dwindled. Shaped by the vast plains and the communal effort of cowboying, they embodied strength, directness, and practicality, guided by a sense of humility and a commitment to living authentically. As the frontier became more influenced by Eastern Anglo-Americans, the cowboy's simple attire evolved to include stylish elements such as white felt hats with silk or leather straps, calfskin chaps, high-heeled boots, and colorful silk handkerchiefs (Dary, 1989).

The primary duty of a cowboy was "wrangling," which involved rounding up cattle, horses, and other livestock. In the 1880s, as land ownership increased and cattlemen grew wealthier, a greater divide emerged between the cattlemen/entrepreneurs and the cowboys. Written contracts replaced the previous informal collaboration of the open range. Cattlemen sought cowboys who adhered to a code of ethics, prohibiting gambling, drinking, or fighting. Cowboys were not allowed personal brands or cattle ownership, preventing them from accumulating wealth (Dary, 1989). The rise of foreign cattlemen from Britain and Scotland brought hierarchical beliefs that clashed with the cowboy's sense of equality.

As the natural propagation of cattle on the open range increased and the cowboy's status diminished to "hired help," the traditional cowboy way of life further declined. The use of barbed-wire fences added to the tension, as ranchers enclosed their properties, including unclaimed or public lands, to protect their livestock from "rustlers." Fence cutting, often done by rustlers or even by cattlemen during droughts, led to conflicts and the enactment of laws against it. Cattlemen also employed "gunmen" to prevent fence-cutting and cattle theft (Dary, 1989).

The Myth of the Cowboy

By 1870, the cowboy way of life had vanished, replaced by a myth shaped by books, Wild West shows, and later, films. Owen Wister's novel *The Virginian* misrepresented cowboys as gun-slinging heroes, while Wild West shows sensationalized and distorted the reality of the West. Rodeos emerged as entertainment events, focusing on competition rather than the original work of cowboys. Films like *Cripple Creek* (see Figure 21) further disconnected cowboys from their bond with the land and animals (Dary, 1989).

Figure 21

Movie Poster



Note. From “Cripple Creek [Movie poster by Goldwin Pictures 1952] by Movies! Reel Variety, 2023, p. 1 (<https://www.moviesreel.com/movies/cripple-creek>). Copyright 2023 by Popcorn Entertainment, LLC. Fair Use.

In the 1920s, Hunter¹⁰² embarked on a mission to chronicle the narratives of genuine cowboys and pioneers who played a pivotal role in establishing the cattle industry in Texas during challenging times. He sought to counter the negative stereotypes perpetuated by popular culture, portraying cowboys as rough, lawless individuals devoid of principles. Through their own accounts, Hunter revealed the true character of these men, showcasing their everyday acts of chivalry, loyalty, love for their country and home, and their respect for the rights of others. Many of them were self-taught, as formal education was scarce in their era (Hunter, 1923).

Nevertheless, the enduring myth of the cowboy persists in modern times, characterized by iconic elements such as wide-brimmed hats, stylish boots, and pickup trucks embellished with rifle displays. These symbols evoke a sense of branded individualism in a society constrained by regulations. Recognizing the cowboy's origins in the vaquero's way of life, I dreamt of my dissertation advisor, Brenda Crowther, donning a 10-gallon hat as we strolled through a neighborhood. United by recent challenges, I inquired: should we revisit our past or venture towards a yet-unseen future? The circular brim of Brenda's hat mirrored the ouroboros¹⁰³, reflecting my psyche's journey of integration with the darker parts of my cultural heritage, anchoring me as I navigate the path ahead (See Appendix E).

¹⁰²J. Marvin Hunter (1880-1957) was an esteemed American author and historian known for his influential book *the Trail Drivers of Texas* (1923), which documented the rich history of cattle drives and the brave cowboys who shaped Texas. His meticulous research and dedication to preserving Texas's heritage have left a lasting impact on the field of Western history.

¹⁰³ An ouroboros is an ancient symbol depicting a serpent or dragon eating its own tail.

The cowboy image continues to captivate the American psyche, representing a longing for freedom and expansive landscapes (see Figure 22). Acknowledging that the original open range belonged to Indigenous peoples, the historical cowboy's connection to nature is expressed through tender interactions with cattle and nights spent beneath the starry sky. The essential role played by pioneer women remains undeniable, as their presence was indispensable for the cowmen to endure the hardships inherent to frontier life. It is within this cowboy culture that the figure of the Cowgirl emerges.

Figure 22

Cowboy Mailing a Letter on the Frontier, Early 1900s



Note. From “Cowboys Through History,” by Traces of Texas, n.d., p. 39

(<https://texashighways.com/travel-news/a-visual-history-of-cowboys-in-texas/>).

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CHAPTER VIII: THE MYTH OF THE COWGIRL

Pioneer woman Dorothy Ross wrote in her 1959 memoir, *Stranger to the Desert*,

It was a truly surprised and unhappy rancher who said: “I can’t figure out why my wife went crazy. Why, she ain’t been out of the kitchen in 20 years!” He merely expressed the viewpoint of many other men. It had not occurred to him that woman is a gregarious animal—or should be. (as cited in Jordan, 1992, p. xxvii)

The myth of the Cowgirl arose from the pioneering women who braved the frontier and evolved through rodeo culture and Wild West shows. As time went on, societal expectations shaped her image—especially in the realm of film—into one of sweetness and wholesomeness. However, the portrayal of the Cowgirl later underwent a shift, as she was increasingly sexualized and objectified.

Throughout this evolution, societal structures gradually succumbed to dominant masculine influences, particularly within the hierarchical systems of the ranching industry. The archetypal image of the feminine underwent significant transformations reflected in containment symbolized by the encroachment of barbed wire and later, a “safer” stirrup relegated to female bronc-riding competitors. This containment not only signified the shrinking boundaries of the land, but also reflected the narrowing value of the feminine principle.

Consequently, the portrayal of the Cowgirl adapted in accordance with prevailing societal constructs of Anglo values. Yet beneath these external changes, the enduring archetype of the feminine persevered, leaving a lasting imprint on the psyche of women. Despite the constraints imposed by evolving societal images, the Cowgirl maintained a profound and unwavering connection to the timeless essence of the goddess archetype through relatedness with animals, the land, and other Cowgirls. In this section, I examine

the perspectives of the pioneering woman and the changing images representing the myth of the Cowgirl.

The Spirit of the Pioneer Woman

Here I explore two unique viewpoints of the pioneer woman, one offered by the aforementioned Hunter (1922) as presented in his book, *Pioneer History of Bandera County: Seventy-five Years of Intrepid History*, and the other by Evelyn Cameron (Lucey, 1990), a pioneer woman who not only chronicled her experiences through letters describing the frontier but also captured those experiences with her photography. Through Cameron's unique perspective and the evocative power of her images, one gains invaluable insights into the world of the pioneer woman and the historical Cowgirl, challenging prevailing stereotypes and illuminating the indispensable contributions of women in shaping the American frontier.

The pioneer women, often referred to as "Prairie Madonnas," dutifully embraced traditional roles, wearing now-classic, homemade printed cotton dresses and bonnets while fulfilling their responsibilities. They gave birth to babies, diligently maintained their households, accomplished seemingly impossible tasks like cleaning dirt floors, and persevered despite the loss of modern comforts they had once enjoyed in more civilized settings. In his book, Hunter (1922) acknowledges and pays tribute to the invaluable contributions of these pioneer women in Texas. Their strength and resilience were essential, as they provided the necessary support for early cowmen to endure the countless challenges of the frontier. Yet the consequences of maintaining such perfection and purity on the woman's psyche are rarely understood.

Pioneer Woman: A Male Perspective

Hunter (1922) emphatically asserted it is his noble duty to shed light on women's significant role in the grand narrative of frontier settlement and insists she deserves her rightful place in Western history. He acknowledged her recognition has been incomplete; society failed to acknowledge her competence in roles beyond those traditionally assigned to women, such as serving as mere adornment at social gatherings or as a symbol of support for the victorious conqueror returning from brutal warfare. Hunter recognized the inherent capabilities and talents of women that extended far beyond these limited expectations, and he was determined to rectify the historical oversight.

Hunter (1922) vividly portrayed the pioneer women's bravery on the untamed frontier, where she faced relentless challenges and found shelter only in crude cabins or dugouts. In this harsh environment, where fierce winds, howling wolves, and warring Native Americans threatened her, she possessed an unwavering spirit infused with "pure and stainless Christian faith, love, patience, fortitude, and heroism" (Hunter, 1922, p. 8). Despite enduring harsh toil, loneliness, and deprivation, she displayed an unwavering constancy as unyielding as the danger that surrounded her. Hunter stated that due to her inherently delicate nature, the pioneer woman had to sacrifice more than her male counterparts, as her finer sensibilities were better suited to less rugged environments.

Hunter (1922) acknowledged women have accompanied men on their adventures and played a crucial role in their achievements. They established the social fabric by creating the first homes, worshiping in the first churches, and building schools and other educational institutions. Despite enduring numerous hardships, the pioneer woman still found the strength to sing lullabies to her children, and her teachings fostered a "sturdy

manhood and patriotism” that helped shape the Lone Star State (Hunter, 1922, p. 9).

Hunter asserted the constancy and unwavering devotion of women are the sources from which the noblest qualities in men are born. Comparing pioneer men to knights, he suggested it is through the charm and love of women that they find their strength. He declared, “(w)oman loves man, is jealous of his freedom, his liberty, his honor, and for him, she sacrifices all” (p. 10).

Pioneer women willingly embraced solitude, foregoing the pleasures of society as they buried themselves in the vastness of the Western wilderness. They severed the ties of their hearts, forged paths on rugged terrains with their feet, and tenderly planted flowers with their hands. Hunter (1922) described women as treasures cherished like “trophies” by men, and declared women embody heaven’s ideal of purity, nobility, and loveliness. He proclaimed a woman’s love is the guiding light of the cabin home and that her heart is capable of forgiving even the cruelest injuries (Hunter, 1922).

But the woman that Hunter (1922) described has no place for her darkness. Hunter’s assessment of the pioneer woman is exemplary of the over-masculinized, or patriarchal, viewpoint that has long functioned to oppress the feminine (see Conclusion for more detail on this issue.).

Pioneer Woman: A Female Perspective

In contrast to Hunter’s (1922) portrayal of the pioneer woman is the story of Evelyn Cameron (Lucey, 1990). Although she was not a Texan, her story is insightful. She was a British-born Cowgirl and photographer who lived in Montana in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She and her husband, Ewen Cameron, ran a cattle ranch, and she documented daily life on the ranch through her photography. Cameron’s photographs

have become known for their candid and realistic depictions of ranch life and the Western landscape. She also captured the lives of Native Americans and local wildlife. Today her work is recognized for its important contribution to the history of the American West.

The most notable book on Evelyn Cameron's life was written by Lucey (1990), a researcher of the West. She compiled a book filled with photographs and diary entries made by Cameron during a sliver of time when the frontier was still unbounded by settlements. Farming homesteads had not yet dotted the range, and scattered ranches were just emerging in Montana, with cattle often arriving from the Texas droves. Cameron was a pioneer and a Cowgirl who developed a deep sense of equanimity through personal crises, struggles, and adventures. Her photography, born out of necessity as a means of financial support, was important because she captured ranch life through a woman's eyes, depicting a life that expressed connection with nature, humans, and wildlife. She was a self-possessed woman who left the safe Victorian social and religious constructs of the Anglo society to discover deeper values and develop an inner moral vision similar to that of Native peoples.

Evelyn Flowers was born into a prosperous, socially prominent merchant-class family in England in the year 1868 (see Figure 23). She left her family estate south of London when she married the older Ewen Cameron, an eccentric aristocrat of genteel poverty. In 1889—the year Montana became the 41st state—they spent their honeymoon in the badlands of Montana seeking hunting and camping adventures. They returned several years later to attempt to make their own fortune and escape the confines of Victorian society. Evelyn left behind riding side-saddle in her ankle-length skirts to live a life of spontaneous complexity in the rugged landscape of Montana (Lucey, 1990).

Figure 23*Evelyn Flowers*

Note. From *Photographing Montana, 1894-1928: The life and work of Evelyn Cameron,*” by D. M. Lucey, 1990, p. 13. Copyright 1990 by Donna M. Lucey. Fair Use.

Using Evelyn’s trust, the Camerons bought property near a tiny town called Terry and built a ranch called Eve, where they bred horses to sell. This venture, along with others they tried, would fail—which prompted each to engage in different tasks. Evelyn was dedicated to keeping the ranch afloat, while Ewen took to his passion of studying wildlife, especially birds. Leaving a household of 15 servants in England, Evelyn’s learned passivity would be challenged on the frontier (Lucey, 1990). Fluent in French and Italian from her days in England, soon life would teach her how to skin a deer, chop wood, plant a vegetable garden, raise chickens, milk cows, brand livestock, castrate cattle, bake, cook, clean, provide hospitality to boarders, sleep with the sourdough-starter “sponge” out of fear it would die, mix grass and manure to insulate the barn from

freezing temperatures, dig for coal under the badlands across the river—all while continuing to read British journals (Lucey, 1990). Evelyn was gratified by her work, although Ewen provided no help. Evelyn writes, “Manual labor . . . is all I care about, and after all, is what really makes a strong woman. I like to break colts, brand calves, cut down trees, ride and work in a garden” (Lucey, 1990, p. xii).

Yet Evelyn’s ritual of recording the realities and details of daily living grounded her in time and space in an unpopulous region (see Figure 24). Her entries were void of inanities; they always began with the weather conditions, the most influential factor in day-to-day outdoor life. Lightning, blizzards, and winds could destroy crops and livestock; fires could sweep through without regard for the ranch’s small structures. She recorded their butter and coal consumption with exactitude (Lucey, 1990). Her entries reflect her approach to life, as seen in this article pasted into her diary:

The first and indispensable quality of a good style is clearness. Generally, it is enough if the writer devotes his efforts simply to being understood. Plainness and clearness are the foundations upon which all other qualities are built. . . . The strongest thoughts find brief expression. (Lucey, 1990, p. xv)

Her entries were not of despair for the pioneering life nor trying to re-create the civilized society they left behind; Evelyn reveled in the wildness of the northern plains. She described and eventually photographed the sparsely inhabited wildlands of sandstone with random outgrowths of vegetation, enormous, petrified tree trunks, and clay buttes reaching for the sky; she saw and recorded the vibrant and desolate beauty of the land. Her instincts were alive.

Figure 24*Cowboys*

Note. From *Photographing Montana, 1894-1928: The life and work of Evelyn Cameron,* by D. M. Lucey, 1990, p. 16. Copyright 1990 by Donna M. Lucey. Fair Use.

The Camerons moved three times, building ranches all called “Eve” (see Figure 25; Lucey, 1990). When Evelyn’s trust money dried up, she raised chickens to sell, feeding them homemade bone meal to enhance their quality. She was introduced to photography by a boarder, and in 1894, purchased her first camera. Her choice of camera and technique reveals much. Instead of the new “snapshot” style, she opted for a No. 5 Folding Kodet, using 5” x 7” glass plates, which provided more refined tonal quality and greater clarity (Lucey, 1990). Relying on absolute stillness, it required great patience and proffered no forgiveness.

Cameron's photos tell an intimate story (Lucey, 1990). Unlike the work of male frontier photographers, Evelyn's images express a unique mixture of straightforwardness, theater, tenderness, and humor. Her self-portraits, especially standing erect on the saddle, emanate a self-confidence and authenticity, nothing more or less (Lucey, 1990). Often, she included a subtle gesture to mark her invisible presence—such as including her unsaddled horse in the background, or intentionally and strategically including her own shadow. When photographing women, she often showed reverence for the pioneer female, whose accomplishments were seldom appreciated. She shot women doing nontraditional work such as branding, roping, and plowing (see Figures 26 and 27). Void of sentimentality, her images of the pioneer women show them as resourceful, courageous women. She also photographed fairly uncommon animals including pronghorn and wolves (see Figure 28).

Figure 25

Eve Ranch



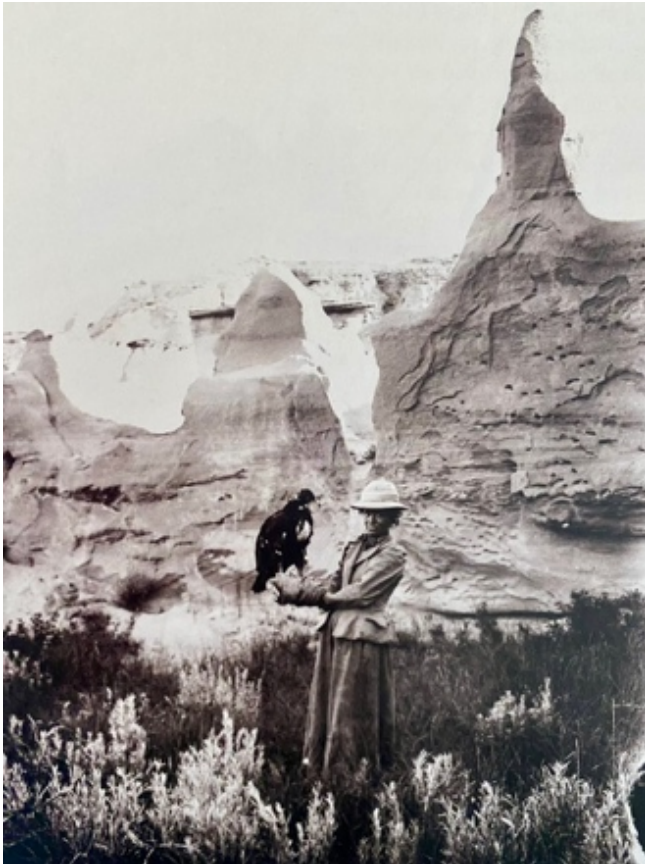
Note. From *Photographing Montana, 1894-1928: The life and work of Evelyn Cameron,* by D. M. Lucey, 1990, p. 43. Copyright 1990 by Donna M. Lucey. Fair Use.

Figure 26*Cowgirls Wrangling*

Note. From Photographing Montana, 1894-1928: The life and work of Evelyn Cameron, by D. M. Lucey, 1990, p. 175. Copyright 1990 by Donna M. Lucey. Fair Use.

Figure 27*Woman Plowing*

Note. From Photographing Montana, 1894-1928: The life and work of Evelyn Cameron, by D. M. Lucey, 1990, p. 176. Copyright 1990 by Donna M. Lucey. Fair Use.

Figure 28*Wildlife*

Note. From *Photographing Montana, 1894-1928: The life and work of Evelyn Cameron,*” by D. M. Lucey, 1990, p. 79. Copyright 1990 by Donna M. Lucey. Fair Use.

Cameron’s portraits often lacked props but featured backdrops of vast landscapes that would evoke the realities of the frontier (Lucey, 1990). She captured how the settlers reimagined their lives, in simple abodes often laced with artifacts of their pasts.

Cowboys, farmers, and sheep shearers were portrayed in their working environments.

Evelyn’s photographs demonstrate a deep understanding of who they were because she lived among them. She captured their intimate connections with animals, such as baby

wolves, golden eagles, horses, and cows, and captured images of women breaking horses

and branding cattle as well as performing household activities. She showed women as they became on the frontier, their skin darkly tanned by living outdoors, a far cry from the porcelain visages of their former Anglo lives (Lucey, 1990).

Cameron emerged transformed from the quintessential pioneer woman into the emblematic historical Cowgirl (Lucey, 1990; see Figure 29). She undertook tasks traditionally reserved for men while still keeping in touch with the creative aspects of life. Her innovative solutions often stemmed from practical considerations.

Figure 29

Self-Portrait–Evelyn Cameron



Note. From “Shop Photos and Books, DEP427, by Evelyn Cameron Heritage, Inc., 2005 (<https://www.evelyncameron.org/downloads/dep427/>). Copyright 2005 by Evelyn

Cameron Heritage, Inc. Fair Use.

For instance, Cameron made a trend out of the divided skirt, a dress style so shocking that wearing it almost led to her arrest in the rapidly growing Montana town of Miles City—a town that boasted a brothel. Reflecting on the societal norms she left behind, she wrote in a letter that she had adopted the practice of riding in a man’s saddle, straddling the horse, because she found it safer. She further commented that side saddles were impractical and of little use in the Western landscape (Lucey, 1990).

In 1928, Evelyn traveled 30 miles in great pain for a routine appendectomy. She intuited that her life was to end and before entering the hospital, she killed her favorite horse. Following the operation, she died of heart failure. She had experienced the immense cycles of life and death in all its many expressions on the frontier. Lucey (1990) records a quote from Evelyn’s diary, “I think of death as a delightful journey that I shall take when all my tasks are done” (p. 236).

In 2001, Evelyn Cameron posthumously received the esteemed distinction of being named a Cowgirl Honoree by The Cowgirl Hall of Fame, recognizing her outstanding documentation of the rugged landscape, cattle, and ranching activities. Through her remarkable photographs and accompanying insightfully written notations, Cameron skillfully captured the essence of the American frontier, evoking the mood and emotions of the experience through the unique perspective of a woman’s lens.

“Branding” of the Cowgirl

During the 1800s, women often undertook the demanding work of “cowboying” due to necessity, yet they were not referred to as “Cowgirls.” These women performed tasks traditionally assigned to men, including participating in roundups alongside hundreds of cowboys. Working on ranches, such women often did not receive pay but

helped run the family businesses when resources were limited. They had to ride astride, wear buckskins, and defy societal norms. Within the self-contained world of the ranch, a cowboy could not criticize the owner's wife or daughter if she excelled in roping or shooting. The term "cowhand" was not gender-specific at that time and described anyone involved in livestock work. The female cowhand performed all the duties of the cowboy and more, including cooking, cleaning, giving birth, raising children, making clothing, tending the garden, and handling all aspects of raising, relocating, and selling livestock. Through her labor, she became intimately connected to nature, her instinctual self, and the primal feminine essence in ways that differed from her previous existence as a woman.

There were many famous Cowgirls associated with the West, yet the best definition of a Cowgirl is by the aforementioned Jordan (1992). In her book *Cowgirls: Women of the American West*, Jordan stated:

A Cowgirl is not just a woman who lives on a ranch or hangs around the rodeo. She is the female counterpart of the cowboy. "Cowboy" in its purest form means an itinerant hired hand who works with cattle, but our sense of the word was much broader. It presupposes a knowledge of horses and stock (yes, even sheep) and a daily confrontation with the elements. . . . Cowgirls are women who work outside, on ranches or in the rodeo, on a regular basis. . . . I do not include in this definition ranch wives who primarily take care of the house. . . nor does my definition include the *desperadas* like Calamity Jane and Belle Starr. . . . Finally, I do not include women who are unhappy with rural life. (pp. xxxiii–xxxiv)

Jordan argued that embracing the land and livestock is essential for a woman to be considered a Cowgirl. However, the perception of the Cowgirl has evolved over time, often departing from this requirement. Initially overshadowed by their male counterparts, Cowgirls transformed into icons, assuming roles beyond traditional expectations.

According to historian LeCompte (2000),¹⁰⁴ during the 1880s, ranch cowboys engaged in competitive demonstrations known simply as “shows,” to demonstrate their superior ranching abilities (p. 8). While women were seldom involved in these ranch-versus-ranch demonstrations due to their “unemployed” status, they actively participated in equestrian activities from youth onward. Growing up on ranches, these daughters learned to ride as soon as they could walk, commuting to school on horseback and engaging in horseback-riding games with friends and siblings. Accompanying their ranching families to town, they even brought along wild horses and bulls. At local fairs, children would compete in riding these animals, receiving prizes from nearby merchants. Occasionally, talented girls were “discovered” during these events, going on to become professional rodeo competitors, providing them with an alternative to conventional domestic roles while maintaining their feminine allure (LeCompte, 2000).

Over time, the position of Cowgirls evolved from being the unseen counterparts of male cowhands to becoming their competitors in rodeos. This shift allowed women to have an opportunity for recognition—unlike Evelyn Cameron, who remained unrecognized as a Cowgirl during her lifetime.

The Performance Cowgirl

In their book *Gender, Whiteness and Power in the Rodeo*, scholars Patton and Schedlock (2012) highlighted the origins of frontier cowboys as descendants of Eastern settlers who embraced the concept of manifest destiny during the era of Western

¹⁰⁴Mary Lou LeCompte, born in 1935, was honored with induction into the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame in 2011. As a recognized leader in preserving the history of rodeo Cowgirls, her book *Cowgirls of the Rodeo: Pioneer Professional Athletes* remains a testament to her invaluable contributions and expertise in documenting their stories.

settlement beginning in the mid-19th century. Over time, as the cowboy image transformed from a laborer disconnected from civilization to a revered heroic figure, the role of the Cowgirl also underwent a shift. The authors explore the varying roles of Cowgirls and minorities in the history of rodeo, recognizing the unique freedoms and experiences of frontier Cowgirls while also acknowledging the distinct challenges faced by these disadvantaged groups (Patton & Schedlock, 2012).

In 1904, Lucille Mulhall¹⁰⁵ was branded as the nation's first Cowgirl (see Figure 30) by former President Theodore Roosevelt, who was captivated by her exceptional skills and fascinated by the frontier (LeCompte, 2000). Unlike many other Cowgirls, Lucille did not partake in the arduous labor of managing her family's ranch. Instead, her father, Col. Zach Mulhall, recognized her innate talent for roping, which she had developed through play. Seizing the opportunity, he capitalized on her abilities, and thus a star was born (LeCompte, 2000). Lucille's father embraced the role of a great promoter of the Wild West show, showcasing Lucille's talents and challenging gender expectations. The Mulhall family, rare in its support, encouraged their daughters to compete irrespective of societal norms.

Tad Lucas¹⁰⁶ was another remarkable woman who defied the gender barriers of her time (see Figures 31 and 32). When she was eight, her brother entered her into a local

¹⁰⁵Lucille Mulhall, born in 1885, was a pioneering figure in the world of rodeo and Cowgirl competitions. Known as "America's First Cowgirl," she gained recognition for her exceptional roping and riding skills, breaking gender barriers and leaving a lasting impact on the history of women in Western sports. She was inducted into the National Cowgirl Hall of Fame in 1977.

¹⁰⁶Tad Lucas (1902-1990) was the youngest of twenty-four children born to a Nebraska family and was known as the world's best female rodeo performer. She achieved her greatest fame as a fearless and innovative trick rider.

bronc-riding competition. Despite being promptly bucked off, she persisted in pursuing her dream of bronc riding. With unwavering belief in her ability to compete with her brothers, she harnessed the skills she acquired through chores on their ranch, and by the age of 14, became a world champion bronc rider, trick rider, and all-around Cowgirl. During the 1920s—which marked a pinnacle for Cowgirl athletes—nearly one-third of rodeos featured competitions for women. The crucial ingredients for success were sheer guts and the determination to become anything they desired (Patton & Schedlock, 2012).

Figure 30

Lucille Mulhall



Note. From “The Ballad of Lucille Mulhall, America’s Original Cowgirl,” by E. McGraw 2016, p. 1 (<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/the-ballad-of-lucille-mulhall-americas-original-cowgirl>). Copyright 2003 by Atlas Obscura. Fair Use.

Figure 31*Tad Lucas–Riding a Bronc*

Note. From “Barbara ‘Tad’ Lucas – Legendary Star of the Rodeo World” by T. Lidral, 2021, p. 1 (<https://westernlivingjournal.com/barbara-tad-lucas-legendary-star-of-the-rodeo-world/>). Copyright 2021 by Western Living Journal. Fair Use.

Figure 32*Tad Lucas–Trick Riding*

Note. From “Barbara ‘Tad’ Lucas – Legendary Star of the Rodeo World” by T. Lidral, 2021, p. 1 (<https://westernlivingjournal.com/barbara-tad-lucas-legendary-star-of-the-rodeo-world/>). Copyright 2021 by Western Living Journal. Fair Use.

The Wild West Show and Commercial Rodeo

The first Wild West show was established in 1883 by William Frederick Cody, famously known as “Buffalo Bill.” Cody, who had firsthand experience as a scout in the Fifth Army during conflicts with Native peoples on the Plains, as well as working on the railroad and wagon trains, parlayed his frontier background into a Vaudeville-style act. This act showcased his experiences, including encounters with Native peoples that involved scalping. Initially, “Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show” featured an all-male cast of actors.

However, in 1886, Buffalo Bill sought to present a more authentic spectacle and added real Cowgirls and cowboys, individuals he referred to as “Indians from Africa” (Blacks), and Native peoples to his show. Notable additions included sharpshooter Annie Oakley, Native American Hunkpapa Lakota Chief Sitting Bull, *vaqueros*, real lawmen, bucking horses, and bison (LeCompte, 2000). It was through this performance medium that the myths surrounding cowboy culture began to emerge, and as women joined the show, they played a role in shaping their own myth within it.

Between 1886 and 1900, Buffalo Bill incorporated more women of Native American heritage and female riders in bucking contests and relay races into his shows, aiming to offer an authentic depiction of frontier life. By the early 1900s, Buffalo Bill had emerged as one of the most iconic Americans of his time. His Wild West Show enthralled global audiences and came to symbolize the quintessential American spirit. His vast knowledge of all things “Western” resulted in Buffalo Bill being sought after by politicians, government officials, artists like Frederic Remington, and writers such as

Mark Twain. Nevertheless, the shows started to wane with the advent of World War I, and rodeos began to gain traction as a popular substitute (Patton & Schedlock, 2012).

In 1897, Cheyenne Frontier Days¹⁰⁷ marked a significant milestone as the first commercial rodeo (as opposed to a “show”) to attract women competitors. The event spanned 2 days and featured an entertainment component similar to the Wild West shows, including performances of ritual dances and reenactments of warring attacks by Native peoples. According to LeCompte (2000), a performer known as Mrs. Bill Irwin, formerly Etta McGulkin, earned the title of “Champion Lady Rider” and became the inaugural winner of the Cowgirl pony race. These competitions provided women with an opportunity to explore a different aspect of themselves.

In roping, riding, and racing, women competed directly against men, setting the stage for a unique development in sports. Rodeo became the first American sport in which women and men competed on equal footing. Through their skills, women earned the respect of their male counterparts and were treated as equals, being regarded as “one of the boys” (LeCompte, 2000).

The rodeos operated independently, each with its unique set of rules and selected events. In 1916, event promoters recognized the popularity of rodeo competitions showcased in Wild West shows and decided to bring them to venues that had previously attracted large crowds, such as ballparks and racetracks on the East Coast. Notably, in

¹⁰⁷Cheyenne Frontier Days is an annual rodeo and western celebration held in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Known as the “daddy of ’em all,” it is one of the largest and oldest rodeo events in the United States, attracting top rodeo competitors and spectators from around the world.

1922, Madison Square Garden¹⁰⁸ hosted the first indoor rodeo, surpassing Cheyenne Frontier Days in prestige.

Due to the confined competition space of indoor arenas as compared to the expansive outdoor shows, the competitive events underwent some changes. Long races and Native ceremonial reenactments were eliminated from the program. Trick riding and fancy roping, instead of being part of the competitions, became paid contract acts for entertainment purposes. In the Eastern shows, bronc riding remained the sole competitive event for women, while races continued to be the most popular event in the West.

In 1924, notable Cowgirl bronc riders Mildred Douglas¹⁰⁹ (see Figure 33) and Goldie St. Claire¹¹⁰ (see Figures 34 and 35) participated in the Cheyenne Frontier Days rodeo, alongside Bonnie Gray¹¹¹ (see Figure 36) who showcased her daring horse-jumping skills by leaping over a car on her horse named King Tut. These women captivated attention with their abilities rather than their appearances. However, as the 1920s progressed, the portrayal of women in pulp novels and Western lyrics began to reinforce old gender stereotypes associated with women on the frontier.

¹⁰⁸Madison Square Garden, originally known as “the Garden,” was established in the late 1800s. It was the name of several successive arenas located in New York City, serving as a hub for various events including sporting matches, exhibitions, and concerts.

¹⁰⁹Mildred Douglas Chrisman (1895-1982) is a 1988 National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame inductee. She rode jumping horses and learned trick riding at 17, when she joined the circus.

¹¹⁰Goldie St. Claire won fame as the Champion Lady Bucking Horse Rider of the world.

¹¹¹Bonnie Gray Harris was a renowned stunt rider and is widely recognized as the pioneer of the “under-the-belly-crawl” horse trick. Her exceptional skills and contributions to the world of horsemanship earned her the esteemed title of Cowgirl Honoree in the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame in 1981.

Figure 33*Mildred Douglas*

Note. From “Cowgirl iconic: Mildred Douglas,” by C. Enss, 2019, p. 1

(<https://cowgirlmagazine.com/cowgirl-iconic-mildred-douglas/>). Copyright 2023 by

Cowgirl. Fair Use.

Figure 34*Goldie St. Claire*

Note. From “Cowgirl iconic: Goldie St. Clair,” by C. Enss, 2021, p. 1

(<https://cowgirlmagazine.com/cowgirl-iconic-goldie-st-clair/>). Copyright 2023 by

Cowgirl. Fair Use.

Figure 35*Goldie St. Claire–Bronc Riding*

Note. From “Female Riders Back in Saddle Bronc at CFD,” by K. Kull, 2018, p. 1

(https://www.wyomingnews.com/wyomingbusinessreport/industry_news/hospitality_and_tourism/female-riders-back-in-saddle-bronc-at-cfd/article_4f909f00-43b7-5cd5-b275-bf859b1f96e8.html). Copyright 2023 by Wyoming Tribune Eagle. Fair Use.

Figure 36*Bonnie Gray*

Note. From “Breaking Trail: Cheyenne Frontier Days,” by K. Weldon, 2023, Picture 11 (<https://nationalcowboymuseum.org/blog/breaking-trail-cheyenne-frontier-days-rodeo/>).

Fair Use.

In 1929, bronc rider Bonnie McCarroll¹¹² lost her life during her last bronc-riding performance, when her foot became stuck in a “hobble” stirrup. The hobble stirrup had been introduced as a safety measure for women riders. It hindered the release of the foot from the stirrup, supposedly making riding easier. The hobble stirrups were tied together under the bronc—an apt metaphor for the corset, and similarly constraining the woman. In McCarroll’s case, the hobble did not keep her safe but contributed to her death. Men continued to use the “slick” stirrup.

¹¹²Bonnie McCarroll made history as the first woman to win the bronc-riding championship at both Madison Square Garden and Cheyenne in the same year. Her death in 1929 had a profound impact on women in rodeo, leading to stricter regulations for female bronc riders. She was posthumously inducted into the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame in 2006.

McCarroll's death deeply challenged societal norms and perceptions about women participating in traditionally male-dominated sports competitions (Patton & Schedlock, 2012). It also sparked debates and raised concerns among those who adhered to Christian ideology and held onto Victorian ideals of women's roles.

The rodeo arena, where women showcased their ranch-honed skills embodying courage, persistence, and talent, became a subject of scrutiny. Patton and Schedlock (2012) underscored the Cowgirls functioned within an entrenched social system that emphasized and rigidly enforced gender segregation. Traditional norms dictated men engage in agricultural and livestock labor while women focused on household tasks, child-rearing, and nursing care. These gender-segregated expectations reflected the Anglo-Christian concept of women. While the first generation of pioneer women carried these norms with them, their children had more opportunities and choices regarding the roles to which they aspired. Women involved in ranching learned tasks traditionally reserved for men and also acquired skills related to homemaking (LeCompte, 2000; Patton & Schedlock, 2012).

From 1886 to 1929, White-skinned women in the rodeo arena were treated as equals, participating in the same events as men and showcasing their physical and mental prowess.¹¹³ These Cowgirls shattered the notion that women should be confined to subordinate positions and find value only through service to others. The prevailing idea

¹¹³Between 1890 and 1920, there were opportunities for white women to compete against white men; however, ethnic women did not have the same access to those opportunities.

that successful Cowgirls had to embody an “amazon”¹¹⁴ type, as portrayed in newspapers, was disproven (Patton & Schedlock, 2012).

In 1917, Bonnie McCarroll gained fame through an iconic photograph capturing her being bucked off a bronc at the Pendleton Roundup (see Figure 37). Dressed in a split skirt and loose-fitting blouse with fringed details, the image portrayed her breaking free from gender expectations and forging her own path. Postcards featuring this photograph circulated, representing the true nature of girls from Western culture and their potential.

Figure 37

Bonnie McCarroll



Note. From “Ride Like a Girl: The Original Rodeo Cowgirls,” by C. Hirschfeld, 2022, p.

1 (<https://americancowboy.com/cowboys-archive/ride-girl/>). Copyright 2023 by Equine

Network LLC. Fair Use.

¹¹⁴ The term “amazon” in this context was used derogatorily, departing from its original Greek meaning, to describe women who were seen as aggressive, strong, and powerful.

However, Patton and Schedlock (2012) noted while these self-determined women were celebrated in action, there was a simultaneous shift in the portrayal of the Cowgirl toward a more passive role. Photographs began depicting smiling girls in outfits that resembled costumes rather than authentic working Cowgirl attire. Patton and Schedlock highlight an image of rodeo competitor Prairie Rose Henderson¹¹⁵ to illustrate the change (see Figure 38).

Figure 38

Prairie Rose Henderson



Note. From “Saddles, Grit, & Ostrich Feathers: The Life of Prairie Rose Henderson,” by H. T. Foodie, 2018, p. 1 (<https://texashillcountry.com/saddles-grit-ostrich-feathers-life-of-prairie-rose-henderson/>). Copyright 2008–2023 by Texas Hill Country. Fair Use.

¹¹⁵Prairie Rose Henderson excelled as a champion bronc rider and relay racer. Known for her vibrant and imaginative performance costumes, she brought a unique style to the rodeo arena. She was posthumously inducted into the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame in 2008.

Prairie Rose was commended for her flamboyant attire, often adorned with feathers and sparkles, and was considered a “fashionista” by today’s standards (Patton & Schedlock, 2012). This emphasis on clothing foreshadowed a shift in the value assigned to women, transitioning from appreciation for their athletic skills to their physical marketability.

Annie Oakley: A Woman of Two Worlds

Out of the historic context of the Wild West emerged figures that amplified the myth of the Cowgirl, and one prominent figure was Annie Oakley (see Figure 39). Born Phoebe Ann Mosey in 1860, Oakley gained widespread fame for her exceptional sharpshooting skills. She married fellow sharpshooter Frank E. Butler, and together, as equals, they performed for Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Shows.

Oakley commanded the highest salary as a performer—female or male—and captivated audiences with her exceptional shooting talents. Despite her awe-inspiring acts, Oakley aimed to uphold a respectable and ladylike image. During her off-stage moments, she embraced a more conventional and traditional role, riding side-saddle and conforming to the gender norms dictated by society. These norms were rooted in Victorian ideals of womanhood, which emphasized a woman’s value based on her passivity, contrasting with the pioneering spirit of the homesteaders (Patton & Schedlock, 2012).

While Oakley embodied the antithesis of her free-spirited and powerful stage persona in her personal life, she also used her influence to advocate for women’s self-defense. She encouraged women to learn to use guns to protect themselves. During the onset of World War I, Oakley offered to fully fund and raise a regiment of women

volunteers to fight in the war and also volunteered to train soldiers in marksmanship. Her offers were declined by the U.S. government.

Figure 39

Annie Oakley



Note. From “Annie Oakley,” by Britannica, 2023, p. 1

(<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Annie-Oakley-American-markswoman>).

Oakley’s journey mirrored that of the Cowgirl, as she competed and excelled in a male-dominated sport (Patton & Schedlock, 2012). Her remarkable achievements challenged the prevailing gender roles of her time, inspiring other women to push

boundaries and defy societal expectations. While she may not fit the traditional definition of a “Cowgirl” as outlined by Jordan (1992), her journey epitomizes the spirit of a pioneer (Patton & Schedlock, 2012). From teaching herself to shoot to support her family to ultimately becoming the World Champion Marksman, she exemplified determination and self-reliance. Her achievements serve as a testament to her indomitable spirit and unwavering dedication.

Native American and Mexican Cowgirls

During the era of Wild West shows, Native peoples were often cast as characters to perpetuate the established myth of the frontier. The fascination of the Anglo-American culture with dark-skinned women led to their portrayal as exotic figures, showcasing their riding skills and fringed dresses to attract audiences to the shows and rodeos. Some White-skinned women used makeup to darken their skin, capitalizing on this fascination and assuming the Native image.

However, Native women faced limited roles and were rarely allowed to compete like their White Cowgirl counterparts. Instead, they primarily served as props, reinforcing fantasies and stereotypes. Promotional posters depicted them as innocent and beautiful, distorting their true natures and the sacred roles they held in tribal life. These romanticized images reduced them to the iconic “Indian princess” trope (Patton & Schedlock, 2012, p. 60).

Sponsor Girls and Rodeo Queens

Bonnie McCarroll’s death marked a significant turning point for athletic Cowgirls, triggering a reevaluation of women’s involvement in sports at that time (Patton & Schedlock, 2012). According to Patton and Schedlock (2012), in 1935 the founder of

the modern Olympics argued women participating in sports went against the laws of nature, emphasizing a woman's primary roles should be those of a companion to men and a mother. These beliefs reflected the Victorian perspective that athletic women (with muscles!) posed a threat to femininity and could have undesirable influences on other women such as "lesbianism" (Patton & Schedlock, 2012, p. 71). This conflicting portrayal depicted women as strong, independent athletes and as beautiful, ladylike wives and mothers. However, for women who were raised in the saddle, there was no inherent conflict, as they comfortably embraced both worlds. Patton and Schedlock refer to this period as "Neo-Victorian," representing a cultural movement aimed at reasserting women into domestic roles to ensure societal stability after the impact of World War I.

The evolution of Cowgirl competitions led to the emergence of the "rodeo queen" and "sponsor girl" roles (see Figure 40). According to Patton and Schedlock (2012), this marked one of the most significant changes in rodeo, as these new Cowgirls became centerpieces in the arena, admired and protected from harm. Initially, in the 1920s, the term "rodeo queen" or "Sweetheart of the Rodeo" referred to professional female athletes. Mabel Strickland¹¹⁶—who bested most cowboys in rodeo events, including bronc and steer riding—petitioned the rodeo board to compete with male competitors for the "All Around Cowboy" title. The board refused, and instead she was pronounced "queen" of the rodeo (Patton & Schedlock, 2012, p. 79). Over time, the title "rodeo queen" shifted to represent women who no longer competed. Rodeo queens—most from

¹¹⁶Strickland made a successful career as a Cowgirl equestrian in films.

wealthy ranching families—became exalted figures of poise and education, figureheads to promote the business of rodeo, rather than real Cowgirls.

Figure 40

Rodeo Queen Postcard



Note. From “Rodeo Queen of the Southwest,” by Vintage Postcards & Collectibles, n.d. (<https://www.cardcow.com/395498/rodeo-queen-southwest-carson-city-nevada/>).

In 1931, women’s event participation was further diminished through “sponsorship.” The Chambers of Commerce near Stamford, Texas sent young women to rodeos to represent their rural areas, emphasizing their feminine charm through their attire, pretty features, and lineage. These “sponsor girls” engaged in trick riding, stunts, and barrel racing, serving as a side show to the cowboy competition; this further minimized competitive Cowgirls and reinforced traditional gender roles.

The influence of the film industry on the sponsor girls and rodeo queens cannot be overlooked. Similar to films, the rodeo became a profit-driven enterprise that relied on

women's external features to attract audiences and boost ticket sales. While some women still competed in events like barrel racing, their physical appearances became crucial for rodeo marketing and their overall success. During the mid-1930s, rodeo advertisements depicted glamorous Cowgirls twirling ropes alongside cowboys participating in bronc riding and cattle steering (Patton & Schedlock, 2012). This new portrayal of the Cowgirl relegated her to a supporting role in male-dominated activities. By 1940, only a few women were permitted to compete, and the selection of a rodeo queen was based on ticket sales rather than accomplishments. The once free and competitive Cowgirl became confined to a new image of pageantry and spectacle.

Historian Burbick (2002)¹¹⁷ delved into the experiences of rodeo queens across the American West in her book *Rodeo Queens and the American Dream*. One such woman, Jean (no last name included), held the title of rodeo queen at the Lewiston Roundup in 1954 (Idaho). Jean openly admitted to idolizing the romanticized images of cowboys and Cowgirls that she encountered in college through silver-screen depictions. Rodeo queens, in a similar vein, embodied a certain glamour and fantasy associated with the myth of the West. This admiration was not only celebrated within their culture but also tied to a desire to maintain a sense of youthfulness. It offered a more exhilarating alternative to the conflicting expectations placed on women as homemakers during the 1950s.

During her interview, Jean described assuming a pose reminiscent of Annie Oakley, famously portrayed in the musical *Annie Get Your Gun* (Burbick, 2002). With

¹¹⁷Joan Burbick, Ph.D., (1946-2021), was an acclaimed scholar whose primary interests were American nationalism and culture, as well as gender issues in the American West.

her legs spread wide, hands on her hips, and aiming for a seductive appearance, she willingly complied with the photographer's instructions. But she candidly confessed that women should not appear athletic, as it would hinder their ability to attract a man.

In the aftermath of the Great Depression, makeup advertisements played a significant role in the country's economic recovery, emphasizing the importance of women presenting their best appearances. Women became reliant on products like hair creams, rouge, and lipsticks to feel confident; a preference for lighter skin tones was promoted. As World War II approached, military recruitment campaigns highlighted the need for men to protect their wives, mothers, and sisters, and sweethearts (Patton & Schedlock, 2012). Images were used to reinforce the ideal of the untouchable and pure female.

The Cowboy Sweetheart

In the 1930s, popular songs by Gene Autry, known as "the singing cowboy," and Patsy Montana, referred to as "the singing Cowgirl," romanticized frontier culture through radio broadcasts (Patton & Schedlock, 2012, p. 91). Autry's sentimental tunes depicted lone cowboys yearning for the promises of the Western frontier, while Montana's lyrics celebrated self-determined Western heroines aligned with the cowboy. Montana's most famous tune, "I Want to Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart," became the first song to sell a million copies.

In 1941, Autry began a production company that brought the Western ranch to the screen. Actresses like Dale Evans altered the myth of the Cowgirl, despite having little

knowledge about being one (see Figure 41). To teach these actresses how to perform like authentic Cowgirls, Alice Greenough,¹¹⁸ a Cowgirl and rodeo star, was brought in.

Figure 41

Dale Evans, Cowgirl Sweetheart



Note. From “Dale Evans: Photos & High Res Pictures,” by Getty Images, n.d.

(<https://www.gettyimages.com/search/more-like->

[this/3271595?assettype=image&collections=hge&family=editorial&phrase=Dale%20Eva](https://www.gettyimages.com/search/more-like-this/3271595?assettype=image&collections=hge&family=editorial&phrase=Dale%20Evans)

[ns](https://www.gettyimages.com/search/more-like-this/3271595?assettype=image&collections=hge&family=editorial&phrase=Dale%20Evans)). Copyright 2023 by Getty Images. Fair Use.

¹¹⁸Alice Greenough Orr (1902-1995) was one of the Greenough sisters who grew up on a working ranch and performed with Jack King’s Wild West Show, riding saddle broncs and performing trick riding. She was inducted into the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame in 1975.

These films adhered to a formula that reinforced the myth of the hero, depicting men as “saviors” who protected women from “evil,” while women were portrayed as passive, gentle, and confined to domestic roles (see Figure 42). It is important to note that during the height of World War II, as men who were not at war found themselves competing with women in the workforce, Autry’s films provided a means for men to reclaim their perceived “manhood” and assert a sense of superiority over women. These movies actively promoted traditional gender roles, emphasizing men as leaders and women as caretakers (Patton & Schedlock, 2012, p. 91).

Figure 42

Roy Rogers and Dale Evans



Note. From “Roy Rogers and Dale Evans Photos and High-Res Pictures (Editorial #166893551)”, by Getty Images, 1950 (<https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/roy-rogers-and-dale-evans>). Copyright 2023 by Getty Images. Fair Use.

These influential tales had an impact on the rodeo industry and women's roles. Consequently, competitive Cowgirls formed their own association, the Girls Rodeo Association, in order to avoid the restrictions imposed by the Rodeo Association of America and the (oddly named) Cowboy Turtles Association. The founders of the Girls Rodeo Association underwent leadership training and established ladylike ethics while advocating for a wide range of competitive events, including barrel racing, bareback bronc riding, steer riding, team roping, steer undecorating, goat tying, and calf roping. However, due to smaller prize amounts, the Girls Rodeo Association struggled to compete with the larger winnings offered by the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association, which sanctioned women's barrel racing, limiting the range of contests (Patton & Schedlock, 2012).

According to LeCompte (2000), Gene Autry's "Flying A Rodeo Company" effectively combined patriotism and ornamental roles for women. As a result, women were pushed out of participating as contestants and performers in the rodeo arena and instead were relegated to parades and promotional activities.

The Pure (But Sexy) Cowgirl

In the 1940s to 1960s, American advertisements utilized the image of the attractive Cowgirl to promote products (see Figure 43). Coca-Cola, for instance, depicted a blonde-haired, blue-eyed, cheerful Anglo-American girl for more than 2 decades, shaping the cultural perception of a Cowgirl.

Figure 43*Cowgirl Promotion*

Note. From “Pin-up Calendar Cowgirl NYSSA Auto Bill Medcalf NR,” by WorthPoint, 1952 (<https://www.worthpoint.com/worthopedia/1952-pin-calendar-cowgirl-nyssa-auto-151145268>). Copyright 2023 by WorthPoint. Fair Use.

This image reached both domestic and international audiences through advertisements, pin-up images, and films (Patton & Schedlock, 2012). Hollywood popularized this “sweetheart” look in Dale Evans, who fit the same mold as the pretty girl saved by the “white knight.”

Simultaneously, contrasting depictions of women began to emerge, as “pin-up girls” took on a sexualized image, clad in revealing attire and often posing with props like fringed leather gloves and six-shooters (see Figure 44). The historical Cowgirl, once a symbol of independence and competition, became associated with notions of purity who

sometimes served as a sex symbol catering to the male cowboy (Patton & Schedlock, 2012).

Figure 44

Eroticized Cowgirl



Note. From Pinterest, n.d. (<https://co.pinterest.com/pin/165648092533338250/related-products/?x=16&y=16&w=414&h=634.6276595744681&cropSource=5&entrySource=s hopping>). Fair Use.

At the same time, the rodeo board was establishing “rules” for the rodeo queen that are still in place today. These rules encompass several key aspects. First, a rodeo queen is expected to marry a man of means rather than a cowboy. Second, she is classified within the “good girl” category, emphasizing a virtuous and respectable image rather than being associated with promiscuity or a “bad” reputation. Additionally, male

participants in the rodeo are to be viewed solely as friends and brothers, with no potential for romantic relationships. Last, rodeo queens are seen as symbols of purity and virginity, and any tarnishing of this image may lead to reprimand or even dismissal (Burbick, 2002).

After the 1950s, rodeo queens took on a new role as public symbols of purity and virtue. They were young, beautiful, and seen as potential paragons of ideal wifedom and motherhood. It was expected that they would maintain their status as chaste queens throughout their reign. These virgin queens, however, were also subject to eroticization. One radio princess from the Cheyenne Frontier Days described the allure of women racing on their horses at the edge of the arena before the rodeo commenced as “sexy.” Burbick (2002) quotes a man who likened horse riding to a timeless love affair spanning countless generations. Throughout human history, both men and women have shared a deep connection and longing to immerse themselves in the sensual, magical, and spiritual world of the horse. From ancient cave paintings to elaborate oral epics, horses have captivated the human erotic imagination for centuries. In the context of the rodeo, the queen and her princesses on horseback inspired a feeling of “fertile joy of pure motion, electric and unstoppable” (Burbick, 2002, p. 116).

According to Burbick (2002), these women stood apart from their counterparts in domestic roles. They were afforded the opportunity to adopt certain aspects of masculine power within the realm of the rodeo. While their roles may have been largely symbolic, they managed to “absorb” some of the characteristics associated with heroic male cowboys. Their attire, traditionally masculine cowboy clothing, was feminized, and they rode with boldness, speed, and confidence. They were not confined by the restrained and

cautious pace expected of ladies. However, in order to be accepted and celebrated, they were then expected to conform to the conventions of femininity and control their power so as not to pose a threat to male power and sexuality. Only then were they able to rise to celebrity status and receive applause.

As time passed, once the allure of being a rodeo queen had faded, these women returned to their domestic roles, untouched by the glamour they once experienced. They were left with stories of domestic sorrow, tragedy, and loss, receiving sympathy rather than admiration as their reward (Burbick, 2002).

While exploring the various images of the Cowgirl, I grappled with contrasting Cowgirl representations: the rugged, earth-bound version and her rhinestone-clad counterpart. I began to understand how the Cowgirl continued to relate to her circumstances despite the growing Protestant values of her culture. In my mind, rhinestones became gems not just adornments but are imbued with the feminine essence of the earth, encapsulating light within matter. The Cowgirl's attire, now reminiscent of divine goddesses with fringe, dismissed such decoration as shallow (See Appendix F).

CHAPTER IX: THE CELTIC CONNECTION: HORSE AND GODDESS

“*Das Ewig-Weibliche, I Zieht uns hinan*”(Jantz, 1953, p. 791). As Goethe expresses in *Faust*, “The eternal feminine draws us” aloft (“Eternal Feminine,” 2017, para. 8).¹¹⁹

The Cowgirl rested on the heritage of the Celtic myth. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the Celtic civilization, emphasizing the Celts’ history and spiritual beliefs as a foundation for exploring the connection between the Celtic people and the horse Goddess Epona (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). Epona symbolizes various messages related to abundance, healing, and the guardianship of souls. The mythic horse represents power, freedom, and the ability to traverse thresholds or liminal spaces.

Engaging with real horses can foster a spirituality rooted in a deep connection with the earth and one’s senses, leading to self-discovery. This chapter concludes with a personal experience involving a horse named Zuni that highlights the transformative power of the horse. Understanding the symbolic qualities associated with Epona sheds light on how these influences shaped the Cowgirl’s relationship with herself, despite societal constraints.

While delving into ancient culture to understand its influence on recent history, I experienced a prophetic dream that has remained vivid in my mind and continued to influence my thoughts throughout my dissertation. The dream revolves around the theme of dissent, reminiscent of the story of Inanna, and the quest for authenticity, which is

¹¹⁹There are many interpretations of this final quatrain. According to reversodictionary.com, “Weibliche” has been translated as “feminine,” “female” and “love.” I selected the translation as “feminine” due to its eternal quality rather than a gender description such as “female.”

often misinterpreted in extroverted cultures like America (See Appendix G). As I explored the Celts and the Goddess Epona, I discovered the significance of working with this relational aspect of myself. These explorations have been crucial in my journey of gnosis.

History of the Celts

In *The Gods of the Celts*, British archaeologist and Celtic scholar Aldhouse-Green (2004)¹²⁰ wrote the Celtic tribe emerged through the gradual assimilation of groups of people, similarly to the Comanche tribe, rather than originating from a specific location. Originally farmers during the Neolithic Era, the Celts inhabited northwest and central Europe (Green, 1993; see Figure 45). Evidence of proto-Celts, discovered in a large cremation site called Urnfield, dates to as early as 1300 B.C.E. Burials at Urnfield included individuals believed to be metalworkers, their remains accompanied by bronze vessels and shields adorned with nonpictorial religious symbols (Green, 1993).

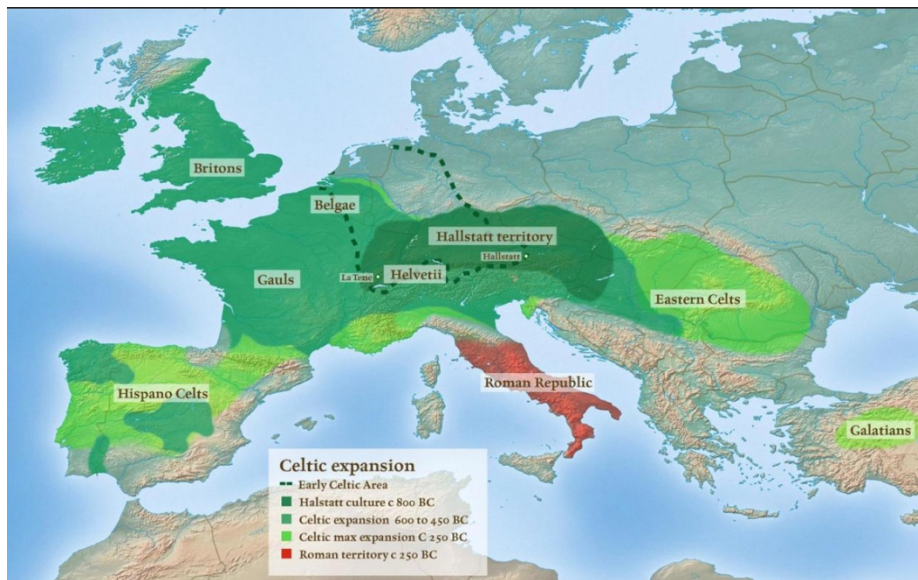
In the 8th century B.C.E. the Greeks learned from the Dorians that horses could be ridden, marking the advent of a nomadic way of life in Europe (Green, 1993). Among the nomadic Indo-European tribes, the Gauls (a Celtic people) settled in what is now western Europe. Horses adorned with opulent metal embellishments became symbols of the elite. Harnessing the mobility offered by horses, Celtic culture expanded into the Balkans, Italy, France, and Iberia. By 700 B.C.E., raiding parties had become common, and the art of metalworking spread. Archaeological excavations uncovered remains of

¹²⁰Miranda Aldhouse-Green, Ph.D., is a British archaeologist and academic known for her research on the Iron Age and the Celts. She received her doctorate in 1981 at the Open University; her dissertation examined Romano-Celtic sun symbolism.

warriors, war chariots, and horses in burial sites, accompanied by weapons such as spears, swords, and body armor, which were likely believed to assist the deceased in the afterlife. Cattle also held significant value and were considered a measure of wealth, the individual cow representing a unit of value.

Figure 45

Map of Celtic Expansion



Note. From “The ancient Celts: More Europe-wide than you would think,” by S. Daly, 2013, p. 1 (<https://www.thejournal.ie/celts-europe-map-967353-Jun2013/>). Copyright 2023 by Journal Media. Fair Use.

In *Women of the Celts*, Markale (1986)¹²¹ noted the social structure of the Celts comprised extended patrilineal families known as *deirbhfine* (derived from the Irish term for true kin), forming the *tuath*, or tribe. Kings and sub-kings maintained a mutual bond,

¹²¹Jean Markale (1928-2008) was a specialist in Celtic studies at the Sorbonne; he researched pre-Christian and medieval cultures. Some of his theories have been questioned by other scholars.

while vassalage governed the relationship between the upper and lower social classes. In contrast to Roman culture, land was communally owned rather than privately owned, with a focus on livestock breeding (Markale, 1986). Exposure to the classical world brought a shift from status based on heritage to that based on achievement (Green, 1993). In 50 B.C.E., Julius Caesar and the Romans conquered Gaul, then encompassing present-day France and the British Isles. Roman dominance persisted until 450 C.E., when they withdrew, leading to Scottish and Irish raids of the region.

Raiders also came from the northeast, specifically present-day Germany (Green, 1993). Germanic tribes such as the Angles, Saxons (later known as the Anglo-Saxons), and Jutes entered from the region that is now Denmark. The territory that the Romans held and later ceded to the Angles eventually took the name England. Scotland, Wales, and Ireland initially remained untouched by Roman rule or the Germanic invasions.

The Druidic Spirituality of the Celts

According to mythologist Campbell (1949), it is crucial to acknowledge that prior to the invasions by the Romans and Germanic tribes, the people of present-day England were Celts. In Celtic mythology, the Mother Goddess held a position of prominence (Campbell & Rossi, 2013). With the arrival of the Germanic tribes, the gods of the ancient Celts retreated into fairy hills,¹²² giving rise to the origins of many European fairy tales rooted in Celtic traditions (Campbell & Rossi, 2013).

Although the Celts were known as a warrior culture, their spirituality revered the mystical and feminine aspects of human existence. Celtic Goddess mythologies revolved

¹²²In the Celtic tradition, “fairy hills” refers to a dimension deeper than the visible world. Fairies represent the powers of nature that inhabit the material world.

around the inherent natural qualities of life present in every creature and place (Green, 1993). Conversely, the warrior cultures of the invading Indo-European tribes focused more on societal and cultural aspects, a perspective reflected in the mythologies of the Old Testament, which emphasized social laws.

The Celts were deeply spiritual, and their stories have been conveyed through oral traditions as well as in the written accounts of Roman conquerors of the time such as Julius Caesar¹²³ and the Roman historian Tacitus¹²⁴ (Green, 1993). The spiritual and governmental leaders of the Celts were the Druids, fulfilling roles as priests, priestesses, and prophets. They would convene annually at various sacred sites, including one near Chartres, for divination purposes.

Historical records indicate the Celts' reverence for the human head, which they collected in battle and through human sacrifices (Green, 1993). While the exact meaning of this reverence is not fully understood, many scholars suggest the head symbolized the power center of the human body and possessed magical properties, representing the entirety of a person (Green, 1993).

The Celts exhibited a religious sensibility that recognized gods and goddesses in all aspects of nature, much like the Indigenous peoples of America. Celtic art often featured certain recurring themes or motifs, particularly those related to natural

¹²³Gaius Julius Caesar (12 July 100 B.C.E.-15 March 44 B.C.E.) was a Roman general and statesman. As a member of the First Triumvirate, he emerged victorious in a civil war against Pompey, assuming the position of dictator from 49 B.C.E. until his assassination in 44 B.C.E. Caesar's rise to power marked a crucial turning point in Roman history, leading to the downfall of the republic and the subsequent establishment of imperial rule.

¹²⁴Tacitus, born Publius Cornelius Tacitus (56-120), was a Roman historian and politician. He is well known for his two major works, the *Annals* and the *Histories*, which examine the emperors Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero, and several other emperors who ruled after 69 (Tacitus, 2009).

phenomena such as water. Unlike the Romans, the Celts did not adhere to a shared pantheon of iconic god or goddess forms. Each god was tied to a specific tribe, exhibiting a fierce individuality, while the goddesses primarily exuded maternal qualities. Although the Celts did not create physical depictions of deities, they embraced symbolism in their religious practices¹²⁵ (Green, 1993). Celtic metalwork often featured animals including horses and cattle (see Figure 46), hinting at the concept of shape-shifting—humans transforming into animals and vice versa.

Figure 46

Celtic Coins



Note. From “Ancient coinage of Danube: Celtic coins of the Danube Valley. CCCBM 12, by Wildwinds, n.d.

(https://www.wildwinds.com/coins/celtic/danube/CCCBM_076.1.jpg). Fair Use.

Prior to the Roman influence, the Celts incorporated numerous solar motifs, such as the wheel, which symbolized fertility and the goddess, into their art, for example, in metalworking. Given their agricultural and pastoral lifestyle, fertility held great

¹²⁵The Romans created icons of Celtic gods and Goddesses that reflected Roman forms.

significance in Celtic spirituality. The rays of the sun and the nurturing properties of water were fundamental to the Celtic worldview, in contrast to Roman classical mythology, which did not associate fertility with these elements.

The Celts embraced various celestial and solar symbols (Green, 1993). Talismans, artwork, and votives displayed motifs such as the spoked wheel, angled cross (swastika), thunderbolt, rosette, and circle (see Figure 47). Often, images of sky gods were accompanied by fertility symbols such as the cornucopia and animals. The Celts depicted the horse both in the sky and on the earth. However, the sky horseman was never portrayed on horseback. Instead, the Celtic warrior associated with the sky cult was depicted holding a spoked wheel, descending upon an earthbound monster with snakelike limbs (Green, 1993).

Figure 47

Celtic Brooch



Note. From “Looted Viking Treasure is Discovered in British Museum Store,” by D. Alberge, 2014, p. 1 (<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/jan/05/vikings-treasure-excavation-british-museum>). Copyright 2023 by Guardian News & Media Limited. Fair Use.

The invading Romans reinterpreted these symbols to represent Jupiter (see Figure 48), which emphasized the power of the state, in an attempt to redefine the Celtic culture (Green, 1993). The Romans built towering “Jupiter columns” measuring 15 meters in height, adorned with foliage.

Figure 48

Roman Jupiter Column



Note. From *Epona: Hidden Goddess of the Celts*, by P. D. MacKenzie Cook, 2016, p. 143. Copyright 2016 by Avalonia. Fair Use.

This confluence represented a blending of Roman and Celtic cultures, as trees held sacred significance for the Celts (Green, 1993). The Celtic sky cult also encompassed allusions to the afterlife, as the wheel spokes discovered in graves symbolized the triumph of light over darkness, particularly in the realm of death. Further exploration of the Celtic horse Goddess Epona will shed additional light on Celtic/Druidic spirituality.

The Goddess Cult Prior to the “Rule of the Seed”

As explored in Baring and Cashford’s (1993) research, the essence of the goddess is eternal and pervasive. She encompasses not only the land and elements but also resides within the spirits of sacred animals, including the horse. Throughout human history, the horse has served both as a source and a symbol of power, manifesting itself in various forms. Whether depicted as a fiery and untamed creature evoking a sense of unbridled freedom or as a domesticated companion aiding in agricultural pursuits, the horse holds a profound significance woven into the fabric of human existence.

According to historian MacKenzie Cook (2016),¹²⁶ ancient peoples believed the entirety of creation, including the stars, planets, plants, and animals, originated from the Great Mother, and in death, all returned to her embrace. Women were revered as living embodiments of the feminine principle, carrying within them the sacred essence of life. The home itself symbolized the womb, a space from which cultures and rituals were nurtured to forge connections between the people and the mysteries of existence. Stories

¹²⁶ P. D. MacKenzie Cook conducts a comprehensive exploration of the Goddess Epona in his scholarly work, *Epona: Hidden Goddess of the Celts*, drawing on his extensive academic background, which encompasses studies in history, philosophy of medicine, and the healing alchemy of ancient goddess-centered mysteries.

and symbolic artwork served as vessels containing these profound truths and guiding humans on their journeys. The land, with its distinct boundaries and intricate network of rivers, hills, and plains, mirrored the form of the womb, acting as a container in which creation unfolded and dissolved. Within each of these sacred spaces, women and the feminine aspects encapsulated the very soul and essence of the land (MacKenzie Cook, 2016).

Women learned the cycles of seasons along with how to gather medicinal plants and herbs (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). In addition, they skillfully employed their instincts to establish a deep connection with animals, gradually earning their trust and eventually adopting animal husbandry techniques. Throughout history, women have intimately understood the intricate processes of birth and death, revering the cyclic nature of regeneration and the perpetual renewal of life. Meanwhile, the male role of insemination, as well as the processes of conception and germination, occur in the concealed realm of the fertile soil of the land and the womb of a woman, both representing a rich source of potential and growth (MacKenzie Cook, 2016).

Around 4000 B.C.E. a significant shift occurred in this way of life (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). On the steppes of Eurasia, men started the process of taming and selectively breeding horses. The incredible speed and power of the horse became attributed to the male contribution and associated with the concept of fatherhood. It is hypothesized that this realization led to the emergence of what we now recognize as patriarchy, the dominance of masculine influence. What was previously regarded as merely a quality of the masculine gradually transformed into the idea of “rule” or authority based on the male “seed” (MacKenzie Cook, 2016, p. 18).

Despite the societal shift toward patriarchy, the presence of the goddess continued to endure as a potent and resilient force. In the Minoan culture, which flourished on Aegean islands such as Crete and remained somewhat isolated from the emerging patriarchal attitudes, a sense of equality between men and women persisted for a significant period. Notably, a Minoan mosaic portraying a leaping bull serves as a striking example (see Figure 49), depicting young girls demonstrating courage and remarkable athletic prowess—a theme that would later echo in the figure of the rodeo Cowgirl (MacKenzie Cook, 2016).

Figure 49

Bull-Leaping Woman, Minoan



Note. From “Late Minoan Painting,” by Art History Resources, 2016, p. 1

(<http://arthistoryresources.net/greek-art-archaeology-2016/minoan-bull-jumping.html>).

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As detailed by Baring and Cashford (1993), by the Iron Age, the Minoan civilization eventually underwent a transformation into a patriarchal society. Myths

embodying the essence of the goddess would be reimagined and reconstructed to align with this new philosophical framework.

Despite the Roman invasions and the subsequent assimilation of various Indigenous warring cultures like the Celts, certain fundamental feminine values persisted within the resulting “new” cultures, which generally retained a polytheistic belief system (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). Since it was customary to worship multiple gods and goddesses, the conquering peoples often preserved many of the deities from the cultures they subjugated, adapting them as necessary.

In these new cultures, goddesses typically occupied a secondary position as mothers, sisters, and consorts to the male gods (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). Although Greece, for example, absorbed Minoan-Phrygian goddesses into its cultural framework, it had already become a patriarchal society by that time. Nevertheless, Greek culture maintained a connection to the goddess, as evidenced in the writings of Homer during the 8th–7th centuries B.C.E. Socrates, a philosopher of ancient Greece, received instruction from a priestess, and Plato acknowledged the feminine as holding primary importance (MacKenzie Cook, 2016).

As Greek culture gradually shifted toward masculine dominance, the myths surrounding birth underwent modifications (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). One example is the Athenian myth of Artemis; in the story, she asks her father Zeus to allow her to remain chaste throughout her life. This narrative implies her secondary status and the imposition of restrictions on her sexual freedom. Similarly, the myth of Persephone’s abduction and rape portrayed her as being subjected to the dominion of Hades, the god of the

underworld. Over time, the symbolism of the underworld transformed from representing the womb into a realm of punishment (MacKenzie Cook, 2016).

Despite the evolving depictions of the feminine in mythology, the Celtic Goddess Epona maintained her enduring influence throughout history (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). It was widely believed that wherever horses were present, Epona's presence could also be felt, transcending both time and place. MacKenzie Cook (2016) further supported this notion by citing a petroglyph located within a set of caves in Oklahoma¹²⁷ that has been associated with images of Epona. This serves as evidence of her lasting significance and her connection to equine symbolism across different regions.

Epona, the Celtic Horse Goddess

Epona was renowned as the prominent horse goddess of the Celts and later embraced by the Romans (see Figure 50). Epona is often regarded as a “zoomorphic divinity,” closely connected to the realm of animal symbolism (Aldhouse-Green, 1996, p. 185).

Symbolism

The depictions of Epona provide additional insights into her attributes. The attire of goddesses in artistic representations often served to reveal their inner natures (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). Epona was occasionally portrayed fully clothed, covered from shoulders to ankles, as were Celtic noblewomen in imagery. This deliberate concealment, particularly of her sacred feminine aspects such as the breasts and vulva, accentuated the

¹²⁷Oklahoma is a state in the south-central region of the United States; on its south and west, it is bordered by Texas.

focus on her inner qualities, ensuring her “secrets” remained enigmatic and mysterious (MacKenzie Cook, 2016).

Figure 50

Goddess Epona, Salonica, Greek Macedonia



Note. From “Epona Salonica 601 ArchMus,” by QuartierLatin1968, 2007, p. 1

(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Epona_Salonica601_ArchMus.jpg).

In certain illustrations, Celtic mother goddesses, who share a connection with Epona, were portrayed with a single breast exposed. This imagery draws a parallel to the well-known photograph of Cynthia Ann Parker after her “rescue,” where she is seen breastfeeding her baby (see Figure 17). The exposure of a “sacred” body part, such as the breast, symbolized the nourishing light from the sun that sustains the earth (see Figure 51). These semi-nude representations held symbolism related to *eros*, representing the primal sexuality necessary for the fertilization and regeneration of life.

Figure 51

Mothers of Versault



Note. From *Epona: Hidden Goddess of the Celts*, by P. D. MacKenzie Cook, 2016, p. 88.

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The riding postures depicted in Epona's imagery symbolize her sovereignty, freedom, and fertility. With her legs positioned to one side of the horse (side saddle, so to speak), this posture has ancient symbolic origins, evident in the portrayal of the 5th-century Minoan Goddess Rhea, who is shown riding with her legs on one side of a lion (see Figure 52), as well as the Phrygian Goddess Cybele (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). This particular riding position does not primarily signify a woman's sexuality but rather reflects a reverence for the divine feminine and embodies the concept of ancient sovereignty. It conveys the rider's control emanates from her inner authority and commanding presence rather than relying on external forces. This quality is exemplified by the Cowgirl bronc riders, who, despite their smaller stature than males, embody a power that is deeply rooted in their feminine aspect.

Figure 52*Cybele on Lion, Altar Relief*

Note. From *Epona: Hidden Goddess of the Celts*, by P. D. MacKenzie Cook, 2016, p. 174. Copyright 2016 by Avalonia. Fair Use.

Epona's images in Gaul and the Rhineland symbolize fertility and abundance, often featuring a mare with a foal suckling from her mother. Stone carvings in Santenay, Autun, and Mellecey¹²⁸ depict animal husbandry practices (Aldhouse-Green, 1996). Outside of Gaul, Epona is portrayed in an imperial position, standing or seated between two horses, reminiscent of the Anatolian motif of the Goddess Cybele and lions. Here the lions are replaced by horses, symbolizing Epona as the mistress of animals (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). This imperial position will also be employed in depictions of Boudica as a national icon in England during the 1900s.

¹²⁸Santenay, Autun, and Mellecey are towns in the Burgundy region of France.

During the late 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C.E., imagery of Epona began to take shape. Celtic coins played a significant role in disseminating symbols among the people (see Figure 53). In Paeonia¹²⁹ during this period, Epona was depicted as a free-spirited female horseback rider; her figure was feminine, flowing, and curvaceous. Symbolic elements such as the triskele (triple-spiral), representing movement, as well as sacred cranes and feathers, were incorporated into images of Epona and the horse. This conveyed a sense of eroticism, which can also be observed in the representations of the Redones¹³⁰ in Northwest Gaul during the first century. These images suggested an expression of unrestrained female sexuality. However, with the influence of Roman culture in the second and third centuries, this feminine eroticism was subdued, as evidenced in the more rigid portrayal of the goddess in the Treveri relief carvings (MacKenzie Cook, 2016).

Figure 53

Paeonia Coin



Note. From *Epona: Hidden Goddess of the Celts*, by P. D. MacKenzie Cook, 2016, p. 44.

Copyright 2016 by Avalonia. Fair Use.

¹²⁹Paeonia roughly corresponds to most of present-day North Macedonia, the central part of Greek Macedonia, and a small part of Bulgaria.

¹³⁰Redones were a Gallic tribe living in the eastern part of the Brittany peninsula during the Iron Age and subsequent to the Roman conquest of Gaul.

Reclining depictions of the Goddess Epona offer an alternative perspective on feminine allure. In the relief carvings found in Allerey¹³¹ (Côte-d'Or, France) dating to the Romano-Celtic period, Epona's eroticism is portrayed with subtlety (see Figure 54). She is shown bare-breasted, leisurely reclining¹³² atop a horse. This symbolizes her magnetism, the ability to attract effortlessly through the power of her fertility, and evokes a sense of intimacy and connection (MacKenzie Cook, 2016).

Figure 54

Goddess Epona at Allerley



Note. From *Epona: Hidden Goddess of the Celts*, by P. D. MacKenzie Cook, 2016, p. 47.

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¹³¹Allerey is located in Burgundy, France.

¹³²The semi-nude reclining position draws from Greek and Roman the images of Aphrodite (Venus), known for her sexual allure and sensuality.

The Underworld

Epona's connection to death in Celtic spirituality is evident through her association with birds, particularly the raven. The raven is a messenger from the divine (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). Funerary plaques found in southwest Gaul depict Epona on horseback alongside celestial symbols and sea monsters, reflecting her association with water. As guardians of the underworld, the Celts believed that entry was through the water element, the sea.

In addition to the raven, another symbol of the underworld was the dog, an ancient deity associated with divine messaging, loyalty, and protection (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). Dogs were believed to guide souls through the underworld. Epona was often depicted carrying a key, which symbolizes protection of the stable and serves as a representation of access to the underworld.

Epona expressed a dualistic nature, representing both life and the journey of humanity. She is associated with themes of life, abundance, healing, and the guardianship of souls transcending time and place. Among her various aspects was a core element that anchors her essence: the horse (Aldhouse-Green, 1996).

Celtic Horse Symbolism

The horse held a central role in both the earthly and religious aspects of Celtic life (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). Socially, it represented the prestige, status, and vibrant spirit of the warrior. The Celts embraced the vitality of life, including their own sexual virility, as well as the inevitability of death—qualities represented by the horse. The horse also embodied the values cherished by Celtic society, notably freedom and generosity. The

Goddess Epona symbolized these concepts through the symbolic motifs of life (such as the cornucopia) and death (ravens, dogs, and graves) (MacKenzie Cook, 2016).

From pre-Celtic times to the era of Roman rule, the horse also served as a symbol of the sun (Green, 1993). The word “horse” provides insights into its meaning. For instance, in proto-Hebrew, *hor* (aur/hor/or) signifies “light,” while in other Semitic languages, it can also mean “cave” or “womb” (p. 39).

Among the various animals, the horse held unparalleled importance to the Celts (Green, 1993). Horses, particularly mares, were primarily employed for farm work. In general, horses were believed to offer protection against the dark forces of the underworld during times of war. Additionally, the horse was closely associated with water cults, as water symbolized movement, healing, and life-giving powers, often described as liquid light.

The horse held a universal symbolism in the ancient world, representing power, endurance, and freedom (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). The concept of freedom was highly valued, often depicted by wings attached to horses to symbolize this quality (an example is the winged white stallion Pegasus of Greek mythology). Goddesses and the moon were frequently associated with horses, as evidenced by crescent-shaped hoof prints. As a chthonic symbol, the horse served as a link between the earthly realm and the underworld. Untamed and wild, the horse embodied a formidable force, but once tamed, it became a representation of an individual’s mastery of excellence and nobility of character, irrespective of social rank. Horses were trained to pull chariots, while humans became riders, further emphasizing the interdependence and relationship between horses and humans.

Ancient civilizations held the belief that the sunrise each morning marked the birth of the sun emerging from the womb of the earth or the underworld (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). In cultures that embraced horse-drawn chariots, people envisioned the sun being pulled across the sky by a horse. Similarly, in societies centered on goddess worship, the chariot of the moon was symbolically pulled by the goddess herself.

Prior to the Bronze-Age ascendance of the masculine-dominated ethos, solar and celestial motifs were not exclusively associated with masculinity but rather were androgynous in nature (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). Subsequently, as cultures evolved, the masculine deities were superimposed onto the goddesses, although certain essential qualities such as instinct and libido persisted. Celtic artwork provides depictions of the interplay between the solar god and the goddess. The Celtic goddesses originally held a primary association with the sun, but as the influence of masculine ideologies grew due to exposure to other belief systems like those of the Greeks and Romans, their association shifted.

The solar symbolism associated with the horse serves as a powerful representation of the Goddess Epona's complex nature (MacKenzie Cook, 2016). MacKenzie Cook (2016) suggested Epona was intricately connected to the underworld while simultaneously crowned by the sun. This depiction of Epona illustrates her ability to bridge opposing forces, such as those of earth and sky, light and dark, life and death, and feminine and masculine. These contrasting elements signify her capacity to encompass and reconcile opposites within herself.

The spaces between contrasting states symbolize a liminal space, representing a period of transition in which boundaries blur and new possibilities emerge (MacKenzie

Cook, 2016). Epona embodies this liminality as a transformative and transcendent deity. (This liminality can be observed in the journey of the Cowgirl as she progresses through various stages, evolving from a historical figure to a performance image and eventually to iconic status). The mythical horse also transcends boundaries, symbolizing a deeper sense of life and eternity. Epona's association with healing and her depiction in hot springs are linked to her solar attributes. The concept of liminality is significant in understanding Epona's freedom and higher form of liberation. In this context, I will share my personal experience with a horse named Zuni.

Horse Whispering With Zuni

For more than 2 decades, I have been a summer guest at the E Bar L Ranch, nestled along the Blackfoot River in Montana. In the early 2000s, the owners extended a unique invitation to me and another regular guest, Lindsay. We were invited to attend a workshop led by horse trainer Clay Wright in Elmo, Utah. Clay, a protégé of the renowned "horse whisperer" Ray Hunt,¹³³ had transformed an old airplane hangar into a modest horse arena. However, this workshop was not focused on riding techniques but rather on forging a profound connection between the horse and oneself.

Clay was a man of few words, with an intense demeanor and a quiet presence. When he did speak, each phrase seemed to reverberate through the air. His opening statement, "All beliefs are bullshit," immediately set the tone for our time together. On

¹³³Ray Hunt (1929-2009), widely recognized as one of the most influential of contemporary horsemen, revolutionized the approach to horse training by treating the horse as an equal to the human and removing dominance from the equation.

the first day, we were instructed to simply observe. As Clay swung open the arena doors, the once serene and empty space erupted into a tempestuous display of power as the Andalusian horses thundered in, seemingly unaware of the confining boundaries. The sheer force they emanated was awe-inspiring, causing me to instinctively retreat against the nearest wall. In contrast, Clay stepped forward, emanating an unwavering and grounded presence. After a few moments of his stillness, the horses gradually slowed their pace, transitioning into a controlled walk, without any physical directives from Clay. Reflecting on this experience, I wrote in my journal about the initial chaos that engulfed me, followed by the subsequent emergence of order. “When chaos is embraced, it transforms into wisdom,” I penned, acknowledging my readiness to embark on this transformative journey.

The second day marked the beginning of our active participation. Clay distributed cardboard boxes, each adorned with the drawing of a prominent cross, among our seated group. Approaching us one by one, he placed a pendulum over the center of the cross and instructed us to move it in a circular motion without making physical contact. This exercise, intended to cultivate the ability to channel energy through our inner power, mirroring the profound influence Clay had demonstrated with the horses the previous day. As I attempted to manipulate the pendulum using only my mind, my efforts proved futile. However, as I began to *feel* the pendulum moving, it gradually began tracing clockwise circles. This simple yet profound discovery would unlock the doorway to connecting with my equine partner for the weekend, Zuni. (Another participant, Louis, the eldest E Bar L Ranch wrangler and a rider of impeccable form, had struggled for days to achieve the same feat with the pendulum.)

By the conclusion of our journey, Zuni had become both my “medicine” and my teacher of essential truths. From the seemingly chaotic display of the horses in the arena, nuggets of insights emerged, etching themselves into the pages of my journal. Today, many years later, those words still resonate with a truth that is not merely intellectual but embodied through lived experience. I wrote the following:

Each breath represents a moment encompassing both life and death, signifying the continuous cycle of existence. In every passing moment, I realize that I have the power to pause, let go, and embrace the opportunity for a fresh start. As I engage with Zuni and maintain an open mindset, she responds with great generosity. By leading from my core, I discover that it is the starting point for all movement, with my limbs naturally following suit. The horse’s mouth serves as a barometer, reflecting Zuni’s emotions and feelings in each interaction. I experience a profound sense of “rebirth,” resembling the cyclical nature of the sun and the moon, when I consciously absorb Zuni’s energy and then release it. I am coming to understand that trust between a horse and a human is established when we demonstrate our capacity to empathize with what each other is feeling. Horses seem to operate without a sense of individuality, instead relying on their instincts for self-preservation. When this trust is established, they are willing to let go and surrender. It is remarkable how achieving a state of “less” than the horse creates a sense of lightness and harmony. Through practice, I am harnessing the power of my imagination, envisioning the path I want Zuni to take, and then allowing myself to feel it deeply from the depths of my heart. It is truly miraculous when I can accomplish this, as Zuni instinctively follows the picture held in my mind.

Through my journey with Zuni, I came to understand the profound concepts of freedom and surrender. Zuni was not an object to be controlled; rather, she revealed to me the transformative capacity in horses, as in humans, to harness their untamed enthusiasm and channel it into a composed and collected state. Zuni became a remarkable bridge connecting the human and spirit realms.

CHAPTER X: BOUDICA, THE CELTIC WARRIOR QUEEN

We British are used to women commanders in war; I am descended from mighty men! But I am not fighting for my kingdom and wealth now. I am fighting as an ordinary person for my lost freedom, my bruised body, and my outraged daughters. . . . Consider how many of you are fighting—and why! Then you will win this battle, or perish. That is what I, a woman, plan to do—Let the men live in slavery if they will.¹³⁴ (Tacitus, 1956, p. 330)

Scott (n.d.), a historian specializing in the study of the Celtic female warrior Boudica (see Figure 55), taught a course at Ubiquity University titled *Boudica, The Celtic Warrior and Queen: The Feminine Resistance to Empire*. In this course, Scott (n.d.) emphasized the profound impact that stories have on shaping history, particularly stories that are crafted to reinforce cultural values (Scott, n.d.). Despite the scarcity of historical documentation of the tale of Boudica—who has evolved into a national symbol of Britain—there exists sufficient evidence to construct a meaningful narrative and representation of her life. Throughout history, Boudica’s story has been continually written and rewritten, serving as a vehicle to uphold and propagate the cultural values of Britain while simultaneously influencing other societies and cultures as well.

The Celts, much like the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, relied on an oral tradition to preserve their history. This similarity is highlighted in Chapter III, where it is noted that both cultures shared a common aspect: Written accounts of their respective cultures were often narrated by individuals who lived in different eras and significantly varied contexts. In the case of the Celtic Warrior Queen Boudica, the earliest historical record documenting her existence was penned by Roman sources several decades after her lifetime.

¹³⁴Words allegedly said by Boudica and recorded by Tacitus.

Figure 55*Boudica, Painting*

Note. From “Boudica Questions,” by M. Porter, 2012, p. 1

(<https://thesnufkin.blogspot.com/2012/07/boudica-questions.html>).

The Roman historian Tacitus¹³⁵ briefly mentions her in works such as *Agricola* and *Germania*, referring to his father Agricola, a Roman legionary, as his primary source regarding an alleged battle involving Boudica. Another significant record originates from

¹³⁵See Footnote 124.

Cassius Dio,¹³⁶ a Roman historian and senator of the second century, who embellished Tacitus' accounts by presenting a more dramatic portrayal of this formidable female warrior (Scott, n.d.; Steyn, 2019).

Historian Steyn (2019)¹³⁷ has made significant contributions to the understanding of Boudica through her research article, *Iceni to Iconic: Literary, Political and Ideological Transformation of Boudica Through Time*. According to Steyn's findings, the historical figure of Boudica, a Celtic woman who rebelled against Roman dominance, underwent a process of mythologization, transforming her image over the course of history as influenced by the desires and agendas of Britain's rulers.

Steyn's (2019) research posits the fabrication of the myth surrounding Boudica of Iceni mirrors the manifestation of patriarchal values. This also can be observed in the transformation of the Cowgirl's depictions and societal roles. Both Boudica and the Cowgirl were subject to mythologization driven primarily by cultural environments that predominantly revered masculine ideals while undervaluing feminine qualities. It is noteworthy that both figures shared a deep connection with horses, and their images were molded by various cultural instruments employed by writers, historians, and poets, as well as by the creation of monuments in the case of Boudica and the proliferation of posters, postcards, and pin-ups of the Cowgirl. However, beneath the layers of mythical and cultural interpretations, Boudica and the Cowgirl retained a primal identity that transcended the images and narratives imposed upon them.

¹³⁶Lucius Cassius Dio (155-235) produced 80 volumes of ancient Roman history addressing the founding of Rome (753 B.C.E.), the birth of the republic (509 B.C.E.) and the empire (27 B.C.E.-229 C.E.).

¹³⁷Margaret C. Steyn, Ph.D., is a professor and lecturer in the departments of Afrikaans and Theory of Literature at the University of South Africa.

The Real Boudica

Queen Boudica¹³⁸ of the Iceni tribe ascended to power following the death of her husband, King Prasutagus. In 43 C.E., Prasutagus was among the 11 kings who surrendered to the Roman Emperor Claudius,¹³⁹ and the Iceni tribe inhabited the present-day Norfolk region of Britain. Initially, Prasutagus maintained the position of a “client king” and enjoyed a friendly alliance with Rome (Aldhouse-Green, 1996, p. 31). In an attempt to safeguard his kingdom’s nominal independence, Prasutagus devised a will that divided his estate: half to Nero, the reigning Roman emperor at the time, and the other half to his two daughters. The act of leaving an inheritance to females posed a challenge to the authority of the Roman Empire¹⁴⁰ (Scott, n.d.).

The Roman procurator Catus Decianus¹⁴¹ disregarded the wishes of the Celtic king and unjustly deprived the two noblewomen of their lands while looting their kingdoms. As an act of punishment for Boudica’s objection to Roman authority, she was publicly flogged, and her two daughters were subjected to rape.¹⁴² These brutal actions were symbolic gestures aimed at reinforcing Roman dominance as well as the notion of women’s subordinate status as compared to men (and reminiscent of the treatment of

¹³⁸Queen Boudica seized her position after the death of her husband, as compared to the other famous Celtic queen, Cartimandua of the Brigantes, who reigned equally with her husband from 43 to 69.

¹³⁹Tiberias “Claudius” Caesar Augustus Germanicus (10 B.C.E.-54 C.E.) was the fourth Roman emperor, ruling from 41 to 54. He was the first emperor to be born outside of Italy.

¹⁴⁰Julius Caesar’s writings on the Gallic Wars highlight the customary laws of the Celts, in which husband and wife were required to contribute equal amounts to the marriage dowry. In Celtic culture, assets like cattle were held separately, and when one spouse passed away, the entirety of the marital assets would be given to the surviving spouse. This starkly contrasted with Roman law, which prohibited Greek and Roman women from owning property or inheriting it.

¹⁴¹Catus Decianus was the procurator of Roman Britain, 60-61.

¹⁴²Scott states in her lecture that the reason for raping the daughters was that under Roman law, a woman could not be crucified if she was a virgin. Raping the daughters cost them the protection of virginity.

Cynthia Ann Parker by the Comanche). In response to these atrocities, Boudica rallied her own people as well as numerous neighboring Celtic tribes in a revolt against the Roman legions (Steyn, 2019). Scott (n.d.) suggested the swift execution and organized manner of the revolt indicated preparations had been made prior to the infliction of these brutalities.

Underlying issues such as unfair taxation (a strategy of domination also used during colonization of the Indigenous peoples of America) and the construction of a controversial temple dedicated to Claudius in Colchester contributed to the uprising (Aldhouse-Green, 1996). The flogging and rapes served as a catalyst, unleashing a powerful force of justice that resulted in the destruction of many allies of Rome, including the Britons. Archaeological evidence from sites in Colchester, London, and St. Albans attests to this widespread devastation. Roman Governor Suetonius Paulinus¹⁴³ temporarily halted his campaign against the Druidic groves on Anglesey¹⁴⁴ in order to quell the insurrection (Aldhouse-Green, 1996; Scott, n.d.). Paulinus, an experienced strategist, ultimately managed to defeat the much larger allied tribes. The Battle of Watling Street in 61 marked the end of resistance against Roman authority for several centuries.

Tacitus and Dio provide contrasting perspectives on the values of the Celts and Romans, as highlighted by Steyn (2019). Tacitus (1956), in his work *Annals*, remarked on the peculiar absence of hierarchy among the Celts and the lack of gender distinctions in their governance. This posed a challenge to the Roman paradigm, as warfare was

¹⁴³Suetonius Paulinus (41-69) was a general best known for defeating Boudica.

¹⁴⁴Anglesey is an island located off the northwest coast of Wales.

traditionally considered the domain of men, making the association of women with warfare problematic (Steyn, 2019).

Dio's contempt for women's equal status is evident in his description of Boudica (Steyn, 2019). In his *Roman History*, written in the second century, Dio (1987) portrays Boudica's physical appearance with a mixture of fear and sexualized imagery. He describes her as tall, terrifying, with a fierce gaze and a harsh voice. Dio then emphasizes her feminine attributes, such as her long tawny hair, while also depicting her adoption of "masculine" warrior imagery with a large golden necklace, tunic, and mantle, grasping a spear (Steyn, 2019, p. 2). Steyn argues that these literary depictions conveyed Roman prejudice against powerful women who posed a threat to the established order and implied that men displaced by a woman must be deficient. Celtic women enjoyed a level of freedom and autonomy that was foreign to the patriarchal social hierarchy of the Romans.

The presence of Celtic women warriors posed a challenge for the Romans because in Celtic society, women participated on equal footing with men in battles. In Welsh and Irish myths, Celtic women were responsible for arming and training war heroes, and they were often attributed with supernatural powers (Aldhouse-Green, 1996). The Romans, accustomed to a patriarchal structure, tended to view women leaders as uncivilized and barbaric.

The historical figure of Boudica faced discredit from ancient authors due to their perception of her as impure. Boudica embodied a woman who defied gender roles, expressing her freedom through her sexuality, ownership of private property, and leadership. According to claims, Tacitus (1956) reported Boudica said, "Nothing is safe

from Roman pride and arrogance. They will deface the sacred and will deflower our virgins. Win the battle or perish, that is what I, a woman, will do” (p. 330). Boudica’s uncompromising stance challenged the established order and threatened Roman authority (Scott, n.d.).

Boudica stood out among other political figures due to her self-assertion of power, albeit in a manner deemed illegal by the Romans. The speeches made during that time reflect the prevailing attitudes about women in Celtic and Roman societies. For instance, Suetonius Paulinus observed that there were more women than fighting men among Boudica’s soldiers, highlighting the active participation of women in combat (Aldhouse-Green, 1996). Boudica’s speech implies the Britons did not hold prejudices against female leaders in warfare. In contrast, Julius Caesar noted in his writings that while Gallic women enjoyed considerable freedom, including sexual liberty, husbands still possessed the authority to execute their wives and children (Aldhouse-Green, 1996). Despite this, Celtic women held significant roles within their society.

Celtic Women and Warfare

Aldhouse-Green (1996) references Ammianus, a Roman writer of the fourth century, who provides descriptions of Gallic women warriors. Ammianus stated,

A whole troop of foreigners would not be able to stand a single Gaul if he called his wife to his assistance [because she] is usually very strong and with blue eyes; especially when, swelling her neck, gnashing her teeth, and brandishing her sallow arms of enormous size, she begins to strike blows mingled with kicks, as if they were so many missiles sent from the string of a catapult. (Aldhouse-Green, 1996, pp. 28–29)

Ammianus highlighted the ferocity and bravery of Gallic women, while other Roman writers emphasized their roles as forceful mothers. According to Tacitus and Caesar, Celtic and German women who did not participate in battle would serve as spectators or

cheerleaders, although they were still vulnerable to harm (Aldhouse-Green, 1996). During the battles led by Boudica, women and children would be positioned near the warriors to inspire them, fueling their sense of honor and valor. The Roman depiction of women warriors may be questionable, as it is possible that the writers projected the attributes of pagan goddesses onto the female soldiers. It is likely that women warriors were closely associated with certain goddesses who possessed supernatural or transcendent qualities, such as Andarta (Aldhouse-Green, 1996).

Boudica and the Celtic Warrior Goddess Andarta (Andraste)

According to Aldhouse-Green (1996), the Celtic Goddess Andarta's name potentially signifies "unconquerable." Dio (1987) claimed Boudica and the Iceni tribe worshipped this war goddess, Andarta, whose name bears resemblance to Boudica's own name, which connotes victory. Prior to the London massacre, Dio wrote that Boudica performed rituals in a sacred grove, releasing a live hare as an invocation to the goddess. Scholars propose the hare symbolized darkness, death, and destruction due to its nocturnal nature (Aldhouse-Green, 1996).

During the Battle of London, the Roman women who were captured by Boudica's forces suffered brutalization. Boudica's soldiers severed the women's breasts and placed them in their mouths before sacrificing them on skewers. Tacitus (1956) stated this act served as retribution not only for the Romans' mistreatment of Boudica but also as a preemptive vengeance for what they anticipated would happen to them once defeated by the Romans. The killing of the Roman women was considered a necessary sacrifice to appease the Goddess Andarta. Despite the divergence between the supernatural goddess

of war and the mortal Boudica, there are notable parallels between them as both embody elements of a warrior, one celestial and the other earthly (Aldhouse-Green, 1996).

The Evolving Myth of Boudica

The story of Boudica has acquired a mythic essence throughout British history. As an iconic figure, her portrayal has undergone continuous transformation, reflecting the prevailing understanding of the world in different eras. These adaptations of her image often carry political ideologies, yet Boudica retains her essence, remaining true to herself. In the subsequent section, I offer a concise overview of the diverse interpretations of Boudica from around 500 to the 20th century, primarily drawing from the research conducted by Steyn (2019).

The Treacherous Lioness

The actual details of Boudica's life were scarcely documented, with her image primarily kept alive and flourishing through oral legends and interpretations. It was not until 500-570 that the British Monk Gildas wrote about her, albeit with a negative bias. Gildas referred to Boudica as "the treacherous lioness," a description that Steyn (2019) related to Dio's portrayal of her "tawniest hair" (p. 3). However, it is possible that Gildas was referring to a region or country rather than a powerful female leader, thereby obscuring the significance of Boudica as a prominent figure. Furthermore, Steyn (2019) noted Boudica was consistently omitted.

The story of Boudica remained relatively unknown until the 14th century when Italian scholar Giovanni Boccaccio and the monks of Monte Cassino discovered Tacitus' works in their library. The advent of the printing press facilitated widespread dissemination of such documents, which were read by the literati 1400–1500. During the

evolving Tudor Dynasty, myths and historical works were utilized to validate the noble lineage of the ruling family and to foster unity among the people under the crown. As a result, Boudica resurfaced as different characters suited to the social, political, and legal fluctuations affecting women's status (Steyn, 2019). The origins of Britain were often portrayed as savage and destructive, and Boudica was depicted as a negative example of women wielding power within society.

The Familial Queen

Throughout history, the story of Boudica has been subject to various rewrites and reinterpretations. Steyn (2019) refers to the Scottish historian Hector Boece, who introduced inaccuracies by relocating Boudica to northern Britain, renaming her "Voada," and portraying her as a sister to Scottish kings. In Boece's narrative, Boudica assumes the role of a traditional family member before embracing her identity as a self-realized warrior. Her battles are depicted as acts of national identity, leading 5,000 women in seeking revenge for the cruelties inflicted by the Romans. Boece claimed Boudica delivered a speech that bears similarities to the one made by Elizabeth I at Tilbury, asserting her strength as a woman while claiming the attributes of a monarch (Steyn, 2019).

Rebellious and Virginal

Steyn (2019) highlighted how the historical writer Raphael Holinshed¹⁴⁵ contributed to the embellishment of the Boudica myth during the mid-1500s. Holinshed

¹⁴⁵Raphael Holinshed (1525 C.E.-1582 C.E.) was an English chronicler who is best known for writing the first complete history of England, *Holinshed's Chronicles*. He influenced many Renaissance writers, including Shakespeare.

crafted a version of Boudica centered on rebellion, in which she defied the prescribed gender roles in warfare. In his portrayal, Holinshed emphasized the disciplined and heroic nature of the Roman emperor and legions, a product of the masculine hierarchy of Roman civilization. He attributed Boudica's defeat to her supposed female excess, incompetence, and unruly nature (Steyn, 2019).

In the late 1500s, a new version of Boudica's story emerged, influenced by Petruccio Ulbadini.¹⁴⁶ Ulbadini presented a more virtuous portrayal of Boudica to Queen Elizabeth I, suggesting Boudica as a historical precedent to validate the queen's image as one of the great female rulers of England (Steyn, 2019). Instead of focusing on the savage image propagated by earlier historians, Ulbadini drew parallels between Boudica and the Virgin Queen, highlighting Tacitus' descriptions of Boudica. In 1591, Elizabeth I had Tacitus' works, *Annals* and *Agricola*, translated into English to promote Boudica as a powerful woman operating within a patriarchal society (Steyn, 2019). Elizabeth even emulated Boudica by riding a white horse and donning a breastplate, wearing her red hair loose. However, it is important to note that while Elizabeth delivered military speeches to unite her people, she never personally engaged in battle. Her speeches emphasized her female courage as a means to intimidate male enemies (Steyn, 2019).

During the Elizabethan era, plays and literature were crafted using Boudica as a model to justify female leadership (Steyn, 2019). Her story was reimagined and reshaped to align with the monarchy's perspectives on gender, war, and religion. In these new versions, the voices of Boudica's daughters were silenced, reinforcing their "impurity"

¹⁴⁶Petruccio Ubaldini (1524-1600) was an Italian mercenary for Henry VII (1545-1547) and Edward VI (1537-1553) and was a writer at court during the reign of Elizabeth I.

resulting from the rapes they endured. The Roman legions came to symbolize the oppressive Roman Catholic Church, which the crown sought to discredit. At times, the story's conclusion was altered to depict Boudica as triumphant over the Roman armies. Her image became associated with notions of heroism, courage, and patriotism, as reflected in the work of poet Edmund Spenser¹⁴⁷ in *The Faerie Queen*. Boudica's shining image endured throughout the reign of Elizabeth I (Steyn, 2019).

Savaged and Dismissed—Again!

After a reign of 50 years by women and upon the ascension of James I¹⁴⁸ to the throne, the image of Boudica again underwent a transformation, reverting to the perception of her as a savage figure. Strong female leaders were now villainized and dismissed. In a reversal of Elizabeth's tactics, John Fletcher depicted Boudica as a cruel, reckless, and incompetent queen in his play *The Tragedie of Bouduca*, published in 1693. Fletcher stripped her of her leadership role by making the British warrior Caratacus (also known as Caratach) her commander, who held true military power due to his gender. This portrayal by Fletcher conveyed the notion that women in positions of power were detrimental to society and better suited to domestic roles. Steyn (2019) argued this reflected the fear that women in power would lead to the destruction and destabilization of male-dominated social relations.

¹⁴⁷Edmund Spenser (1552/1553-1599) was an English poet recognized as the main craftsman of nascent modern English verse.

¹⁴⁸After the death of Elizabeth I, who left no heirs, James VI of Scotland (1567-1625) assumed the throne as James I of England (1603-1625). He ruled as monarch for England, Scotland, and Ireland until his death in 1625.

In the aftermath of the Jacobean and Cromwellian periods, Britain experienced a resurgence of societal liberties. Charles II reopened theatres, and with that, Boudica made a reappearance. However, in line with the prevailing stereotypes of the time, the warrior queen underwent a transformation into a more passive and refined figure. Writers like Milton challenged the authenticity of the ancient historians' accounts and portrayed Boudica as a subordinate woman ruling alongside a male warrior named Cassibelan¹⁴⁹ (Steyn, 2019). Once again, Boudica was molded to fit the social and ideological constructs and gender ideals of the era.

Model for Nationalism and Taming the Wild

During the 1700s, Boudica evolved into an icon of British nationalism (Steyn, 2019). The focus shifted toward emphasizing Roman imperial values as a model for British expansion into the New World. The Roman domination of the “savage” Celts served as a parallel to Britain’s mission of civilizing the “savage” Americas. William Cowper¹⁵⁰ played a significant role in this transformation by presenting Boudica as a Druidic princess, effectively inverting her role (Steyn, 2019). Now she became associated with imperialism, serving the patriotic agendas of British nationalism. The celebration of her Celtic heritage could be seen as legitimizing imperialist claims. Cowper’s poem featuring Boudica became part of the curriculum for schoolchildren in the 1900s. Concurrently, David Hume¹⁵¹ suggested the rebellion led by Boudica was a result of the

¹⁴⁹Steyn footnotes that he was named after the historical Cassivellaunus, a British tribal chieftain who fought Caesar during the first invasion in 54 (Steyn, 2019).

¹⁵⁰William Cowper (1731-1800) was an English poet and Anglican hymnwriter. He was known for writing nature poetry inspired by everyday scenes of the English countryside.

¹⁵¹David Hume (1711-1776) was a Scottish Enlightenment philosopher, historian, economist, and librarian who is best known for his influential system of empiricism, skepticism, and naturalism.

religious practices of the Druids, including elements of “black magic” and human sacrifices (Steyn, 2019). This further disempowered the image of Boudica, as historical reality and cultural values became distorted.

National Icon of Liberty

During Queen Victoria’s reign, the legend of Boudica experienced another significant transformation as she became an international icon. Boudica was revitalized, embodying her earthy and warrior queen qualities. Her name, meaning “victory,” became associated with the feminine Victoria. Boudica was no longer seen as the symbol of a defeated nation but as a heroine who drove out the Romans, representing the spirit of liberty. Writers such as Lord Alfred Tennyson¹⁵² portrayed her as fiery, untamed, and passionate (Steyn, 2019).

Boudica became intertwined with Britannia, merging into a maternal force with her daughters at her side. The statue *Boadicea and Her Daughters* by Thornycroft,¹⁵³ commissioned in 1902 and placed near Westminster Bridge, has become a national icon. It symbolizes the glory of Britain and its global dominance. The statue’s powerful imagery depicts Boudica standing on a wheeled chariot with raised arms and a spear in hand, exuding a victorious and commanding presence (see Figure 56). No longer subservient, she embodies fierceness, regality, and nobility in her flowing tunic, drawing upon her ancient roots. Horses flank her, further emphasizing her connection to her Celtic heritage and symbolism. Her daughters, positioned behind her, suggest a maternal

¹⁵²Lord Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892) was a British poet of the Victorian era known for works including *The Charge of the Light Brigade* and *Idylls of the King*.

¹⁵³Sir William Hamo Thornycroft (1850-1925) was an English sculptor of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

imperialism. Thornycroft's statue acts as a metaphorical lighthouse, uniting the British people, and representing their nation (Steyn, 2019). Much like the modern Cowgirl, Boudica serves as a role model for women, inspiring courage, resilience, and independence.

Figure 56

Statue of Boudica



Note. From “Boudica is Firing UP a New Generation,” by Bidisha, 2019, p. 1 (<https://unherd.com/2019/07/the-woman-who-shook-an-empire/>).

The section on Boudica further exemplifies the nature of myth, not as a lie but as representative of an ideal. Beneath all myths, there is a personal life; the two are in relation to the other, not molded into one. Boudica and the Cowgirl were archetypal images as well as real women who lived connected to nature and animals such as the

horse. Because of this connection, they experienced their feminine spirituality as seen in the Indigenous tribes.

Like the myths of the Cowgirl and Boudica, my dreams began reflecting my own transformation of the feminine. I dreamt I was led from my bedroom down a long road to a complex surrounded by trees and a serene lake. I realized I could not see my wedding ring but instead it had merged with my flesh, forming a ridge within my bone, a substance reminiscent of the eternal. The message of this dream aligns with the sentiments expressed in my opening poem, *Learning to Feel, The Wild Redeemer*, written in 2017: “I find my voice of truth in my bones and blood” (See Appendix H).

CHAPTER XI: ARCHETYPES, INSTINCTS, AND SYMBOLS OF THE COWGIRL

“Truth did not come into the world naked, but it came in the types and images. It will not receive it in any other fashion. There is a rebirth and an image of rebirth” (*Gospel of Philip* 67:9–12). The frontier, a realm fraught with contradictions and paradoxes, incessantly tested the resolve of settlers. On one hand, it demanded unwavering self-reliance from those who sought to conquer it, yet simultaneously, their very existence relied on the nurturing embrace of the land. In this intricate dance of survival, the pioneers found themselves forging symbiotic relationships with the untamed creatures that roamed the wild frontier. Dogs, horses, and cows emerged as primary companions in the pioneers’ quest for survival, requiring domestication for the purposes of labor, transportation, and recreation.

The settlers’ responsibility for the well-being of these animals demanded a unique form of knowledge, one unknown in their previous experiences. In their interactions with these sentient beings, the pioneers discovered an understanding akin to that held by Native peoples. This wisdom was not transmitted through conventional channels of language but rather through instinct and the intimate bonds the pioneers formed with their animal counterparts. Unbeknownst to the settlers, these animals embodied ancient symbolism reminiscent of the profound connections in the aforementioned Celtic cultures.

While the prevailing myth of the cowboy celebrated rugged individualism, the Cowgirl, in contrast, harnessed her innate relational skills and instincts to forge profound connections. She formed bonds not only with the horses she rode but also with her fellow

Cowgirls and the very land itself—a land that had so recently been wrested from the stewardship of Native peoples that their voices still echoed in the air. Through her intimate association with the environment, the Cowgirl acquired the ability to decipher the subtle whispers of the wind, the haunting cry of the coyote, and even the unspoken sentiments conveyed by her trusted steed.

Throughout work on this dissertation, my personal spiritual practice has revolved around the process of individuation through depth psychology and dream analysis. In the course of this journey, I discovered it was the instinctual aspect of my being that had become atrophied during my marriage, largely due to a solely transcendent theology and a culture constellated with Anglo values focused on hierarchy and externality. While instincts are commonly perceived as purely physical reactions, my exploration and self-reflection have revealed that instincts are intricately intertwined with the intuitive function (See Appendix I). My mantra of inquisition was, “How do I know?” It was through a mysterious, intuitive aspect performing its function that I found the courage to venture into the unknown territory of divorce and leap into the transformative journey of this dissertation. To assist me in this process the archetypal image of the Cowgirl unexpectedly arrived. That archetypal image embodies a feminine intelligence that is fervently seeking its recognition in a world that has suppressed it. It is my contention that this psychic, instinctual intelligence will aid in the healing of the West’s central ethos. The Dalai Lama said, “The world will be saved by the Western woman” (Holland, 2021, para. 1)¹⁵⁴—wearing cowboy boots, I would add! (Chan, 2010).

¹⁵⁴The Dalai Lama made this statement at the Vancouver Peace Summit 2009 and again in 2015 with Nobel Laureates in 2015 (Holland, 2015).

The Unconscious Realm: Archetypes, Female Images, and The Black Virgin

Plato's concept of "eidos" refers to imagistic thought from which the notion of an idea emerges. The term "archetype" derives from "typo," signifying an impression, or a permanent, unchanging psychic energy. The archetype represents a fundamental pattern or essence, while the archetypal image reflects a fluid or pictorial manifestation of the same. The archetypal image possesses a high degree of plasticity. Because of this, the way in which archetypes manifest, specifically in the form of perceived creative imaging, varies with changing times and cultures. Legitimate archetypal images evolve slowly and cannot be swiftly legislated or controlled. They possess their own inherent transformative power, adapting gradually to the cultural and societal shifts that occur over time.

Various types and images emanate from the godhead and manifest in diverse forms, such as the Black Virgin or the Cowgirl. These aid the soul in establishing a connection with the source, commonly referred to as God. The soul, which often is alienated from this source, communicates with images that offer a pathway between the fragmented human mind and the divine. They provide a means for the soul to rediscover unity and communion with God (Hoeller, 2019).

The archetype of the feminine in Western culture has primarily been represented by the archetypal image of the Virgin Mary (Baring & Cashford, 1993). However, this portrayal often omits the dark, instinctual aspect of the feminine. Any partial image of the deity, when identified as representing the whole truth of divinity, constitutes idolatry.

The essence of an archetype is to bring the unconscious aspects of ourselves into consciousness. In a contemporary context, this process can be seen as a form of *gnosis*, or

spiritual knowledge. We can use this as a tool to visualize and explore our intrapsychic contents.

Archetypal images of the Cowgirl and the Black Virgin (or Black Madonna) contain archetypal energies of the feminine, or goddess (Baring & Cashford, 1993). There is a symbiotic relationship between these images and the psyche. Both names reveal the archetypal qualities they impart. For example, “Cow” represents the instinctual aspect, a symbol of the Great Mother as described in Chapter VII. “Girl” represents an outer image of youth and freshness, attributes of Aphrodite that will be described later in this chapter. “Black” refers to a dark, feminine sensuality, and “Madonna,” as Queen of Earth, identifies with Earth as the feminine ground of her being (Baring & Cashford, 1993, p. xi). I will now briefly explain this instinctual perception through the ancient image of the Black Virgin (see Figure 57) and the historical events that led to her suppression, which caused a distorted image of the feminine.

Black, symbolizing the feminine, calls forth the mysterious creative force. This essence, though obscured in Judeo-Christian religions, finds mention as “black,” “dark,” or “swarthy” in various translations of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible’s Song of Solomon, describing the bride, known as “the Shulamite” (Baring & Cashford, 1993, p. xi).¹⁵⁵

Within Judeo-Christianity, two prominent feminine figures emerge—Eve and Mary. Eve came to embody the physical and material aspects, while Adam represented

¹⁵⁵In Hebrew, *shulamite* comes from the verb *shalem*, meaning to be, make whole or complete.

the mental and spiritual dimensions. Eve symbolized carnality, while Adam opposed this and so came to rule over women (Baring & Cashford, 1993).

Figure 57

Black Virgin, Chartres



Note. Personal photograph.

The Christian collective consciousness is deeply ingrained in its association of man with the mind and woman with the body. This division between mind and body can be traced back to Iron Age mythology, as described by Baring and Cashford (1993). It gave rise to the belief in the separation of the creator from creation, and the notion that the body should be controlled and punished for its desires. However, it is important to

recognize that both the body and mind are integral expressions of the soul¹⁵⁶ (Baring & Cashford, 1993).

The consequences of human actions endure over time. One unfortunate example is found in the writings of Augustine, perpetuating the concept of “original sin” (Baring & Cashford, 1993, p. 537). This notion distorted the understanding of human nature, presenting it as inherently sinful rather than a divine blessing. It is important to recognize that the act of negation itself creates and sustains the very thing it condemns.

In ancient Egypt, Isis, represented the feminine principle of nature, and symbols held a magical significance as they embodied the essence of what they represented. The prototype was intimately connected to the archetype. Modernity, with its emphasis on rationality, often dismisses the significance of symbols.

Begg (2015),¹⁵⁷ a scholar and Jungian analyst, delves into the profound aspects of Black Virgins in his book *The Cult of the Black Virgin*. He noted numerous Madonnas worldwide are depicted as Black, yet they are frequently overlooked or even whitewashed, disregarding their symbolic heritage. Begg revealed the existence of more than 450 Black Virgin images around the world, with a significant concentration in France.

For centuries, faithful communities have safeguarded the archetypal feminine influence of the Black Virgin (Begg, 2015). However, many members of the Catholic priesthood, often claiming to protect the faith, have opposed that influence, particularly after the Second Vatican Council, 1962–1965. The ecumenical council of the Roman

¹⁵⁶In much current Western spiritual thought, the connection of mind, body, and spirit is accepted.

¹⁵⁷Ean Begg (1929-2018) was a Jungian analyst and historian of the Black Virgin.

Catholic Church aimed to bring about adaptation within the Church in response to the modern world by using of vernacular languages in liturgy, increased emphasis on ecumenism and interfaith dialogue, a call for greater lay participation, and a renewed focus on social justice.

According to Begg (2015), Jesus would have been familiar with the syncretic¹⁵⁸ Gnostic teachings that revered the sacred feminine. During the Age of Taurus (4460 B.C.E.–2300 B.C.E.), which followed the expansion of masculine empires, Rome became host to mystical cults including Christianity. The Age of Pisces (1–2000) ushered in a more intuitive and emotionally driven era during which Christianity differentiated itself from Hellenistic values. The Roman Empire and the Christian Church merged in a system known as caesaropapism,¹⁵⁹ in which state and religious authority were intertwined. Despite the decline of goddess cults, three prominent Black goddesses—Isis, Cybele, and Diana of the Ephesians—remained. Epona and the Triple Goddesses also retained significance throughout Roman rule. Even before Constantine I established Christianity as the state religion, worship of a Great Mother and her sacrificial son who offered salvation already existed. The Christian Church contested a more experiential and subjectively oriented Christianity that embraced feminine wisdom. The Roman Catholic Church that emerged possessed a strong masculine quality of central authority, influenced by the Roman virtue of strict legalism. Deviation from Church doctrine was deemed heresy (Begg, 2015).

¹⁵⁸Syncretic means the blending of two or more religious belief systems into a new system. Gnosticism is identified as an early syncretism that challenged orthodoxy.

¹⁵⁹Caesaropapism is the supremacy of secular power over ecclesiastical powers. It can also mean the merging of the two, in which the head of state is also head of the Church.

Protestantism viewed the ancient Black Virgin as an untamable source of life (Begg, 2015). It was not until the 1800s that the concept of the Black Virgin resurfaced through apparitions associated with the Lady of Lourdes. Begg argued the resurgence of the Black Virgin served a psychological purpose in society by reconciling sexuality and religion, dismantling the strict patriarchal rules, and embracing human fallibility. She symbolizes a crusader for freedom advocating for independence that fosters human flourishing. Her most significant role lies in her unwavering ability to “restrain the destructive hand of God,” balancing justice with mercy (Begg, 2015, p. 48).

As Christianity evolved, ancient deities became detached from their natural contexts (Begg, 2015). Goddesses were traditionally worshipped in their respective natural environments. The original placement of Black Virgin icons was often in forests or concealed among bushes. The cult of the Black Virgin was closely linked to natural phenomena and associated with healing waters. The Romans appropriated these sacred sites and transformed the goddesses, particularly those worshipped by the Celts and Teutons, into Catholic saints and angels (Begg, 2015). The Black Virgin sites were often ornamented by horse symbols representing libido and death, as well as icons of Epona.

As described in Chapter II, the Christianity that influenced the settlers of the American West lacked a significant feminine dimension. Judaism, founded on a masculine, monotheistic belief in Yahweh, diverged from the pluralistic traditions of other cultures that embraced the use of graven images or idols, particularly in Greece and

Egypt (Begg, 2015). The Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria¹⁶⁰ played a significant role in shaping the symbolic interpretation of scripture; his ideas later influenced Christianity. Philo introduced the term “archetype” to describe a pattern that connects principal ideals. These archetypes were not mere abstract concepts but held inherent meaning. In Egypt, Christianity predominantly took on a Gnostic form, emphasizing divine emanations from the godhead¹⁶¹ through spoken words. Begg identifies several feminine words associated with this tradition, including “Wisdom, Silence, Truth, Thought, Faith, Grace, Life, Church, and Gnosis itself,” representing intuitive, experiential knowledge or insight (Begg, 2015, p. 94).

Both Christianity and Judaism underwent a process of pruning and ultimately relegated the feminine aspect to the masculine *logos* (Begg, 2015). The Gnostics held the belief that objective phenomena were contained within symbols, while the later Church tended to perceive symbols as concrete and literal facts (this nondogmatic Gnostic perspective can also be observed in the spirituality of Native peoples, as described in Chapter IV).

The meaning of certain words, such as “whore,”¹⁶² underwent a transformation. Originally associated with female sexuality and wisdom, “whore” came to be seen as a negative term, representing a seductive temptress leading the faithful male astray.

¹⁶⁰Philo of Alexandria (15-10 B.C.E.-45-50 C.E.), was born Philo Judaeus. He was a Greek-speaking Jewish philosopher and the most notable representative of Hellenistic Judaism. His writings provided clarity on the development of Judaism in the diaspora.

¹⁶¹Godhead refers to the infallible source of all or the concept of the Triune God (one God in three, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).

¹⁶²“Whore” contains the Hebrew word *hor*, meaning “light.”

Goddesses such as Aphrodite, also known as Porné,¹⁶³ were associated with all-embracing feminine wisdom and included the virgin and the whore (Begg, 2015).

The archetype of the Black Virgin conveys a profound message: The feminine principle represents a potent force of nature. She emerges to shatter the chains that confine the unconscious. This force possesses an intuitive underground magnetism. According to Begg (2015), ancient feminine figures like Inanna, Sophia, and the Holy Grail, and the medieval Christian Cathars may no longer resonate with present-day individuals. Instead, the goddess now manifests as a new kind of temple: the human heart. She also possesses the power of discernment to navigate the complexities of the world and unveil one's inner truth. The Black Virgin symbolizes the "alchemical Isis," encapsulating all the elements within us (Begg, 2015, p. 143). The Gnostics believed humans are composed of body, soul, and spirit. The experiences and cultural influences of one's ancestors reside within the individual's psyche. Beneath the surface of individuals' personalities and characteristics lies their essential nature; thus, the historical Cowgirl finds her instinctual self—a manifestation of the dark feminine—in the untamed frontier.

Instincts and the Unconscious

In 1919, Jung wrote *Instinct and the Unconscious* in order to provide a clearer understanding of the function of instinct. He argued the prevailing definition of instinct did not consider the circumstances that provoked it, often resulting in a "all-or-none" effect without any variation in intensity. According to Jung (1969), reactions to stimuli

¹⁶³Porné was an epithet for "prostitute" in the context of the goddess. In modern terms, "porn" is associated with obscene images.

are frequently disproportionate, such as instances of inflation or over-exaggeration, and cannot be classified as purely “instinctual” (p. 130). He distinguished instinct from habitual phobia.

Jung (1969) put forth the idea that instincts possess a teleological psychic function, an underlying purpose or aim; they are inherited and reside within the unconscious. They operate consistently and uniformly everywhere, akin to a “reflex.” Despite being primordial, the origins of instincts cannot be defined, and they cannot be learned through repetition. For example, animal instincts are not acquired through a learning process in the wild. Consequently, instincts are closely related to intuition, another unconscious process.

Intuition can be described as “hunches” or a sudden idea (Jung, 1969, p. 132). Unlike conscious, sensory activities, intuition is an instinctual act of apprehension. The difference lies in the fact that instinct is a purposeful impulse that drives action, whereas intuition is the unconscious, purposeful understanding of a highly complex situation. Jung posits that intuition is the reverse of instinct. Brenda Crowther (personal communication, July 5, 2023) further explained Jung’s quote, “You think your thoughts are yours, don’t you? But they enter you from somewhere else” as “intuitive thoughts.”

Jung (1969) defined the unconscious as the totality of all psychic phenomena that lacks consciousness. Each psychic content possesses a certain energy value which determines its potential to become conscious. The unconscious serves as a container for memories that are too weak to attain consciousness because their energetic value is lower, causing them to disappear into this reservoir. These unconscious contents are what give rise to dreams. Jung refers to them collectively as the “personal unconscious” when they

are specific to an individual (p. 133). In the unconscious realm, the archetypes of perception and apperception reside. Jung argued these innate forms of intuition are essential determinants of all psychic processes. As a result, instincts compel humans to adopt specific modes of existence, influencing the way they perceive and comprehend the world according to distinct human patterns. Together, instincts and archetypes comprise what Jung called the “collective unconscious” (p. 133). Therefore, instinct should be understood as a universal and regularly occurring phenomenon that transcends individuality (Jung, 1969).

Archetypes and instincts are both collective and determine one another (Jung, 1969). Instincts are commonly observed in animals, and even though they may be domesticated, they still retain their fundamental motives. The process of rationalization has led to difficulties in identifying the original motive behind instincts. According to Jung (1969), when instincts are enveloped in rational explanations, humans often fail to recognize the original motive, hindering humans’ instincts altogether. Instincts possess a uniform and regular nature that humans struggle to acknowledge. Jung suggested humans are prone to numerous distortions of judgment, particularly as a result of an instinctual exaggeration of the rationalistic standpoint (Jung, 1969).

Since Descartes’ time, there has been a decline in the recognition of archetypes (Jung, 1969). They have been reduced to mere categories and rational concepts, making it increasingly challenging to perceive them over time. However, similar to instincts, archetypes maintain a regular and uniform nature. There exists a correlation of this factor determining the mode of apperception. Jung (1969) refers to this correlation as the primordial image or archetype, which represents the instinct’s perception of itself or the

“self-portrait” of the instinct (p. 136). Intuition plays a role in activating instincts through the imagery of archetypes; images help humans recognize the archetypes (Jung, 1969).

Archetypes represent typical modes of apperception, and like instincts, they exhibit regularity and uniformity, irrespective of whether they manifest in mythological forms or not (Jung, 1969). The collective unconscious is composed of the cumulative instincts and their corresponding archetypes. Every human possesses instincts and a multitude of archetypal images.

Eros and the Goddess

As explained in Chapter VIII, the instinctual archetype of the Cowgirl stands in contrast to the conventional archetype of the Anglo woman. The archetypal image of the Anglo woman of frontier times is characterized by her attire, notably the corset, which she would wear even while engaging in the responsibilities of childrearing and homemaking (Boswell, 2018). This image epitomizes the role of the female partner in a patriarchal marriage, emphasizing the suppression of feminine values and her creative expression, as well as constraining her very flesh!

The Cowgirl is an archetypal image that emerged during the pioneering era of the American West, a time when the active participation of all family members was crucial for running ranches and ensuring survival (Boswell, 2018). In contrast to conventional societal norms, the Cowgirl could not rely solely on her outward appearance but had to actively engage in the demanding daily tasks required for sustenance.

The spirit of the pioneers compelled the manifestation of the goddess archetype, as the frontier called for women to serve both as cowhands and mothers (Boswell, 2018). Over time, the Cowgirl archetypal image evolved from her historical role into different

expressions, as described in Chapter VII. She is a multifaceted figure, driven by her own instincts and possessing a deep connection to animals, which fuels her courage. The cow's horns, resembling the crescent moon, symbolize her feminine essence and relate to the Egyptian Goddess Hathor (Baring & Cashford, 1993).

In *Goddesses: Mysteries of the Divine Feminine*, Campbell and Rossi (2013) highlighted the archetypal nature of gender roles in both biological and psychological contexts. Campbell and Rossi also noted the lack of mythological models representing a woman's journey toward individuation. Thus, the historical Cowgirl courageously stepped into action—without the guidance of role models.

The Cowgirl's connection to the land and animals—the Great Mother aspects—drives her to restore the feminine in her way of life (Campbell & Rossi, 2013). Although she may not be consciously aware of it, the land becomes sacred to her, as it reveals mythological entities. Campbell and Rossi (2013) asserted when nature assumes such significance as an icon, it indicated the divine was communicating with and actively working on behalf of the human observer.

The Cowgirl is constrained by her inherited patriarchal attitude and Christianity, which lacks the feminine principle and therefore cannot transcend it (Boswell, 2018). Instead, she learns to co-exist with this impoverished version of the Christian woman. Rather than suppressing or disregarding it, she finds new ways to relate to the women in her culture and to her own identity. She develops an indomitable spirit rooted in nature and, while tacitly accepting traditional gender roles, she manages to live on her own terms. Furthermore, she nurtures a relationship with a power greater than herself.

Although Campbell (1949) argued there are no mythical role models for the individuated woman, there are insightful attributes embodied in ancient symbols. Rather than being closely associated with the Virgin Mary, the Cowgirl aligns more closely with Isis, the precursor to the Virgin Mary (see the section on The Luminosity of the Cow).

The Art of Donna Howell-Sickles

Storytelling through images holds tremendous power. Bethany Dodson (personal communication, January 30, 2020), director of research and education at the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame in Fort Worth, provided a wide array of books that delve into the Cowgirl experience. These books range from personal narratives to accounts of rodeo queens and artists, each shedding light on different aspects of the Cowgirl's life. Standing out among these remarkable works is *Cowgirl Rising: The Art of Donna Howell-Sickles* (Streep & Howell-Sickles, 1997). In this book, Howell-Sickles¹⁶⁴ masterfully portrays the Cowgirl through captivating imagery accompanied by text written by Streep. Together they weave a narrative infused with mythological cues that illuminate the essence of the Cowgirl. The introduction, penned by Jordan, captures the message that Howell-Sickles' artwork conveys (Streep & Howell-Sickles, 1997). Jordan stated, “[Cowgirls are] confident and strong, they move without apology or the need for permission. At ease with animals and with themselves, they are also at home with other women, and with men: all this without denying their essential womanness” [sic] (Streep & Howell-Sickles, 1997, p. 11).

¹⁶⁴Donna Howell-Sickles was inducted into the Cowgirl Hall of Fame in 2007. She works primarily in pastel, charcoal, and acrylics.

Howell-Sickles (personal communication, February 16, 2023) carries the lineage of women who settled and lived on ranches in the American West during the 19th century. Their lives required embodied self-reliance and rootedness; they learned to trust their abilities in tasks such as birthing livestock, baling hay, cooking, and weathering the unpredictable elements. At a lecture at the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame, Howell-Sickles (personal communication, February 16, 2023) said women on the ranch were taught they were capable of doing anything a man could do—*as long as it was not noticed*. These ranch women were tough. Howell-Sickles' mother was a rodeo athlete. She served as Howell-Sickles' role model, demonstrating women could and would do whatever was necessary, even plow the fields all night. Howell-Sickles later witnessed a new generation of women daring to further defy conventional gender rules.

Howell-Sickles' (personal communication, February 16, 2023) interest in drawing was in her bones. However, it was not until her junior year in college when she received an antique souvenir postcard that her focus shifted toward the Cowgirl as the primary subject of her artwork. The postcard depicted a woman smiling with vibrant ruby red lips, and was accompanied by the caption, "A real Cowgirl of the Old Southwest." Initially, these postcards seemed to the artist like frozen images of the past, media-created fictions. However, Howell-Sickles soon discovered that beneath the surface of these images lay the stories of real women who performed remarkable feats: riding bareback and executing daring stunts and relays before crowds of corseted women wearing elbow-length gloves. She recounted the tale of Cowgirl Mabel Strickland, who walked the streets of Rome in trousers, causing parents to tell their little children to cover their eyes. Rodeo became the first sport in which women could earn a livelihood through their athletic prowess. The

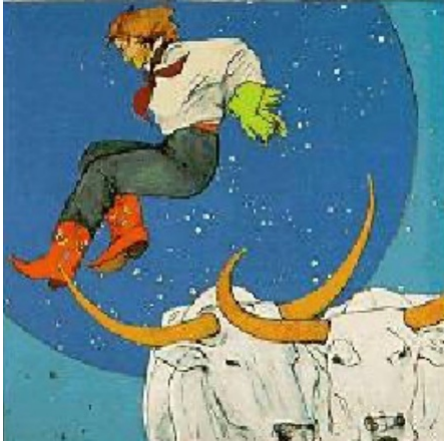
women of rodeo embodied courage, strength, and a contagious laughter that resonated “long and loud” (Streep & Howell-Sickles, 1997).

Howell-Sickles had a profound fascination with books, particularly those on mythology (Streep & Howell-Sickles, 1997). Her bibliography includes references to the mythological works of Baring and Cashford (1993), as well as Marija Gimbutas.¹⁶⁵ Howell-Sickles integrates images of fertility goddesses in her pictorial narrative of the Cowgirl (Streep & Howell-Sickles, 1997). One notable piece, titled “And the Cowgirl Jumped Over the Moon” (see Figure 58) depicts a significant part of the individuation process of a woman’s empowerment mimicking the bull-leaping ceremonies performed in Crete (p. 29). Another work, “Perch” (see Figure 59), narrates the story of the Cowgirl’s as a “magician” surrounded by images of growth from red roses to white doves of transformation, wisdom, and spirit (Streep & Howell-Sickles, 1997, p. 108). A notable piece inspired by the Celtic triple Goddesses, “Lone Star Trout Flipper” (see Figure 60), features three smiling Cowgirls holding fish, a symbol of the Goddess Aphrodite, with flowers depicted through a single star above them denoting a power symbol of the pentagram (Streep & Howell-Sickles, 1997, p. 77).

¹⁶⁵Marija Gimbutas (1921-1994) was a Lithuanian archaeologist and anthropologist known for her research on Neolithic and Bronze Age cultures.

Figure 58

And the Cow Jumped Over the Moon



Note. From *Cowgirl Rising: The Art of Donna Howell-Sickles*, by P. Streep & D. Howell-Sickles, 1997, p. 29. Copyright 1997 by Greenwich Workshop Press. Fair Use.

Figure 59

Perch



Note. From *Cowgirl Rising: The Art of Donna Howell-Sickles*, by P. Streep & D. Howell-Sickles, 1997, p. 108. Copyright 1997 by Greenwich Workshop Press. Fair Use.

Figure 60*Lone Star Trout Flipper*

Note. From *Cowgirl Rising: The Art of Donna Howell-Sickles*, by P. Streep & D. Howell-Sickles, 1997, p. 77. Copyright 1997 by Greenwich Workshop Press. Fair Use.

Howell-Sickles incorporates ancient symbols of life, along with the Cowgirl's relationship with animals, into her Cowgirl imagery (Streep & Howell-Sickles, 1997). These symbols include the crescent moon, representing the power of creation; triangles suggesting feminine inspiration; red horses as embodiments of eros and passion (see Figure 61); five-pointed stars as homage to milky Mother Earth; heroic white horses; and

the feminine attributes associated with Aphrodite, such as doves, red roses (also symbolizing the Virgin Mary) and six-petaled flowers.

Figure 61

Lavender and Buckskin



Note. From *Lavender and Buckskin*, by Donna Howell-Sickles Fine Art, n.d., p. 1. (<https://www.donnahowellsickles.com/workszoom/3521919/lavender-and-buckskin#/>).

Through her artwork, Howell-Sickles conveys a clear message: The contemporary human Cowgirl is a manifestation of the goddess archetype. The imagery of Cowgirl-goddesses had an impact on the psyche of women in the early 20th century. Even before American women obtained the right to vote, they were already riding astride, though some were still wearing their long skirts and corsets. Cowgirls embraced their own unique style, incorporating feathers, fringe, and sequins—ornamental elements reminiscent of Mother Earth’s creations—into their costumes (see Figures 62, 63, and

64). They fearlessly performed daring stunts, such as hanging beneath the belly of a galloping horse.

Figure 62

Cowgirl Costume



Note. “Dare to Wear” exhibit at the Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame, 2023—personal photograph.

Figure 63

Various Cowgirl Costumes



Note. “Dare to Wear” exhibit at the Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame, 2023—personal photograph.

Figure 64*Cowgirl Hats*

Note. “Dare to Wear” exhibit at the Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame, 2023—personal photograph.

In contrast to the historical Cowgirl, the “performance” Cowgirls embraced a nomadic lifestyle, liberating themselves from traditional domestic roles. These remarkable women shattered social constructs not through force, but through their fierce individuality and the power of unity (Streep & Howell-Sickles, 1997). The feminine principle remained profoundly influential within their collective spirit, similar to the bonding seen in matrilineal cultures. This camaraderie is evident in numerous photographs capturing the performance Cowgirls standing shoulder to shoulder (see Figure 65). The Cowgirls’ unique costumes symbolically express the essence of the Goddess Aphrodite, further amplifying their connection to the divine feminine.

Figure 65*Cowgirl Embrace*

Note. From “Walla Walla Cowgirl Inducted Into Ellensburg Rodeo Hall of Fame,” by A. C. Eveland, 2020, p. 1 (https://www.union-bulletin.com/local_columnists/etcetera/walla-walla-cowgirl-inducted-into-ellensburg-rodeo-hall-of-fame/article_3494a930-d4b8-5781-8311-89923574f69b.html). Copyright 2023 by Walla Walla Union-Bulletin. Fair Use.

Aphrodite and the Cowgirl

That they may call a shame and sin
 Love’s Temple that God dwelleth in,
 And hide in secret hidden shrine
 The naked Human Form Divine,
 And render that a lawless thing
 On which the Soul Expands its wings.
 (Blake¹⁶⁶, 1818, Line 63–68)

¹⁶⁶William Blake (1757-1827) was an English poet, painter, and print maker. He produced a diverse collection of works which embraced the imagination as “the body of God.”

The Cowgirl defied societal and cultural norms, embracing a vitalism that led her into a mysticism interwoven with the primordial roots of the land, fauna, and animals. Perhaps, unbeknownst to her, she ventured into numinous relationships, connecting with a transcendent essence that existed before the very creation of a heavenly realm.

In this section, I delve deep into ancient roots to gain a better understanding of how the myth of the goddess persists, defying societal constraints and resurfacing through the forces of desire and love. Love, as an inherent human quality, resonates with the very essence of existence (Baring & Cashford, 1993). The origins of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, can be traced to a fusion of deities from various cultures, including Ishtar,¹⁶⁷ Inanna,¹⁶⁸ and Isis.¹⁶⁹ Despite the patriarchal nature of Greek society, the goddess archetype remained prominent in its imagery. Exploring the feminine symbols associated with animals and birds, considered attributes of Aphrodite, provides us with valuable insights into the feminine aspect of the Cowgirl.

According to Baring and Cashford (1993), the image of Aphrodite comes alive when humanity recognizes the divine nature of its animalistic instincts (see Figure 66). Aphrodite is intimately connected with beauty, joy, love, and desire. Wherever she is present, animals are driven by the longing for connection and procreation. Just as Aphrodite wears an embroidered girdle, the Cowgirl adorns her own version—in the form of chaps—inheriting the irresistible power expressed through the garment. The

¹⁶⁷Ishtar was another name for Inanna, one of the three goddesses of the Bronze Age who arose in Northern Sumeria (Baring & Cashford, 1993).

¹⁶⁸Inanna was a Sumerian Goddess known as Queen of Heaven and Earth. Her original nature, associated with Venus, was later changed to make her a goddess of war (Baring & Cashford, 1993).

¹⁶⁹Like Inanna, or Ishtar, Isis was the goddess of Egypt during the Bronze Age. Sophia of the Hebrew and Christian traditions was modeled after Isis (Baring & Cashford, 1993).

girdle symbolizes eros, the transformative power of passion that challenges and transcends societal constraints imposed on femininity.

Figure 66

Aphrodite Painting



Note. From “Aphrodite, 1902,” by B. Riviere [Artist].

(<https://www.artnet.com/artists/briton-riviere/aphrodite-kxbLD4fT6traZxJBj4lxg2>).

Baring and Cashford (1993) explain how the Judeo-Christian culture diminished the concept of love, reducing eros to mere sexual desire, and associating it with sin. This stands in contrast to the beliefs of Indigenous cultures such as the Celts and Native American peoples, as explored in previous sections. The Church’s model of sinful sex clashes with the playful touch and unbounded joy that should coexist with love.

Furthermore, patriarchal values have sexualized the feminine, leading humanity to forget the true essence of the god Eros (Baring & Cashford, 1993). It is important to acknowledge that sexualized depictions of the Cowgirl, as described by Patton and Schedlock (2012), have perpetuated the understanding of eros as sexualized. The iconic Cowgirl pin-ups have contributed to the objectification of the feminine and the distortion of the true essence of eros.

The Religion of the Frontier: Instincts and the Stars

Who has created the religions of the world? Man! If left to himself, he can naturally bring about his own salvation. Who has produced Christ? Who has produced Buddha? All that is the natural growth of man. Man has always produced symbols that redeemed him, so if we follow the laws that are in our own nature, they quite naturally will lead us to the right end. (Jung, 1997, p. 403)

Jung was the first modern psychiatrist or psychologist to assert that the human psyche is by nature “religious” (Jung, 1970c, p. 9). According to Jung (1970c), religion is not confined to adherence to a specific creed, although every creed is built on divine experiences and a faith that alters consciousness. The term “religion” finds its origins in the word *relegere*, a noun of action coined by Cicero.¹⁷⁰ It signifies “going through again” rather than “binding fast,” which later interpretations suggested (Jung, 1970c, p. 9). *Relegere* implies a circuitry or a recurrence of engaging with the numinous, emphasizing a cyclical and transformative process of encountering the divine.

The Cowgirl’s identity was shaped in part by her profound connection with animals. As detailed in Chapter VIII, the historical Cowgirl faced unique challenges

¹⁷⁰Cicero (106 B.C.E.-43 B.C.E.) was a Roman statesman and philosopher who promoted optimum principles during the formation of the Roman Empire. He came from an elite family of the Roman equestrian order and served as consul in 63 B.C.E.

living on the frontier, without an established manual or tradition to guide her. While contemporary definitions of a Cowgirl often emphasize attitude, the historical Cowgirl's relationship with animals was much deeper. In mythology, animals fulfill various roles depending on context, and they also symbolize aspects of human instinctual nature (Hannah, 1992). In her book, *The Cat, Dog and Horse Lectures, and "the Beyond"*, Jungian analyst Hannah (1992) suggested humans share an instinctual nature with animals. One's well-being depends on their connection with these instincts, and when one becomes detached from them, they may experience neurotic tendencies. Among the animals, humans are particularly close to cats, dogs, and horses. Hannah explained that understanding the archetypal images associated with these animals can aid one in reconnecting with their human instincts.

Hannah (1992) highlighted Jung's observation that lower instinctual forces can be understood through animals. For instance, the horse rider who has lost her way home can rely on the horse's instincts to find the way. Instincts play a vital role in human life, serving as a powerful means of self-protection that surpasses the wisdom obtained solely through intellect. Animals often live in closer alignment with their true natures, or as Hannah suggested "God's will," than humans do; they embody a more direct and instinctual connection with the inherent wisdom of the divine (p. 57).

In his work *Visions: Notes of the Seminar Given in 1930-1934*,¹⁷¹ Jung (1997) discussed the concept of "blind instincts" and suggested following the path of instinct will naturally lead individuals in the right direction (p. 402). Hannah recalls that Jung

¹⁷¹*Visions* was a written account of Jung's lecture series presented 1930-1934. It recounts visions of woman linking earth and sky, body and spirit, the infernal, and the sublime.

references the logion of Christ in the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus,¹⁷² in which Christ says that birds, animals, and fish are what connect one to the kingdom of heaven. This understanding aligns with Christ's teachings and emphasizes the importance of one's connection with the natural world (Hannah, 1992).

Hannah (1992) explained that Jung emphasized the importance of trusting oneself as a path to achieving completion or individuation. If one follows the way of nature, one will naturally discover one's own law (Hannah, 1992). Hannah further elaborated one cannot command or control instincts, but by following them and understanding their archetypal meaning, one can discover the valuable lessons they hold, akin to finding the "golden nugget" of wisdom within. While the world often fixates on personal transformation, Jungian analyst Marie-Louise Von Franz¹⁷³ presents a different perspective (Hannah, 1992). Von Franz suggested the luminosity of the *sensus naturae*,¹⁷⁴ the innate sense of nature, emerges when instincts and intuition are connected to the entirety of the surrounding natural world (Hannah, 1992). It is from this interconnectedness that clairvoyant insights and luminous experiences "descend upon" animals and other living creatures to foresee future happenings (Hannah, 1992, p. 61). This concept of the "whole surrounding nature" represents a natural force that governs the psyche and all phenomena of life (p. 61).

¹⁷²The Oxyrhynchus Papyri is a collection of thousands of papyrus texts from ancient Oxyrhynchus in Egypt and surrounding sites dating from the third century B.C.E. to the seventh century.

¹⁷³Marie-Louise Von Franz (1915-1998) was a Swiss Jungian psychologist and scholar known for her psychological interpretations of fairy tales and alchemical works.

¹⁷⁴*Sensus naturae* is Latin for "sense of nature" or "natural sense." It has a close relationship to prophecy. This concept originated with Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535) of Cologne, Germany, who wrote three books on occult philosophy drawing from Kabbalah, Hermeticism, and Neoplatonism.

Hannah (1992) also explored the integration of animal archetypes in the human psyche. She referenced Jung's discussion of Paracelsus'¹⁷⁵ concept of *lumen naturae*,¹⁷⁶ which suggested the dark aspects of the psyche can be seen as an inner firmament resembling a "dark starry sky" (Hannah, 1992, p. 61) Within this firmament, animals such as the cat, dog, and horse are regarded as "stars." However, one cannot directly access these firmaments by delving solely into the instinctual realm. Instead, the key lies in assimilating the archetypal image that sparks the instinctual response (Hannah, 1992). In the context of this dissertation, it is pertinent to briefly describe the archetypal meaning associated with the primary animals connected to the Cowgirl—the dog, the horse, and the cow (see Figure 67).

Cooper (1987),¹⁷⁷ an historian and author, emphasized the profound role of symbolism in providing insights into humanity. Symbolism, an ancient tool of knowledge, has the power to crystallize an aspect of life and reveal essential truths that reside within oneself. It is intrinsic to both the human mind and spirit (Cooper, 1987). Cooper (1987) refers to Mircea Eliade,¹⁷⁸ who suggested the recovery of symbols can liberate modern individuals from cultural narrow-mindedness and existential relativism.

¹⁷⁵Paracelsus (149-1541) was a Swiss physician, theologian, alchemist, and philosopher of the German Renaissance.

¹⁷⁶According to The Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism, *lumen naturae* means the light of nature that illuminates consciousness. It is an invisible light with a longing to enkindle and is related to intuition (ARAS, n.d.).

¹⁷⁷J. C. Cooper, born Jean C. Cooper (1905-1999), documented the history and evolution of symbols from prehistory to the present day in China.

¹⁷⁸Mircea Eliade (1907-1986) was of Romanian descent and was an historian of religion, a philosopher, and a University of Chicago professor. His theory of "eternal return" contributed to the understanding that the human mind participates in myth and rituals.

Figure 67*Building Blocks*

Note. From *Donna Howell-Sickles–Building Blocks*, by McLarry Fine Art, n.d.

(<https://mclarryfineart.com/artists/donna-howell-sickles>).

In the context of the Cowgirl, numerous symbols emerge. However, this section focuses on the primary animals associated with the Cowgirl. These animals, metaphorical

“stars,” possess a unique luminosity¹⁷⁹ akin to the divinity of angelic messengers of God (Cooper, 1987, p. 159). They hold symbolic significance that carries meaning and insight.

The Luminosity of the Dog

Dogs possess a plethora of symbolic meanings, with their most prominent qualities being fidelity, nobility, and watchfulness. According to Cooper (1987), dogs also represent the conservative, observant, and philosophical principles of life. Hannah (1992) further added dogs are inherently maternal and above all serve as loyal companions. Their lives are governed by their acute sense of smell, and their docility and willingness form the foundation of their relationship with humans (Hannah, 1992).

Hannah (1992) recounts a myth in which the dog, known as human’s most loyal friend, ultimately betrays humans to the devil. She explained a Promethean act of disobedience is necessary for consciousness to develop; that act can arise from either the conscious or unconscious realms. Without it, humanity would remain unconscious (Hannah, 1992). Understanding the instinctual aspect represented by the “dog” within oneself is crucial. Dogs seem to have a less developed sense of morality than humans. They act primarily on instinct, and their behaviors may sometimes appear as a betrayal to humans. However, the dog remains true to its own nature.

Danger lies in living solely by abstract moral standards, as some humans tend to do. This can lead to the repression of emotions, which can eventually erupt or cause individuals to disconnect from the vital stream of life. This occurs when one is unaware of their true desires and instead substitutes what they believe they *ought* to desire

¹⁷⁹A distinction exists between the concepts of numinosity and luminosity; the luminous is the spirit of nature (reflected), whereas the numinous is the spirit (non-reflected).

(Hannah, 1992). This phenomenon can be observed in the iconic figure of the “trophy wife,” who may appear to have achieved a sense of perfection on the surface but has experienced a loss of selfhood in the process. A true Cowgirl who is connected to her instinctual nature develops more responsibility—ability to respond—for life. This authentic morality arises from the soul, not an external authority, as in many religions.

Rational thought and adherence to societal values alone will not lead a person to wholeness. As discussed earlier, it is the “dog instinct” that holds the innate wisdom and guidance (Hannah, 1992, p. 93). Individuation, the process of the eternal self-blossoming into reality, cannot be forced unless the unconscious is engaged and aligned with this transformative journey. Eros, the passionate and creative force within, is often repressed within the Christian consciousness (Hannah, 1992).

Courage becomes the essential ingredient that empowers individuals to embark on the path of individuation. Salvation can be attained only through the demanding work of learning to trust one’s internal “dog instinct” (Hannah, 1992, p. 93). Through experimentation and exploration, one learns to recognize and rely with greater certainty on those aspects of the unconscious that are in harmony with the truth—feelings and instincts. Humans stumble and veer off course when they rely solely on rationality or sentimentality. Instincts, devoid of such influences, cut through to the truth like a sharp sword in ways that the conscious mind is often unable to achieve (Hannah, 1992).

Mythologically, the dog holds significance as the guardian of paradise and the guide of souls after death. Eros, the life force and the connective energy is intricately linked to this unseen realm, as described in Chapter VIII. A disconnection from eros can manifest through promiscuity in myths, as in the portrayal of sexualized Cowgirl images.

The loss of connection with eros results in the absence of reliable guidance in relationships. The ultimate goal of individuation is to develop a morality that transcends mere rules and ethics, instead encompassing the totality of life and embracing the wisdom of eros (Hannah, 1992).

The Luminosity of the Horse

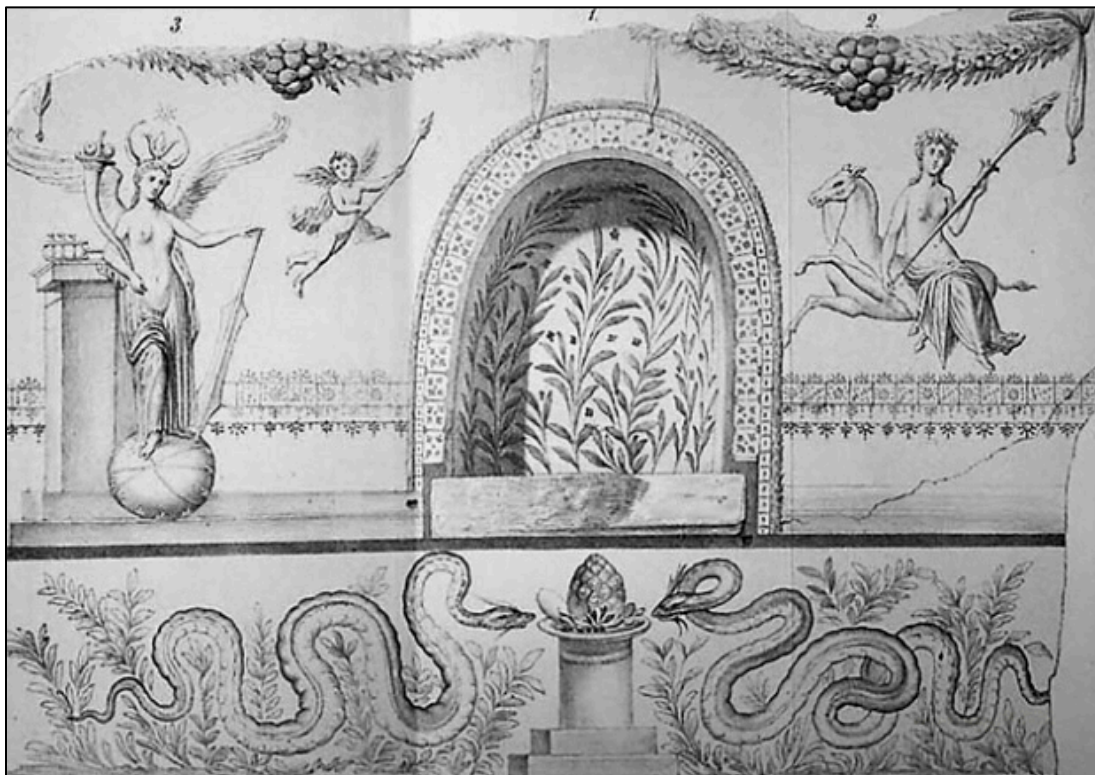
Unlike the dog, the horse did not evolve from other types of animals. As outlined in Chapter III, the existence of horses can be traced to the Neolithic era. A horse's sense of smell is comparable to a dog's sense of smell. A horse's intelligence is not primarily rooted in its mind but rather in its sensory perception. This heightened sensitivity allows horses to discern even the slightest movements of their riders. Hannah (1992) explained how the more a horse is treated as an object and subjected to having its will "broken," the more its natural and instinctual gifts are diminished or destroyed (p. 107). Women are often similarly objectified.

The horse carries symbolic representations of energy and libido that are tempered with restraint. They are recognized as diligent workers, helpers, bestowers of vitality, and possessors of clairvoyant abilities. However, horses also possess the opposite aspects. Hannah (1992) recounts a story depicting white horses (see Figure 68) in the sky as representing good, while black horses riding beneath the earth are associated with evil. It is important to note that these interpretations do not convey moral judgments but rather represent two facets of the whole. Humans typically find it easier to handle the "good" aspects, but the challenge lies in effectively handling the "evil" aspects, which requires a connection to one's instincts. The underlying message is to learn how to manage the

unruly horse within, and when it expresses its positive power to responsibly direct that energy (Hannah, 1992).

Figure 68

Goddesses Epona and Isis at Pompeii



Note. From “Deities Associated With Epona. Co-Depictions: Isis,” by Epona.net, 2007, p. 1. (<https://www.epona.net/associated.html>). Copyright 2004-2007 by Nantonos & Ceffyl. Fair Use.

To truly understand how to ride a horse, one must also learn how to relate to one’s own instincts. Just as the horse’s energy cannot be assimilated but can only be engaged with, one’s own instincts require a similar approach. The horse moves swiftly and gracefully, guided by its instinctual nature. Similarly, the human has the capacity to operate in alignment with the “law” of their own inner being, what Jung called the Self

(Hannah, 1992, p. 113). The realization dawns that salvation does not come from external sources such as societal or religious law, rather, it stems from the deep connection and alignment with one's own inner truth (Hannah, 1992).

Throughout history and in ancient mythology, the horse has also been associated with the concept of sacrifice. Indigenous tribes killed horses to secure safe passage, both in the earthly realm and in the afterlife. In these cases, the sacrificed horse often belonged to the deceased individual as seen in the shamanic horse sacrifice ritual. Additionally, the horse symbolizes the entirety of the world, and sacrificing a horse carried the profound significance of redeeming the entire world. Such acts of sacrifice served as transformative guides, leading individuals to shift their focus from the external world to the inner realm of self-discovery and realization (Hannah, 1992).

The horse Pegasus symbolizes both ordinary and divine libido, serving as a powerful symbol that unites opposites (see Figure 69). Hannah describes Pegasus as a chthonic animal, representing the earthly and instinctual realm, while also possessing wings of transcendence into the spiritual realm. The horse Pegasus thus becomes a symbol that leads individuals toward wholeness and integration (Hannah, 1992).

To effectively harness the creative spirit within, one must ground it in the reality of everyday life through hard work and dedication. Just like the horse's sensitivity and extrasensory perception, one's own inner sensitivity contains the multifaceted complexity of their being. By embracing life in its entirety, including its inherent sacrifices, one naturally progresses toward the ultimate goal of individuation (Hannah, 1992).

Figure 69*Pegasus, Hermès Scarf*

Note. From “Collection of Hermès Scarves: February 12, 2018–September 1, 2018,” by National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame, 2018.

(<https://www.cowgirl.net/museum/exhibitions-2/>)

The Luminosity of the Cow

The cow, as an archetype of the Great Mother, represents a distinct quality in contrast to the dog and the horse, which symbolize powerful principles of instinctual life. In his book *The Great Mother: An Analysis of an Archetype*, Neumann (2015) discussed the matriarchal era of humanity, in which the womb and belly held deep symbolic significance as maternal elements. Creation thrived and existed through the nourishing water or milk of the earth. Rain symbolized the celestial cow’s milk, while water from the earth symbolized the milk from animals such as cows. The cow stood as a central

symbol, representing nourishment derived from the heavens and the earth, encompassing realms above and below (Neumann, 2015).

According to Baring and Cashford (1993), the worship of cow goddesses can be traced to the Bronze Age, with origins in goddesses such as Inanna (Ishtar) of Sumer, Isis of Egypt, and Cybele of Anatolia. Inanna in particular was revered as the Holy Shepherdess and the Keeper of the Cow-byre (cowshed), and she was associated with giving birth to her son, the Lord of Life (Baring & Cashford, 1993).¹⁸⁰

As time progressed, the Sumerian myths underwent transformation due to the influence of various invaders from the Akkadian,¹⁸¹ Semitic,¹⁸² and Aryan¹⁸³ cultures, who held sky-cult beliefs. These warrior-oriented cultures integrated their sky-focused religious practices with the existing goddess-centered cultures, resulting in the evolution and reinterpretation of the ancient cow goddess myths.

The archetype of the Great Mother and the various moon goddesses embody the essence of nourishment and maternal instinct. The cow symbol holds both celestial and chthonic significance. In Celtic depictions, the cow is portrayed as red with white ears. Additionally, the Egyptian deities Hathor, Isis, and Nut are associated with cow symbolism. These goddesses are sometimes depicted wearing cow horns or featuring other cow-like attributes. The legs of the celestial cow symbolize the four quarters of the

¹⁸⁰The myth of the birth of Christ in the manger at Bethlehem originates from this earlier Sumerian myth.

¹⁸¹Akkadian was an East Semitic language of ancient Mesopotamia from 2500 B.C.E. to 500 B.C.E.

¹⁸²Ancient Semitic-speaking peoples lived in the Near East, including in the Levant, Mesopotamia, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Horn of Africa, from 3000 B.C.E. to the end of antiquity.

¹⁸³Aryans were nomads from central Asia who migrated into the Indus Valley from 2000 B.C.E. to 1500 B.C.E.

earth, while her underbelly is adorned with stars from the firmament, representing a divine connection to the celestial realm (Cooper, 1987).

According to Baring and Cashford (1993), the recurring presence of archetypal images throughout history is testament to the psychological necessity of these images within the human psyche. The Sumerian period, characterized by gender equality and the recognition of women as the bringers of creation, underwent a significant shift with the arrival of Semitic tribes. In this new cultural context, the son was elevated to the status of consort to the mother, resulting in a power shift that diminished the agency of women. Women became defined primarily by their relationships to men as wives, daughters, or sisters, rather than being recognized as individuals in their own right. The traditional myths of goddesses were transformed into narratives of goddesses being violated by gods, instilling fear, and reinforcing the danger of female disobedience (Baring & Cashford, 1993). As a result, the goddesses, as well as women in general, began to fade into cultural invisibility.

Isis, the preeminent goddess of ancient Egypt, held immense influence from before 3000 B.C.E. until the second century. Her cult and iconography later became assimilated into the Christian image of the Virgin Mary. Known as the milk-giving goddess, she was revered as the Great Mother Goddess of the Universe (Baring & Cashford, 1993). In depictions, Isis is sometimes portrayed wearing cow horns with the sun's disk placed between them (see Figure 70). This represents the creative power that manifested in Hathor, and the qualities of Hathor merged with those of Isis (Baring & Cashford, 1993).

Figure 70*Hathor Carving*

Note. From “Hathor,” by J. J. Mark, 2009, p. 1 (<https://www.worldhistory.org/Hathor/>).

Nut, another significant figure in Egyptian mythology, was the sky goddess associated with Isis and Hathor. She held the role of the cosmic mother, giving birth to the sun, moon, and stars, as well as the gods themselves. Nut was sometimes depicted in the form of a cow (Baring & Cashford, 1993).

The Relational Quality of the Cowgirl

The archetype of the cow as the Great Mother holds significant, albeit unrecognized, prominence in the cattle industry. The Cowgirls, through their narratives and experiences, offer a different perspective—one that emphasizes connection and relationship rather than the mere commodification of cattle.

The artist Lanker (2012) interviewed, wrote, and created images about Cowgirls and ranch women of the American West. These women have a commonality that Maya Angelou cites in the afterword of Lanker’s book, *Tough by Nature: Portraits of Cowgirls and Ranch Women of the American West*. Angelou stated these images are proof that

women are “hearty, adventurous, and fascinating” and Angelou asks, “What could be more fetching, more endearing, more beautiful than a woman who thinks well of herself?” (Lanker, 2012, p. 131). Cowgirls’ stories serve as powerful examples of the goddess principle of relationality. Lanker’s book captures the essence of their experiences through the following insightful quotations:

What I love most about this life is getting on a good horse and following cattle. I get tears in my eyes thinking about it because you see nature is so wonderful. The grass is green, and the creeks are running, and there’s a cow I’ve been following with her calf by her side. (Kay Meyring, as cited in Lanker, 2012, p. 36)

Gena McNeil shared, “If you don’t look at a cow and see what she’s thinking, what her personality is, you’re missing the whole thing. Maybe that’s a woman’s perspective” (Lanker, 2012, p. 34). “I like cows. I really like cows. They have a wonderful maternal instinct. They are very motherly” (Carolyn Hunt Olson, cited in Lanker, 2012, p. 22).

Our whole idea is that everything has an importance, and you have to take care of everything. You don’t just take care of the cattle, but you take care of your land, and it will take care of the cattle. (Gerda Hyde, cited in Lanker, 2012, p. 54)

I like cattle, you know. I miss them when I don’t have any around me. . . . I had a calf in the kitchen this winter. . . . It’s nothing for a rancher to have a calf inside, it doesn’t make any difference how beautiful your house is. . . if you can save a little calf. (Marie-Jean Ansolabehere, cited in Lanker, 2012, p. 72)

Through the voices of Cowgirls living on the land, the Great Mother and the cow goddess are alive.

Native Peoples’ Relationship With the Horse

The horse is central to the story of humanity, as seen in cultures from the Celts and Romans to the Texas Comanches—as well as in the culture of the Cowgirl. Running

Horse Collin (2017),¹⁸⁴ a scholar specializing in Native horse studies, delves into the subject in her dissertation, *The Relationship Between the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas and the Horse: Deconstructing a Eurocentric Myth*. Through her research and conversations with Indigenous elders, she discovered ancient knowledge of the horse is regarded as sacred. This perspective aligns with the Indigenous people's understanding as discussed in Chapter IV. According to this worldview, knowledge is not something to be acquired or owned but rather emerges naturally through connections with “all our relations” (Running Horse Collin, 2017, p. 60). Animals are seen as mentors, and through observation and interaction with them, humans gain both earthly and spiritual understanding.

Furthermore, the Indigenous cultures viewed animals such as the horse as *medicine*—that which connects one to the Creator. This spiritual connection cannot be bought or sold. Stories and symbols surrounding horses in Indigenous cultures capture their spiritual nature.

In historical native perspectives, horses were regarded as spiritual beings rather than mere livestock. In her work, Running Horse Collin (2017) includes insights from Diné scholar Peter Iverson,¹⁸⁵ who provides an understanding of the symbolic significance of the “the twins” (p. 110), the traditional narrative about a blue horse and a white horse, in Diné symbolism and ceremony. According to Iverson, these horses were

¹⁸⁴Yvette Running Horse Collin, Ph.D., is a member of the Oglala Lakota Nation (Oglala Sioux Tribe) and founder of Sacred Way Sanctuary, home to the Indigenous Native American horse, on the outskirts of Florence, Alabama.

¹⁸⁵Peter Iverson, Ph.D. (1944-2021), was Regent's Professor of History at Arizona State University and published many works on American Indian history in the 20th and 21st centuries, with Diné history as the focus of his research.

birthed into the fourth world alongside the Holy Beings. One represented a white shell and the other a blue shell; each were infused with power and released to gallop across the night sky, leaving the Milky Way in their wake along with the gift of “star knowledge” (Running Horse Collin, 2017, p. 110). The symbolism of the horse reveals its connection to the natural elements of creation. For example, the hoof prints represent the white abalone shell; the horse’s hair signifies rain; and its eyes represent the stars. Each element is brought into existence through ceremony and song. The horse, embodying the essence of light energy or life force, has always existed and will continue to exist eternally (Running Horse Collin, 2017).

Running Horse Collin (2017) highlighted a ceremony of the Oglala Lakota shared by a native individual whom she interviewed that further showed the deep dimension of rituals. Known as “Anponatan,” this ceremony derives its name from two Lakota words: “anpo,” meaning “before the sun rises,” and “natan,” which conveys the simultaneous notions of movement and existence (Running Horse Collin, 2017, p. 117). Prior to sunrise, each family would choose a horse and a rider to engage in a dance with the emerging sun. Through prayers and songs, they prepared themselves for the day ahead. Symbols were painted on the horses, including spirals and a universal circle representing the divine with the Creator positioned at its center. A handprint painted on the horse symbolized a constellation and was believed to be an extension of the human soul. As the sun ascended, the riders mounted their horses and engaged in a dance illuminated by the rising light. (Running Horse Collin, 2017).

The Cowgirl's Relationship With the Horse

The bond between the Cowgirl and the horse holds special significance. The prologue of Strep and Howell-Sickles' (1997) book, introduced by Teresa Jordan, states girls form a profound connection with horses because these majestic creatures do not judge them based on anything other than their true selves. Horses have the ability to sense the deep aspect and intention of girls' humanity, allowing for an authentic and unconditional bond to develop (Strep & Howell-Sickles, 1997).

Burbick (2002) explores the connection between rodeo and the untamed wilderness in a chapter in *Rodeo Queens* titled, "Trusting the Wild." One of the interviewees is Blanche, a rodeo queen of the 1940s. Blanche reminisces about her childhood on a ranch, where she played an instrumental role as her father's right-hand helper. She fondly recalls her secret adventures with horses, engaging in daring feats such as standing up while riding.

Blanche says it is important to understand *who* the horse is:

They can feel you. They can sense by your tone of voice if you like them and if you are sincere about liking them. . . . Then you get their trust, and they will do anything for you [if you treat them] firm and kind. (Burbick, 2002, p. 65)

Blanche grew up knowing the Dorrance family (Burbick, 2002). Tom Dorrance¹⁸⁶ is renowned as a pioneer in the field of horse communication, challenging the traditional cowboy mentality of "breaking" horses and advocating a more heart-centered approach. Dorrance emphasized the importance of establishing a genuine relationship with horses

¹⁸⁶Tom Dorrance (1910-2003) and his brother Bill were considered the founders of modern natural horsemanship. Tom Dorrance is best known for his seminal book, *More than a Horseman*. He and later, Ray Hunt (1929-2009) changed horsemanship ideals to focus on "seeing" from the horse's perspective through the felt sense.

based on mutual understanding and respect. He taught by utilizing the sensory organs of touch and voice, humans can form a partnership with animals. This approach emphasizes patience, empathy, and the release of societal notions of dominance and control.

Blanche's perspective challenges the nature of rodeo's bucking horse contest (Burbick, 2002). She saw the strap used to make the horse buck as symbolic of the betrayal of the primal connection between humans and horses. According to her, rodeo activities have contributed to the further separation between humans and horses, as they often involve the requirement of submission. Despite her criticism, Blanche did not wish to outright condemn the rodeo but instead called for contemplation of the profound and intimate relationship between humans and horses. The artificial stimulation of a horse's instinctual flight response during rodeo events also feeds into the spectators' fascination with witnessing the enactment of conquering the feminine quality, perpetuating that mythic narrative (Burbick, 2002, p. 69).

While initially bringing communities together through related town celebrations, dances, and gatherings, and providing financial support to ranches, the rodeo's communal quality evolved into a commercial industry (Burbick, 2002). This commercialization included the stereotypical imagery of cowboys riding bucking broncos, portraying them as self-actualized heroes dominating wild nature, which inherently embodies feminine qualities.

CHAPTER XII: CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLLY COWGIRL

I was born because of a dream, and it was through dreams that this dissertation was guided. Symbolizing the essence of my work is the uroboros, a timeless circle in which the snake devours its own tail, providing its own material sustenance. This eternal cycle, the beginning merged with the end, signifies the interconnectedness of my earthy and spiritual journey.

I began by researching my ancestral roots, intertwined with the very fabric of Texas, the land that shaped me. As I delved deep into this material, a transformative force awakened within me, nourishing my spirit, and preparing me for a more profound experience.

The Cowgirl, a quintessential female figure of Texas, became a teleological force of the goddess, silently working through her image toward the restoration of the intricate tapestry of Michelle. She became a salve and clarifier of my former solipsistic and mechanistic ways of perceiving the world. This feminine power has diligently toiled to help me shatter the constraints of societal corsets, empower my life from a more soulful ground, and unveil the true essence of freedom—not as an ideal but as a condition of being.

In the Introduction, I alluded to three pivotal moments in my life in which important messages, seemingly originating from a higher power or spiritual source, pierced my being. The first instance occurred when my instincts led me to turn right, escaping the bullets that struck my father. The second revelation occurred when the truth about my then-husband's deceit came crashing down upon me. Now, I will recount the third and final such powerful moment.

Five years before the demise of that marriage, while applying makeup at my vanity, the morning sun cast a play of bar-like patterns onto the pale-yellow carpet. These patterns, reminiscent of prison bars, triggered an inner voice whispering, “All of this will fade away, and you will show them—women—another way.” At the time, I dismissed this message, but I now recognize it as a prophetic communication emanating from the depths of my unconscious, foretelling the destiny that awaited me.

I will now summarize the “light” found within the material of this research, or the highlights beginning with Chapter III and conclude with my own understanding of the wholly cowgirl, an archetypal image of the individuated women.

Chapter Highlights

In Chapter III, I began the process of “rooting” by learning about my native land of Texas from its earliest Paleolithic times through its colonization by various European cultures. I discovered the goddess myth resided within my own culture. I gained a clearer understanding of how the state was shaped by European nations carrying conflicting principles and beliefs that still echo today.

While finding my own Texas roots, I discovered how myths align the body with nature, providing guidance and how symbols activate one’s inner reality. Within the Texas narrative, the quintessential representation of the feminine emerges as the Cowgirl. As I peeled back the layers of cultural influence, I began to see her as an image of the goddess. My studies of Texas’ Indigenous cultures of Texas, particularly the Comanche and the Caddo, unveiled how the goddess lived through the Cowgirl’s bond with the land and animals, a connection shared by both the nomadic Comanche and the agrarian Caddo despite their distinct lifestyles.

In Chapter V, the divorce from the ensouled world was paramount to understanding the split within my own Western perspective. Rediscovering the link between the inner soul and the spirit of the land emerged as a return to the essence of Texan culture, encompassing both the masculine ethos and the goddess present in the wisdom of Native ancestors. Chapters III through V provided the foundational bedrock from which the mythological image of the feminine would eventually resurface in history.

Chapter VI delves into the experiences of women across cultures, spanning from Indigenous societies to various others. This era demanded novel skills from European women that echoed those inherently possessed by Indigenous women. Women also embarked on an inner and outer frontier, challenging societal gender roles against the backdrop of the vast and turbulent Texas landscape; this set the stage for the emergence of the Cowgirl. This section compelled me to reflect on my own ingrained adherence to societal roles that minimize women's unique creativity. The narrative of Cynthia Ann Parker's life emerged as a potent myth, symbolized by her iconic image captured in my hometown. Although positioned as an ancient Christian Madonna and child image, her primal instincts remain apparent through the deep well of her eyes.

Chapter VII chronicles the history of the vaquero and ranching culture, where the insatiable desire for land ownership led to the partitioning of grasslands with barbed wire, an allegory for the division of the feminine principle. The vaquero's evolution from a laborer with humble means into a figure antithetical to his former range life underscores how an influx of masculine values can erode the feminine quality of interconnectedness. Animals like cattle were commodified, while land was claimed. This same ideology can

be seen in my own life with the absence of the feminine principle. Like cattle, women may become a commodity hence the role of “trophy” wife emerges. Nevertheless, the essence of the goddess persisted through pioneer women who defied Victorian ideals. This understanding birthed the foundation for the Cowgirl’s myth.

The myth of the Cowgirl unfolds through her shifting images. Rodeo events enabled women to compete based on their own abilities, distinct from the associated identity with men as dictated by Anglo norms in East Texas. Within Wild West shows, women showcased their skills such as trick riders and forged connections with fellow women. These women enjoyed alternatives to traditional European roles of a wife. Their attire mirrored individuality and creativity, reminiscent of Indigenous cultures, featuring chaps crafted from hides adorned with fringe and beads. These elements, I discovered, symbolize the goddess, perpetually simmering within an increasingly civilized society.

Exploring the life of Evelyn Cameron in the same chapter highlighted a woman who chose the wilderness over the societal expectations of her prominent British family. Her story prompted profound introspection into materialism and the true definition of “riches.” This chapter’s research deepened my understanding of how patriarchal societies often view adornments, fashion, and jewelry as status symbols, failing to recognize their deeper connection to the divine feminine and as gifts of the Earth Mother. This chapter also unraveled how masculine values tend to objectify women in different ways, placing them within societal confines like Rodeo Queens, pin-up icons, and eroticized projections, rather than acknowledging the untamed eros that reside within every woman, driving her toward liberation.

In Chapters IX–XI, I explored the ancients, unraveling the intricate interplay between history, cultures, and the feminine. Celtic mythology, for instance, revealed a period when women were equally valued until Roman ideology subjugated their culture, mirroring the Anglo values inherent in Texan heritage. The significance of the horse as a symbol of power and freedom emerged in both contexts. When the feminine is not equally valued, power arises through domination rather than an inner trust. My experience with horse whispering with Zuni heightened my ability to connect with others through the heart space, emphasizing the significance of this connection.

Celtic women’s role as guardians and protectors of land found its echo in the Cowgirl’s persona. As a “warrior” woman, the Cowgirl resonates with the archetype of Boudica in Chapter X, a historical figure whose myth shed light on how images transform to mirror the evolving cultural values and ideologies of different eras. Like Boudica, the Cowgirl evolves into an emblem of liberty and a champion of women’s suffrage, embodying the goddess as she traverses through time. The goddess is always present!

Chapter XI’s exploration focused on the Cowgirl’s inherent quality that makes her a beacon for women’s wholeness. Chapter VIII spotlighted the Cowgirl’s unique ability to establish profound connections with horses, fellow Cowgirls, and the land itself, utilizing relational skills and instincts. Drawing from ancient wisdom, particularly the Black Virgin and Jung’s insights into the instinctual life, I realized this quality was not a diminished aspect but a vital facet of the feminine suppressed by Judeo-Christian theology. This quality became the Cowgirl’s survival mechanism, her guiding orientation. In delving into animal archetypes like the dog, horse, and cow—central to the Cowgirl’s

realm—I unearthed their symbolic significance in shaping her psyche with distinct instinctual functions. I revisit the theme of the Cowgirl's relational quality, juxtaposing it against the perils of disconnecting from one's authentic self, where rationalization of the Western mind described in Chapter V distorts the psychic structure, akin to the narrative of the Bluebeard fairy tale and my own story.

Throughout the material, I included the significant role that my dreams played in shaping the process. Additionally, I provided insights that were gained through working simultaneously through depth and dream analysis with Brenda Crowther, who also served as my dissertation advisor. These dreams not only facilitated the unfolding of the psychic and integrative journey but represent another type of intelligence that modern society has overlooked.

The Wholly Cowgirl

Through my life experiences, I have embarked on a journey of self-discovery, getting to know the true essence of Michelle. The pursuit of a PhD has provided a harmonizing structure in this process. Instead of seeking a transcendent spiritual life, I have learned to ground myself in the present and bring the energy down, allowing me to actively engage with life on a daily basis.

After my divorce, various options lay before me: I could remarry and repeat the same pattern, get a job, or commit to a different kind of academia that fosters human transformation through both objective and subjective rigor. The working woman can paradoxically display a form of passivity, compensating by being active. I find myself a product of both the Cowgirl and the Anglo woman, blending the qualities of a corset-defying Cowgirl and the conditioned society of the Anglo woman. This unique cultural

amalgamation is evident in the *genius loci* of Texas, where Anglo dominance prevails in the eastern region, while the Cowgirl spirit shines in the western region. Fort Worth, located on the cusp of these two cultural areas, is often dubbed “Where the West Begins.” It is also home to the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame, which celebrates women’s fierce courage, creativity, and independence. Despite often being overlooked, this museum serves as a satellite, beaming the message of the feminine ground as explored in this dissertation.

Throughout my dissertation journey, the goddess archetype has been with me, especially as I delved into the world of the Cowgirl. By exploring the lives of women who defied cultural boundaries and embraced the feminine essence, I found a profound resilience awakening within me. Instead of dwelling solely in the realm of abstraction and rationalization, I learned to engage with life on its own terms and see truth as what exists. One striking example of this was the legal battle I have been entangled in since 2015, fighting for my rightful inheritance as a mother who contributed equally in value to my husband in my first marriage. While my former husband provided our monetary sustenance, I brought life into the world and nurtured our children—an immeasurably essential role often overlooked in financial evaluations. Sadly, this situation is emblematic of the plight faced by many women in Texas culture, trapping them in unfulfilling and atrophying marriages.

In the face of a patriarchal society that would expect me to relinquish my claim obediently like a “good girl,” I found myself engaged in the aforementioned battle, inspired by a deep, soulful principle. This was not a rational decision, as I had learned to rationalize my actions within a cultural paradigm that associated being “spiritual” with

certain perceived values of kindness and compassion. However, I challenged this notion of peace, which is often mistaken for nonconfrontation. Jesus himself said, “I come not in peace, but with a sword.” This sword symbolizes the power of discrimination—the ability to discern when to act and when to wait. Such wisdom resides within the feminine ground of my instinctual self, guiding me on this journey of standing up for what I believe is right.

My dreams from the liminal realm played a crucial role in guiding me along the path. As I embarked on the journey of living more truthfully, I became more grounded. I yearned for the authenticity I witnessed in the women I studied, those who lived on the frontier and embodied the feminine through their deep connection with their surroundings and situations. Like the Cowgirl, I, too, started to approach each circumstance in life with the appropriate quality of relating. At times, gentleness was required, and at other times the verbal equivalent of a six-shooter!

Because I worked on my dissertation during the COVID-19 era, the concept of freedom was heightened. When I left my marriage and reoriented myself on this quest, I was breaking a mold, defying a societal structure. With her independence and courage, the Cowgirl has always symbolized freedom. I would learn that freedom is not achieved without struggle and is an organic process. It is an internal state reflecting a depth of consciousness. It is one of the most desired and elusive conditions. Cowboy hats, spurs, and fringe can be icons of freedom.

Everything possesses both a light and dark aspect, and true wholeness comes from integrating the two. Discrimination is essential, as it helps one discern when to use each aspect appropriately. Rather than imposing preconceived paradigms to find answers, I

became devoted to the spiritual work of learning the language of my soul and discovering true morality. This language is rooted in the material world, an aspect that has been marginalized by patriarchal influences. However, light is inherent in matter, permeating the earth and all living beings, particularly women. Traditionally, religions have placed great emphasis on transcendence, overlooking the sacredness of matter. The Cowgirl, riding astride with her fanny fully in the saddle, works with spirit in a completely different way. Wearing buckskins and fringe made from animals once recognized as sacred beings, the Cowgirl knows the sanctity of matter in all its forms.

The Cowgirl embodies a revolutionary archetypal image of the goddess. Being revolutionary entails liberating the mind and imagination from constrained perceptions of oneself and the world. Through the deeper part of her human instinctual nature, the Cowgirl restores passion, desire, and imagination by channeling them through the material world. True to herself, she demonstrates her connection to the spirit within matter by riding astride, rounding up cattle, and (sometimes) adorning herself with rhinestones and fringe. An archetypal bridge, the Cowgirl can inspire women to rediscover their instinctual natures through their everyday lives, re-rooting themselves in the wisdom of the earth.



Michelle and Mocha on the Blackfoot River, Greenough, Montana 2023

“My Ode to Evelyn Cameron Pose”

(personal photograph)

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APPENDIX A: DREAM—June 6, 2021

The dream begins with a distinct, sepia-like red-blood hue, setting the scene with a sense of danger and turmoil. Outside, I am observing a brick building with stairs on its side, amid violence and riots in the surrounding area. Contemplating my safety, I decided to climb the stairs and seek refuge inside my contemporary home in Fort Worth. As I enter, I sense the presence of violent people downstairs, but I try to remain calm. However, I also feel the need to take some action to protect myself.

In an unexpected turn, my daughter Isabella joins me inside the house. Together, we discover a set of stairs leading to an Old World-style attic that exudes timeless beauty and traditional charm. Fearful of the people below, I caution Isabella to be quiet so as not to attract any unwanted attention. During this time, a large set of sliding doors materializes, revealing another room. We enter this room and close the sliding doors, trying to avoid the individuals downstairs. Another set of stairs leads us down into the original brownstone building, where we are surrounded by mahogany furniture and intricate moldings. The brownstone appears to be vacant.

As the dream transitions into full color, the sense of danger and chaos dissipates, and everything appears to be normal. We locate the kitchen and step outside through the right-side door, greeted by daylight.

Insight

In my former life, I tried to be compassionate in an attempt to drown out the shadow. In the dream, I was experiencing an alchemical transformation symbolized by the kitchen, the place where cooking occurs; it is the first transformation one learns, through food. I discovered a dark, violent aspect of myself that would help to protect me;

the light would not save me. The sweet and angelic Anglo woman I was had a man to look after her and thus had no need for a shadow for her own protection. I was afraid of the darkness within; this was a quality I needed to discern. I had misunderstood the real meaning of compassion. It was not just kindness. Instead, compassion is objective; I was learning objectivity through my examination of Texas history and its colonizing forces.

APPENDIX B: DREAM—June 13, 2021

Angela, a friend, is in my bed. She is dressed in one of my sweet gauze-like night gowns. I am naked and put on another gown similar to hers, but it is short in length. I then get in bed with her. It is not romantic. I feel a sense of urgency to find a book for her. I get out of bed and search through a pile of books on the floor for a particular one. It is called *Interdependence* and was written by a biologist. Angela represents an out-of-the-norm character, an alternative world, values that are opposite of mine.

Insight

This dream helped me understand the opposing values of light and dark. Angela represented my shadow—not negative or bad, but rather the unknown aspect of myself. The shadow had been misunderstood, and it encompassed my unlived gifts. I came to realize there was a relationship between me and my shadow, symbolized by the book called *Interdependence*.

Evangelical Christianity has conditioned one to believe that darkness is inherently evil, while light is considered good. However, I was learning “for every angel, there is a devil”—and the devil is not always wrong. The devil prefers one be seduced by the comfortable life and the light, as symbolized by the bed and fine nightgown, representing the aspect of comfort.

Later on, I also learned evil either plays out in one’s actions or needs to be brought to consciousness to prevent it from harming others. This understanding was the reason courtesy was created—as an approach to confront evil. Consciously using manners was akin to practicing “spiritual etiquette.” I recognized others had no rights to my thoughts, and it was essential to be mindful of that aspect of myself.

APPENDIX C: DREAM—November 16, 2021

Last night's dream was violent and surreal. I was inside a building with my husband and others when an emergency call disrupted the scene. A black Jeep appeared, and I found myself high up in a room without windows. The office expanded outside without walls, and the floor turned into a platform of rocks. I entered the black Jeep, transforming into a Black man, and it became like an airplane, flying over a sequence of black and burgundy SUVs, possibly dignitaries or even the president. The Jeep took us straight into the garage of a building with the necessary clearance.

Inside the building, I assumed the identity of the Black man and entered an elevator, finding a pink suitcase and a surveillance video camera. Two men joined me in the elevator, one of them with a black roll-on bag. I caused chaos to distract them and hid the bag behind a side table made from a tree trunk. Fearing their return, I ran down a long hallway, which transformed into a wide corridor. I entered different doors which led to "homes," seeking refuge, but finally found myself in one with my husband, who felt like my former husband. We had an emotional interaction marked by trust and love, but he suddenly turned aggressive, attempting to harm me. In a desperate move, I sought help from two old gay men in the home next door.

The scene shifts again. I find myself in a car with my husband, sister, and niece, heading to a friend's party. I say something hurtful to my husband. It's nighttime, and I am seated on his lap on the driver's side. He tells me I cannot go to the party because he is talking with my sister. I protest, exclaiming, "Hell, no, they are *my* friends," and then I accuse him of having feelings for my sister. We all get out of the car, and my sister and niece sit on a suspended chair lift to the left of the car. My sister is offended and angry

with me. As it is snowing outside, she bundles up in a coat and hat. Though I feel the urge to apologize, I do not do so. When I wake up, my head is racing with ignited anger.

Insight

I have embraced the archetypal strength of the Black man—a representation of power with big bones. This strength propels me past dignitaries directly to my desired destination, like a bird soaring freely. My thoughts have evolved, now focused on creation rather than just bits of intellect. According to Jung, one's thoughts are not truly theirs; one may believe they own them, but they are not entirely within one's control.

The pink luggage in the dream signifies *eros*, representing a connection to love and passion. The presence of the two gay men suggests the emergence of a new relationship in my life. However, I recognize my jealousy in the dream reveals my venomous feelings toward those who seem to live a collective life with ease. I understand the spiritual path is not one of ease but involves grounding with the earth and cultivating inner qualities independent of collective influences.

In my culture, I have adopted certain qualities, but I am now going against the grain in many aspects of life. I am discovering myself in ways beyond my former roles of mother and wife, relinquishing the self-proclaimed “trophy wife” identity. This shift leads me to leave behind materialism in pursuit of an authentic life. The process is akin to alchemy's *putrefaction* of the old paradigms, wherein the old must be broken down to make way for transformation. Although the destruction of that old paradigm felt like a torturous death, it is paving the way for growth and renewal through an increased awareness.

As my psyche surveils me during this journey, a new feeling is arising—the feminine aspect, where my true security resides. I am learning that seeking security in another's psyche is not the answer; true security lies within myself.

APPENDIX D: DREAM—November 28, 2021

I find myself riding horses in a hilly area, accompanied by what I believe to be my family. Strangely, I am riding my horse backward, sitting on its head and pulling the reins in the opposite direction to stop it. As the others ride away, my horse continues across the field onto another hill, and suddenly I find myself alone. A sense of catastrophe surrounds the scene.

I decide to walk toward the corral located down the hill to seek help and retrieve my powerful and large horse. However, on my way, I encountered a Lucite-like barbed wire fence blocking my path. In order to move past it quickly, I choose to push it over, using a piece of wood with spikes to anchor it safely to the ground. With the fence cleared, I headed towards the corral with determination.

Insight

This dream presented me with a choice between two paths. One option was to return to the hill and follow the conventional life, while the other was to explore a different way to retrieve the horse. During a dream analysis session, Brenda shared a Sufi tale about a man named Rudin riding a donkey the wrong way through town. When questioned about it, Rudin responded by questioning whether it was him who was sitting the wrong way or the donkey that was facing the wrong direction. Rudin refused to conform to the collective notion of the “right” way and challenged the status quo.

The dream also highlighted that consciousness is not limited just to humans; sometimes animals can be conscious, too. The horse in the dream was unique, and it chose to ride off on its own. I had to take the initiative and collect it myself. This horse represents a powerful force that can assist me as I navigate through life, but I must be

willing to embrace a different approach and not conform to societal norms. This dream served as a guide for my research into animals and instincts.

APPENDIX E: DREAM—May 22, 2022

On May 22, 2022, I had a dream that emphasized the significance of exploring the cowboy aspect of Texas history. Brenda Crowther and I are walking together in my neighborhood, not in her professional capacity as my analyst and dissertation advisor, but as friends. It seems like we have just survived a catastrophic event. I ask her whether we need to deeply understand the past or if it is better to keep forging ahead toward a new future.

Suddenly, the scene shifts, and we find ourselves amid trees on a hill, our feet rooted in the earth. Brenda is wearing a large-brimmed hat reminiscent of the 10-gallon hat of the *vaquero*, evoking a connection to the heritage and history of Texas.

Insight

Brenda represents an aspect of myself that I am integrating. She is wearing a 10-gallon hat, a masculine symbol of the cowboy, representing my *animus*. The round brim shape is reminiscent of the ouroboros circle described earlier in this chapter. History reveals one's identity, but it is also the material, or impetus, that propels one forward. I can relate to this driving spirit as a Texan whose history includes movement such as driving cattle across the frontier and brutal events. Fort Worth, my hometown, was once a hellish place, teeming with crime, brothels, and cattle exchanges. By studying this historical material, I am rooting myself in the earth.

APPENDIX F: JOURNAL ENTRIES—December 2021–July 2022

During this research, I was examining the two differing images of the Cowgirl, one the weathered, earthy type and one the rhinestone-bejeweled, glamour-girl version. This section challenged my understanding of materialism. Here, I provide insights that occurred not through dreams but analysis over the time-span of this dissertation. The following insights are from a collection of journal entries dated from December 2021 through July 2022. It is part of a recurring theme of understanding the nature of matter and the feminine ground.

Insight

The Cowgirl embodies two distinct images: the earthy, worn masculine type, and the rhinestone-glammed version. Society, conditioned by the Protestant ethic, often views jewelry and bling as mere symbols of materialism, associating them with rewards or payment. However, delving deeper and questioning the origin of those rhinestones adorning the Cowgirl's splendid apparel reveals they come from the Great Mother herself. She wears her birthright as the natural goddess she embodies, embodying the true essence of her being—nature itself.

Jewels hold immense power, as they all originate from the earth, thus representing the feminine. Within these gemstones and gold lie one of the earth's most profound secrets—light hidden within matter. As the Cowgirl adorns herself, reminiscent of Aphrodite, in “goddess uniforms” adorned with beads, fringes, and crystals, she breaks free from the beliefs that dismiss such adornments as “superficial.” The women who wore corsets were not weak, despite cultural pressure to suppress their essence. These beads of glass are akin to stained glass, radiating pigments from the earth mixed with

glass, and evoking a brilliance similar to that of rose windows found in cathedrals. All jewelry is, indeed, a precious gift from the Mother symbolizing her boundless creativity and beauty.

APPENDIX G: DREAM—March 10, 2022

On March 10, 2021, I experienced a prophetic dream that has remained vivid in my mind and continued to influence my thoughts throughout my dissertation. The dream revolved around the theme of dissent, reminiscent of the story of Inanna, and the quest for authenticity, which is often misinterpreted in extroverted cultures like America. As I explored the Celts and the Goddess Epona, I discovered the significance of working with this relational aspect of myself. These explorations have been crucial in my journey of gnosis. I dreamt the following:

For a prolonged period, darkness has enveloped my surroundings. I find myself driving down a highway, following the instructions of my financial advisor, Rand, who wants me to visit his new office building. The building I reach is an octagonal glass hub perched atop the land. Descending 70 floors, we arrive at his apartment, which he also uses as his office. Rand proudly boasts that this place represents the epitome of modernity. However, as I observe, everything appears artificial—the surfaces, the lighting, and even the oxygen is piped down from a generator above. Something about this setup feels deceptive, and my discomfort grows when Rand introduces me to his business partner, who resembles the Joker (the supervillain of comics and films) in a black velvet jacket. My whole body tightens, and I instinctively dislike him. I realize this “state of the art” structure is not just an office building, but also serves as living quarters, further fueling my unease.

Insight

In the dream, Rand, my financial advisor, represents an aspect of my masculine side, and the elevator’s descent symbolizes a penetrating journey into the darkest depths

of my being. The significance of the 70 floors becomes clear as it combines the number 7, associated with the seven layers of hell, with zero, representing a deep and profound place in the universe. Rand's presence reveals a part of my ethical masculine aspect and exposes the truth that lies within the 70th level.

On the other hand, the other financial advisor, resembling the Joker in his black velvet coat, represents the darker aspects of the cosmos. As I look at the situation from a dual perspective, I feel a strong desire to escape. The Joker embodies the art of deception, highlighting the hidden truths I need to confront.

Through this dream, my ethical masculine side takes me on a journey to explore even the darkest parts of the universe, which ultimately leads me to examine the realities of life on earth. The dream serves as a profound exploration of my psyche and the dualities within me.

This dream holds significance in the collective as well within me, as the Kabbalistic significance of 70 stories reveals its great value, tenfold of the sacred seven. Throughout the Old Testament, groups of 70 are mentioned, carrying a collective aspect in their symbolism. For instance, Moses is accompanied by 70 men to Mount Sinai, the Babylonian exile lasts for 70 years, and legend says that Adam knew all 70 languages of the world. These references to 70 signify a profound collective aspect, both in ancient lore and within the depths of my own unconscious mind.

On a personal level, this dream has brought forth a profound understanding of my fate. My father's death, intertwined with my synchronistic marriage to a man sharing the same name as my late father, holds a deep psychic link. The magnetic center created by my blood father's presence has passed into me, the daughter, influencing my choices and

attractions. This magnetic center plays a pivotal role in my ability to form a marriage, attracting partners who align with its qualities. Through this dream's exploration of the 70 levels, I have embarked on a journey to uncover and comprehend this magnetic center, shaped by the known and unknown aspects of my genetic father.

In my former marriage, I found myself both psychologically resembling my husband's daughter and practically serving as his wife. This dynamic is not unique to me but rather a universal phenomenon that unfolds in various relationships.

This dream has also illuminated the original, deeper significance of the marriage ceremony—a ritual in which the father's libido, creating the daughter's magnetic center, is transferred to her husband. This transfer is not about treating the daughter as property, as patriarchal cultures have come to interpret marriage, but rather signifies a profound transfer of libido in service to the marriage relationship.

The dream has shown me how a lived life offers material for growth and understanding. The evangelical ideology tends to suppress such opportunities by focusing on societal virtues and respectability. However, I have come to realize the spiritual life involves coming down to earth rather than merely transcending problems. The dream has offered me a path to resolve conflicts by embracing the ordinary aspects of life and working with the psychic structures within an alchemical process, rooted in an earth-based transcendence.

APPENDIX H: DREAM—July 11, 2022

On July 11, 2022, I had a dream that seemed to symbolize the transformation of the feminine. In the dream, I found myself in a bedroom connected to a long hall that gradually transformed into a road, leading to a complex. This complex was surrounded by trees and had a serene lake, all owned by a woman who remained unseen. As I stepped out of the bedroom, I noticed my wedding ring was visibly missing, which puzzled me.

It was during this walk that a revelation struck me—I realized the missing ring was not truly gone, but had somehow merged with my flesh, forming a ring-like ridge within my bone. This realization left me in awe, as if the essence of the ring had become a part of my very being.

Inside the complex, I found myself sitting at a dining room table, but instead of food, it was stacked with papers adorned with various logos and emblems. The significance of these papers remained enigmatic to me, leaving me with a sense of wonder and intrigue.

Insight

In this dream, the long hall that transforms into a road represents a journey from the personal place, symbolized by my wedding ring as a representation of marriage, toward a nature complex owned by an unseen woman. The “complex”—not just structural, but also psychological—symbolizes the formation of the feminine aspect in my psyche. As I travel this path, I sense the ring is still with me, even though I cannot see it. This sensation signifies a shift in my perception and understanding of relationships and unity.

The bone, representing essence, and the ring, symbolizing relationships, hold great significance. As I leave behind the personal realm and enter the feminine complex, I align with the symbolic essence of the ring. I discover my true essence of the feminine, the deep core of my being.

Within the complex, I encounter a table stacked with papers, stationery, and emblems, representing the archetypal information center of the psyche. This exploration into the feminine complex has led me to uncover my own essence, comparable to the enduring quality of my own bone. Throughout history, bones and hard substances were used to depict the goddess, communicating her everlasting nature. Bone, as the least destructible human material, represents what remains when flesh is consumed—the eternal essence endures.

APPENDIX I: JOURNAL ENTRIES—February 27, 2023–July 7, 2023

On February 27, 2023, I wrote the following on understanding instincts:

In my experience, I've learned instincts come from our roots, deeply connected to the unconscious. When I lacked a strong foundation, I attempted to transcend my pain, seeking to "rise above it" through a purely mental approach, neglecting my instincts and intuition. But I soon realized intuition is what grounds me and keeps me connected to reality.

The Bluebeard fairy tale serves as a reminder of what happens when I rationalize a situation. I recall saying, "we all get the right to change" instead of admitting that someone may in fact be and remain repulsive.

As I observe the Cowgirl, I see how her instincts are linked to the animal side of human nature. Despite facing increasing restrictions on her freedom, she doesn't merely tolerate it; she co-exists with it. Living as she does, she has managed to restore the feminine aspect and embody the indomitable spirit of nature. She has bravely chosen to follow her own path, regardless of societal expectations.

On July 7, 2022, I journaled about the spirituality of matter related to the Cowgirl:

The Cowgirl embodies the liberation of the feminine. The earth itself symbolizes the feminine, which was once taken ownership of, just like the cattle industry took control of the land. Similarly, women were once symbolized by the corset and chains, but a new vision emerged as they broke free from these constraints. The historical Cowgirl represents the masculine aspect of the female expressing herself—a powerful goddess figure.

In the realm of creation, the man impregnates the woman, and she experiences the expansion of flesh with child—a metaphorical “big bang,” like the Great Mother birthed God. Humans express what God is through their senses, evident in nature imagery found throughout the Bible, like burning bushes and fishes. Morality resides in our flesh and the soil; however, the Christian church distorted nature by imposing rules and ethics. Instincts are abundant throughout the natural world; animals such as dogs, with their heightened senses, lead the soul through death and hear sounds inaudible to humans. The horse leads us through mythical journeys in their own unique way. The horse image disappeared at one time but not the horse. Images change and bring up a new archetypal image so humans may learn a new aspect of themselves.

As I examine the history of Texas, I grapple with the coexistence of the goddess among warrior tribes like the Comanche, known for depredation and stories like Cynthia Ann Parker’s. Through my exploration, I realize that nature embodies both cruelty and nurturing qualities—the warrior heroically triumphs over nature, but there’s also the maternal aspect of nurturing.

The Cowgirl’s journey starts with her sharpshooting skills, but she undergoes a transformation when she becomes “goddess-ed” in the liminal space, where mythological images blend with chthonic horse beings. This wrestle of opposites is necessary for true inner and outer revolutions.

Women have been often relegated to the image of the Madonna, representing the “light” side of the Goddess, depicted by soft, maternal love. However, the Black Virgin in the crypt below Chartres Cathedral reminds us of the dark unknown mystery and qualities

that have been rejected in the woman. Understanding the mythology of the Cowgirl reveals the profound essence beneath the performance.