

The Ride:
Equine Influence and Inter-species Performance

by

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ABSTRACT

***THE RIDE:* EQUINE INFLUENCE AND INTER-SPECIES PERFORMANCE**

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The question of animals and performance defines the crossroads of the academic fields of Critical Animals Studies and Performance Studies, giving rise to the proposition of inter-species performance. But are all performances that integrate animals into the production inter-species? Or are there different manners of collaboration? In 2008 and my horse, Katrina, and I rode across Canada. Though this event was not undertaken as a performance endeavour, the production that emerged can be understood as a uniquely collaborative human/equine performance – *The Ride*. *The Ride* presented a meeting through the middle of an inter-species partnership that was performance in its foundation of physical communication and learned cooperation between a human and a horse. *The Ride* was an event that “became” a performance due to its active, reciprocal human/equine exchange, and the experiential interaction of a host of audience/participants throughout the course of the journey. Through embracing the positive, expansive qualities of equine alterity, and recognizing both the human and equine perspectives at play within the event, *The Ride* presented a performance that was fundamentally inter-species.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The question of animals and performance defines the crossroads of the academic fields of Critical Animals Studies and Performance Studies, giving rise to the proposition of inter-species performance. But are all performances that integrate animals into the production inter-species? Or are there different manners of collaboration? In 2008 and my horse, Katrina, and I rode across Canada. Though this event was not undertaken as a performance endeavour, the production that emerged can be understood as a collaborative human/equine performance – *The Ride*. *The Ride* was an event that “became” a performance due to its active, reciprocal human/equine exchange, and the experiential interaction of a host of audience/participants throughout the course of the journey. *The Ride* presented a meeting through the middle of an inter-species partnership that was performance in its foundation of physical communication and learned cooperation between a human and a horse. It was not an example of a human merely utilizing an animal for a human-centric objective. *The Ride* is a performance of human/equine relations, which approaches the partnership from a perspective of mutual alliance, offering a comprehensive understanding of animal alterity and a true experience of *inter*-species dynamics. Within the context of animals – specifically horses – partnering with humans through performance, how is *The Ride* understood as an inter-species event that explores the expansive, productive qualities of equine alterity?

In this thesis I will explore this question of inter-species collaboration through the performance of *The Ride*. This inquiry begins by questioning the nature of animals and performance, and advances through a sequence of questions that proceed from the distinctions of inter-species performance:

- Do animals perform? If so, how is this performance characterized? What defines inter-species performance?
- How does the manner in which language is utilized characterize and define an animal’s agency in performance? How is the mode of communication implicated in an inter-species act?

- What concepts have been applied to animal/human performances to allow for further exploration into the productive qualities of alterity? How are these concepts interwoven into inter-species performance?
- What characterizes human/equine relationships? How does performance define this inter-species partnership?
- How does *The Ride* illuminate the fundamental dynamics of human/equine performance? What distinguishes *The Ride* as an inter-species performance?

Field of Inquiry

The intersection of Critical Animal Studies and Performance Theory has become an increasingly popular area of academic study in the past ten years. Scholars like Una Chaudhuri and David Williams recognize the opportunity to further explore and expand notions of animal alterity through performance. Chaudhuri defines Critical Animal Studies as an academic field of inquiry that “looks at the myriad cultural practices through which people relate – today and in the past, here in the West and elsewhere in the world – to the non-human animals with whom we share the world” (“Animal Acts” 37). By examining the manners in which animals are represented, related to, articulated and treated by humans, Critical Animal Studies aims to challenge and renegotiate the marginalized position that non-humans are typically afforded, while at the same time acknowledging animal perspectives and positions, in and for themselves. Chaudhuri states that,

In this sense, the animal is the latest figure to be enlisted in the ongoing exploration of identity that has defined progressive politics in the past several decades – the new critical animal discourse is targeting “speciesism” as feminism targeted sexism and civil rights targeted racism (“Animal Acts” 39)

Animals by their very nature and being challenge human-centric notions of cognitive reason, etymological communication, and constructs of power; animals employ intuitive based logic, read body language and physical resonance, and flow with the interconnectivity of their

environment – their manner is literally an entirely “other” experience to humans’ outward disposition. But *Homo sapiens* are also animals directly connected to the larger world, which likewise gain information from “animal” instincts and approaches, even if this information is not overtly acknowledged. Through recognizing the validity of each animal’s essence and opting to learn and engage, rather than cast aside, utilize, and dominate, the distinct qualities of non-human alterity can be discovered, understood, respected and advanced, shedding light on alternative manners of creating, receiving and conveying meaning.

David Williams asks, “How might one interact with another whose difference is recognized as an active event, rather than a failure of plenitude? What are the productive qualities of alterity (29)?” In dominant culture, humans have primarily afforded animals two positions of consideration: the imposing view of anthropomorphism and/or the dismissive categorization as “non-humans” through elite, “speciesist” perspectives. As Williams puts it, “Animals – ‘trapped in a place of endless misrecognition’, like all of patriarchal humanism’s others – have often been defined in terms of lack: of reason, memory, imagination, free will, conscience, language, and so on” (30). This reductive view, or “misrecognition,” has drastically limited the potential of animal instigated understandings, and produced a lack of academic investigation into the nature of inter-species dynamics, animal agency or inter-subjectivity. “Critical Animal Studies brings the theoretical framework of ‘posthumanism,’ progressive identity politics, and multicultural inquiry to bear upon ‘the question of the animal’” (Chaudhuri “Animalizing Performance” 2). With Critical Animal Studies the expansive possibilities of animality are being acknowledged, encouraging a more nuanced interpretation, which attempts to renovate the human approach to non-human “others.”

One of the key reasons cited for the traditional dismissal of animals in the humanities is “animals’ purported (recently contested) lack of language, our embeddedness [sic] in it” (Chaudhuri, “Of All Nonsensical Things” 520). Chaudhuri goes on to say, “If language is indeed a barrier, then the quest for a deeper, richer mode of understanding the animality we share with nonhumans might logically lead one to the embodied arts of performance” (520). Though conventional Western theatre is heavily entrenched in language, not all forms of performance hold this same devotion to the spoken word. As Chaudhuri highlights, animals’ absence of language is merely “purported” and “recently contested” as it favours an etymological language

above all other forms. It is not thought that animals do not communicate with one another, but merely that they do not “speak,” and humans, as a species, have tended to associate the intricacies of spoken and written language with an advanced level of thought – a privilege only afforded to humans. With this speciesist spin on communication hierarchies, all other forms of language, such as body language and intuitive understandings, have been dismissed as inferior: not nearly so caulked full of meaning as the word. Employing the dynamic process of performance places the emphasis on the engagement of an act, and allows for a domain in which humans and animals can meet on more even ground. The exchange between Critical Animal Studies and Performance Studies offers a space in which a foundational dialogue can form based on a language shared by all species – movement and physical resonance.

According to Richard Schechner, “Performances are make-believe, in play, for fun [...] Performance is an illusion of an illusion” (xi). Or to further distinguish performance for the purposes of animals in performance: performance, unlike games or display, is demonstrated learned behaviour for a point in which the active engagement of the participants is viewed or experienced by an audience. Working within this understanding of performance, all animal/human interactions are performance, but not necessarily inter-species performance, meaning that not all animal/human interactions recognize the perspective of the animal. How does the manner in which language is utilized characterize and define an animal’s agency in performance? If all animals partnering with humans are performance, how is *The Ride* distinguished as an inter-species performance, rather than merely an instance of an animal in performance?

Though there is a growing wealth of academic writing looking at animals and performance there are few instances in which animals have been afforded the opportunity to stand in on their own right and “speak” for themselves through performance. *The Ride* is an event in which an animal, specifically a horse named Katrina, is afforded the opportunity to engage with a human as an equal and perform for an audience tailored and focused to her needs, opinions, and character – making *The Ride* a uniquely inter-species performance.

The Event

In order to understand my equine partner/Katrina's role in *The Ride*, the conditions and construct in which we were working and living must be understood.

The Ride had three key attributes to its approach: (1) it was a journey between one woman and one horse, with no support team; (2) we had an objective of figuring our way across Canada with the help of the locals who (hopefully) happened across our path; and (3) the journey was undertaken as a documentary, but shot without a crew, meaning that 90% of the footage was filmed by myself. It was a deliberately creative endeavour, but not a theatrical production. Our approach and mandate set up conditions that invited a performative exchange, which was crucially reliant on a human/horse relationship.

The Ride was a performance that spanned 160 days. When we started on April 28, 2008, Katrina and I took merely what we could carry, and we were not accompanied by a support team. The only constant elements were the two of us, as we figured our way from Nova Scotia to the Pacific with the help of everyday Canadians that crossed our path and decided to partake in our journey. For those five months, Katrina and I depended on each other for everything, from the ability to find and acquire food and water; to each other's emotional, mental and physical wellbeing; for camaraderie and safety we were completely reliant on each other, as sole constant companions. We met hundreds of people and animals along the way, and even more became invested in our journey as our story traveled beyond our physical whereabouts, but it was a journey literally and figuratively built on the back of Katrina and her willingness to follow my lead, and my commitment to follow hers in turn. If either of us fell ill or were injured the journey was over; if Katrina gave up on me and soured to the demands of the road it was over; if I lost my faith in her it would be over. If we weren't constantly there for each other every minute of every day we had no hope of crossing the 6,000+km that we needed to. We had to meet in the middle, and become a cohesive equine/human team in order to make the journey possible.

Our ride was motivated by Barbara Kingscote's 1949-50 ride from Quebec to British Columbia with her horse Zazy, which she recounts in her 2006 book *Ride the Rising Wind: One Woman's Journey Across Canada*. On her journey Barb found what she refers to as "the generous heart of my country", the generous heart of Canada (5). Our objective was to see if it

was still possible, almost sixty years later, to make it across Canada purely on horseback, character and Canadian kindness. It was a mission of idyllic passion, optimism, insanity and a belief in the possibility of inter-species joining up.

The Ride traveled across Canada from East to West, the Atlantic to Pacific, crossing the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. We were trailered to a fairly arbitrarily chosen town on the Atlantic coast to begin our journey – Sumac Farms in Trenton, Nova Scotia. This starting location was selected in order to incorporate as many provinces as possible, while still conceivably allowing us to complete the journey in one year: between the end of winter in the spring, and before the snow blocked passage through the western mountain ranges in the fall. That first night in Nova Scotia was the only accommodation that I arranged in advance, one night's stay so Katrina could have a good night's rest before our improvisational expedition began.

I started planning this journey in August of the previous year, allowing for approximately seven months of preparation. This groundwork did not include a plotted trajectory across the country, arranged accommodation, supply pickups or any form of accompanying support. We were literally dropped in Nova Scotia with the provisions that we could carry, aiming roughly for a path that would lead us to the Pacific. The preparation did include arranging funding and sponsorship whenever possible, coordinating the technical demands of shooting a documentary, training for the physical journey, and most importantly finding the right horse.

I had no idea how many kilometers I could expect to cover in a day, but I knew Barb averaged 50. I knew the horse would have to be able to carry not only my weight, but also the additional weight of our meagre supplies – approximately 250lbs. I knew the horse would have to be bomb proof and mentally able to handle the daily challenges of contending with traffic and an unpredictable environment. And personally, I was hoping for a mare. A mare would be more likely to bond with me, the way that Zazy did with Barb. As the old adage goes, if you have a good gelding you have a good horse, if you have a good stallion you have a very good horse, but if you have a good mare you have a **great** horse. I wanted a great horse. And I needed a horse that would go to the end of the world

for me, or at least the other side of Canada. As it turned out that that horse lived in Kingston, Ontario and was named Katrina. (“The Ride.” Manuscript. 13)

Katrina was not chosen for her exceptional training or experience – as she had almost no under-saddle training when we met, mere months before starting our journey. Katrina was chosen for her spirit, and the immediate and profound way she related to me at first contact. Katrina noticeably connected with me and respected my presence the first time we met – a response, I later learned, that she rarely shares with humans without extensive interaction. It was this relationship that I had been hoping for, a connection that would get us through the rough patches and keep her from giving up on me when we both desperately just wanted to go home. Everything relied on the strength of our partnership. What I would be asking her to do was leaning towards the impossible, as there were so many things that could go wrong and so many elements that had to come together perfectly to make it go right – and the most essential aspects had to do with my horse. For this production to work it had to be an inter-species performance, not merely an instance of a human utilizing a horse for her own goals – my horse could not be considered a tool.

I had an approximate sense of our course and the major obstacles that we would face, but no detailed design. The “plan” was to start riding “west” (which in Nova Scotia is as much north, as it is west). We would figure out the specifics of the journey concurrently as we traveled, based on advice and help from the locals that we met along the way. It was a gamble. A gamble based on a speculative faith in the embracing character of Canada. And it was a gamble based on the elusive notion that I could form a relationship with my horse that would endure the many obstacles that we would face, and carry us safely across 6,000+ kilometers of diverse Canadian terrain. I had to believe in people, and I had to believe in Katrina, trusting her as my sole partner in a ridiculous journey, one that I could not complete without her.

My lack of concise planning, along with the charismatic appeal of Katrina – a beautiful, commanding horse packed for distance – was intended to incite interactions with locals that crossed our path, drawing in an audience to our event. Our limited capacity to carry supplies – we could carry only a day’s ration of feed for Katrina – meant that I would have to engage with people daily in order to maintain our provisions, and learn about the local roads and geography. I

would also be actively seeking nightly accommodation for Katrina. This could be as simple as a fenced-in backyard with some grass, but ideally we were looking for farms with a spare field or extra stall that Katrina might utilize for a few hours. Where these stays would be was entirely based on the amount of ground we were able to cover on any given day, and that relied on Katrina's fluctuating disposition and willingness to work, along with what opportunities arose. In the mid- to late-afternoon each day, I would start looking for a place that might meet Katrina's requirements. When I found a potential dwelling we would simply ride up to the door and ask if they might have room for my horse for the night. I wouldn't ask for anything for myself, I would only ask for Katrina's benefit. I had basic camping equipment and carried simple food provisions, so that I could get by on my own, but I needed overnight board for Katrina so that she could rest safely while also being able to get her fill on hay or grass in order to maintain her condition. I expected that there would be large stretches of Canada where we would not have the luxury of farms to knock-on, but whenever possible I would aim to secure Katrina a bed for the night. Of course, the hope was that people would embrace my presence as well, and invite me in for a meal, a chat, and/or a place to bed down, but I would never presume to ask for myself, I would only seek out a safe haven for my horse.

These were the initial conditions that configured the journey, and the approach that we abided by throughout the duration of the performance. What turned this expedition from a human-centric excursion into an inter-species performative event was the manner in which Katrina and I came together and how our performance was presented and experienced by our happenstance audience/participants. Our inter-species approach to the journey presented a meeting of our human/equine perspectives, which engaged those who crossed our path, encouraging them to become active participants in *The Ride*. Because of Katrina's equine influence people engaged with us more readily, becoming emotionally and imaginatively involved in our performance and the event. Over the 160 days that we spent on the road, Katrina and I faced a myriad of challenges, covered thousands of kilometers, delved into exchanges with hundreds of strangers, and were taken in by 112 families.

The Ride took on the form of a unique, traveling, improvisational creation, which relied on the relationships created between Katrina and myself as transient performers. The most challenging part of the expedition was the constantly shifting dynamics and the imperative to

maintain this form of continuous improvisational interaction, which valued and respected both species' perspectives, and for Katrina and myself to adapt a multitude of roles: spectator/actor, leader/follower, rider/horse, and as equine-pedestrians constantly sharing space with motorized vehicles.

The archival documentation of *The Ride* comes from a variety of references: the 62 hours of raw documentary footage; my journals, manuscript and memories of the live event; and the numerous emails, texts, and blog posts written by the audience/participants of the performance.

CHAPTER TWO

Animals and Performance

Do animals perform? If so, how is this performance characterized? What defines inter-species performance?

Horses hold a distinctive – but not exclusive – relationship with humans, as they are one of the few animals of *prey* that humans have chosen to partner with – or which have chosen to partner with humans. As Bartabas, the horse trainer and Artistic director of the equestrian cabaret Théâtre Zingaro¹, puts it: “*Man* is the horse’s most noble conquest” (Williams 32). Unlike human interactions with cats or dogs, which are a rearrangement of predatory dynamics for human/animal relationships, horses are animals of flight that allow humans, predators – albeit hopefully benign ones – to hold positions of respect in their herds and lead them (or even ride them) into and through danger. The basic engagement of a horse with a human goes entirely against “natural” codes, yet it is a partnership that has been reproduced repeatedly in a myriad of situations around the world over thousands of years. Whether or not the horse is able to communicate its views on the duality of its nature – on one hand as a flighty animal of prey, and on the other, as a performative companion species – the complexity of horses’ contradictory roles is undeniable. If a horse in a field, uninvolved with a human, is adhering to its core nature and is therefore “just” a horse, then is a horse interacting with humans always “performing”? In a sense the very interaction of a human and a horse, due to its “unnatural” conditions and learned behaviour, is performance. Based on this foundation, whether a horse is pulling a wagon, competing in the Olympics, or dancing in a Théâtre Zingaro production, if the horse is acting in conjunction with a human, the horse is performing. It is merely the human objective of the performance that shifts focus between the different acts. And as a result of the divergent human approaches not all equine/human performance equally consider the horse’s role in the act, or are inherently inter-species performance. Considering *The Ride* as a work of performance provides an opportunity to examine Katrina’s role in the event, and explore this unique instance of an animal equally engaging in a performance with a human.

Garry Marvin explores the notion of performative animals in his discussion of English foxhunting as a “rural performative event”, one that is about death, but in which death is not the core concern of the event (108). Marvin sees the fox and the hounds, in addition to the flourishes of the human orchestration, as performative in nature, and not merely in terms of “performing” a function. Marvin suggests that the fox, whether or not it is actually sighted or physically present during the hunt, performs a role that is central to the production; in fact the fox creates the quality of drama through employing its natural instincts. The fox, in being aware of itself and the hunt, masks its scent and attempts to evade the threat, and in doing so acts out its role in the narrative (112). Though Marvin’s aim is,

Not to decode or recode it [foxhunting] but rather to pay attention to the flows, surface events and processes that engage the passions, thoughts and actions of those who participate; to explore the performative construction and aesthetic bases of an event centred [sic] on natural skills of two sets of animals which are converted, in the imagination and emotions of human participants, into an expressive performance. (Marvin 108-9)

It is through the fox’s awareness and interaction with the people that the fox performs, and becomes no longer “just” a fox. Marvin argues that within the framework of the foxhunting event “the animals are transformed, by the attention paid to them, by the perceptions of them, and by the demands made of them,” (109), and that at least on certain levels the animals, especially the hounds, are aware of their performance and interpret it to some degree. Hounds are bred to pick up, hold and follow a scent. They instinctually kill prey to eat, but a hound that has killed an animal to fulfill his instinctual urges, according to Marvin, has not “hunted” in the sense that he is discussing (113). Foxhunting is about the chase, the performance, the journey, the experience – the kill is merely an appropriate manner in which culminate the event (Marvin 108). The hounds are aware of this distinction, and conduct the hunt according to this knowledge. Within foxhunting the hounds’ role utilizes their instinctual abilities to track a fox, but also recognizes that the objective of the hunt is contrary to their natural inclinations, and as such the hounds hunt according to the learned conditions of the event. Much like the horse that engages in abnormal activities due to human influence, the hound acknowledges the conditions of the occasion, adjusts and acts accordingly. I would argue as well that the horses – the third species of non-

humans involved in the hunt – also perform in a similar manner to the hounds, and are perhaps even more performative. Though Marvin does not mention the horses, the horses' actions in the hunt are working entirely contrary to their instincts and are reliant on learned equine/human behaviour, as animals of prey collaborating with a predator (humans) to hunt another predator (the fox). Foxhunting, at least in regards to the horses and the hounds, demonstrates the fundamental elements of animals in performance, but not necessarily of inter-species performance. Whereas the fox is an animal implicated in a human performance, the hounds and horses are exhibiting a conscious learned behaviour. The fox is purely a fox responding to a predator, and its actions are only transformed in the perspective of the audience, whereas the hounds and horses are likewise viewed in a performative manner, but also individually recognize the artifice and adjust their actions accordingly. Marvin concludes that the animals of the hunt, “without being aware of performing [...] have their behaviour read, responded to and are experienced as though they were” (109). The fox's behaviour is instinctual, not learned or extraordinary, and though conceived as part of the performance by the humans, the fox is not literally performing in the event. The hounds on the other hand, as Marvin indicates, are acting contrary to their nature, and performing according to the conditions of working with humans for a hunting objective. The hounds, in addition to having their actions read as part of the performance by the human spectators/performers, are performing due to the fact that they are responding to the learned conditions of the event along with the humans and are therefore animals in performance. But whether or not foxhunting should be considered an inter-species performance is dependent on how the animals are positioned within the event and the degree to which they are allowed to demonstrate their own perspectives and agency as individuals, not merely as tools of the hunt.

In *The Ride*, Katrina was similarly transformed by the attention paid to her, along with the perceptions and demands made of her. Katrina was acting as herself, within a specific set of conditions that were a heightened reality, while at the same time recognizing the extra, special attention bestowed to her, and responding according to the inter-species parameters of the event.

After dinner I needed to go out and check on Kat one last time for the night, so the whole family came with me to meet her. Kat was relaxed and happy, in a good disposition for visitors for a change. Alysha, their youngest daughter, really

took to Kat and spent the whole time scratching her neck, and Kat relished the attention. Myla went back into the house and came out with a small bucket full of apples and carrots for the “kids” to feed Kat. All of their kids are in their teens and early 20s. Kat had about three full apples and half a dozen carrots. This was the type of food she really appreciated – treats. So as soon as they stopped putting treats in front of her, she started to nose around their pockets asking for more. And she might have very well gotten them. Myla was completely prepared to go into the kitchen and fulfill her request, but I said that she had probably had enough for now. Kat did her best to charm them into ignoring my opinions, and another full bucket was produced for her in the morning. Without question, Katrina can work a crowd when she wants to. (“The Ride.” Manuscript. Horizon, SK. 475-6.)

Through the attention paid to her, by humans, Katrina adjusted her natural inclinations in response to the inter-species conditions. By performing according to the dynamics decided by the inter-species exchange, which recognize the desire and inclinations of both sides involved, the humans taught Kat what would get her treats, and Kat taught them the personal rewards of feeding her. Both species in this inter-species performance were transformed by the attention paid to them and through the mutual recognition of the other’s perspective.

Though animals may recognize the distinctions between their natural state and various states of interactions with humans, they do not necessarily conceive a difference between imitating and being, or performing and existing. Horses receive information and respond: in a sense they always “believe” and actively engaged in life, whether it is “real” or “performance.” But that does not mean that they do not conceptualize some degree of variation in the levels of interaction, and can therefore be conceived as performative or in performance by humans. Or to quote Deleuze and Guattari, “We fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are” (qtd in Baker 78). Animals, as autonomous individuals, are not only performative within their active engagement with humans and the event, but they also rouse performative perceptions in, with and for the humans. In inter-species performance, animals reciprocally influence how a performance is dictated and interrelated with by the audience and their fellow performers. In *The Ride* Katrina’s perceptions, mood and preferences worked in conjunction with

my own rational, emotions and objectives to determine the course of our performance. We collaborated on decisions such as what roads we would traverse, when and where we would take breaks, and what farms we would approach. Katrina had as much input as I did in the course that our performance took.

Alan Read, in *Theatre and Everyday Life*, states that from his perspective, and for his purposes in examining “everyday theatre”, or instances of performance in everyday life, “life is the given, theatre the created” (151). This holds true in *The Ride*, and within animals in performance. Where “life” leaves off, where the prey joins cause with the predator, where a horse joins up with a human, something is created and a performance begins. The larger dramatic framework of *The Ride*’s story is most easily discerned when looking at the piece as a whole – the overarching journey from the Atlantic to the Pacific. But it is in the engagement of *The Ride*’s everyday life, and its interactive parts that the performance exists. At its basic core performance (or theatre of the everyday) – inter-species or otherwise – requires at least two individuals to engage in the act to make it such, or as Alan Read puts it, “Theatre is after all the only art which requires the presence of two organisms in the same place, bodies of the same species, one as performer the other as an audience” (154). While this can be true, the “bodies” need not always be of the same species. In equine/human performance the coming together of the horse and human acts as the triggering factor for the performance. This can be a self-contained act in which both (human and horse) act as performer and receiver (or active audience), or it can also be understood as one element in a tridimensional performative exchange. The horse and equestrian actively affect and read each other as both actor and receiver, while also working as a cohesive unit performing for a third party – an audience, which tends to be human. Katrina and I worked on both of these levels; we performed with and for each other, and for the audience/participants who crossed our path. . Tamara Annis writes in response to her experience of crossing paths with *The Ride*,

A once in a lifetime event! A lone woman rider and her horse doing a cross country journey, they walk by my house, then our shop, we drive by you on the highway on our way to our summer solstice circle...by the time the fire was blazing and the cauldron was boiling...the food and drinks were ready...in walks the girl on the horse!!!!!!!!!!!! It was an out of this

world experience! (Email)

In the everyday moments of *The Ride*, when it was just Katrina and myself trudging along the road in our unaccompanied experiences, we were a self-contained performative unit, in so far that our “unnatural” inter-species interaction is inherently performative. But it was the moments in which we engaged in an act with an outside party – with the happenstance participants of our journey – that the performative tensions of intrigue, emotion and imagination were most fully employed invoking the larger dramatic narrative of *The Ride*. As such Katrina and I were distinguished and viewed as a performative unit by many.

Communication for Collaboration

How does the manner in which language is utilized characterize and define an animal’s agency in performance? How is the mode of communication implicated in an inter-species act?

One of the most significant, but rare, critiques I received from naysayers of our journey, was that the undertaking was not animal friendly, and to some, even a form of abuse. Their basis for this understanding was that Katrina did not get to decide to partake in the journey. I decided that we were going to walk across Canada, and this decision was made without Katrina’s full awareness. It was a choice that I could make with her perspective in mind, but that I could not make with her full input. Though it is true that Katrina did not understand what was about to happen when she walked onto the trailer headed for Nova Scotia to begin our journey, Katrina did decide; she decided not to give up on me; she decided to greet me every morning, and allow me to tack her up; she decided to walkout and follow my lead all the way across Canada and home. In her own language Katrina did decide to partake in this journey. This doesn’t mean that she was always happy with my choices, and she often “voiced” her disagreement by balking, being moody or moving at a snail’s pace, but she always had the option to flat out say “no” and refuse my directions – she is a 1200lb animal, if she doesn’t want to go, she doesn’t. She also demonstrated her commitment to our performance over and over again, by coming to me every morning, keeping an eye on my whereabouts whenever we were not in physical contact,

nickering to get my attention, and mutual grooming. Still, I worried every single day that at some point she would give up on me, and sour to the demands of our performance, but she never did and often when I was at my lowest, and had the least faith in what we were doing, it was she who kept us moving forward, encouraging the performance to continue.

As Una Chaudhuri, discusses in “‘Of All Nonsensical Things’: Performance and Animal Life” (521), one of the reasons why animals lack proper representation in culture by humans, is the human tendency to pay “attention to the record of an engagement rather than to the experience of it” (Chaudhuri 521). The recording of an event clearly favours human cognition, and places the emphasis on hard documentation, relegating the position of the act, where the animal can equally contribute, to a secondary consideration. Focusing on performance in inter-species relations demands that the emphasis remain on the experience in the moment, which offers a common ground and an equal foundation for exchange. Marvin quotes Peggy Phelan’s suggestion that, “Performance honours the idea that a limited number of people in a specific time/space frame can have an experience of value which leaves no visible trace afterwards” (Phelan 1993:149)” (115). Performance demands an active experience, one in which movement and physical resonance communicate as clearly as, or in inter-species performance more clearly than, words. Performance is a medium of articulation that can equally consider all animals, humans and non-humans, and one of the key factors in distinguishing the characteristics of inter-species performance – rather than animals utilized through performance – is the manner in which this language is employed.

In looking at equestrian events, such as dressage or Théâtre Zingaro’s equestrian cabarets, there are two understandings of performance at work. One is the spectacle, the obviously theatrical quality of the whole production, with all its pomp and grandeur; the decorative attire, flashy movements and overt demonstration for an audience are all theatrical spectacle. The other, the inter-species performance, lays not in the spectacle but in the harmonious coming together of a human and horse through the manners in which they communicate and relate to one another. Bronc riding in rodeo, another example of human/horse performance, relies on spectacle for its appeal, but based on the domineering manner in which the riders handle the horses, there is little equality and the horses are approached as a homogenized tool in a human-centric event. Both dressage and rodeo are human/equine

performances, but due to the manner of communication involved, and perspectives recognized, both performances are not inter-species. Dressage relies on subtle physical communication between horse and rider in order to execute a dance. The better the inter-species communication the more successful the performance and the more fluid the result. Dressage is all about the nuances of human/equine communication, and the beauty that can be found in a harmonious partnership between a human and a horse. *The Ride* was an event that engaged both of these areas of equine/human performance. Through the spectacle of involving a human and a horse in an overt journey it demonstrated an animal in performance, and through the joining up that was created based on the manner in which Katrina and I related to each other, it was an inter-species performance.

Animal languages vary by species, and require study and experience to clearly understand the manners specific to each animal. From working with horses for years, there are countless cues that I read with every interaction. I understand that a horse is disrespecting me when s/he uses me as a scratching post, and likewise, it is uncouth to immediately reach for a horse's head upon first meeting. Based on numerous small exchanges like these, the horses that I relate with – such as Katrina – and I know where we stand, and the dynamics in which we are working. There are elements of horse articulation that essentially span the species' communication, and then there are the individual cadences of each horse's dialect, which are only intimately understood from extensive work with that specific animal, along with the mutually learned behaviour specific to the various equestrian disciplines, or the shared language created between and the human and the horse. From the extensive amount of time that we have spent together, I am most closely attuned to the nuances of Katrina's communication, and Katrina to mine. Through this basis of understanding we created our own unique communication that defined the parameters of our relationship. Horses that deal with people frequently learn to ignore the human social faux pas, and not take offence when a strange human reaches for their nose – but this behaviour has to be learned. One of the serious drawbacks to exploring the broad configurations of animals in performance is that it addresses animals as a sweeping subject matter, and does not take into consideration the species' specifics or the individuality of each animal. It also underestimates the impact of species fluency in relating meaning through performance. *The Ride*, or any other form of inter-species performance, indirectly challenges the

notion that animals lack self-articulation and that humans can only relate to them from an anthropomorphic or purely utility-based perspective.

The distinct qualities of animal alterity, which presumably vary at least to some degree by species, offer the opportunity to expand horizons into the conceptual understandings of non-etymological communication. As Bartabas puts it, in reference to his 1997 Théâtre Zingaro production *Corre*, “What counts is what lies behind the intention of a gesture, what informs it. Any gesture only has value if it touches on grace” (Williams 34). The “intention of a gesture” goes beyond conscious or constructed subtext into a multidimensional articulation, which employs layers of emotion, intuition, and physical resonance, in addition to body language and/or verbal language to communicate.

Kat and I trudged down the highway, with the day feeling like it had gone on forever. The world whizzed past us in a motorized frenzy, but we crept through the land at a snail’s pace. I had gotten off and was walking beside Katrina. My map suggested that we were close to the Maltby’s Farm, but covering the required ground felt like a vast eternity. Kat and I hung our heads with exhaustion, and just concentrated on putting one foot in front of the other. A farm emerged from the trees on the far side of the road. Katrina perked up and chatted with a horse in the field. I barely noticed the exchange, with my gaze resting on the gravel as it crunched beneath my feet. Katrina nickered again to the horse. I glanced up at the farm but thought nothing of it, we were destined for the Maltby’s. Katrina saw it differently. Here was an opportunity that I was clearly oblivious to – a suitable farm for the night. As I focused back on the road, Katrina nudged me with her muzzle and gestured to the horse. Apparently the horse had given the farm a good review and Kat wanted to make sure that I was aware of the possible accommodation on the left, and the horse she wanted to meet. When I didn’t change our course at her suggestion, she gave me a firmer nudge with her nose, and indicated the farm again with a tilt of her head. This time I stopped and stared at her, surprised by her unexpectedly thorough communication and understanding of our life. She had shaken me out of my exhausted daze and made sure I wasn’t missing a potential farm that she fancied. She nudged me again. I smiled and

scratched her head, acknowledging that I had finally gotten the point, but that we had to keep going anyways. We were expected a few more kilometers down the road, but otherwise Kat had a point, that might have been a good option for the night. (“The Ride.” Manuscript. Amherst, NS. 64.)

People may see my description of Katrina’s actions as speaking for her, or anthropomorphizing her behaviour, but Katrina is actually an incredibly clear communicator, she just doesn’t use words or rely on verbal articulation. But in live interaction, and especially to those fluent in equine dynamics, Katrina does not mince words and has no qualms about stating her opinions. These opinions come in the form of controlling space, body language, and mood. Interestingly, both Katrina and I revert to our most species-specific behaviours, and stop considering the other’s “language” when we are most stressed, angry or distraught. For me that means turning to words and yelling, and for Katrina it entails throwing warning kicks, and encroaching on my space when seriously upset. The heightened state of our expedition pushed both of us to our emotional and physical limits, which in turn challenged the normal lines of equine/human interactions and defined the parameters of our relationship in the broadest terms. Our performance demanded a manner of interrelating in which both species had a full ability to articulate. In this situation neither species could be dominant all of the time – though both Kat and I would be considered “alpha-mares” – as a mutual respect and willingness to negotiate for each other’s needs was paramount to the success and safe execution of *The Ride*. Our performance had to be inter-species, not merely a horse in a human’s event.

Even though it was only 4:30, we had supper when we went inside, which suited me fine – more time to relax. Lucy had called a reporter that she liked at the local newspaper, and the woman arrived just as we finished eating. The reporter was around my age, very funny and smart. I liked her immediately, and since she was genuinely interested in the story behind our journey, not just the basic facts, we ended up talking for a long time. It was the most extensive interview I had given to date, but we got on so well it was more likely chatting with a friend than being interviewed.

We went outside to get some photos with Katrina, but apparently this was not a good time for her. The woman that owned the horses in the adjoining field had

shown up. I could hear her angrily talking on her cellphone with the field's owner. She was not impressed with Kat's presence. But Kat wasn't too impressed with hers either. The woman was rounding up her horses to feed them and keep them at a distance from Kat. And Kat was completely distraught at being left alone by her new friends. She so rarely gets to hang out with other horses – especially ones that she really likes – that this was just all too much for her. But I needed her to pose for a photo. I managed to get her halter on, but she had no interest in coming to stand with me, and was dragging me around the pen in her distress.

“Now is not a good time for a photo-op,” she was loudly proclaiming.

I could just imagine how unprofessional this must look to the reporter – I could barely control my horse. I tried to entice Katrina over to the fence, but she pulled away and when I went to take hold of her again she sent a double-barrel kick in my direction.

“Warning! – This is not a good time!”

She had no intention of hitting me – the kick had no punch and was very short – but she was communicating clearly: she was annoyed with me, upset by the situation, and just wanted to be left alone.

I wasn't in a position that I could renegotiate without risking another hoof or two flying my way, so I gave her a moment. We spend so much time together that we have created our own equine/human language, but with the stress of the other horses being removed, Kat had lost all niceties and was treating me purely like a horse – and horses communicate with teeth and feet when really trying to make a point. (“The Ride.” Manuscript. Redvers, SK. 435-37.)

Looking at a performance such as *War Horse*, which attempts to utilize and mimic equine behaviour in a traditionally theatrical format, can perhaps most clearly demonstrate the impact of equine fluency on communication, and cast light on the nuances of exchange that Katrina and I were constantly engaged in throughout *The Ride*. *War Horse*, with its life-size puppet representations of horses, does an excellent job of articulating isolated horse movement, but misses the point in the manner in which horses read and respond to stimuli, specifically to human interaction. The puppets are essentially proportionally correct representations of draft horses that

use movements and mannerism that accurately reflect live horses. But the way that Albert, the lead human, approaches and handles the main “horse” Joey, demonstrates a lack of understanding in the way that horses understand human behaviour and read body language. As a person approaching a nervous horse, it is important to appear calm and unthreatening, but at the same time the person must also remain in a leader position – imitating herd dynamics – in order to elicit the respect from the horse that then becomes the foundation of the bond, which *War Horse*’s story explores. When Albert first approaches the nervous, untrained Joey he responds with quick, showy hand movements that would cause Joey more alarm. He follows this by retreating to a crouching position while constantly peaking at Joey over his shoulder. Not only would this be dangerous around a skittish horse, but also it would relegate Albert to a low-status position, and not invite the horse’s interest or respect. Though both my father and sister saw the same show, due to their limited equine fluency, their experience of these events was very different. They saw the relationship between Joey and Albert that the narrative required, but were unaware of the mistranslation of horse/human dynamics, and the subsequent “false” dialogue that was presented. They saw the human articulation of the events, but were unconscious of the disconnected “equine”/human exchange.

Though *War Horse* is clearly not an inter-species performance due to the obvious lack of actual horses in the production, the spirit behind the puppetry holds an inter-species essence in the value it puts on Joey’s position in the relationship. Though the cues they demonstrate in the human/equine relations are not always correct, Joey is portrayed as a unique individual, who chooses to bond with a human, and as a result participates in a myriad of reciprocal human/equine exchanges. Through using puppet representations of horses *War Horse* is able to exhibit the nuances of inter-species human/equine interactions, something that many equine/human performances cannot do, due to the experiential, subtle nature of inters-species performance. *The Ride* likewise offered an opportunity for an audience to get up close to an inter-species performance and see the intricacies of the partnership at work. But not all of the audiences we encountered were conditioned to view the performance of *The Ride* in this light. Due to the standardized experience of viewing tightly controlled human/equine performances, which present a reductive experience of the exchange, many people were not initially attuned to grasping the intricacies of our inter-species articulation.

Horses are one of the most predominantly depicted animals in popular culture. Horses represent a significant portion of what Chaudhuri and Enelow refer to as the “‘cultural animal unconscious’, a web of ideas and images circulating around us, offering clarifications, mystifications, and inspirations” (3). It is primarily from this “unconscious” that people build their frame of knowledge regarding an animal, especially if they have had limited access to immediate physical interaction. Horses are largely presented as noble, kind, free spirited: wild but tamed, and sharing a unique relationship with people. Productions such as *War Horse* demonstrate the appeal of equine affinity, by relying on romanticized depictions of horses to draw mass audiences to their performances. And though these idealized characteristics can be elements of equine/human experience, there are many other aspects of the inter-species exchange that are rarely demonstrated in popular culture, leaving people who have had little first-hand interaction with live, non-scripted horses unaware of the specific nuances involved. As a result humans have a tendency to unknowingly dictate human-centric notions of human/equine contact.

The positioning of the audience in relation to our performance often placed restrictions on Katrina’s ability to presence to her full ability – meaning that the audience’s viewpoint had the ability to limit the expression of Katrina’s individual equine essence, influence, articulation and perspective, her presence. This in turn hindered the opportunities for Katrina and our audience to engage in the full spectrum of inter-species dynamics possible. The lack of practical equine fluency was perhaps the most significant daily challenge that Katrina had to deal with throughout our journey. As our event took place in spaces across Canada we had very little control over the circumstances, forces, and environment of our “stage.” People’s inability to accurately understand the threatening messages that they were projecting to Katrina – or vice versa, to grasp the warnings that Katrina was communicating to them – meant that I had to be constantly on alert to translate and attempt to ease the tension that people, and especially motorists, were so frequently oblivious to.

It was hard to find an opening in the traffic flow large enough for us to reach the other side with any ease. We had to just look for as much space as we could hope to find and cross quickly. We took our opportunity and made it to the gravel shoulder, without a problem. Thankfully, here the shoulder was fairly wide and accommodating. At this point in the road the highway was four lanes across, so I

figured that people would be more willing to move over, as it was so convenient – there was no need to cut into oncoming traffic to get around us. But quickly we learned that this was not the case. Everyone was in highway-mode, and they were not looking out for non-motorized beings. This was a place for cars and speed – to get where you are going, everything else be damned. Only the occasional person had enough consideration for us to drift into the far lane. People had been more willing to take us into account when there had only been one or two lanes, and passing without crowding us meant hugging the centre line or cutting into the oncoming traffic. But this was large-motorized-vehicle territory; we were trespassing and therefore disregarded.

I could bitch and complain about being constantly buzzed all I wanted, but unless I did something about it, they were just going to continue. Kat was handling it well, probably in sensory overload, but eventually it would fry her nerves and she would react. I needed to find a way to keep this situation from escalating from serious to dangerous quickly. Even with Kat being on her best behaviour, the close proximity of the traffic was concerning. And if Kat's chill demeanour disappeared, this ride would go from calculated risk to a potential death wish instantly.

I put my reins in my right hand and starting using my left hand to conduct traffic. I dramatically gestured for the cars to move away from us, and then even more elaborately signed for them to slow down. I would gesture left, then raise my arm quickly and bring it back down slowly. *Move over!!! Slow down!!!* I had to keep repeating the signs, switching back and forth between the two to make my point. Then I would quickly put two hands back on the reins to steady Kat as they passed us.

Surprisingly, with my conducting efforts almost everyone made an effort to yield to our presence. And after awhile Kat even began to calm. She was now reading the traffic's body language as giving way to her. Those slight deviations in intention, in horse language, meant “non-threatening”, and it made a world of difference to Katrina. No longer was she feeling like hunted pray exposed on the road. (“The Ride.” Manuscript. Parry Sound, ON. 302-3.)

People unused to relating with horses in an uncontrolled environment, naively expected me to have full “control” of my horse. People who considered Katrina to be my tool or my mode of transportation, as easily manipulated as a bicycle, were oblivious to the inter-species dynamics that they were experiencing, and unaware of the conversation being had between them and Katrina via body language and physical resonance. Humans are so conditioned not to consider non-humans as equals, that when they have experiences with animals that are not structured to human dictates both sides are often left confused, intimidated and frustrated. Not only was the language divide a threat to our wellbeing on the road, it also created risky situations for the unaware people who were drawn in by our spectacle. People would pull over on the shoulder, encroaching on Katrina’s space at times when she was already anxious, and then proceed to try to pat her, oblivious to the fact that horses in high-spirits tend to have reduced spatial awareness and are much more likely to accidentally step on a person. Experienced horse people will immediately read the situation and maintain a level of alertness, ready to consider the horse’s perspective and shift with the horse’s movement as needed, while deducing the cause of the stress and attempting to minimize it. But the majority of people fail to understand the signs and make the matter worse by blindly going after their personal objectives – to pat the pretty horse. Unless the human is open and willing to engage with the horse on even ground, and the horse is interested in exploring the relationship further, the inter-species dynamic possibilities are missed, making the mode of communication and the positioning of the audience crucial factors in the articulation and understanding of inters-species performance.

As much as Katrina communicated throughout the performance of *The Ride*, many participants were not able to receive all of her points, requiring me to bridge the human/horse communication divide and shift the conditions to accommodate all. Most often this merely required a reconfiguration of the spatial dynamics so that Katrina didn’t feel threatened and so that she had the room to manoeuvre as needed. Rather than this need for adjustment being a lack, or a dismissal of Katrina’s role in the event, it demonstrates the necessity of a fluid connection and the imperative of constantly maintaining balanced human/equine consideration in inter-species performance. Katrina and I were equal participants in the live performance of *The Ride*, due to its focus on the experience in the moment and nuanced reciprocal communication through a multitude of cues, least of which were based on the spoken word.

“Becoming” and “Presencing”

What concepts have been applied to animal/human performances to allow for further exploration into the productive qualities of alterity? How are these concepts interwoven into inter-species performance?

One of the cornerstone concepts of animals and performance is Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s notion of “becoming-animal.” Una Chaudhuri’s writing, as well as articles by David Williams and Steve Baker, references this significant, and somewhat elusive, concept drawn from Deleuze and Guattari’s 1987 book, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, and the chapter titled “Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible” (232-309). Chaudhuri most clearly defines “becoming-animal” in terms of what it is not: “becoming-animal” is not a literal “being” of an animal, nor is it an imitation or a projection of animal characteristics (“Animalizing Performance” 5). It is also not an exploration of one’s “inner animal”, nor is it a shamanic journey, or an animalistic totem (Chaudhuri “Animalizing Performance” 5). “Becoming-animal” is an active process. The key element that Chaudhuri draws from the notion of “becoming-animal” is this “active process” and the manners in which its “activeness” places the importance on the process or experience of “becoming” rather than the retrospective documentation, along with the possibilities of de-territorializing human and non-human domains. These fundamental elements of “becoming” are also the foundation of inter-species performance.

Focusing on the experience of a performance, as opposed to the analytical breakdown of the event relates to the active process of “becoming-animal,” but is not in itself a “becoming.” Steve Baker describes “becoming-animal” as a matter of stepping aside “from the human, to indicate an other, to signal the animal, and thus to enter the privileged ‘experimental’ state of identity-suspension” (71). But how this specifically differentiates from imitating an animal is harder to define, and, much like resonance-based communication is a matter of feel and intention. Baker suggests that it is not possible to address questions of “what it is to be animal,” a core concern of “becoming-animal,” a physically active or performative concept, without wrestling with the contradictions of performing without “imitation.” Deleuze and Guattari write, “No art is imitative, no art can be imitative [...] becoming animal does not consist in playing

animal or imitating an animal” (Baker 77). Again, it is through what it is not that “becoming-animal” is defined. Deleuze and Guattari use the refusal of imitation in an attempt to clarify the essence of the process involved, but Baker does not agree that imitation can, or even should be avoided in a creative exploration of the animal (Baker 78). Baker makes the important point that to “imitate an animal (or indeed to refuse to do so) already presupposes a knowledge of what that animal is” (Baker 78). It is this study of direct, organic animals that Chaudhuri’s practice of “becoming-animal” is noticeably lacking. Chaudhuri’s approach is meant to explore the possibilities of finding a “kind of theatricality and performance style that could capture and convey the kind of reality claimed by Deleuze and Guattari” (“Animalizing Performance” 2). But in Chaudhuri’s exploration of “becoming-animal” through *The Animal Project*², no actual non-human animals are consulted, or immediately involved in the inquiry – all of the animals referenced are filtered through other forms of connotative interactions, such as photography (“Animalizing Performance”). These socially implicated images draw on Chaudhuri’s primary lens of analysis, what she has termed “‘zooësis’: the way culture makes art and meaning with the figure and body of the animal” (“Animalizing Performance” 2). Through employing animal references that are already culturally loaded *The Animal Project* creates a study of a study, or a conscious performative commentary on established instances of zooësis, rather than an objective search for the nature of “becoming-animal.”

The two most significant differences between *The Ride* and Chaudhuri’s *The Animal Project*, are that in *The Animal Project* animals are not physically representing themselves, but rather are being performed by and for humans, while within *The Ride* Katrina was performing with humans and presenting herself; secondly within *The Ride*, though I was engaging with equine behaviour and perspectives, I was by no means attempting to “become-equine”, or exploring the question of “what it is to be animal.” Rather we were creating and performing a mutually reliant, connected and respectful equine/human relationship – with the key aspect being the “mutually-reliant.” It was an exchange, a symbiotic relationship. One that, like “becoming-animal,” was an active process, but it was not a process that was consciously aware of the territory it was negotiating. *The Ride* started from a position which demanded that both species be provided the room to presence, rather than from a position in which a human attempts to conceive an animal state. This position relied on a certain amount of knowledge on each side of

the other species, but it was not intended as a “becoming” in this sense. Katrina relied on me for the fulfillment of her needs, while my wellbeing and ability to follow through on my objective was entirely reliant on her. This created an unconventional balance of equine/human power, as Katrina could not be considered a tool or expendable. She could not be expected to conform to my dogmatic dictate, or traditional human hierarchical superiority. Our relationship, rather, had to be one of constant negotiation, in which her needs and opinions had to be equally considered with mine. Because of this – though I am obviously and constantly aware of the species difference between Katrina and myself – I relate with her as my partner, not merely as a horse, or my horse. Through our collective training and adaption to the life requirements of *The Ride*, I became Katrina’s herd, and Katrina my sole constant companion – we reciprocally affected each other. Or to use Donna Haraway’s concept, we were equally implicated “companion animals” (Chaudhuri 14). Though *The Ride* was actively based on process, focused on the ever-fluctuating experience and exchange in the moment, there was no attempt to “become” each other, but we did have to understand each other and connect to be successful.

The “becoming-animal” that Chaudhuri, Williams and Baker draw on is one part of Deleuze and Guattari’s abstract journey through concepts of “becoming.” As Deleuze and Guattari are also interested in other forms of “becomings”:

Becoming-animal is only one becoming among others. A kind of order or apparent progression can be established for the segments of becoming in which we find ourselves; becoming-woman, becoming-child; becoming-animal, -vegetable, or –mineral; becomings-molecular of all kinds, becomings-particles [sic] (272).

Deleuze and Guattari are not so interested in the “animal,” or inter-species dynamics, as they are engaged by the notion of “becoming” and the manner in which the process of “becoming” challenges the reductive tendencies of society, which marginalize these various “others,” and calling these perspectives into question. Chaudhuri, Williams and Baker have employed the more performative and useful aspects of Deleuze and Guattari’s “becomings,” such as the notion of “becoming-animal” as an active process, one in which the binary of animal and human is questioned, and which expands the possibilities of human/animal relationships through

exchange. These concepts are most constructively explored, and are most usefully exhibited, in Williams' discussion of "becoming" as a "meeting in the middle", as demonstrated by Bartabas' Théâtre Zingaro.

Williams, in looking at Théâtre Zingaro's performances and training as an exploration of inter-species performance, defines "becoming-animal" as a meeting "through the middle" in which both species are transformed, while at the same time retaining their reciprocal alterity:

These encounters, 'doings in the now moment' in which the 'saying' takes precedence over the 'said', offer the possibility of what Deleuze calls 'becoming-animal': In an animal-becoming a man and an animal combine, neither of which resembles the other, neither of which imitates the other, each deterritorializing [sic] the other [...] A system of relay and mutations through the middle (Williams 36).

Involving the animal in the equation of "becoming" illuminates the process and exchange involved in the action while inviting a description of what it *is*, rather than defining it as what it is *not*. Williams is still drawing on the Deleuzian concept, in focusing on the active process of "becoming" and the renegotiation of territorial conditions, but Williams utilizes a concrete example of such a "becoming" to further illustrate the intentions behind the concept. In the Théâtre Zingaro productions that Williams references, the animals – in this case the horses – are actively involved in the process, allowing for a fuller exploration of the "inter-species intersubjectivity" possibilities of the human-equine partnership (29). *The Ride's* approach to inter-species dynamics is most closely akin to William's understanding of human/equine relations as a meeting "*through* the middle."

Both Baker and Williams also consider the writings of philosopher Martin Heidegger and his "Letter on humanism" in their inquiries into posthumanist understandings and humans' relationship with animals. Though Heidegger's is flawed in its speciesist underpinning – understandable given that he was writing in the 1920s-40s – his questionings into the nature of "being" elaborates on, or in fact, since Heidegger was writing before Deleuze and Guattari, provides a foundation for, a full expression of "becoming-animal." Heidegger's "concern was to

understand the animal in its otherness, and to let that otherness be” (Baker 79). Heidegger refers to his approach as a “self-transposition,” in which there is a “‘going-along-with’ undertaken for the sake of ‘direct learning how it is with this being’” (Baker 79). Though Heidegger’s approach is not exactly the “meeting in the middle” of Bartabas’ performance, as it leans too heavily on the human perspective, his exploration of an expansive inquiry into the alterity of animals provides a valuable perspective. Williams quoting Heidegger asks, “If the ‘animal’ comprises a constitutive outside of the ‘human’, (how) can this limit-horizon be experienced as ‘not that at which something stops but...that from which something begins its presencing’ (Heidegger 1971:154) [...] What are the productive qualities of alterity” (29)?

Inter-species performances involve performative interactions in which all species involved are offered the space to fully articulate their “presencing”, and in which they are acknowledged and celebrated for their contributions and collaboration within the act. Performances such as *The Ride* draw on the active process of “becoming-animal”, along with Heidegger’s recognition of the animal as a positive “other” with expansive possibilities, but which also literally involve an animal and recognize the synergy of the inter-species event.

A Meeting Through the Middle

What characterizes human/equine relationships? How does performance define this inter-species partnership?

Approaching animals, and inter-species dynamics, from a position that recognizes the animals’ “presencing” for its positive and expansive capabilities is how *The Ride* approaches equine performance. Katrina was not my pet, my vehicle or my tool, she was my partner; but this does not mean that she was not also still, very much a horse. Due to Katrina’s position in *The Ride*, her influence went far beyond the parameters of the common horse, allowing her to influence all aspects of our performance. Katrina treats me like a horse and I treat her like a human – she treats me like a human and I treat her like a horse, and somewhere in the middle we come to our own understanding. Our manner of relating to each other accepts, combines, and

challenges all of the human and horse dynamics possible, and as a result we become Kimber and Katrina, an inter-species team.

Baker states, “One explanation for the continuing attraction of the animal for artists, philosophers and others is the perception – which may or may not be justified – that the very idea of the animal is in some way aligned with creativity, or in alliance with creativity” (Baker 71). Linda Kohanov, a horse trainer and one of the innovators of Equine Experiential Learn (EEL) and Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy (EFP), also recognizes a similar reasoning for human’s interest in animals, specifically horses, breaking it down into the key qualities of equine cognition that seem to draw human interest:

Horses also model the strengths of what are often referred to as “feminine values”: cooperation over competition, relationship over territory, responsiveness over strategy, emotion and intuition over logic, process over goal, and the creative approach to life that these qualities engender (Kohanov xxx).

Horses’ perceptive nature, matriarchal-herd configuration, nomadic lifestyle, and intuitive based rationality – characteristics that are key to the survival of a flight species – offer an alternative perspective to humans, a perspective which suggests the potential of expanding horizons and nurturing artistic values. Williams writes that,

For Bartabas, human-horse interactions represent the possibility of a conjunction of two very different ontologies and epistemologies – one sensory-motor/perceptual, the other intellectual – and, in riding, the temporary creation of a third composite assemblage much greater than the sum of its parts: equestrianism as becoming-centaur for both rider and horse? (Williams 33)

Within the human-horse partnerships of Bartabas’ training, and within the relationships of Kohanov’s experience, lies the possibility of becoming something more, something distinct, built out of the strength of each species – a creative partnership. But whether the association of humans and horses has been formed out of an inspired yearning or a utilitarian harnessing of power, the relationship is – as it is often billed – an age-old or ancient bond. And it is through this bond, a performative alliance, that horses are most widely understood by humans.

Horses plough fields, march into war, chase foxes, jump fences, race miles, and dance dressage all in partnership with humans, and – some would say – for purely human gains. But restricting equine participation to a purely tool-based position, one that utilizes the body of the horses solely for human means, devalues the input and perspective of the horse. This marginalizing position only recognizes the spectacle of an animal in performance with a human, but does not recognize the subtler inter-species performance that may be involved. For any of these acts to be successful the human must at least recognize – if not embrace – the horse’s perspective. Not that there are not countless instances, in contemporary culture and throughout history, of humans “breaking” horses, a term which refers to the overpowering of horses’ spirits, and a containment of their character, in order to fulfill human objectives. These “training” technics work out of fear, species domination, and an interest in the horse only as a tool – a perspective that has little to no use in this discourse due to its limited, marginalizing methodology. Though these breaking technics have been most predominantly recognized and employed, there have always been others, on the fringes and more recently in the main stream, who practice non-invasive training approaches, who are often now referred to as “horse whisperers,” or as practicing “natural horsemanship.” At the core of these approaches is something akin to “becoming-centaur.” Like Bartabas, “horse whispers” or anyone training in a non-invasive method, utilize an understanding of herd dynamics, and the equine communication of body language and intuition in order to articulate the desired objectives in an inviting, positive and nonthreatening manner: a training process that is based on leadership, understanding and – eventually – partnership. This methodology engages the possibilities of equine “otherness” in order to expand perceptions, learn, question and traverse domains inspired by these inter-species experiences. And the more nuanced the performance, the more necessary the inter-species reciprocal exchange.

An important distinction in Théâtre Zingaro’ approach is that Bartabas addresses each animal as an individual in their own right, and it is this “meeting through the middle” of a human and a horse that allows for the subsequent inter-species performance (Williams 37). Bartabas trains each horse independently, working in a way that he describes as “listening ‘beyond the ear’” rather than the hackneyed “whispering” (Williams 37). Bartabas engages the horse’s own instincts, balance and movement to create a performance based on sensation, rather than

instruction and restriction (Zingaro). The exchange between the horse and Bartabas is an ephemeral, “circulation of energies” in which “the subtle is touched” (Williams 36). It is a “meeting through the middle” of a human and a horse in which both articulate, each is influenced and reciprocally changed, while at the same time always remaining exactly what each is individually. It is, as Williams suggests, “becoming-centaur” (33).

These powerfully synchronized equine-human, or “centaur” partnerships are the foundation of Théâtre Zingaro’s repertoire: a professional equestrian cabaret that has been internationally recognized for over twenty-five years (Zingaro). But the experience of the “centaur” joining up, or the inter-species performance is not necessarily clearly demonstrated in the theatrical performances of Théâtre Zingaro. As in dressage, the inter-species performance of Théâtre Zingaro lies in the sub-textual performance, and the manner of training that Bartabas discusses. The subtle nuances of the inter-species performance can be easily over shadowed by the spectacle of the theatrical cabaret. Perhaps Théâtre Zingaro’s inter-species performance is most clearly articulated in the daily viewed training sessions at their riding academy, Académie du Spectacle Equestre [Equestrian Arts Academy], which is based out of Royal Stables of the Château de Versailles (Zingaro). Here, I imagine, the inter-species performance would more easily transcend the conditions of the performance, free of the lighting effects and staging technics of their main stage, offering a closer more intimate experience of the equine/human dynamics. As Bartabas says, it is the intention behind the gesture that matters, and what occurs between the rider and the horse that demands synergy and offers a subtle experience that resonates (Williams 34-5).

Another equine/human performance company, Cavalia,³ claims to be an “equestrian ballet” that is a “one-of-a-kind homage to the age-old bond between human and horse” (Cavalia). Cavalia’s productions are massive, as they tour North America boasting the largest circus tent in the world, while utilizing 40-60 horses in each of their shows, and a cast of 20 human performers (Sumanac). The foundation of this company is based on the mass-market appeal and draw of equine/human relations and circus. In Cavalia’s shows the horse is represented in a plural, species-homogenizing manner, in which one horse can easily be exchanged for another, with the intrigue being found in the larger herd appeal. In Cavalia’s productions each horse is on stage for no more than 5-10 minutes, and there is always more than one horse that can fill any given role

(Sumanac). Horses in Cavalia's shows, are celebrated, but they are not recognized as individuals. They are used as an element of production in a massive, multilayered spectacle – as tools of human entertainment. The horses are transposable, and the tightly controlled productions leave the equine-performers little more agency than the puppets in *War Horse*. In Cavalia the power of the performance is in the spectacle of the stunt riding, the human control of a herd, and the precision of synchronized dressage riding – the abilities of humans to control and manipulate horses. Not that Cavalia's training and enactment technics are not impressive, and perhaps hold elements of inter-species exchange, but their production style limits the horses' impact and position as partners in the performance, reinforcing a narrow understanding of human/equine exchange. David Williams recognizes the possibility of overly simplifying, and limiting equine representations through acknowledging them as a being worthy of human partnership, but at the same time “homogeniz[ing them] as a species, despite the enormous diversity of forms and types of *equus caballus*, and the very particular qualities of individual horses; and, like ballet dancers, their bodies are often defined in relation to an abstract ideal ('conformation')” (Williams 30).

Recognizing an animal in a human performance is much more obvious than an instance of inter-species performance. The distinction lies in the intention of the act, the language employed, and in the fluency and willingness of the performers and audience to recognize the reciprocal exchange. And while all human/equine collaborations are performance, not all horses included in performances are given the opportunity to presence, or make the performance inter-species. Katrina's role in *The Ride* touched on both of these areas of understanding. She engaged as an animal in performance, as a horse she represented the enchanting magnetism that horses often hold for people, but she was also her own distinct individual, with her own job, insights, and influence beyond the scope of zooësis. She embodied the spectacle appeal of an animal in performance, along with the nuanced synergy of an inter-species act. Katrina captivated the imagination of our audience/participants, while at the same time encouraging the participants to engage with her personally, as a distinct horse, bridging a species divide and offering an invitation to collaborate intimately with us in our inter-species performance.

***The Ride* – Equine Influence**

How does *The Ride* illuminate the fundamental dynamics of human/equine performance?
How is *The Ride* “becoming-centaur”?

Riding a horse across Canada holds a certain element of spectacle, and spectacle holds experience aloft, stands out and is remarkable. Animals, specifically companion animals, invite contact as much as they intrigue. They present a socially recognized invitation to interact with an animal and the associated person when in their physical proximity. Combining the spectacle and companion animal dynamics in *The Ride* presented an opportunity to draw attention to the nuances of animal/human exchanges and inform inter-species performance. Though not everyone rides or works with horses, everyone has an association with the animal whether it is terror, intrigue, experience or respect – everyone has a horse story. The presence of a horse invites the recounting of such stories, offering a mutual experiential territory to bridge the gap between strangers, and entice a myriad of interactions that involve both human and horse perspectives. In an inter-species performance like *The Ride*, the immediate and intimate contact between the human audience and the equine/human performers takes this initial conceptual contact and offers the opportunity to recognize and alter the dynamics between the species. As a spectacle, a horse packed for distance, Katrina drew attention; as an animal she invited interaction; and as an inter-species team we challenged reductive notions about the limits of human/equine reciprocal exchange. Katrina’s physical requirements of food, water and shelter also forced me to constantly seek assistance from strangers in order to have her basic needs met, drawing more participants into the inter-species collaboration of our event. Were I only looking after my own wellbeing in a human-centric event, I could have easily overlooked or shied away from this contact, ignoring the possibilities of engaging an audience and expanding the influence of the performance. Horses require a communal approach for wellbeing. Celebrating the human companion species/ herd dynamics of Katrina’s involvement broadened our experience and demonstrated the potential of human/equine collaboration. Our presence resonated, drawing peoples’ attention and encouraging further engagement in the experience. Neither Katrina nor I alone would have drawn the same manner of notice that we garnered as a unit; with all our equipment clearly strapped on for a journey, we stood out.

As we made our way through Durham and on to Scotsburn, easily following Paul's directions, many people smiled and waved as they took care to pass. But it was Janice Pace who took the whole thing a hugely Canadian amble forward. Janice pulled over on the far side of the road and approached us on foot to keep Kat at ease. She was curious about this girl and her horse packed for distance, and wanted to let us know of a trail that ran along an old railway bed. It would be a good route for a horse, as it would keep us off the pavement and away from traffic. She asked us where we were headed and smiled warmly hearing our tale. She encouraged us on and left us to choose our route. I didn't want to get lost again and was worried about losing sight of the landmarks that Paul had flagged, so we stuck to the road.

A little further up Janice reappeared and pulled up next to us, leaning across the passenger seat to talk to us out the window, "Have you had lunch yet?" "*Um, uh, no.*" "I just live up the road a bit, will you join me? I have soup on and your horse is welcome to eat my lawn." ("The Ride." Manuscript. Scotsburn, NS. 37-38.)

Katrina, in being a horse partnering with a human, drew Janice's attention, offering an opportunity to engage with us, and become emotionally involved our inter-species experience. As much as horseback riding was an appropriate vehicle for me, with my specific background and knowledge, horseback riding was chosen for the interactive and inviting characteristics of its human/equine performance. People engaged with Katrina, and judged me based on my relationship with her.

When we first glimpsed Paul and Yolande's picturesque little dairy farm on the banks of the St. Lawrence, we knew immediately that it would be a sort of homecoming, even though we had never been there before, nor met either of our hosts. The beautiful red farmhouse shaded by lilac trees, just said "home."

Yolande had come to host us through responding to a phone call from Tonny, whom she had never actually met. Upon listening to Tonny's explanation she agreed to put us up, but the one thing that gave her pause was the quality of my relationship with my horse. Would I know anything about horses? Or would she

experience a girl putting her horse at risk due to a lack of knowledge, or an egocentric conquering of a quest? That was the only thing that she wouldn't have been able to handle, seeing a naïvely idealistic girl jeopardizing her horse's wellbeing for her dream. But as Yolande told me later, she could tell this wasn't the case the minute that she saw us walking down their road – what she saw was a team, me and Katrina, in it together and for each other. And because of this she knew we would get on just fine. (“The Ride.” Manuscript. La Pocatière, QC. 171-2.)

Many people assumed that if I looked after my horse, than I must be a respectable person. This recognition of mine and Katrina's mutually reliant position, and the manner in which each partner's behaviour reflected on the other, was the basis on which many people first came to participate in our inter-species performance. They may not have realized the extent of our collaboration initially, as it could be easily overshadowed by the spectacle of our event, but our inter-species manner resonated and affected peoples' approach to us. It astonished me how quickly people not only bought into Katrina or I in concept, but how eagerly strangers embraced the nuances of our exchange, and respected our ways. This espousal of our journey was entirely based on Katrina's presence and our inter-species connection. Katrina opened doors for us, and created a common ground of exchange that traveled with us from coast to coast.

Sustaining a horse, Katrina, for an extended duration of time over a vast and diverse landscape, required intriguing and involving a population the size of a small village – a community of support to see us through. Asking a horse to change environment daily, to have little fixed routine, no equine companions and an unstable diet is not only incredibly stressful to a horse's system and contrary to their nature, but also potentially fatal. Maintaining Katrina's mental wellbeing was crucial to maintaining her physical wellbeing. And maintaining her psychological health required meeting her on even ground, or through the middle. Taking on a traditional/domineering/human position in our interactions was not an option. Katrina had to be allowed to voice her complains, concerns and preferences in order to have her needs meet and uphold her quality of life to a level that would allow her to partake in the entire journey. As a result Katrina's interactions with the participants of *The Ride* were much less contained than the

average horse performance. Our audience and fellow participants got up close with Katrina; they fed her treats, groomed her, experienced her infectious spirit, and witnessed her temper-tantrums.

I spotted the green and white house on the corner of Township Road 93 and Range Road 93. This had to be it – there was a host of kids running around the lawn.

Kat was clearly giving in to her exhaustion as we neared. One of the kids spotted us and pointed. Was this the place? Had they been waiting for us? I talked to Kat and pointed to the house, she looked where I indicated and perked up. She understood this was our final destination for the day.

Kat was so excited to be done for the moment that by the time we turned up the driveway she was prancing up a storm. The moment I dismounted she started crow hopping on the spot, throwing a regular temper-tantrum in her impatience to be untacked and turned out to eat. She had held it together as long as she needed to, but now she was done and was having a little melt down. It just wasn't the best state for her to be in while greeting a herd of children.

By my count there were definitely more than the five kids we had been told to expect, and they all crowded around Kat as we neared the house. I held the kids at bay from petting Kat, for worry that she would squish one of them with her interpretive dance. They would have to wait until she had settled into her pen and regained her wits about her before a visit. The kids stood there on the lawn staring at us wide-eyed and silent. None of them had said anything, so I still didn't know if we were at the correct farm. I asked one of the girls if we were in the right place. They all nodded. Another girl pointed to a corral and told me that her older brother Stetson would be coming to show me where Kat was to go. There were no adults in sight, but we had eight kids to care for us, and a corral waiting. (“The Ride.” Manuscript. Bow Island, AB. 540-1.)

Katrina was often not the mild-mannered, demure cowpony that I would have perhaps liked her to be at times, but it was that spirit and opinionated nature that saved her from being pushed past her limit and unable to continue. Katrina would not allow me to treat her as anything other than my partner, demanding that our relationship be inter-species. She had no interest in being a horse

merely used in an epic event, and she is not one to be dictated to, preferring an equally respectful conversation. There had to be a broader range and malleability to my equine expectations than I had ever experienced before. Based on my unique understanding of her, I had to be intimately attuned to catch each of Katrina's cues, which were primarily physical and often subtle. Though few words were ever used, Katrina and I came to carry on a constant dialogue that we learned and created together through our extensive interaction with each other. Our "conversations" were founded on the articulation of movement, space, gestures, sound and physical resonance. I had to give Katrina the space to presence in her own right if there was to be any hope of us sustaining our performance for the months that were demanded. There was no option, but to approach the performance from an inter-species perspective due to the intricacies and requirements of the event.

People are used to seeing horses from a distance, at pasture or in controlled situations that are designed to accommodate them. When a horse is only briefly experiencing a stressful situation, or performing for a contained duration, before being allowed to return to their comforting routine, demands can be made of the horse without risking the horse's wellbeing, and many horses enjoy having a job to do. Competitive sport horses have a similar performance schedule to the equine-performers in Cavalia, where they are only expected to work in the highly stimulated environment of the spectacle performances for a limited duration – often-mere minutes – before returning to the controlled atmosphere behind the scenes. Police horses have a routine of work and rest, and frequently share their work with another equine/human team for reassurance and wellbeing. Katrina did not have any of these luxuries. In *The Ride*, Katrina had no common grounding beyond me. She lived in a heightened, stressful environment for over five months, and due to this, the range of her performance went far beyond the standard public display of equine/human exchange. In fully expressing herself, if anything, Katrina drew focus to our inter-species collaborative performance, by making herself stand out as unique horse, with a distinct personality to be remembered.

Katrina was not merely an animal utilized in performance, she was a key performer in an inter-species collaboration. Through Katrina's primary involvement, *The Ride* tapped into a performance that was similar in structure to foxhunting, though obviously not centered on the hunt of a fox. As Marvin says of foxhunting,

The hunt does not unfold in a linear fashion – it ebbs and flows through these landscape spaces, gaining or losing intensity according to the changing configurations of the principal performers [...] The human participants enter onto a stage or, better, into a performance space that demands and requires a special presence of acute awareness of the surroundings, a bodily engagement with it and an absorption into it. As a setting the space is highly nuanced. The physicality of the landscape: the woods, streams, hedges, slopes, open spaces become objects of intense interest because of the potential for drama (110).

The Ride embodied the ebbs and flows of exchange similar to those seen in foxhunting. Katrina's performance in *The Ride* was not scripted to say the least. She performed her role, and in doing so, engaged the human/equine dynamics that made the event a performance. Though the initial experience of *The Ride* was based on the spectacle/performance it was the nuances of the inter-species collaboration that allowed for the full articulation of the event and created the impact of the performance. The performance of *The Ride* was not static, but ever shifting and changing with the subtleties of our joint experience. Katrina's interactions with humans, including myself, were dependent on the day, her mood and the environment. As in foxhunting, every turn in the road, every passing of a car, every person we came in contact with had the possibility of drastically changing the course and nature of our journey. Our inter-species performance offered a vast array of possibilities, conflicts and triumphs that people recognized in our presence.

We hit snow in Nova Scotia, black fly season in Northern Ontario, and the heat of summer in the prairies; we crossed the St. Lawrence River, traversed the Canadian Shield, spanned the prairies and navigated the Rockies. Every path we took had the possibility of shifting the forces at play within our performance. Our inter-species relationship was not experienced in an isolated or controlled situation, but was constantly affected by external factors that influenced our agency and the balance of our exchange. Every bridge we crossed held the possibility of disaster, and every person we met held the opportunity to change the course of our performance. Much of my understanding of our performance came from viewing the experience through the perspective of Katrina. I developed, as Marvin describes, a "special presence of acute awareness" (110), but rather than my senses being tuned to the performance space of a foxhunt, my "acute awareness" was centered on my mutually reliant relationship with Katrina.

Our environment was constantly shifting, which meant that I had to be relentlessly focused on the demands of incorporating both of our perspectives into a unified act. I had to, at least partially, read the landscape in the manner that Katrina was, while at the same time retaining my own human understanding of occurrences. On rainy days, tires splashing through puddles made the whole world more imposing; bridges were not opportunities for easy crossings, but occasions for claustrophobic relations with large vehicles; grass ditches were invitations for a tasty snack; and people were the way to grain. This is how I came to see the world through a joint view with Katrina, as we delved into the terrain of human-equine inter-subjectivity. I had to experience the world through Katrina in order to recognize and respond to potential dangers that could set her off in a direction that could be hazardous in the human conditions of the road, or to recognize her need for water and where an equine-suitable drink might be acquired. Katrina equally had to adjust to my needs and assessments, adapting to the constant imposition of traffic, trusting in my evaluation of human made dangers, and supporting my decisions about suitable places for the night. I learned to identify the types of grasses that Katrina preferred, and sought out areas that held her favourite varieties for our breaks. On the other side of things I also had to learn to perceive us, and our actions, the way that outside human parties experienced our presence and work to maintain our relations in both human and horse specifics. The initial reactions to our spectacle had to do with the core relationship acknowledged in our inter-species team, and the allure of horses for people. People did not know our story when we crossed their paths; all they saw was a young woman and her horse packed for a journey, plodding down the road alone. They had probably never heard of Barb and her journey, and they had no idea how far we were aiming to travel or what motivated our actions. What gained their attention was that we were a girl and her horse going somewhere, and it was because of this human/horse dynamic that people felt an opportunity to engage with us further. If I had courted publicity, or broadcasting the mandate and objectives of our journey we would have garnered attention, but it would have focused the experience on the human-centric objective that initiated the event, and not equally accredited the inter-species performance. The newsworthy event relied on words and rhetoric, a manner of communication that inherently devalues the subtler experience of the inter-species performance. Publicity would have drawn in people who were only interested in that grand side of our journey, which was very far away from our everyday involvement and what people reacted to in our immediate inter-species presence. We intentionally tried to avoid publicity,

especially larger publications that would cause our story to get ahead of us and inform people for our performance ahead of the actual event. We embraced this approach from Barb's journey in order to allow people's interactions with us to be in the moment, and genuine. This favoured the live involvement with the performance over the human fabricated explanation of the overarching event. Otherwise, our production would have been placed in the realm of the broad sensationalism, and homogenizing generality – it could be anyone, and any horse, anywhere in the world – when the strength of our performance came from the fact that it was this human and this horse, crossing this country. Kimber and Katrina crossing Canada, with the specific, tangible nature of our inter-species collaboration. Occasionally through word of mouth, and a few unavoidable province-wide publications, there were people who heard about us in advance, but the majority of people remained unconscious of our expedition until they personally saw us traipsing down the road or we showed up on the doorstep of their home, responding intuitively to the event they saw before them.

I spotted a fenced corner at the next county road. A good start. I couldn't see any animals, but at least it was an appropriate space. As we got closer I saw dried horse manure in the grass. How long had it been there? It certainly wasn't fresh, but still, it suggested that horses had been in this field at some point in the not so distant past. We would give it a try.

We rode into the driveway and stopped. The front door was across a lawn surrounded by gardens, and for the life of me I couldn't see how I could reach the doorbell while keeping Kat away from trampling the flowers. I didn't have to ponder the predicament for long as we had already been spotted.

A kind looking man with a creak to his voice came out of the house and greeted us. Upon hearing our story, of traveling across the country, and our need for a stall for the night, Eric smiled and didn't miss a beat, "Oh, sure. We'll find a space. And what about you? We have room for you too."

Eric's family was the 111th that we had come to stay with. And his response to us that day on his driveway embodied all of the amazing Canadians who had miraculously responded in the same immediate, inviting manner upon finding us at their door. There was no question about bringing us into their home. *Of course*

we were welcome, and how wonderful it was to find a girl and her horse in their yard. It amazed me every time. (“The Ride.” Manuscript. Langley, BC. 604.)

The distance was never the goal of *The Ride*, the journey was. It was about the experience of the interactions, not the conquering of the abstract objective, and in this manner it also favoured an equine perspective. The performance was improvisational, in the moment, ever changing and shifting with the given dynamics. It was about the act, not the analytical concepts behind it. As Elizabeth Costello says in J.M. Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals*, “That is the kind of poetry I bring to your attention today: poetry that does not try to find an idea in the animal, that is not about the animal, but is instead the record of an engagement with him” (51). *The Ride* was about the engagement between Katrina and me, as an inter-species team, and the experiences that we shared with those who crossed our path and partook in our human/equine performance.

It astonished me how quickly people not only bought into Katrina and me personally, but how eagerly strangers embraced the motivation behind our whirlwind expedition. People weren’t just buying into me and/or Katrina; they were embracing our experience, and displaying their longing to believe in the unlikely – that a human and a horse can come together to cross thousands of kilometers in spite of modern societal arrangements. People wanted us to make it through safely and achieve our goal, but more importantly people wanted to believe that the ridiculous and impossible was, at least occasionally, possible. Katrina’s performance worked in two manners: through being a horse partnering with a human; and as an animal whose actions in an event stimulated the emotions of desire, challenge, and possibility in the imaginations of the humans involved. Both of these areas of performance affected Katrina’s position as an animal in an inter-species performance, as they dictated the parameters of Katrina’s influence or the breadth of her ability to presence in the company of humans.

Stepping out into the first few kilometers of our last day we discovered that people had heard about us. We had a group of young women and their horse waiting for us at the end of their driveway as we rode past. One of the girls was planning on being the next one to undertake an across Canada ride and was excited to see that we had made it. It was such a horse-focused community that everyone who drove past smiled at our presence and waved. A friend of Elaine

and Sarah's pulled over and called out her support on the verge of tears – she was just so overwhelmed and moved by what we had done. She came back later and met us at the foot of the Pacific, wanting to be there with us when we finished, to be part of the journey.

Kat loved the attention – everyone focused on her is how she believes the world should be. It has always taken me a little more getting used to any level of celebrity, no matter how quaint.

Just focus on Katrina and make it through the day.

That was always my job. Nothing else really mattered. I was always happy that our trip meant something to other people, but I didn't know how to process that impact. (*The Ride*. White Rock, BC. 610.)

Though Katrina may not be able to articulate her experiences in quite the same manner it is clear that she remembers the journey and is still affected by her experiences in *The Ride*. This is seen in how she interacts with me, and other cues such as her response to the sight of her saddlebags or to road riding with traffic. The experience is still alive in her existence, with aspects relived through various triggers, and demonstrated through her body language and movement. She may not conceptualize the emotion that she evoked or the narrative that she was involved in, but she experienced it all, and still recounts her story of *The Ride* in her gestures and relations. Katrina's willingness to participate, and join-up with a human, in an all-encompassing experience offers the opportunity for *The Ride* to be understood as more than a journey, an inter-species performance. Through being herself, a very opinionated horse, Katrina demanded that our relationship perform as an inter-species dynamic. And together we conjured emotional and imaginative tensions in those who crossed our path, drawing out the human/equine collaborative performance at the heart of *The Ride*. In *The Ride*, we became a cohesive team, whose circulated energies and resonating sub-textual exchanges were as a kin as reasonably possible to “becoming-centaur” – truly an inter-species performance.

CHAPTER THREE

Conclusion

The Ride started out as one woman and one horse crossing the 6,000+km of Canada from coast to coast, but what *The Ride* “became” was Kimber and Katrina, an equine/human team engaging in a performance that fundamentally relied on an inter-species collaboration. The odds against *The Ride* were enormous. From all rational standpoints we shouldn’t have made it. There were just too many things that could go wrong, and were highly likely to. We shouldn’t have made it, but we did. The factors that came together to execute the performance of *The Ride* in its entirety were a combination of engaging conditions, happenstance, and equine influence – the right people and the right horse, at the right time. And most importantly, *The Ride* was successful because of the dynamics found with the specifics of our inter-species performance.

When talking about *The Ride* people are often disoriented by my constant use of the term “we.” My frequent use of the terms “we” and “our” lead people to believe that there were other humans traveling with us – it is foreign concept to most to understand the extent to which Katrina and I were a “we.” *The Ride* began as an event that incorporated an animal in its configuration, with an elusive hope of that relationship becoming an inter-species collaboration. It was through training each other on the road that Katrina and I found our synergy, in a constantly negotiated, active process. There were times when Katrina and I reverted back into our species specific perceptions and failed to recognize the other’s position, but the performance was the most effective, holding the most impact and possibilities when we worked as a collective team.

The Ride “became” a performance due to its active, reciprocal human/equine exchange, and the experientially interaction of a host of audience/participators throughout the course of the journey. It presented a meeting through the middle of an inter-species partnership that was performance in its foundation of physical communication and learned cooperation between a human and a horse. Our performance worked on range of levels from the initial impact of a horse partnering with a human, to the spectacle involved in our traveling configuration, and as an animal whose actions in an event stimulated the emotions of desire, challenge, and possibility in

the imaginations of the humans involved. Each of these aspects contributed to the overall experience of *The Ride*, but it was the inter-species performance at its heart that made all of these other elements possible.

Within the realm of inter-species performance lays the opportunity for an animal to equally contribute in an act with a human. Performance places the emphasis on the act, and the live experience of it. Focusing on performance in inter-species relations demands that the emphasis remain on the experience in the moment, which offers a common ground and an equal foundation for exchange. Animals innately confront human-centric concepts of analytical reasoning, language based communication, and power hierarchies, through employing intuitive knowledge, articulating through body language and offering an alternative perspective of the world, one which relies on an interconnectivity and balance with their environment. *The Ride*, or any other form of inter-species performance, indirectly challenges the notion that animals lack self-articulation and that humans can only relate to non-humans from an anthropomorphic or purely utility-based perspective. The more nuanced the performance, the more necessary the inter-species reciprocal exchange, and the more crucial it is to bring light to the expansive possibilities of such collaborations. Engaging the inherent potential of equine alterity, through productions such as *The Ride*, offers an opportunity to expand perceptions, learn, question and incite change in how we understand a myriad of experiences. Approaching animals and inter-species dynamics from a position that recognizes the animal's "presencing" for its positive and expansive capabilities promises to influence a vast array of academic fields, not least of all the performance arts and theatre studies.

The Ride was a "meeting through the middle" of a human and a horse in which both had the freedom to articulate, with each being influenced and reciprocally changed, while at the same time remaining exactly what they were individually. It was a true inter-species performance, and within inter-species performance lays the possibility of becoming something more, something distinct, built out of the strength of each species – a creative partnership.

¹ Théâtre Zingaro is an equestrian theatre company based out of Fort d'Aubervilliers, which is located on the outskirts of Paris, France. Their shows employ a mixture of equestrian theatre, dance, world music, and poetry, along with other performance disciplines. Bartabas founded Théâtre Zingaro in 1985, and is still currently the Artistic Director, as well as one of the key trainers of the company. In 2003 Bartabas also founded the Académie Equestre de Versailles, a professional training program that teaches the arts of Théâtre Zingaro, such as fencing, dancing, singing and Kyudo, along with a focus on Haute Ecole dressage (Zingaro).

² *The Animal Project* (2005) was a “two-week summer workshop with eight actors, during which the Deleuzian idea of ‘becoming- animal’ was explored through imagery and improvisation”. The workshop was held through the Department of Drama at New York University. The performance involved undergraduates in the Playwrights Horizons Theater School along with Fritz Ertl (director), Steven Drukman (playwright), and Una Chaudhuri (dramaturg). *The Animal Project* was the “first self-conscious theatrical engagement, in the United States, within the new academic field known as Critical Animal Studies” (Chaudhuri “Animalizing Performance” 1).

³ Cavalia is an equestrian performing arts company founded in 2003 by Normand Latourelle, a “pioneer of Cirque du Soleil from 1985-1990.” The company of Cavalia currently has two productions touring North America, *Cavalia* and *Odyseo*. Cavalia’s shows are presented in circus fashion, under a big top tent. Their productions employ a mixture of “acrobatics, dance, aerial stunts, live music and equestrian arts”, integrated with special effects and multimedia (Cavalia).

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