ABSTRACT

THE WILD INSIDE:

CREATIVE POSSIBILITIES FOR POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE

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Feeling stifled and restricted from the deep rigor of the academic process, I chose to activate the more creative and wild aspects of my consciousness in order to develop new ways of approaching sustainability. Through a deeply intimate auto-ethnographic process of rewilding, I created several pieces of art and documented the process of accessing different modes of consciousness in order to balance and release the overly worked rational and analytical parts of my being. Through activating the multiple intelligences that I hold within me, I was able to come up with four applications that I believe can change the approach to the sustainable movement. The four applications when enacted are: 1. Yoga, Meditation, and Mindfulness, 2. Shakti Energy and the Human Connection to Nature, 3. Play and Imagination, 4. The Return of Magic. The aim of these four applications is to shift the human conception and approach to sustainability so that we may begin to enter a different kind of consciousness and thus develop more creative solutions to the problem our earth and all of humanity are facing. Like Albert Einstein said in so many words, problems cannot be solved from the same mode of consciousness that created them. That being said, the aim of this thesis is to shift the consciousness in order to approach our problems with a fresh, dynamic, and innovative perspective.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1- Introduction

Chapter 2- Autoethnography

Chapter 3- Literature Review

Chapter 4- Rewilding: Applications for Social Change and Sustainability
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1- “Green Trees and Greed”..............................................23
Figure 2- "The Bloody Blooming"..............................................44
Figure 3- “Moon Messages”.....................................................64
Figure 4- “Breathing In Color”...............................................85
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my extraordinary thesis committee, Janine Schipper, John Lynch, and Stanley Clark. You three have shown me the true meaning of education. Thank you for helping me to express the wild which lies within me, and for always encouraging me to dig even deeper into the depths of the most mysterious.
Chapter 1

Introduction

“"I'm a machine, You're a machine
I'm tired of being machine
Damn Machines,
You're a machine, I'm a machine
I'm tired of being
A damn machine"

--Felix Da Housecat
Contemporary western culture is domesticated. Most of us spend most our time indoors, interacting daily with various machines. We no longer roam the earth gathering our own food and building our own shelter. Instead, we live in houses that have been fabricated by many men and machines and enter large grocery stores where we have our pick of any food our taste buds could imagine, processed and prepared by various machinery and brought to us from all over the world. Our human instincts, once the sharp tool we were so dependent on for survival, have drowned in a sea of excessive technology and distraction. I myself can feel my own instincts beginning to wane as I take part in the daily mechanical tasks of modernity, yet I do believe that it is my own awareness of that loss that keeps my animal nature alive. It is the knowing that something is missing, or not quite right that offers a space for reflection and deep inquiry.

The human domestication process began with the desire to control the natural world. This mastery began with the manipulation of plants and animals for nutrition, and slowly over time developed into a systemized method of control over entire populations of people, governed by the desire of those in power to keep their control tight and central. This way of living and mastering nature became justified through a rational science. In The Death of Nature Carolyn Merchant (1980) quotes Francis Bacon, who is often attributed as the Father of modern science:

The new man of science must not think that the “inquisition of nature is in any part interdicted or forbidden.” Nature must be “bound into
“service” and made a “slave,” put “in constraint” and “molded” by the mechanical arts. The “searches and spies of nature” are to discover her plots and secrets. (p. 169)

It was this this way of thinking that refashioned our relationship to the natural world into a “thing” to be “mastered”. We can see this throughout human history on this planet, as the Abrahamic religions began to emerge, molding, fitting, and controlling the earth through the voice of God. Over time, Gods were replaced by the iconic propaganda of one ruler to another from Genghis Khan to Napoleon Bonaparte to Mao Tse Dong. As Riane Eisler (1988) discusses in her book, *The Chalice and the Blade*, we see these patterns happening throughout history:

> It is impossible in a few pages to even begin to describe a process that went on for millennia and is still going on in our own time; the process whereby the human mind was, sometimes brutally and sometimes subtly, sometimes deliberately and sometimes unwittingly, remolded into the new kind of mind required by this drastic shift in our cultural evolution...It was a process that...entailed enormous physical destruction...It also entailed massive spiritual destruction. (p.83)

Throughout the small amount of time that humans have lived on this planet and modernity has taken its course, we have always found some way of controlling our deepest wildest nature as entire nations seem to have been
built upon the captive heart. Max Oelschlaeger (1991) in his book, *The Idea of Wilderness* goes on to describe this transition:

As the eighteenth century gave way to the nineteenth, the forces of history—the scientific, democratic, and industrial revolutions, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment—amalgamated themselves into a cultural paradigm so powerful and pervasive that it yet rules the west...Not surprisingly, therefore, Modernism has transformed the idea of wilderness. Nature now, so far as she retains feminine qualities has “become a mindless, submissive body. Not only did this new image function as a sanction, but the new conceptual framework of the Scientific Revolution—mechanism—carried with it norms quite different than the norms of organicism.” (p.95)

Western culture over time went from a holistic worldview; one that included the entirety of the biotic community as one, to a segmented and separate reality, one that once it was divided was easily conquered. Dolores LaChappelle (1987) discusses the three movements of the 16th century in her book *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex*, that of “enlightened rationalism”, “scientific research”, and “mechanical invention”:

In essence, it’s all the same process—tearing out a single item from a related natural system, tinkering with it either in thought or, as far as technology and invention, physically manipulating it and coming up with another “useful” entity—but in reality, only useful for what has recently come to be called, ‘The Industrial Growth System’. (p. 42)
This Industrial Growth System that LaChappelle speaks of has led us to this current era, the product of centuries of fragmented thinking. The celebration of science is still kept as an ‘advancement of modern man’ yet it is the very thing that keeps the human perception segmented and egocentric. Reverence and respect for the natural world is not a dominant aspect of modern society, control over her is. As the economies of the world are run on the ‘natural resources’ she provides. Instead of seeing the entirety of this earth as part of ourselves, humans have sliced and diced this earth up, making out natural resources to be the prime fuel of this fragile man-made economy we now rely upon to sustain us. Carolyn Merchant goes on to say,

The removal of animistic, organic assumptions about the cosmos constituted the death of nature—the most far-reaching effect of the Scientific Revolution. Because nature was now viewed as a system of dead, inert particles moved by external, rather than inherent forces, the mechanical framework itself could legitimate the manipulation of nature. (p. 193)

This mechanization process has been slowly dominating the minds of human beings since it began as the fundamental justification of control over the natural world. Now at our current space in time here in the west, institutions surround us and the day-to-day contact with the natural world and earth/soil by men and women has almost been completely eliminated. Indian scholar and feminist Vandana Shiva (2008) in her book, *Soil Not Oil*
discusses the emergence of Shakti energy as an alternative lens with which to view our current paradigm:

It is fruitful to remember that energy has other meanings and other forms. From Shakti, the generative force of the universe, to the sun that powers our lives, to the water that comes to us as bountiful rain or a flood or a tsunami, to the air and the wind that move the clouds and create the climate. Energy is not just oil and gas. It is an all-pervasive element of life. (p.134)

Yet, as of now, we are locked into a dominant mode of thinking that sees aspects of the earth as commodities and perpetuates the enslavement of the organic process. This is part of a deep process of domestication that humans, animals, and the entire biotic world have had to endure at the hand of those very few in power, those that collect prodigious amounts of wealth, while millions starve daily around the world. As David Kowalewski (2000) states in his book Deep Power: The Political Ecology of Wilderness and Civilization:

The essence of domestication is forcing a natural creature to stay somewhere it does not want to and be preventing it from going somewhere it does. Domestication, therefore, is the immobilization of natural flow. It is the frustration of the heart's desire to go where it is pulled. (p. 16)

This ‘frustration’ as Kowalewski calls it is stifling to the contemporary human. It eliminates the deep sources of creativity and originality that are in
each and every being on this earth. It erases our connection to our internal selves, our instincts, and intuition. This continuous process of systemization and regulation has offered mass produced humans, thinking within the same regulated boxes that this entrenched and historic mechanical system and mastery over nature ruled by a few in power are hoping to produce. I myself am a product of this system and have felt within my body, mind, and soul a deadening of these creative impulses. There have been brief bouts where this energy has been released, yet, since a young age I have struggled with problems of depression, low self-esteem, and apathy due to this control and “immobilization of [my] natural flow.” (Kowalewski, 16)

The institution, created by humans, is a large cause of this “deadening”. The New Oxford American Dictionary defines ‘institution’ as, “a society or organization founded for a religious, educational, social, or similar purpose.” The institution fits very well within Max Weber’s theory of Rationality. Within this theory, rationality is guided by four laws, including: efficiency, predictability, calculability, and non-human technologies that control people. Each rule contains a measured form of behavior and reduces the innate spontaneity of each human into a controlled system. Bureaucracy (a central tenant of the institution) is a perfect illustration of this kind of rationality. “Formal rationality” is what developed specifically here in the west and as George Ritzer (2004) exposes in his book *The McDonaldization of Society* exposes, has created much of the world we see around us here in the west. Ritzer goes on to say, “An important aspect of formal rationality...is
that it allows individuals little choice of means to ends. In a formally rational system, virtually everyone can (or must) make the same, optimal choice.” (p. 26) But as Weber and Ritzer point out, there comes a point where the rational system itself, that very bureaucratic system, becomes irrational. Ritzer goes on to explain:

Despite the advantages it offers, bureaucracy suffers from the _irrationality of rationality_. Like a fast-food restaurant, a bureaucracy can be a dehumanizing place in which to work and by which to be serviced. Ronald Takaki characterizes rationalized settings as places in which the “self was place in confinement, its emotions controlled, and its spirit subdued.” In other words, they are settings in which people cannot always behave as human beings—where people are dehumanized. (p.27)

For the purpose of this study, dehumanization and domestication can be seen as similar methods of control and machine culture efficiency. The institution within itself, means to reduce and reestablish a set of systemized norms that completely disregard the intrinsic individuality of each human being. By institutionalizing expectations out of humanity, we are automatically neglecting the particular strengths of each human and asking them to fit inside of a set of boundaries so that those in power may have greater control over them. In “Why Socialism?” Albert Einstein (1949) Wrote:

The crippling of individuals I consider the worst evil of capitalism.

Our whole education system suffers from this evil. An exaggerated
competitive attitude is inculcated into the student, who is trained to worship material success as a preparation for his future career. (p.7)

We are at an extremely volatile and fragile time in our planet’s history where the earth may no longer sustain the amount of industrialized development humans have inflicted upon it. Author Bill McKibben (2010) in his book *Eaarth*, puts it plainly:

The planet on which our civilization evolved no longer exists. The stability that produced that civilization has vanished; epic changes have begun...We may, with commitment and luck be able to maintain a planet that will sustain some kind of civilization, but it won’t be the same planet, and hence, it can’t be the same civilization. The earth that we knew—the only earth that we ever knew—is gone. (p.27)

Something MUST change if humanity is to move forward. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports bleak statistics on the state of our planet and its projected patterns now, and into the future. It goes on to say, “Total radiative forcing is positive, and has led to an uptake of energy by the climate system. The largest contribution to total radiative forcing is caused by the increase in the atmospheric concentration of CO2 since 1750.” (p.13) In addition, it says, “Human influence on the climate system is clear. This is evident from the increasing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, positive radiative forcing, observed warming, and understanding of the climate system.” (p.15)
There is only so much conservation organizations can do to affect change on a mass population, this change must come from within our individual humanity and creativity. It is time that we begin to employ different modes of consciousness that are outside of this deeply domesticated system if we are to invent and discover solutions to this soul deadening paradigm.

As I have spent the last year and a half studying various methods of sustainable solutions for this earth, I have continuously come back to the realization that no system can change if I, myself do not change. For change to truly occur, it must come from within. I say this because each individual makes up these great institutions and systems within which the world operates. Simply addressing injustice and wrongdoing at the systemic level does not take into account the intrinsic sensitivity and aesthetic of each and every human being. As we are all organic beings on this earth, each deeply original- we all have our own specific and intuitive methods of being in this world, ways of coping with the systems at large, and strategies for staying alive and wild amidst the constant drone of machinery. If we only address the larger issues from the outside-in, we miss out on that very unique interaction with the natural world that only we as individual beings understand.

Allowing oneself to comprehend that the individual IS the system may also move us all to begin to pay attention to our own thought process that in turn affects our behavior within this system. The thought is the seed that
pushes the individual into action. By opening ourselves up to the process within which our own individual minds operate, that which it focuses on, and the ways in which we are distracted on the daily, may give us more insight into the kind of world we are creating through psychic participation. This is where the change truly begins, as once we begin to change our thought patterns, we begin to change our actions. Once the individual’s actions change, that in turn affects the greater systems at large. Still, it all comes back to the individual, as both the individual and the greater system are directly interconnected and linked. Krishnamurti (1964) in *Think on These Things*, says:

> It is the mind that has created the present civilization, this tradition-bound culture or society and, without understanding your own mind, merely to revolt as a communist, a socialist, this or that, has very little meaning. That is why it is very important to have self-knowledge, to be aware of all your activities, your thoughts and feelings; and this is education, is it not? Because when you are fully aware of yourself your mind becomes very sensitive, very alert. (p. 85)

With this in mind, I have found a very personal and expressive way of tapping into the deepest domesticated core of myself and this is through the creative process. For me, as woman in this current era of domestication, creativity has given me an outlet for real, pure change. I offer the word pure in this context because it is coming from an unrehearsed place, a place that is still unknown, and a place that still carries with it a sense of mystery. The
magic of creativity offers a real sense of rebellion, as it offers something to humanity that has never existed before, the spark of fire that transforms. Osho (2004) in his book *Freedom*, discusses this aspect:

That is why I don't teach revolution; I teach you rebellion. Revolution is of the crowd, rebellion is of the individual. The individual changes himself. He does not care about the power structure, he simply manages to change his own being, give birth to a new man in himself. (p.93)

There is a sense of magic that exists within this kind of awareness of your own mind and processes within it. David Abram discusses the meaning of magic beautifully in his book, *Spell of the Sensuous*:

*Magic* then, in its most primordial sense, is the experience of existing in a world made up of multiple intelligences, the intuition that every form one perceives—to the swallow swooping overhead to the fly on a blade of grass, and indeed the blade of grass itself—is an *experiencing* form, an entity with its own predilections and sensations that are very different from our own. (p.9)

To begin to view the world from this kind of magical lens in which you acknowledge that everything around you has a consciousness, even your chair, allows for the imagination to open itself up and the creation of a new kind of world to open up. Imagination and creativity are pivotal in this process of reanimating our reality, and one could argue that they, as illusive and hard to define as they are, are the keys to the paradigms shifting.
For me, the re-enchantment process that sits side by side Abram’s magical consciousness is creating art through painting on canvas. That practice alongside movement therapy, i.e. yoga and or dance and sitting meditation allows for me to shift my perception. In this concrete way, I am able to release instinctual aspects and other-than-rational energies that seem to enliven my spirit and liberate a deep part of me. Through painting I am able to enter a different kind of consciousness, one in which I feel, think, sense, and imagine reality from a different space. This is my own process of rewilding. This is my personal way of getting back in touch with my primordial self; the child inside that still carries that sense of wonder and awe at the natural world, and believes that magic is real, and that people are at their core, good. That is a part of me that fights the deadening impulses of institutional expectations.

When I am able to create, there is no rationality; it is based purely on inspiration and intuition. This feeling, this emergence is what I believe to be at the heart of creating insights into sustainable solutions for this earth. We must begin to find ways of employing other-than-rational modes of consciousness on a global level if we are to understand ways of approaching the depth of crisis this earth is currently undergoing. As Albert Einstein mentioned in his speech discussing the implementation and development of the atom bomb, we cannot begin to change this world from the same mode of consciousness that created it (Calaprice, 344). We must learn to approach it from an original standpoint, from a place that has never been stood on.
before. We must find ways of allowing ourselves to access these deeply hidden and domesticated parts of ourselves so that we can unearth a kind of freedom never before experienced. This freedom is the key to our survival, for staying locked in this box of control and mastery over all our intuitive faculties ensures a common death, if not in body, in spirit. Clarissa Pinkola-Estes (1996) explains:

When creativity stagnates in one way or another, there is the same outcome, a starving for freshness, a fragility of fertility...no breeding of this idea to that one, no hatch, no new life. Then we feel ill...We wander aimlessly, pretending we can get along without the lush creative life or else by faking one; but we cannot we must not. To bring back creative life, the waters have to be made clear again. We have to wade into the sludge, purify the contaminants, reopen the aperture, protect the flow from future harm. (p. 325)

To keep this entire thesis itself a biotic entity, I felt that I must produce the material for its study as a match to its core idea of de-domestication/rewilding. The act of writing a thesis itself for an academic institution is somewhat of a domesticating process because of its deeply restrictive nature. Only one kind of dominant discourse is acceptable throughout this process, one that is seen as legitimate and dominated by the left-brained faculties of logic, analysis, and reasoning as illustrated by this kind of writing I am delivering to you right now.
I have had many sleepless nights trying to reconcile my core beliefs of creativity and rewilding and the academic process as I have felt throughout my studies that I have been placed into a dominant mode of thinking that doesn't suite me best. Although I did comply with the rigors of graduate school, I was under the impression that this program designated as “Sustainable Communities” was to be more innovative, creative, and all around different as the degree itself is only a few years old. It does have many unique features as a truly interdisciplinary degree, but it is still locked within the confines of legitimate academic standards of discourse.

Dr. Stephen Gallegos (1991) in his book *Animals of the Four Windows*, puts it so well:

Overvaluing thinking is the cultural mode that we have inherited...we don’t teach our children how to think, we spend the greatest part of their young lives teaching them what to think. We lay down certain specific patterns of thinking that we then force them to regurgitate upon demand...and teach them that they are somehow incompetent if they don’t do this. We don’t allow them to develop their ability to quest and to question in an organic and nurturing way. (p.9)

I have finally gotten to know myself well enough to see that I need more creativity in my life to nourish the other parts of me that express and communicate better through other modes of consciousness besides just thinking.
We are told over and over in our culture that an education is the route to a good career and that “knowledge is power”, yet our dominant mode of education in this country, as high as it may get is still limited by its mode of consciousness. Academia suites those very well that can communicate easily through their left-brained faculties, and our culturally dominant mode of thinking. In the book, Two Sides of the Brain, author Sid Segalowitz (1983) delineates the key differences between the right and left hemispheres of the brain and their functions:

The left hemisphere is characterized as linguistic, mathematical, scientific and logical while the right is characterized as responsible for music, art and dance appreciation, perception, sculpture, and fantasy. Occasionally dreaming, poetry, and sexual satisfaction are thrown in for good measure. (p. 57)

As it is classically known, the left hemisphere of the brain houses certain kinds of characteristics that tend to favor academics in general, simply through its logical method of discourse. Those individuals that are more intuitive, emotional, and creative are more influenced by the right hemisphere. Of course none of us are either one or the other primarily, but we may exhibit characteristics that seem to be dominated by one side or the other. Generally, those that are more “right-brained” individuals such as myself may seem to find they have a harder time in school than others that hold more left-brained characteristics. I have experienced this throughout my domestic education experience. Even now, I have friends that speak
academia so well, and it is not as such a struggle for them as it seems to be for me. They find their own creativity and outlet in this kind of work, and are able to liberate parts of themselves that yearn to be free, yet to me, I find it stifling and difficult. I feel it’s not a natural process for me as it is for others.

After years of much bad self-talk, depression, and anxiety, I have realized that it’s not because I’m stupid or unable to learn as quickly as others, but that I operate better when employing different modes of consciousness. There are several authors that speak to this subject, as Howard Gardner in his book *Multiple Intelligences* goes on to say:

> In my view, if we are to encompass adequately the realm of human cognition, it is necessary to include a far wider and more universal set of competences than we have ordinarily considered. And it is necessary to remain open to the possibility that many—if not most—of these competences do not lend themselves to measurement by standard verbal methods, which rely heavily on a blend of logical and linguistic abilities. (p.x)

I am 30 years old and finally waking up to the truth of this realization, I can only think of the 13 year old stuck deep inside of the institution who feels similarly, with no way out. The kind of magical consciousness that Abram speaks of, feeds my soul and helps me ingest my living reality at the kind of level I feel works best for me as a different kind of intelligence than the mainstream.
The West’s current dominant mode of consciousness that includes the scientific and mechanistic thinking that got the planet and its peoples to the point we are at now, at the precipice of great catastrophe, is the precise kind of consciousness I feel most ill-at ease residing inside of. Author, Dr. Stephen Gallegos goes on to say, “The core process of thinking involves dissection, labeling, and establishing the relationships of parts to one another through comparison.” (p.12) This is an amazing gift of cognition in so many ways, but when it becomes the dominant mode of knowing in our culture, we have become extremely imbalanced.

The integration of artistry and creativity into life’s everyday experiences allows for the more right-brained faculties to balance out the dominant left-hemispheric activities and that is when imagination, play, and creativity are able to flow through. The dominance of logic in our culture is the place where we configure reality from, yet reality is so much larger and multi-dimensional then we currently perceive it as. David Abram goes on to say in Spell of the Sensuous:

I began to wonder if my culture’s lack of assumptions regarding the lack of awareness in other animals and in the land itself was less of a product of careful and judicious reasoning than of a strange inability to clearly perceive other animals—a real inability to clearly see, or focus upon, anything outside the realm of human technology, or to hear as meaningful anything other than human speech. (p.27)
Reality is magic, the world is completely animated, creation and imagination are everywhere yet through the current dominant lens within which we view much of the ‘legitimate’ world, it is reduced greatly from those things that we can feel, sense, and deeply know only to those that we can measure, prove, and think through. In this paradigm the invisible has lost its merit and emotion has fallen wayside to reason. I hope to be clear in this thesis process that I am not calling for complete anarchy and a disassembly of our institutions but rather for more attention and care to be place on different aspects of intelligence and that in turn I believe, will transform our institutions into something different, more accessible and open to the wild being. Bridging the gap between rationality and the deeper more mysterious aspects of feeling, sensing, intuition, and imagery is what is needed in order to regain the balance this earth so desperately needs.

Watching myself go through this graduate process over these two years has gotten me to this very point, at this very moment, of writing this thesis and I do believe that there is a great lesson to be learned from all the sleepless nights and deep anxiety that I have endured over the past year and a half. I hope to unearth some of those lessons in this work. That is why, in order to keep this project as pure and humble as I possibly can, I have chosen to use the auto-ethnographic method as I believe that within this method lies the opportunity for a depth of exploration that one may not find in other modes of discourse.
I will be conducting an ‘evocative’ auto ethnography for this study. By this I mean that I will record and analyze my own thoughts, feelings, and emotions while participating in this creative process. The creative process I will be engaging will be primarily working with acrylic paints on canvas. To me, this is a non-verbal yet highly expressive form of communication that is able to afford me the opportunity to enter into a different level of consciousness. I aim to document this process so that while I am experiencing this different level of awareness, I will see what the process does for my body, soul, and spirit- as a collective biotic individual made up of so many different swirling energies. The expression and release of these energies is key, as it is the real moment of rewilding. This is the moment that those parts of me that feel caged, stifled, and controlled are able to be free-at least through color. I aim to compliment this process with a consistent yoga/movement practice as well as a consistent meditation practice. Maintaining these other-than-rational exercises will provide a real space to reflect and notice any real changes in my being.

I understand that to do an autoethnography well and with meaning, I must train myself to become, “sufficiently introspective about [my] feelings or motives, or the contradictions [I] experience” (Muncey, 35). I know that it will take an immense amount of authenticity toward my own biases and assumptions of what I will be experiencing. A certain kind of vulnerability is needed to conduct this study well, and I am prepared to offer myself to it. To me, vulnerability and an openness to the other kinds of knowing that occupy
my perception will be the keys to my expression and exploration into this study. The highest aim of this work is not just acquiring knowledge but uncovering a deep truth that may assist humanity in moving forward on this trepidatious path we have begun to walk in the 21st century. There is not much truth without vulnerability

Tessa Muncey (2010) in her book, *Creating Autoethnographies*, discusses this aspect,

Finding a style and voice of your own, which silences the critics in your head, I believe is an important aspect of autoethnography. This style and voice might metamorphose into a poem or picture, a story or drama or a film, but it should allow the recipient of the piece, the reader or the viewer, access to the inner story that cannot be told by more conventional means.” (p. 56)

So in a sense, I will be telling my own story of how I am attempting to de-domesticate myself or rewild myself through a creative process. Deborah Reed-Danahay (1997) describes an auto-ethnography as:

An ethnography that includes the researcher’s vulnerable self, emotions, body and spirit and produces evocative stories that create the effect of reality and seeks fusion between the social science and literature. It also questions the notion of a coherent, individual, self (p.137).

I understand that auto-ethnography is a different approach to typical social science research, yet no less valid. Although there will only be
information coming in from my own point of view, the depth and richness that will come out of such a single pointedly directed study will surely be of a different kind than that of typical social science research. This of course, will come at the sake of variety and diversity in the source of data collection. Yet, I am hoping that it will compensate with its focus and substance.

I do understand that there are real and true limitations to the autoethonographic method. I see my prime limitation as one point of reference and understanding that with which I have issue, my own experience. This is a narrow scope in which to view the entire problem within which I am addressing. Also, there is only my own voice and the capabilities of expressing my own observances through only my lens, which is completely subjective, may color the research. If anything, I hope that this study will not speak for an entire population, but rather open up larger questions to a wide array of people.

In conclusion, I feel optimistic about this somewhat avant-garde thesis process. By infusing myself as part of the research, I hope to offer a kind of subjectivity within the research that is rarely afforded in typical social science projects. I’m hoping that by understanding the subtle nuances of my own process I will be able to garner some insight into the creative consciousness, ways of accessing it, and why accessing it is important to our current decaying paradigm. I’m hoping that by entering a different kind of consciousness, I can then approach our deepest disturbances with a fresh perspective.
Figure 1 - "Green Trees and Greed"
Chapter 2

Autoethnography

In your eyes I see the eyes of somebody
I knew before, long ago
But I'm still trying to make my mind up
Am I free or am I tied up?

I change shapes just to hide in this place
But I'm still, I'm still, an Animal
Nobody knows it but me when I slip
Yeah I slip, I'm still, an Animal

-Miike Snow
Part I

I was raised in a house without a man. I grew up in a house where you never closed the bathroom door and were able to walk around naked if you felt like it. There were not very many rules as my mom herself was a wild woman who loved to dance to music that affected her soul, drink as much wine as she wanted, and laugh as loud as she felt like. That is where I learned how to be free as my mother refused to compromise those aspects of herself, for anyone. Unfortunately, as a young girl we lived on a very busy street, so I wasn’t able to go outside and play as the average 7 year old would. I wasn’t able to go outside and experience the natural world as a young person yet, I was able to be as free as I like inside my own house and like most children who are left to their own devices I ended up directly in front of the television. Something about the electromagnetic charge that a television gives off, with its flashing lights and quick movements, instantly catches and holds the attention of anyone, especially young people who are so susceptible to influence. Having one in my own room also meant that I could watch as much of it and whatever I wanted, at any time, so it was exactly that which I did, for years on end. At this point, in elementary school I was spending hours upon hours in front of the TV, making sure that I got home to catch my favorite show at 3pm, ‘The Golden Girls’. How an eight-year-old girl can become obsessed with a show about retired women living together in a house in Florida still puzzles me. Because I spent so much time in front of the television, I became privy to the adult world as a young girl. I grew up very
fast. I also became increasingly overweight as the lethargy of non-movement began to affect my body, and the chubbier I became over the years.

Still, I was young and lived in a different kind of reality, so I didn’t consciously seem to be bothered by having a nature deficit as I didn’t know any different. The times I was able to experience the natural world, was when my mom and I would go to the beach on the weekends. I remember feeling the cold sand on my body and the water come over me as it washed it away. The ocean gave me a deep peace inside myself. And as a child, I used to lie at the exact place the tide comes up and disappears into the sand. My mom said I would lay there for hours, feeling the water splash over me, and the sand beneath me, cradling me. This was my deepest connection to the natural world, and the moments of my childhood that still feel most healing. I was able to wash away all that electromagnetics from the television and lie in a pure space, in pure presence with the natural world. This was my cleansing. I didn’t move, I just stayed on the shore, with my eyes closed feeling the rapture of the purest parts of mother earth.

Because of this kind of daily interaction with a machine as a child, now, in retrospect I see that the programming began to program me. I became accustomed to staying indoors and going outdoors on adventures seemed frightening and unknown. I never grew that kind of experience in the wild that a child does, sure-footed and alive. Instead I was trepidatious and hesitant to explore, for fear of the mystery behind the wild scared me deep in my bones, as all I had ever known was the stillness and lethargy of
the television. I became frozen in my bedroom, in front of the TV and instead of exploring the natural world and all its magic I explored the lives of fictional characters whose faux stories seemed to fill a very empty place inside of myself. There was a deep loneliness that I experienced as a child, one that I don’t believe I would have had if I were able to regularly play inside our mother earth. There was a reason that I was so attracted to the TV as I was yearning for company, and trying to fill a void that became deeper and deeper the older and more estranged from the natural world that I became.

I never had any rules placed upon me as instilled by a typical nuclear family, yet I was still surrounded by unnatural structures molding, shaping, and fitting my young mind into a good consumer/student. I spent the first half of my day inside four walls, a classroom with intermittent periods of recess in which I was able to spend time outside, yet the majority was spent inside. The second half of my day was spent indoors, inside the four walls of my room with my attention and focus on a machine spitting out entertainment, ads, and rules of modern living. These two processes that became the regular routine for much of my childhood and into my teenage years was an intensive process of domestication as any young, wild fire that pulled me toward the natural world was quelled by the modern instruments of distraction.

Because of the nature deficit that I endured as a young child, unconsciously yearning for an outlet to make up for all the magic, creativity,
and imagination the natural world can offer a young girl, I alternatively channeled that energy and yearning to create into other endeavors, projects that helped me to feel that magic and connection to something greater than myself. The creation of art, any kind of art became a channel to release those energies within myself as a child that had become stifled, stuck, and undernourished. Because of the nature deficit that I experienced, it seems that intuitively my soul knew it needed another way of connecting to the greater mystery of life. I discovered a channel for which to express my connection to that mystery and that was through the creation of art.

I always loved to play with color. Oil pastels seemed to fit me best as a young girl as I loved the way you could get dirty with them, smearing them all around the paper and creating something new out of nothing. The aliveness that I seemed to miss from the natural world, I compensated for through the use of bright vibrant colors that were able to express something inside of me that I had never had the chance to feel entirely. Bright colors always fit my aesthetic, and me I suppose. As a young girl even amidst my alienation and loneliness I was very social, loved to laugh, and was fascinated by people.

My favorite part of school was always art class, as it seemed to be the only time of the day in which there seemed to be a break in the greyness of the daily indoctrination of civility. It was a time when I was able to express from within, not regurgitate from above. The only time in my life I have ever won a competition, was the county art competition I was entered into in the
third grade. We were asked to submit our depiction of California in oil pastels; mine was chosen for its bright colors and expressive images. At eight years old my body and senses were increasingly more suppressed through intensive exposure to television yet the drawing through vibrant color was somehow able to help me channel those suppressed energies. There, in that hour of the day I was able to release an uninhibited splash of color that emerged purely from my young soul, this was creativity in its purest form.

My deepest most depressive parts of my life were in my later teenage years, and I realize now that during this time I was not creating anything at all. At 14 years old I had hit the highest weight I have ever been, at 285 lbs. High school was a period that I felt most frozen creatively as it was the period of time I was coming into adulthood yet, I had very little contact with the wild, the natural world. I went from basement bedroom, to classroom, to car. I rarely if ever hung out outdoors, I stayed in cafes and diners- smoking cigarettes and lamenting my existence.

By the time I graduated college, a deep part of me yearned to experience life outside of the United States. Something in me knew that there was a wildness that existed outside the properly trimmed lawns and cookie cutter houses of suburban USA, where I grew up. I knew this because something inside of me was always able to connect to people of other cultures so easily. It was a different kind of connection that I felt, a heart connection instead of a head connection. I yearned for this, as I felt so
alienated and alone amidst the mechanical nature of the states. So at 23 I joined the Peace Corps and was assigned to live and work in Morocco.

It was during this period of my life that I realized what it was like to live a natural life. This was arguably the happiest period of my existence as I was able to for the first time, operate on organic time without clocks and deadlines. This was the first time I had ever experienced a daily movement that was centered around times of prayer and the setting sun. It was during this time of my life that my meditation and yoga practices became so intensive. I grew a kind of patience that I never knew I had within me and cultivated a deep need for silence in my daily life. This was also the first time in all my life that I had spent many hours daily outdoors. All of these practices created a kind of space within me, in which I was able to develop a connection to the natural world that fostered a kind of wildness within me that had always been held captive. It was during this period of rewilding myself within the natural world, without the limits of American domestication that I was free to begin to paint again. I specifically remember during this period feeling the deep release of creation coming out of me—-it was very cathartic. I created some of my most interesting, organic, and colorful pieces of artwork during this time, all which seemed to flow out of me as easily as breathing. Finally, at 23 years old, I knew what it really meant to be free.

Fast forward to me in my twenty-ninth year having lived the past seven years away from the mainland in Morocco and Hawaii, I was drawn to
visit my father in Detroit, Michigan for fear that he was soon to pass. As I came to visit my dying father, I also realized that the land within which he resided was dying. Old factories and dead parking lots filled the space in between highways. The natural landscape was inert, for it was winter and little organic life grew. I saw the connection to the health of my father, and the health of this Earth and felt a deep calling to somehow help heal the great rift between the human/machine world and the natural/animal world. Upon making this decision, I carried with me a great sense of duty, optimism, and possibility.

Upon entering my third month of graduate school, I surprisingly started exhibiting the same symptoms of suppression and confinement that held me captive throughout my many years of schooling. I never allowed myself to feel freely the reality of how the American education system made me feel about myself, my abilities, and my own conscious awareness as a human animal on this planet. As my own natural capabilities are ones centered around emotion, intuition, healing, and creativity, the dry logical and confined nature of the academic institution held me frozen in a box I never was able to realize that I had been held captive inside of before. After spending the last seven years rewilding myself close to the natural world, away from the 4 walls of the institution or the consumer machine, I was finally able to begin to see clearly what academic schooling in this country does to those that are of a different kind of intelligence.
As my depression, frustration, and overall discontented attitude grew in direct proportion to the more time I spent in school, I started realizing that it was the confining and domesticating nature of academia itself that was causing my depression. Not only was the material that we were taking in within the SUS program about the state of the world very depressing, but also it was the way in which I was constricted and controlled in my responses, learning style, and consciousness within the academic realm that was uncomfortable and deeply restrictive. There was no space for me to express the imaginative, creative, intuitive, and emotional faculties in which I excel. Mainly, it was very dry response papers that had to be formatted and controlled in a specific manner. This is the western, left-brained, logical, and analytical format that is widely accepted and seen as legitimate.

I have heard this word over and over in graduate school, that my work needs to be legitimate, yet legitimate means that it must be formatted, researched, and presented in a specific manner. The thing is, I don’t understand easily that way. It takes a long time for me to read dense material, and I have to stretch my brain far and wide. It’s exhausting for me and takes massive amounts of energy. I express myself and understand much easier when I’m able to use the multi-dimensions of consciousness that we carry within our brains and bodies. I’m also much happier, because I’m doing what comes naturally to me, and able to express myself without feeling confined and controlled to fit in to a system that I have never really fit into.
I hit a point during this academic process where I began to feel very dead inside, uninspired, and depressed. I began to wonder why I was forcing myself to fit into a system that has really never served me. I realized it was because it was what society expects out of me, and in order to be successful in certain circles within this economic system that has been constructed here in the US, we must have things like Master’s degrees so that we can get jobs that can pay us a decent wage so that we may buy the houses and make the families that keep the capitalistic economic engine running. Anything outside of this formatted, fitted, and very well controlled system simply doesn’t seem to fit in, or at least, it isn’t legitimized and therefore not taken seriously.

Yet, because I do believe that education at its core is meant to be a process by which we are meant to learn, grow, and expand our consciousness, not simply a process where we learn facts and regurgitate them through the same manner by which we comprehend them, I have chosen to see what can happen to my own consciousness when I begin to feed this deeply creative, pensive, and imaginative part of me that is underfed and undernourished within this system. Because I need, deeply, in my soul to be able to feel, think, and grow through all different mediums, I have chosen to begin to paint to express these deeply stifled and repressed energies within me that have been held captive through various institutionalized formalizations of behavior.
The process itself began during my second semester of graduate school. Feeling sad and unsure of why and uninspired to go out and drink in order to let go of the tension I held in my body from constantly being critical of myself and others work, I decided to start to paint. Slowly, I became more serious about it, and as I began to paint more, I realized that I began to feel much better. Something inside of me was released, and a deeper connection to the mystery of reality was finally met. As I am still painting while writing this thesis, I can offer the details of my process and how it has changed over time.

I believe that documenting this process is a pivotal aspect to the work itself. By allowing myself the freedom and giving voice to the frustrations and deep suppressions I felt throughout these two years, I believe I am in some way liberating myself and others that have felt confined through this system. The format of this thesis still fits inside the confines of the academic ‘standard’ so that it may be legitimate, yet, opening my consciousness up to other ways of breathing in life and expressing it- I am finding that it is opening the shadow side of myself, and the pieces of my inner knowing that rarely get a chance to express itself. This is a way of truly rewilding myself, and moving past the standardized aspects of formal communication.
Part II

The painting process itself has evolved over time but since I have consciously chosen to document my experience for this thesis process, there have been a few constants that have remained. Before I actually begin to paint, I devote at least 10 minutes to stretching my body and engaging in deep breathing practices through yoga. This helps me to unwind, and begin to open up various energy centers of my body so that I may be able to release any stuck energies more easily. The yoga process is one that I take very seriously and believe the breathing aspect to be essential to this process. There is a deep opening that one can only expose oneself to when actively participating in deep breathing, and yoga is my outlet for that. The process begins with a deep belly breath, one that comes from the bottom of my abdomen, it continues to fill up my stomach, and then rises all the way to my clavicle. This is a very slow breath that is also called in yoga an ‘ujay’ breath, which employs a low, slow, flow and is heard at the back of the throat. The energy I gather and the peace that I feel when employing this method of breath has contributed to the release of creative energy in my body, as it is the Shakti life force that cycles throughout my being, opening me up and releasing the stuck emotions, feelings, or waste material of my body.

After engaging in a stretching exercise for at least 10 minutes, I allow myself to begin the process of painting. Every time I sit down to paint it is different. Much of it has to do with my mood and emotions that day. Because I have been enduring an ongoing depression throughout graduate school that
feels as though I have a dark cloud over me much of the time, exposing myself to the possibility of painting— with bright colors, expressed through my own unique consciousness often automatically uplifts me and inspires me to express those feelings that have felt pressed. This to me, has become a form of therapy that I engage as the traditional talk therapy that I have encountered here at NAU doesn’t seem to help me in the same way that painting does. There is ferociousness, a fierce nature to painting, that allows for expression. The power of expression is so important here, and I cannot emphasize it enough. To express oneself, through whatever medium one chooses is so desperately important in this current era of so much standardization. Expression of ones uniqueness, the well of emotion that lies within the body-mind-spirit of someone should never be underestimated. And it is specifically this power to express myself, that I have found so healing.

The feelings I am able to tap into while painting, that well of expression that lies within me— when released feels like someone is pulling a thorn out of my foot, or that a deep pain is removed. Often times when painting, I find myself crying, but it is not a cry in the traditional sense— that I am overcome with emotion over a sad thought or feeling, it is more an emotion that seems to match the expression of color on the canvas. It is as if something very deep inside of me is being touched, a part that was so suppressed, inert, and uninspired is finally able to stretch out and move again. The tears well up in my eyes, and a sound comes out of me, a hissing
noise that is part of my breathing—finally I am able to let go—express, and feel the deepest parts of my animal body of emotions again.

I get this feeling when I listen to inspiring music and allow myself to dance freely out in nature. The power of movement of the body during this process is pivotal to the release of creativity. Too often in this current era of standardization and domestication we segment and separate the different aspects of our body off during certain activities, usually within the 9-5 daily work routine. I know this very well as I have a 20-hour a week graduate assistantship on campus that is in a cubicle, part of the 9-5 office culture. During this time, I don’t move my body much at all and mainly use my brain and hands to type and think. The other parts of my body, my spine, my neck, my chest, are all caved in, as I engage my brain in thinking so much that I tend to forget the other parts of my being. This leads to me feeling increasingly exhausted and wiped out, yet I have barely adjusted or moved my entire body. This is the kind of exhaustion we endure here in the developed western world, one caused from over-thinking, analysis, and rationality, the left brained faculties. We forget to integrate our entire biotic being, and all of the wisdom our body holds. In that segmentation we lose the important pieces of our instinct, knowledge that has been gathered over thousands of years from our sensing bodies that help us make our way in this world. Losing touch with that also aids us in losing touch with the magic of the natural world and the sensitivities it can help us cultivate, paying attention to the cues nature gives us. Consistent interaction with machines
versus interacting with the entire biotic world that is simply an extension of our own selves, as we are one piece of a whole that is this planet, cuts us off from the most important aspects of being alive on this planet. It creates a society of human beings that begin to feel isolated, alone, depressed, and apathetic due to the lack of connection to other beings, be it trees, animals, plants, water, or other humans. This is the exact kind of hollowness and empty apathy that I felt as a child, interacting with the television for 5 hours a day and it is was the lack of exposure to the wild that domesticated my being, and suppressed the deepest, most free and fierce aspects of my soul.

The process of opening up the body to movement is something I discovered to assist me in opening up a channel for that which has been suppressed and contained within me to express itself. During this period of exploration and opening myself up to creative ways of reanimating my body and soul, I was able to get my hands on a particularly inspiring piece of music made from a Sri Lankan woman who calls herself M.I.A. who's lyrics cover political topics such as living as a refugee, corporate greed, and terrorism but also open up the inspiring topics of creativity, individuality, femininity, and spirituality. Listening to this music while allowing myself to go into the forest, completely alone and dance freely with my eyes closed, triggered the same feeling of release and expression I feel when putting certain colors on canvas. This is the seed, and the core of inspiration. To me, this is the purest feeling of being alive. Inspiration is formed from a certain kind of feeling within the body that is touched so sensitively and so tenderly, as it touched a
part of me that I didn’t even know that I had. It awoke something within me that had been sleeping for a very long time. Inspiration is that feeling that opens you up to possibility; it is a truly magical feeling of being alive as an animal on this Earth.

As I write this, I feel myself well up with tears, as this feeling is the feeling that gives me so much joy, it is the feeling that promotes love, it is the feeling that offers hope. But mostly, inspiration activates ones energy and sparks a kind of fire that ignites those dormant creative and imaginative energies within the self. Inspiration is a real key for change, and in my experience, it is ignited through innovation and authentic, deep creativity.

**Part III**

This is an account of my painting process.

*I sit and stare at the blank canvas. Anxiety wells up within me as I begin to feel the pressure of creating something ‘beautiful’, something that others are going to see, something that they will judge me for. I know I have talent, but do I need others to know it? What is talent? Being able to sell something? Make it look desirable? All of these feelings flood my consciousness as I take a deep breath in and say to myself, “This is for no one else but you.” It seems to be a constant battle between what my soul yearns to express and what my ego wants to produce. I shake my head and open the bottom of my belly. I sit for a moment, listening only to my breathing and feeling its rhythm inside my body. I*
do everything I can to let go, let go of any expectations, let go of non-­ expectations; I sit still, present in this moment and open my eyes.

I scan the colors I have collected and use my feelings to guide me. I find myself attracted to the red and blue, in aims to make the most magnificent indigo I can. Indigo speaks to me, it provokes feelings inside of me, it draws me toward it. I slather the deep blue paint from the tube directly onto the canvas, I get paint all over my hands, and a deep part of me likes it. I add the red as it releases a part of my femininity and provokes me to feel from that core. Red speaks to me too as it is the color of blood, the color of the heart, the color of our insides. Red speaks to me as a woman as I release this color from my body every month—it is close to life, it is close to death.

I use a large brush to blend these two colors right there on the white canvas until I begin to come up with the color that was rumbling deep inside my body, the color that was begging to come out, the color that provokes a feeling. I take a big breath as if I am letting go again, all over again, but this time I am letting go of something that was dying to be free. I add another layer of purple, directly from the tube, and smear it with the color I’ve already found on the canvas. I use a long knife to blend these colors-­ and the shape and movement of the two shades dancing together moves something inside of me again. I take a deep breath and can feel tears well up in my eyes, what emotion is this? Joy? Fear? Sadness? What am I releasing? I don’t dwell on it as analyzing it diminishes its sanctity. I simply close my eyes, breath, and let the tears fall down my cheeks, onto my red stained hands, exhaling the pain.
I open my eyes and look to the colors at my feet. I feel called to create a flower, a large one. This feels so close to me, as if it could be part of my body, the female, or anything that over time blossoms. I scan the tubes, and move my hand toward the color that calls to me, before I can comprehend it, I know it. Gold. Bright, iridescent, the color that is beauty no matter how you lay it down on the canvas, gold. I grab a nice paintbrush, one that is smaller so that I can control the shape easily and begin to slowly reveal what are already there-the blossoms of a beautiful flower. I make them large and grand. I feel them opening up to something beyond itself. I throw down the gold paintbrush and grab for my knife so that I may begin to carve into this flower. I want to dive into the center of it, swim in its stain and paint it with my whole being, I am the flower- I feel its depths, I revel in its incandescence.

With paint all over me, I carve into this flower creating texture, digging into it as if it were the earth itself, getting dirty, feeling it, joining it, making union. Now I am feeling a great urge within me to move faster, dig deeper, express and reveal this beautiful thing. I throw down the knife and now begin to operate only from the other ways of knowing, I sense what color is needed like an itch that needs so desperately to be scratched. And when I smear the color onto the canvas at the center of the petal, it feels so right that I exhale with great pleasure. The juxtaposition of color against the other shades fills me with real joy and the scowl on the brow turns into a smile at my lips. I begin to blend the colors, feeling their emergence as part of my own soul.
All of a sudden I feel a flash of my ego emerging, judging this painting, wondering what other will see- it injures my psyche and I put my hand to my brow, taking a deep breath in to return to the pure, sacred space within which I was just operating. There it is. I smile as I realize I don’t care what it looks like, I simply feel that this is a beautiful piece of art because it is me-my center, my insides, the parts that are hidden and scared to come out, the parts that have learned to walk inside the lines and fit sit inside the box, finally letting itself go- crying over these colors as I can bathe in its brightness, finally this is me- I am the paints, I am the gold.

All through this process I make sure that the center of the flower remains untouched, as that is the most sacred space and the energetic as well as focal point of the entire piece. I make sure to avoid it, leaving it blank-wondering what could possibly fit inside this space. As I carve some more and begin to use my own fingers to paint the painting, I blend myself even more inside of it. There comes a point where I no longer feel the urge to carve or add color. I sit back to look and feel this piece. I take in a deep breath and close my eyes. Suddenly, it comes to me. Red. The color of my insides, the color of the heart, the color of blood. I grab a tube of red and realize I want this flower to bleed, this flower feels pain. It can still be destroyed, and such a fragile beautiful thing is not easily able to live in this world, so simple and undisturbed.

I take the tube of red paint and release it at the top of the canvas, letting the weight of gravity carry it to the bottom. Down, it slowly rolls, like a living being. It marks every piece it comes into contact with. Slowly, it moves down
the center of the canvas, and as perfectly as I could have imagined it, falls straight into the heart of the flower. The flower bleeds, and its as real as anything ever could be. I feel a depth of satisfaction from this action as it offers a real finality to this exquisite flower, and an anguish that falls from it, as real as any part of my own soul. (See Next Page)
Figure 2 - “The Bloody Blooming”
Chapter 3

Literature Review

All those wasted hours we used to know
Spent the summer staring out the window
The wind takes you where it wants to go

First they built the road, then they built the town
That’s why we’re still driving around and around
And all we see
Are kids in busses longing to be free

Wasted hours, before we knew
Where to go, and what to do
Wasted hours that you make new
And turn into
A life that we can live

Some cities make you lose your head
Endless suburbs stretched out thin and dead
And what was that line you said?

Wishing you were anywhere but here
You watch that life you're living disappear
And now I see
We’re still kids in buses
Longing to be free

-Arcade Fire
This process of creating art through color on canvas has within it the capacity to open up my consciousness and shift the way in which I connect to the world. It pulls out the wildest parts of me, those aspects that yearn to be untamed and uncontrolled and it releases my psyche from any kind of captive energy so that it may ultimately expand and comprehend the world through a different lens. This aspect of this process is what is so pivotal over the course of this study as this is exploring a purely imaginative and playful space that is able to approach different problems with a fresh perspective and different mode of thought that lies outside of the ‘rational’ mind. After engaging in this activity I feel alive, happy, and see the world through a colored lens where color, texture, and the wildest parts find their way to the surface. Using this process to assist in approaching different problems related to sustainable communities, I believe is an unseen key to the development of our future on this planet.

It was that single pointed feeling that I was able to put into words that has helped me understand my experiences while painting and how it was able to help connect me to the wild with-in and with-outside of myself. It was that deep, sensitive, and single pointed feeling of inspiration, that seed which seems to draw from deep within myself and extends itself outward and beyond, not too unlike a seed being planted and moved to grow by the sun. That seed is what moved my consciousness as well as my creativity into being. The origin of the word inspire in Latin is translated as ‘to breathe’ or ‘to blow into’. And the Oxford dictionary states that, “The word was usually
used of a divine or supernatural being, in the sense [to] ‘impart a truth or idea to someone.’” I resonate with that definition as it contains the word “truth” within it, and the experience of being inspired is so deeply truthful.

And as I write this and begin to explore the meaning of this process, I am brought back to the realization that as the natural world is the wild, and I am part of the natural world, I am wild. The layers of indoctrination and civilized manners of being may cloud that understanding of the self, but it is no less real or true. Feeling this deeply in my body, I am able to look to David Abram (2011) and his phenomenological approach to the natural world to assist me in understanding this connection. In Becoming Animal, Abram speaks of ourselves and our minds as the wild:

Is not awareness, too, a kind of medium or atmosphere—a capacity that blooms within us, swelling and subsiding, only because we are penetrated by it, encompassed by it, permeated? Are we not born into mind as an unseen layer of the Earth, gradually opening ourselves to the nourishment of this medium adapting ourselves to its lunar rhythms, aligning ourselves with the way it glimmers and sings in our particular species?” (p. 124)

Because Abram himself is so easily able to enter alternate states of consciousness as a magician, he is able to assist us in understanding our own bodies and minds as part of this Earth, not away from it. Once I truly begin to understand this aspect of my being, I am able to understand that seed of inspiration that awakens creativity within. He goes on to say:
Whether sustained by a desire for spiritual transcendence or by the contrary wish for technological control and mastery, most of our contemporary convictions carefully shirk and shy away from the way the biosphere is directly experienced from our creaturely position in the thick of its unfolding...They divert us from a felt sense that this wild-flowering earth is the primary source of itself, the very well spring of its ongoing regenesis. From a recognition that nature as the word itself suggest is self-born. And hence that matter is not just created but also creative, not a passive blend of change happenings and mechanically determined events, but an unfolding creatively ever coming into being, ever bringing itself forth. (p.303)

It is this blending with nature as part of it and the clear understanding that creativity is natural, it is nature, and it is that which we spawned from, that which we are. When we disallow or negate that creativity within through control and manipulation, we distort the flowering process that comes from each and every individual on this earth. The creative process is the essence of life itself, as it is the unfoldment of the unknown, it is the emergence of that which has never existed before. Life is born from the inspired seed of creativity, it is pure freedom in its highest form. If this energy is confined and controlled, the inspiration behind it is lost, and thus the process itself loses its spirit. It is that very freedom that is what makes the creative process either something extraordinary, or if restrained simply a mechanistic

Poetry and art prevent the standardization of peculiarity. Artistic language suggests, instead of describing comprehensively, the immediate presence of being. Art and poetry dismantle the reduction driven by intellectual control, allowing its practitioners to become a part of totality. This transformation is called authenticity or one's own voice, that is, the genuine that exists in everyone. (p. 18)

Henry David Thoreau (1854) in his time on Walden Pond understood this aspect of humans as part of nature, not separate from it and wrote on it in *Walden*, “We seek to perceive them, and we do not see them; we seek to hear them, and we do not hear them; identified with the substance of things, they cannot be separated from them.” (p.83) It is this blending with those principles of nature, those emergent properties that make up the heart of the creative process that is the essence of being truly free on this earth.

Carl Jung was deeply aware of this as he believed that our instincts were the parts of our subconscious that were designed as part of nature. It was the human reaction to the natural world, ways to protect itself and family as a wild animal, ways of sustaining oneself, and methods of keeping safe and healthy. It is a funny question when one doesn't use the thinking mind to take in information and react to it. For instance, how we know when someone may be staring at us, and unconsciously we turn our heads to meet their gaze. Or when we have certain kinds of symbolic dreams that seem to
come out of nowhere yet relay a message to us that we may not have understood or even been able to grasp in our waking, conscious hours. These are our instincts at play and they connect to archetypes, the deeply programmed and played out modes of human behavior that we know deep inside of our bodies, that have become ingrained in us as part of this earth.

Dolores LaChappelle (1992) in her book *Sacred Land, Sacred Sex* goes on to say:

...the roots which the psyche has sunk not only in the earth in the narrower sense but the world in general. The archetypes are thus that portion through which the psyche is attached to nature, or in which its link with the earth and the world appears at its most tangible. (p. 77)

LaChappelle goes on to discuss archetypes as “an inherited mode of psychic functioning, corresponding to that inborn *way*... in other words, it’s a pattern of behavior” (p.77) Archetypes are our own human nature, and the ways in which each of us act out our own inherited psychic tendencies.

Jung was of the few that had western medical training but yet, was also in tune with the deeper natural rhythms of wo/man and the Earth. Much of his work aligns closely with Shamanic methods used by native peoples around the world. Jung himself was able to travel to the southwest of North America and learn from the Navajo tribe as well as to Africa where he was able to see, feel, and blend himself with the culture of those native tribes within Uganda and Kenya. These experiences alongside his own depth
of understanding into the human soul and psyche, allowed for the first kind of holistic psychiatry here in the west where the human soul and the instinctive archetypes within which we operate carry a great weight of importance. Jung was increasingly aware of the influence and shift of modernity on the human animal and the effects of its conditioning. In the book *Primer of Jungian Psychology*, Calvin Hall (1973) and Vernon Nobly put Jung’s sentiments very clearly:

The person who suppresses the animal side of his nature may become civilized, but he does so at the expense of decreasing the motive power for spontaneity, creativity, strong emotions, and deep insights. He cuts himself off from the wisdom of his instinctual nature, a wisdom that may be more profound than any learning or culture can provide. (p.216)

Yet, it was precisely this domestication process of the ‘modern man’ that has caused many contemporary westerners to lose contact with these natural ways of being. Jung himself has called it an, “atrophy of instinct” in the book *The World Has a Soul* edited by Meredith Sabini (2002), and goes on to say:

Civilized man...is in danger of losing all contact with the world of instinct—a danger that is still further increased by his living an urban existence in what seems to be a purely manmade environment. This loss of instinct is largely responsible for the pathological condition of contemporary culture. (p.15)
Instincts are the part of the human animal that are deeply linked to the Earth, nature, and the natural rhythms of life on this planet. It is the deep subconscious aspects of ourselves that emerged from our ancestors and evolved over time, it is the Earth. Creativity, imagination, and inspiration come out of this animal space as this is a space of emergence, growth, and evolution- the laws of the universe that are inside of our human biotic being. To promote and cherish the creative aspect of every human, is to cherish nature. Fritjof Capra (2002) in his book, *The Hidden Connections* describes this beautifully:

Throughout the living world, the creativity of life expresses itself through the process of emergence. The structures that are created in this process—the biological structures of living organisms as well as social, structure in human communities—may appropriately be called “emergent structures”...With human evolution, language, conceptual thought and all the other characteristics of reflective consciousness came into play. This enable us to form mental images of physical objects, to formulate goals and strategies, and thus to create structures by design. (p.120)

Capra goes on to say that “Facilitating emergence means facilitating creativity.” (p.122)

In essence, the creative process of emergence is essentially the laws of the universe and emergent structures acting itself out within our human/animal bodies. Aspects of its expansion and contraction guide us
through the creative process. Yet in the current ‘sophisticated’ era of technological ‘advancement’ these inherent creative impulses are getting muted out by abstracted images of how the human relates to nature. Those innate feelings that bubble up as instinct and intuition become flooded by intellectualism and rationality, segmenting and separating the felt experience, not necessarily easy explained through words. Brian Swimme (1996) in his book, *The Hidden Heart of the Cosmos* goes on to describe this:

> During the modern period, we became so puffed up with our sense of superiority concerning science’s explanations of the universe we did not even notice that we stopped wondering over the stars. It seemed reasonable to stop paying attention to the cosmos. Why wonder about something when we were convinced it was only a machine? Why pay attention to something when we had the mathematics that explained it? We regarded a scientific explanation as something that removed the mystery, so that in time we tricked ourselves into thinking that the mathematical explanations of phenomena were more significant than the phenomena. Believe that and before long you are living in a skydome. (p.48)

The thinking mind in contemporary North American culture is held as a great asset. Our ability to consciously employ those left brained faculties of logic, rationality, and analysis are the keys to contemporary technological advancement. Yet, the thinking mind is only one aspect of our consciousness. It is the most easily measured and understood and therefore the most
prevalent. In the book *Animals of the Four Windows*, Dr. Stephen Gallegos (1991) discusses the four ways of knowing that humans are capable of. He walks in Carl Jung’s footsteps by covering thinking, sensing, feeling, and shifts the fourth one to imagery instead of intuition. These four modes of knowing if used equally, will create a holistic model for the human consciousness. This in many cultures is the definition of health, balance. Balance is the platform upon which holistic health may stand.

Chinese medicine for instance is a holistic medicine. Everything is centered around the yin and yang principles which represent opposite sides of the same entity. Yang is the masculine aspect of ourselves or anything in particular that carries heat, dynamism, expansion, growth, innovation, and physicality among other attributes. The yin aspect includes the feminine side which contains intuition, passivity, reduction, conservatism, contraction, water, softness, and nurturance to name a few. We can apply these attributes to any situation, any organ in the body, any action we take part in, anything really. The goal in these opposing forces is to keep them in a constant state of balance, to remain whole. If one or the other is employed too often, the person, organism, etc. becomes out of balance, incomplete, and thus very ill. This is the foundation of all holistic health, balance. Here in the west, our methods of knowing are dominated by the thinking mind. So rarely do we include the other modes that, we are drastically out of balance. David Abram’s phenomenological approach of the deeply sensuous experience that includes feeling, sensing, and imagery, alludes to a holistic consciousness.
Here in the west, we are cut off from these other ways of knowing resulting in a culture that is deeply unstable. Dr. Gallegos goes on to say:

Thinking constructs hierarchies, designates kingship, and gathers armies. These are good at destruction and at maintaining rigid organization, but they know nothing of wholeness. Return to wholeness is within the domain of imagery, not of thinking. We cannot dictate the form that imagery should take in order to accomplish growth or healing, we must trust that imagery itself knows. What thinking can do is to support and nurture imagery, learn from it, and be willing to enter into a relationship with it. (p.63)

The domestication process of crafting the contemporary human within North American culture, leads us to segment and separate aspects of ourselves so that we may operate within the system at large, functionally and easily. Yet, by doing this we negate the other aspects of our entire biotic being. I want my reader to understand that I am not calling for anarchy but rather more attention to be placed on different learning styles, and ways of knowing so that our institutions may transform into organic and dynamic places of being. Our education system here in the west celebrates the left brained faculties, especially thinking. Thinking dominates the other four ways of knowing, and is the main method of consciousness we promote and employ in the West, in schools all around the country. Dr. Gallegos discusses this imbalance within our education system, and the consequences that it has on not only the individual, but the culture as a whole:
The jungle in which we force our children to survive is of our own making, and the extreme consequences that we impost result in a rigidity of thought and behavior that is tantamount to a social straightjacket. What is lost, what is sacrificed on this alter of survival education, is the flexibility and the freedom to honor the creativity and subtle origins of one’s individual being as it emerges on its growing edge. This is a loss not only to the individual but also to the culture. (p.76)

Children carry this ability to feel, be, and see themselves as part of the natural world so easily. Before the re-education of the synthetic against the natural begins, the window of time that children carry beside them allows them to be part of the magical consciousness that permeates nature. One could argue that there is no more creative a space then inside the womb of our mother earth as the earth itself, and humans as part of her is a consistently evolving and emerging biotic being. Our ability to create and imagine is fully alive when we are children. At this point in our lives, our minds are free, still connected to the natural world and without a deep understanding of any real restriction or control. Our imaginations run wild and are filled with a ‘magical consciousness’ seeing world and all that it makes up as living, alive, and imbued with spirit.

Children still so close to the seed from which they emerged, their young minds still developing and forming, and are able to employ their imagination and creativity freely. There is a sense of spontaneity in play that
has no rhyme or reason; it simply emerges from the human as an original and authentic feeling and thought, allowing space for a real sense of freedom. In the book, *The Art of Play*, authors Adam Blatner and Allee Blatner (1997) discuss the importance of play,

You can celebrate with delight the discoveries of new potentialities arising out of your unconscious, the magic of allowing the inspiration of the muses to act through you, the joy of surprise with the events that occur in a receptive, co-creative state of mind, and the deep sense of belonging that occurs when you and others share the intimacy of bringing forth each other’s images. (p. 7)

In England, there are a group of environmental educators that call themselves, “Creeping Toad Environmental Educators”. They are made up of many neo-pagans and shamans whose goal is to enliven the imaginations of children when coming into contact with the natural world. Susan Greenwood (2005) writes:

The work of Creeping Toad Environmental Education develops children’s imaginations and the art of creative play; it uses fairy tales, myths, and those ‘other than human beings’ to bring the natural world alive in a children’s imagination by building on their animistic thinking and actively encouraging them to interact with the natural world. (p. 160)

Play in nature can potentially open up the human mind to its highest form of creativity, as there is an absolute freedom in nature, without any human
created constructs or social systems. Because the nature of a child’s mind has yet to be deeply affected or conditioned by the cultural norms within which it operates, the activity of playing and actively working to encourage and move the imagination in nature stimulates their creativity. Children and adults alike are free to draw upon their imagination, a deep part of their own inner nature and express that amongst the most natural of external environments, to allow themselves to fully express that which lies within them. Jesus Sepulveda (2005) discusses this aspect of the child appreciation of nature:

Human beings are nothing more than nature. To pretend differently is to fall into alienation. It is to forget beauty...to observe nature in order to appreciate it is to find plentitude. Our existence and the existence of everything on this planet depend on this challenge. For this reason, unlearning the condition of our childhood in order to be able to appreciate nature's beauty is a primordial necessity. (p.23)

The creative process itself is different for every person, but it was that deep sense of release that was matched by tears and breath, and then the inspiration that pushed the creativity out of me that signified my process. There was a heightened kind of awareness that also seemed to match that release, as I began to put the paint on the canvas, it felt alive, as part of myself, matching my emotions- expressing my depth of feeling. Julia Cameron (1992), author of The Artist’s Way discusses in her book the deep spirituality of finally releasing one's creativity. She goes on to say:
...I have come to believe that creativity is our true nature, that blocks are an unnatural thwarting of a process at once as normal and as miraculous as the blossoming of a flower at the end of a slender green stem. I have found this process of making spiritual contact to be both simple and straightforward. (p. xxiii)

Cameron sees the release of creativity as a natural and spiritual process, which initiates a kind of flow. There is a kind of electric action that happens to our consciousness when we create. Creativity allows for a certain, “quality of experience” to emerge from ones consciousness. (Csikzentmihalyi, 110)

Positive psychologist Mihalyi Csikzentmihalyi has written a book on the ‘flow’ of creativity. In his studies he interviewed several different people from around the globe and found that through the creative process, there were similarities. Some of the most profound of them include, “Distractions are excluded from consciousness,” (Csikzentmihalyi, 112) “Self-consciousness disappears” (Csikzentmihalyi, 112), and “The sense of time becomes distorted.” (Csikzentmihalyi, 113) These are all indicators of an alternate state of consciousness in which our awareness and connection to the socially constructed systems of which most of us are domesticated into here in the west, become transparent, and a connection or release, however the creative process affects the individual, is felt. In Mihaly Csikzentmihalyi’s (1996) book Creativity, he quotes poet Mark Strand, on his process:

The idea is to be so...so saturated with it that there’s no future or past, it’s just an extended present in which you’re...making meaning. And
dismantling meaning, and remaking it. Without undue regard for the words you’re using. Its meaning carried to a high order. It’s not just essential communication, daily communication, it’s a total communication. (p. 121)

This flow or release that is documented by so many that understand and study creativity, are trying to put words and understanding to those parts of the human psyche and connection to the cosmos that is so hard to comprehend through the thinking aspect of our consciousness. This is more of a felt sensation guided through various emotions and sensed through our intuitive consciousness. As this process continues to grow inside of my own consciousness, I can see and feel a shift in my own perception of myself amidst the natural world. Eco-depth Psychologist Bill Plotkin (2003) would see this creative flowing process as an access point to the deeper aspects of our human psyches and even as deep as our souls:

In addition to non-ordinary states, the pathways to the soul should have other common themes. Many are rooted in metaphor and symbol—dreamwork, deep imagery, ceremony, signs and omens, poetry, and art. No surprise: symbol is the currency of imagination, and imagination the prime window to the soul. (p. 118)

Throughout this thesis I have discussed how something inside of me has been released, or unblocked and rewilded. And it that was the aspect of the creative process that felt so satisfying as I was rewilding myself or connecting to nature, my own nature, in a pure and natural way. The
question here is what is connecting to nature? Or what has been suppressed in all of this? As this study goes deeper and deeper, we can see that it is aspects of the human soul that are suppressed and negated in the domestication process of humanity. The human soul is part of the natural world, it is held inside of the cosmos just as it is held inside of our bodies. It is a mysterious and enigmatic piece to the human experience but there are those that venture to understand and even release its suppression amongst the automization of our current society. The field of depth psychology that was started by the late Carl Jung began this quest of understanding the human soul amidst so many other factors that seem to make up a human on this Earth. Eco-depth psychologist Bill Plotkin has taken his work even further and found ways of accessing it, and maturing ourselves so that we may be able to hold ourselves up as developed and responsible adults here in this space and time. Here, in Soulcraft, Plotkin goes on to assist us all in understanding the human soul and its connection to the cosmos:

Nature—the outer nature we call “the wild”—has always been the essential element and the primary setting of the journey to the soul. The soul, after all, is our inner wilderness, the intrapsychic terrain we know the least and that hold our individual mysteries. When we truly enter the outer wild—fully opened to its enigmatic and feral powers—the soul responds with its own cries and cravings...Our society is forever erecting barriers between its citizens and the inner/outer wilderness...But when we escape beyond these artificial
barriers, we discover something astonishing...The individual soul is
the core of our human nature, the reason for which we were born, the
essence of our specific life purpose, and ours alone. (p.15)

As we begin to see the wild is outside as well as inside of us we can see how
creativity offers us an access point to the depths of our being as does
extensive amounts of time in nature. This helps us understand what it is
releasing or touched so deep in the body upon creating, the human soul. The
creative process is simply allowing ourselves to realign with the deepest, and
most natural aspects of our being, the freedom of emergence. To me, this is
what the wild is, those very strange and weird aspects of art and life that
seem to come out of nowhere, and most of all the freedom to express that
oddity however it may reveal itself. The less we constrain ourselves, and the
more we begin to understand the origins of this deep yearning for freedom
and wildness, the more we can begin to allow it in our lives as something real
and needed. As Plotkin says, “As a culture we downplay the importance of
imagination...Imaginations is our most valuable power on the journey to the
soul.” (p.145)

Another depth psychologist with which I resonate very deeply, is
Clarissa Pinkola Estes. She wrote the virtual Bible to many women entitled,
Women Who Run with the Wolves, which is a book of myths that make up the
wild woman archetype. She wrote this for women so they would remember
their roots as a species, and to help them understand the origins of their
instincts and intuition, all which connect to the soul. The creativity of women
and humanity in general is reiterated throughout this book, as it is a cornerstone of human behavior. Throughout the book, one thing is not disputed, the importance of a healthy and thriving creative life. She goes on to say:

...A woman’s creative ability is her most valuable asset, for it gives outwardly and it feeds her inwardly at every level: psychic, spiritual, mental, emotive, and economic. The wild nature pours out endless possibilities, acts as a birth channel, invigorates, slakes thirst, satiates our hunger for the deep and wild life. Ideally, this creative river has no dams on it, no diversions, and especially no misuse. (p.323)

It is this creative and imaginative aspect of our beings that offers a direct window to the soul and works to express itself through various modes of consciousness outside the realm of thinking that to me, is an imperative aspect to rewilding the human being on this earth. To re-enliven our connection to the natural world by embodying that nature through emergent creative acts, not only allows us to feel the depth of instinct alive in our bodies, but allows us to feel ourselves as part of the natural world again, not any kind of machine that keeps itself separate from it. Creativity is natural, humanity is nature, and the awareness brought to it through the creative act re-instills this connection, re-enlivens this instinct, and renews the human spirit.
Figure 3-“Moon Messages”
Chapter 4

Rewilding: Applications for Social Change and Sustainability

How can we listen or see to find our way by feel to the heart of every yes or no? How do we learn to trust ourselves enough to hear the chanting of earth? To know what’s alive or absent around us, and penetrate the void behind our eyes, the old, slow pulse of things, until a wild flying wakes up in us, a new mercy climbs out and takes wing in the sky?

-Linda Hogan from Dwellings
The term ‘Sustainability’ is a loaded word used by economists, environmentalists, and educators alike. It ranges from ‘greening’ one’s lifestyle to advocating for social justice. It has become a buzzword and a movement within itself yet even in this program at NAU I and other students have had a hard time defining a truly Sustainable Community. The discourse around the ‘Sustainability Movement’ varies from person to person, as it seems to serve as an umbrella word that emphasizes the cause that is of most importance to whoever uses the term.

Yet, as I have discussed in previous chapters and realized throughout my experience in this program as a creative being myself, change in my experience begins at the individual level. As the famous quote from Gandhi indicates, if we wish for real change to occur, WE must be the change we wish to see in the world. I understand that this is not the example that everyone chooses to follow as many feel that a movement must be made in mass, as that is the only way to shift the institutional agenda. I believe that each affects the other and that within every macro large scale movement, you have the individual and their own life experiences, consciousness and view of the world that hold great influence to their peers and to the greater society at large. With that in mind, based on the information and experience I was able to gather throughout this thesis experience, I have suggested four applications of creative changes that can be made in the life of every individual that sees themselves as part of the sustainability movement. These four applications were garnered from my own personal experiences
and the literature review of this thesis. Those together helped me shape the
four ideas/applications of ‘rewilding oneself’ and shifting consciousness in
order to develop sustainable solutions for the future.

Creativity is key here as these four applications appeal to all modes of
consciousness so that we may begin to employ a more holistic way of
thinking, feeling, imagining, and sensing the world around us. By engaging
these other parts of ourselves it is my aim to be able to approach the
catastrophic environmental, social, political, and cultural problems our
generation faces with a fresh state of mind. In essence, it is my goal to do
what Albert Einstein suggested and change the mode of consciousness that
created these problems, so that we may be able to approach them from a
new, dynamic point of view. By using the information I gathered by
observing my own process of rewilding myself through creating art, as well
as the well of knowledge of authors that speak on this subject, I have deduced
the four applications into the following: 1) Mindfulness, Meditation, and
Yoga, 2) Connection to the Natural World, Shakti Energy, and the Return of
Instinct, 3) Imagination and Play, and 4) The Return of Magic and Quantum
Theory.

**Yoga, Mindfulness, and Meditation**

I found during this process of rewilding myself through art that the
time I spent breathing, doing yoga, and sitting in meditation prepared me for
the ability to release pent up frustrations, and allowed me to tap into those
deeper parts of myself that yearned to be felt and expressed. The importance of yoga, stretching and moving the body into certain positions so that all muscles and cells receive more oxygen is what was key in this process, as it opened me up to be able to sit in meditation for longer periods of time as well as begin to truly understand the depth of importance meditation holds amidst the West’s contemporary norms of excessive consumption and distraction.

So often here in the United States of America, our modern contemporary life commands the everyday human to be tense, alert, and on guard. From driving a large machine everyday, or riding in one or around many, to arriving to whatever job that dictates your attention, many of us are asked to be on guard- our nervous system working in its sympathetic state, alert, and under stress in order to complete the days worth of activities this world has asked of us.

The job of a graduate student competes within this system, under the same duress. Being asked to read 600 pages a week+ alongside working a 20 hour a week job leaves little room for much else other than sleeping, eating, and excreting. The amount of tension that built up inside of my body over the course of this graduate process was colossal. Consistently engaging my left brained faculties, I could feel the build up of pressure inside of my head and in my shoulders. This caused much stress to accumulate within my body and mind leaving me spiritually empty and devoid of much energy. Sadly, my innate hopeful and optimistic nature gave way to pessimism, and sadness
over the grim reality over how humans treat each other and Mother Earth herself. This stress to me, was part of the domestication process, working my body and spirit down into an easily pliable and thus manipulated entity, so that I was able to perform the mechanical actions required of me without much of a fight.

The outlet I found within all of this, to rehumanize me within all of it, was yoga. The ability to stretch my body, open the energy centers within it, and experience the release felt like pure freedom. Nourishing my heart chakra and working to release the tensed muscles of my chest, allowed for a release- an emotional release to emerge within me. I began to remember the other aspects of my being, and the other parts of my body and consciousness that begged for attention. The power of expressive movement is essential in the de-domestication process as here in our current mechanical modern lives, our bodies have become part of the machine, completing tasks and due dates in a timely manner without much of a shift in form. Yoga became one of the many entry points of accessing these other dormant consciously creative centers of my being, and it proved to be a very important one at that.

Another pivotal aspect of my conscious awakening toward de-domestication, was mediation and mindfulness practices. I found myself fortunate enough as part of my graduate experience, to be able to take part in meditation as part of my course curriculum. This proved to be one of the most beneficial and truly relaxing times of my entire two years in graduate school. Meditation proved to be the space within the day where I was able to
really let go, and observe my mind with all its energy and myriad of thoughts running round and round. It also allowed for a space of compassion and love for myself, humanity, and the planet to emerge through all the negativity I was feeling. Thich Nhat Hanh in his book *The World We Have*, goes on to discuss the power of not only meditation but living mindfully and present in this current era:

> When we see a group of people living mindfully, smiling, and behaving in a loving manner, we gain confidence in our future. When we practice mindful breathing, smiling resting, walking and working, we become a positive element in society, and we will inspire confidence in everyone around us. This is the way to avoid allowing despair to overwhelm us....Its very important that we live our daily lives in such a way as to demonstrate that a future is possible. (p.74)

Mindfulness and meditation practices are such simple yet truly revolutionary methods of rewilding the self as the silence and space that one cultivates in these practices allows for the mind to pause. In that silence, the natural, animal aspects of ourselves are able to return to the surface, employing those other ways of knowing and remembering ourselves as part of this earth, not separate from it. Within the pause also resides a truth of the present moment. We shed the past and future in these silent spaces and cultivate an appreciation for every second that passes, for each breath that passes through our lips. Care for one another and the planet will evolve naturally from this state as it breeds gratitude for all that one has and cherishes the
beauty of every living being. The thought of mindlessly destroying anything in the name of economic development has no meaning or value from this state of mind, only love can emerge from such a still, silent, and tender place.

**Contact with the Natural World, Shakti Energy, and Instinct**

Other aspects that I gathered from this process of rewilding myself that proved to be helpful were engaging in actual contact with the earth as often as possible. Spending time outdoors whenever I could and taking the time to really listen with my entire being to the sounds of the forest, or wherever one may be inside of our Earth, allowed for me to reset myself, my thoughts, and conscious body amidst the chaos of our developed world. The concept of ‘Shakti energy’ is not new, in India it is thought of as being the all pervasive energy of the earth and universe. Using this term is to remind us that the earth and humans as part of her, contain massive amounts of untapped energy, not to be seen as ‘resources’ but as dynamic and inexhaustible aspects to this connected universe. Vandana Shiva in her book *Soil Not Oil* discusses the importance of putting human energy, humans as part of the dynamic aspect, back into the earth versus machine energy:

To make the energy transition beyond oil, we need to bring people back into the economy, bring human energy back into production, respect physical work, and give it dignity...There are multiple levels at which the human capacity to do work needs to be put back into the energy equation and into human destiny. First is the internal energy
of human beings in all its dimensions—spiritual, cultural, emotional, intellectual, physical. If it is tapped, this is the largest energy source we have—inexhaustible, replenishable, and ever enlarging. Human energy, combined with the energy of the sun, the plants and animals, the wind, the air, the sea and water, the soil and earth is both the basis of work and livelihoods and the source of sustainable and renewable energy. (p.140)

This is Shakti energy as Shiva puts it, “living energies”. Reenlivening our everyday experience through the use of these living energies, will slowly allow for the humans to rewild themselves amidst the machine culture of our current reality. By working with the earth somehow everyday, either by spending time outdoors, working in the garden, biking to work, however one chooses to use their time outside- one is subtracting from the machine culture within which we live, which is indoors and working with artificial intelligences and reanimating it through our own animal ‘shakti’ energy. This is the energy that is so needed to shift not only our own domestication process, but the overall way in which we interact with the earth around us, and one another.

This process has the potential to bring about the return of instinct, as we humans living amongst ‘the machine’ have lost much of our instinct as organic time and experience has become lost to regimented, planned, and controlled moments of experience. Time in nature has been shown to have a positive affect on not only our bodies but minds and souls as well. Richard
Louv (20119) in *The Nature Principle*, goes on to say, "...accumulating evidence indicates how simply living and working in a natural or re-natured environment...can have a profound impact on our mental health." (p.62) And it is the job of eco-depth psychologist Bill Plotkin to assist people in growing their souls through experience with the natural world. He goes on to say in his newest book, *Wild Mind*:

> What happens when we rewild our techniques and practices for facilitating human development—not by merely getting them out the door and onto the land or waters, but, much more significantly, by fashioning approaches in which our encounters with the other-than-human world are the central feature? What happens, in other words, when we allow nature to be the primary therapist or guide, while the human mentor or advisor becomes more of an assistant to nature, an agent or handmaiden of the wild? (p. 18)

This natural therapy, as Plotkin calls it, is a prime method for allowing the reappearance of our wild, uninhibited, and instinctive natures to return to us. This is an imperative aspect to rewilding the human species as it is our instincts that help us to know, through no rational sense of consciousness, when something is off, or imbalanced. As we spend more time outdoors allowing every sense of our body to intertwine with the natural rhythms of this earth, we are reenchanting those lost and “atrophied” instincts as Jung put it that have disappeared amidst the quiet hum of machine culture, silent of its natural Shakti energy. More time spent in nature and surrounded by
the natural world is imperative to healing all aspects of the spirit, body, mind and soul and may assist us in regaining the lost aspects of our human/animal nature.

It is conceivable that reengaging this aspect of our psyches that may have become underused or inert, will grow our consciousness closer to the natural world. The closer we become to that which we already are, the more humans will feel a deeper sense of responsibility and pain toward the destruction and annihilation of our living earth. This is the natural state of the human, to have razor sharp instincts and to be at home within the natural world; alienation from her has only brought on a culture that dismisses the earth as a resource, not a precious and alive part of our own bodies. The closer we get to the living earth, not separate from her through time indoors and engaged by machines, the more we will begin to feel her as part of ourselves and defend all aspects of her as if all living life were a part of our own kin.

Imagination and Play

There is a special state of mind that we enter into when we allow ourselves to engage in playtime. It crosses over into the realm of silliness, absurdity, and even obscurity. Playing, however one would like to think of it, is something that is left up to children for the most part and around the time one hits puberty, the rational state of ‘reality’ begins to deaden these imaginative and creative other realities we have created for ourselves. Yet,
in my understanding throughout this study of creativity and consciousness, I do believe that imagination and play are deeply linked to this channel of opening and an imperative piece of creating a truly sustainable world.

There is a purity to imagination and playtime, as it is something that comes from our deepest place of creativity, uninhibited by the rules of ‘reality’ and undomesticated in its conception. Children are born into this world with so much imagination! They can see feel and taste other realities that are to them as real as any other aspect of their material life. Yet the ‘civilized’ world discounts these aspects of a child’s other sense of time and space as silly and ridiculous. What if humans were to allow themselves in a new mode of play consciousness somehow everyday? Playtime as a child I can remember as elaborate, fun, and always evolving into something new. It was spontaneous and wild, there were no rules, it was a time when I was able to be, say, do, feel, and think whatever I wanted, as it was make-believe a place of enchantment and fun.

When I was engaging in the conception of my various paintings, I was able to arrive at a space where my ego was not involved. I allowed myself, if only for a short time, to just create, not caring what it was going to look like or how others were going to judge it. The irony is that it was when I let go of what it would look like; it became something so very beautiful. In other words, when I allowed myself to play, and not take anything too seriously, the work was beautiful. It reflected my freedom of mind and heart. The colors complimented one another as something so sweet to the senses and
the shapes seemed to fit the space perfectly. It was only in this pure space of creative play, where I was able to reenter the consciousness of a seven-year-old Chase, that I was able to create something so different and pure. It was in this space of play where there was absolute freedom and my imagination was able to come through. It is hard for anyone to imagine when they feel the weight of criticism, judgment, and analysis. It was only within this very unique space of child-like enthusiasm where my ego had yet to become fully formed or aware of itself against the backdrop of modern life, that I was able to create and feel my imagination well up inside of me as a balloon would.

There are those few individuals that are able to find that space of conscious creative playtime in their adult lives. It emerges in different ways and in different aspects of their work, but it is there. John Paul Lederach (2005), a Christian peacebuilder who has mediated some of the most difficult of conflicts, uses his imagination and artistry to help him find paths to peace through creativity. He describes this in his book, *The Moral Imagination*:

*The artistic process is fun. The greatest artists of all time had a knack for playfulness, for seeing life inside of things. Too much seriousness creates art with a message but rarely creates great art. There is no scientific evidence that seriousness leads to greater growth, maturity, or insight into the human condition than playfulness...Ironically, the pathway to healing may not lie with becoming more serious. This may explain one reason that people of so many geographies of
violence have developed such extraordinary senses of humor and playfulness. (p.160)

Imagination is encouraged by the ability to allow for play. One of the greatest thinkers of our time, a man who still dictates the narrative around quantum theory even 50 years after his death, Albert Einstein believed deeply in the power of imagination. Author Alice Calaprice in her book, *The Quotable Einstein* quotes the man himself as saying, “When I examine myself and my methods of thought, I come close to the conclusion that the gift of imagination has meant more to me than my talent for absorbing absolute knowledge.” (p.19)

Learning to recognize the importance and value of finding the space where imagination can be encouraged and promoted, within an area of play or wherever a non-critical space could find itself, is imperative to the development of thought around the concept of sustainability. Finding, inventing, or creating spaces in our daily lives where we play, have fun and are able to dance with ideas and creations, may be the key to opening up a vision for our future. For something revolutionary to affect planet Earth and humanity as part of her, entering a completely different mode of consciousness through whatever fun, creative, and playful manner one enjoys most, could be the path to a sustainable future. Trying to invent solutions within the mindset, within the machine, and within the system at large that created the problems will only create more of the same, we must exit this system, rewild our bodies and minds, and get OUTSIDE of these
boxes we have been put inside of. The answers lie outside of it all, as Einstein himself said, "I must seek in the stars that which was denied to me on Earth.”

(p.9)

**The Return of Magic and Quantum Theory**

The final application I have deduced from my own experience of rewilding, is the return of magic into our everyday lives. So many authors speak of this aspect yet it is something that seems overlooked and discounted as nonsensical by mainstream culture. Let me be clear here, that the word magic incorporates all energetic aspects of the unseen. It is the mysterious yet very real aspects of our current reality here on earth. It is part of the unexplainable pieces of reality that do not fit into any rational science. They are the experiences beyond coincidence, the feelings beyond intuition. Magic, the animated world where the entire earth and every object within and beyond her is alive, has a consciousness and can be communicated with. Magician and phenomenologist David Abram discusses his definition of Magic in *Spell of the Sensuous*:

Magic then, in its perhaps most primordial sense, is the experience of existing in a world made up of multiple intelligences, the intuition that every form one perceives—from the swallow swooping overhead to the blade of grass, and indeed the blade of grass itself—is an experiencing form, an entity with its own predilections and
sensations, albeit sensations that are very different from our own.

(p.10)

It is within these different modes of consciousness that exist all around us in everything that makes up the magical consciousness. When one believes that everything around them is awake and alive, and that you can in turn interact with and ask from it things, and possibly shape its own proclivities, that is when you get into magic as its own craft. Neo-pagan Starhawk (1979) describes how she views the art of magic making in *The Spiral Dance*:

To work magic is to weave the unseen forces into form; to soar beyond sight; to explore the uncharted dream realm of the hidden reality; to infuse life with color, motion, and strange scents that intoxicate; to leap beyond imagination into that space between the worlds where fantasy becomes real; to be at once animal and god. Magic is the craft of shaping, the craft of the wise, exhilarating, dangerous—it is the ultimate adventure. (p.123)

Both of these definitions tie into the field of quantum theory, as it was the “collapse of the wave function” that began to prove, scientifically, that humans can shape through their perception, their reality. Here Dr. Joe Dispenza (2012) discusses this experiment in his book, *Breaking the Habit of Being Yourself*:

What quantum physicists discovered was that the person observing (or measuring) the time particles that make up atoms affects the behavior of energy and matter. Quantum experiments demonstrated
that electrons exist simultaneously in an infinite array of possibilities or probabilities in an invisible field of energy. But only when an observer focuses attention on any location of any one electron does that electron appear. In other words, a particle cannot manifest in reality—that is, ordinary space-time as we know it—until we observe it. (p.14)

Within this idea of observing something to make it real, one can as Abram and Starhawk discuss shift one’s perception to not only understanding other conscious modes of experience but project a thought, idea, or experience out there in energetic thought form and turn it into a material reality. This technique has been used by many sages and shamans throughout history. Author Shakti Gawain discusses this act in her book, *Creative Visualization*:

> An artist first has an idea or inspiration, then creates a painting. A builder first has a design, then builds a house...The idea is like a blueprint; it creates an image of form, which then magnetizes and guides the physical energy to flow into that form and eventually manifest it on the physical plane. (p. 6)

Beginning to use these different forms of magic as defined by several different people on several different conscious levels all connect to one main idea that we create our reality first through our thought forms, observation, and imagination. Understanding this aspect of consciousness can change the course of human destiny and the destructive affects we humans are having on one another and the earth. By shifting our perception and opening
ourselves up to the kind of future that we truly desire for our children, and children's children, we can begin to project in our minds eye the changes in human behavior we wish to see.

As the basis of this thesis has studied and done its best to show, humans are part of this ever-evolving universe, we are the cosmos, we are the trees, we are one another. We are constantly emerging, shifting, changing, and we carry the power of imagination and creativity to create our environments around us. The greatest and most beautiful piece to all of this is our ability to consciously shift our perception and create an environment around us. Using the well-established techniques of quantum theory, creative visualization, witchcraft, and phenomenology can assist humanity in the next evolutionary step towards healing and creativity by using our own creative, inspirational, and imaginative power to create our future together.

Ervin Laszlo in his book *Quantum Shift in the Global Brain* discussed this shift and the human conscious contribution to it, “In the human world, unlike in nature, a bifurcation can be decisively influenced by conscious will and considered purpose. Human will and purpose decide whether the world heads toward breakdown or toward breakthrough.” (p.31) And it is the creative mind of each and every one of us as animals inside of this earth that can assist it in transforming into a truly sustainable one.
Conclusion

There is a space here for self-critique as I can see how much of this thesis could be seen as a call for anarchy. Let me be clear that I am not calling for complete anarchy and a shutdown and destruction of our social, political, economic, and cultural institutions. Rather, I am calling for a transformation of them. If our institutions were to begin to embrace the more right-brained aspects of our current reality, allowing for different kinds of knowing and intelligence to emerge equally as important as our rational faculties, I believe our institutions would see a great transformation in the way in which they conduct themselves. I believe the form and structure of them would transform as it gave way to different priorities and access points of intelligence. Beginning to embrace these different kinds of intelligence and knowing I believe is the center for real transformation.

This thesis was of a different family than most traditional, academic and predominately left-brained works. It was my aim to create a thesis that was holistic in its approach to a problem, so that I may in turn integrate all aspects of myself, and my consciousness to understanding and working toward finding a solution for it. I saw the main problem that this thesis is addressing to be that our academic institutions that are controlling much of the discourse around sustainability tend to favor only one kind of knowing or intelligence, predominately the left brained faculties of thinking logically, analytically, and rationally. I do believe that by creating art, documenting my process, documenting my own history and looking to those that have written
on the emergence of different aspects of our consciousness I have come to understand some of the ways in which humans may begin to employ other-than-rational modes of present awareness that integrate both sides of the brain to all human created problems faced by our Earth. This is the path to a holistic future, a balanced future, and in my opinion a sustainable future.

Employing the great well of creativity we humans carry within our bodies and souls and the imagination possible within that well is the key to developing truly creative and innovate strategies and methods of a living future. Continuously engaging in our imbalanced method of discourse and discussion around the topic of sustainability from a predominately left-brained analytical standpoint will only bring us more of the same, rational, carefully understood and researched controlled solutions. These rational aspects are very valuable to the question of sustainability, but they do not address the entire realm of consciousness within which one can conceive of alternate possible solutions to the problems humanity is facing. There is a whole other piece, which is desperately needed in all of this- a wild piece.

We humans are animals, not machines, and we do best when we are able to be free with our ideas, conceptions of reality, and impressions of the future. Free of judgment, free of control, and free of limitations. Restrictions create walls and walls create barriers to the freedom of thought and consciousness that is needed in order to discover the future of our children and children’s children. The wild is freedom, and it lies within each and every one of us as humans on this Earth, by cherishing this wildness and
seeing what it can do for the whole of the Earth, humanity, and the cosmos is what the next step in the sustainability movement must embrace if it is to emerge as something truly innovative. Healing requires balance, and it is time we begin to balance all of the rationality this country was founded on with creativity, as it is the over use of rationality itself, founded in science, that is destroying humanity and this beautiful planet we call our home. One thing we should keep in mind is that there is no greater piece of art than our beautiful planet EARTh. Lets listen to her call, intertwine ourselves inside of her womb, and become the art she has shown us is possible.
Figure 4-“Breathing In Color”
Works Cited


Works Cited


Works Cited


