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Mentor's Introduction

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Alanna Stalker-Horner recalls childhood and her interest in the details her mother would recount of the horses on her farm: their names and markings, quirks and adventures, and her attachment to them. As Alanna's young girl Mara learned to hold herself upright, she was held on Alanna's horse for her first rides. She would ask her grandmother to tell stories of her horses, and Alanna would recognize these characters and her mother's relationship with them from earlier tellings.

Through winter, Mara, now entering adolescence, looks forward to summer riding camp and draws the horse she will care for and ride. This relationship is not one of domination or practicality. It is one of mutuality and interdependence. Simone de Beauvoir (1953) described girls' transcendence in such relationships, their freedom in Nature.

> . . . among plants and animals she is a human being; she is freed at once from her family and from the males—a subject, a free being. She finds in the secret places of the forest a reflection of the solitude of her soul and in the wide horizons of the plains a tangible image of her transcendence. . . (p. 407)

She discussed women who preserve their independence:

> Walking through the heather, dipping her hand in the stream, she is living not for others, but for herself. Any woman who has preserved her independence through all her servitudes will ardently love her own freedom in Nature. (p. 689)

In developing an art room in the barn of the summer riding camp, Alanna has broken convention and created an environment that is open to the girls' freedom in Nature. This also nurtures the girls' self-definition. Both of these are, to Rosemary Ruether, essential in establishing a "new humanity" appropriate to a "new earth". She hopes for a cultivation of self that affirms others and the earth "as that 'thou' with whom 'I' am

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in a state of reciprocal interdependence" (p. 211). Stories told by Alanna's mother are essential to Alanna and Mara's self-definition and their bond with Nature now reflected in Mara's drawings of her horse.

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