Synaesthetic Perception as a Mode of Being:
Crossings of the Sensuous and the Poetic

by

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B.A., University of Washington, 1962
M.A., University of Montana, 1973

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Abstract

“Synaesthetic perception as a mode of being: Crossings of the sensuous and the poetic” seeks to disclose the harmonious interrelationship between synaesthetic modes of being, wildness, the poetic, and education. Merleau-Ponty (1962) and, more recently, David Abram (1997) have both proposed that synaesthetic perception, characterized by the overlapping and intertwining of the senses, is common to our direct, preconceptual experience in the life-world. Although we often disregard and discount synaesthetic capacities because they are non-linguistic and non-rational, they are an essential and rich characteristic of being human. The inquiry suggests that greater sensorial awareness that comes from awakening a trust in our sensuous embodied selves is promoted by being in the presence of the poetics of everyday circumambient wildness and in engagements with certain poetic writings which are grounded in the natural realm.

Synaesthetic perception, a non-linguistic mode of knowing, must be accorded greater respect; it must be acknowledged and encouraged in all areas of education. Nature poetry, which is rooted in the texture of our ordinary sensuous experience amid wild others, can be an ally of education in this endeavour. The study proposes that it is through an awakening of the wisdom of the senses that we might recognize and value the importance of cultivating an ecopoetic rootedness in and reciprocity with the earth. The practice of a
synaesthetic mode of being might bring about a positive transformative power, one that inspires a resistance to the encroachment of technocratic, dehumanizing controls on many aspects of our lives, and urges us to create a more wholesome, habitable earthhome for both human and nonhuman.

This is a poetizing inquiry, an increasingly accepted form of qualitative arts-based inquiry, that is written in verse, and presented in a poetic dialogic format. This methodology, which is congruent with the central position of the poetic in the study, is informed by the writer’s background in poetry and literature. Each of the four chapter-long stanzas takes up one of the main themes: synaesthetic perception as a mode of being, the pulse of childhood knowing, a poetic sense of dwelling, and the intertwining of the senses and the poetic. A distinctive feature of the dissertation is that each stanza is fashioned as a polyvocal performative dialogue: an intertwining of poems, poetic fragments and the voices of others with the researcher’s own verse-voice. The inquiry is offered as an experimental work in process. The reader is invited to engage in the dialogues by bringing her/his own sensuous experiences in the wild and knowledge of poetry to the piece, thus becoming a co-creator of the inquiry.
## Contents

Supervisory Committee ........................................................................................................... ii  
Abstract ................................................................................................................................ iii  
Contents ..................................................................................................................................... v  
Acknowledgments ....................................................................................................................... vii  
Revealingness of Fog ................................................................................................................... viii  
Prelude ........................................................................................................................................ 1  
Situating the Topic ....................................................................................................................... 2  
Finding My Voice ......................................................................................................................... 10  
Crafting a Poetizing Inquiry ......................................................................................................... 11  
Poetic Performative Formatting ................................................................................................. 15  
Writing Conundrums .................................................................................................................... 19  
Presenting the Terms ................................................................................................................... 20  

**Stanza I: Synaesthetic Mode(s) of Being: Sensuous Harmonies** ......................................................................................................................... 28  
Proem ....................................................................................................................................... 28  
Synaesthetic Perception ............................................................................................................... 29  
Intertwining of the Senses ........................................................................................................... 34  
Intertwining of the Senses with Wildness .................................................................................... 39  
Allure of Language .................................................................................................................... 45  
Thought-ful Interlude ................................................................................................................... 51  
The Wellspring of Memory ......................................................................................................... 53  
Lure of Technology .................................................................................................................... 56  

**Stanza II: Pulse of Knowing** .................................................................................................. 61  
Proem ....................................................................................................................................... 61  
Going Forth ................................................................................................................................. 61  
Surfacings: The Waters of Mnemosyne .................................................................................... 71  
Poetic Musings Toward Childhood ............................................................................................ 74  

**Stanza III: Toward a Sens of Place** ......................................................................................... 80
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Revealingness of Fog

Cocooned
   in dense whiteness,

fog blind
   I am sightless,
   adrift among shadows.

Shape changing fog
   shrouds space,
   the terrain slips away,
   the known, the solid,
   trail, trees, rocks,
   concealed.

I am befogged, anchorless
   with no sens
   of which way to go.

Quieting the mind,
   I relinquish vision.
   My other senses rally,
   reaching into the dense opacity,
   gathering a sens of the place.

I savour scents that spill into the dampness—
   bog mustiness
   cool mossy greenness
   whiff of cedar, of fir
   pungency of kelp, like a taste of the sea,
   feel the drenching rub of bushes,
   spiderlines quivering across my face,
   the brushing touch of flowering ocean spray,

listen to the muted sounds
   that weave through the fog bound stillness—
   rustlings of hidden creatures
   plunk of cones
   haunting hoot of owl
   hush of waves
   seal fin slap.

I am enfolded in a sensuous intimacy
   with the unseen.

A sudden piercing brightness,
   the fog dissolves
   revealing a place
   newly perceived,
   a place transformed, as I am.¹

(Vernon, 2008)
Prelude

*We can think out of a true sense of play.*
Kuspit, 1993, p. 186

Play is a “fundamental activity of man (sic)**, the back-and-forth movement of encounter and exchange with the world in which man is continually engaged … an activity out of which understanding comes” (Hans, 1981, p. x). In thinking out of a sense of play one relinquishes an attachment to the predictable and maintains an openness to the unusual and the unexpected. The term prelude³ comes from the Latin *praeludere*, which combines *prae* (pre—before) and *ludere* (to play) (Oxford English Dictionary [OED], 1973, II, p. 1655).⁴ This *prelude* is a preface to play. It is designed to incite the reader to be “*in play* with the matter at hand” (Caputo, 1987, p. 219), to enter into a playful reciprocal engagement with the inquiry. It is a threshold piece that prepares the way for and foreshadows the presentation of synaesthetic perception as a mode of being,⁵ and extends an invitation to engage in the kind of “creative play and fresh perception” (Bohm & Peat, 1987, p. 50) that comes with the interplay of the senses that is inherent in synaesthetic modes of being. The reader is encouraged to maintain a receptive openness to the thematic concerns of the inquiry, to the interplay of ideas, and to the unconventional dialogic format of intertwining voices, that is, to allow preconceptions to fall away, to break with long held intellectual habits, and to resist adherence to the dominant academic discourse.

In this prelude I present the topic of the study, synaesthetic perception as a mode of being, and the major themes. I explain my rationale for crafting a poetizing inquiry characterized by a performative dialogic format in which poems and poetic fragments are interwoven with theoretical, philosophical, and ecosophical voices and my own verse voice. I also mention some of the conundrums I have had in the writing of this inquiry. At the end of the prelude I present a glossary of key terms. I offer this inquiry to the reader as an experimental work in process.


**Situating the Topic**

Synaesthetic perception is a mode of being that offers the possibility of awakening a trust in our sensuous embodied selves. Merleau-Ponty (1962) and, more recently, David Abram (1996) have both proposed that synaesthetic perception, characterized by the “overlapping and intertwining of the senses” (Abram, 1996, p. 124), is common to our direct, preconceptual experience of the life-world. Merleau-Ponty “identifies subjects with their bodies and views perception as the primary mode of the body—a body that can be itself only by going beyond itself” (Evans & Lawlor, 2000, p. 4). Sense-perception, then, “is our fundamental bodily way of being in the world” (Baldwin, 2004, p. 127). The five senses in their “kaleidoscopic” (Howes, 1991, p. 167) intermingling give us access to the circumambient natural realm in which we are embedded. As earth dwellers we are enfolded synaesthetically in the earth’s shifting sensuous landscapes, skyscapes, waterscapes, and “soundscapes” (Schafer, 1994). “Perception … is an attunement or synchronization between my own rhythms and the rhythms of the things themselves, their own tones and textures” (Abram, 1996, p. 54).

It is the characteristics of synaesthetic perceptual experiences which occasion our reciprocal, participatory interrelations with wild others: those natural entities, both animate and inanimate, of the “more-than-human” (Abram, 1996, p. 64) realm, that I endeavour to bring forth in this inquiry).

Merleau-Ponty asserts that “our basic contact with the world is pre-reflective … our fundamental cognition of the world is not purely ‘mental,’ a wholly intellectual operation—it is rather a function of all our sensory, motor and affective capacities operating in a unified field” (Crowther, 1993, pp. 102–103). Our “primordial, preconceptual experience, as Merleau-Ponty makes evident, is inherently synaesthetic” (Abram, 1996, p. 60). Sensuous synaesthetic experiences are primordial, in the sense that they are fundamental, original, not derivative, and not enclosed in concepts. They are ineffable, unknowable, not graspable in words, but undeniably deeply felt. Although often disregarded and discounted, because non-rational and non-linguistic, synaesthetic
capacities are an essential and rich characteristic of being *homo sapiens*. As Serres (1997) points out, *sapiens* “first of all means to feel or suffer flavour and fragrances” (p. 73).

Language is one way of knowing but there are other ways of knowing, such as synaesthetic perception, that are not encompassed in language. A synaesthetic mode of being is simultaneously a mode of being and a tenor of knowing. It is a knowing which is paradoxically a kind of nonknowing, as in giving up attachment to what one thinks one knows. This is a participatory “somatic-emotive knowing which seeks evidence in nonmaterial reality” (Heshusius & Ballard, 1996, p. 5) and is nontranslatable. Heidegger (1971a) reminds us that “[for] Greek thought the nature of knowing consists in *aletheia*, that is, in the uncovering of beings. It supports and guides all comportment toward beings” (p. 59). Synaesthetic perception as a mode of knowing and linguistic knowing complement each other.

Synaesthetic modes of being, which evoke a sensuous embodied knowing, awaken us to the presence of everyday circumambient wildness and to our interconnection and interdependence with the sustaining earth, what the poet Gary Snyder (1969) calls, in a book by that title, the “earth house hold.” Such modes of being make it possible to experience an at-homeness, that is characterized by an intimate, reciprocal relationship between the self and the natural realm.

Humans are inescapably part of, entangled with and dependent upon planet earth. Our relationship with wild otherness is undeniably, unavoidably one of reciprocity. For Merleau-Ponty, “perception is this reciprocity, the ongoing interchange between my body and the entities that surround it” (Abram, 1996, p. 52). Such an interchange is symbiotic—we contribute to and receive from the living, breathing earthworld we inhabit. Without a *sens* of our reciprocity with the sustaining earth we feel disinheritcd, alien. For Buber (1970) “relation is reciprocity” (p. 67), and depends on cultivating an “I-Thou” relationship with the other, one that speaks with the whole body in an honouring of the other, rather than an “I-It” relationship that casts the other as an object (pp. 62–63). Cultivating the art of reciprocity brings a greater awareness, gained through perceptual openness and acuity, of our co-existence with wild others—that we are enfolded together
in a wholeness. We share common ground, air, water, sustenance in a state of reciprocity. As Heidegger (1971a) reminds us, “the ground of man (sic) is not only of a kind identical with that of plant and beast. The ground is the same for both. It is nature …” (p. 100).

It is this reciprocal relationship that excites in us an empathy and caring for the “earth household.” Due to our inextricable embeddedness with the earth, whatever befalls the more-than-human realm we feel acutely, for “to be incarnate is to be in the world and of the world; it is to be part of the domain [the body] surveys” (Dillon, 1988, p. 139). Reciprocity depends on paying attention to our perceptions, and accompanying feelings and thoughts, during an existential experience of being in the presence of wild inhabitants, and is contingent on welcoming them into our field of concern. I don’t just see them as mere objects of my perception. I esteem the more-than-human, perceive and celebrate their intrinsic value, their mode of dwelling, and their reciprocity with their surroundings. As Merleau-Ponty (2004) asserts, “the whole of nature is the setting of our own life, or our interlocutor in a sort of dialogue” (p. 138), a reciprocal dialogue. The perceiving body is an “integral part of this subject-object dialogue” (Evans & Lawlor, 2000, p. 4). The reciprocal nature of this dialogue is explored further in the ‘Awakening the Connatural’ section of Stanza III, Toward a Sense of Place.

What kind of mode of being makes it possible to sense, that is to know, not only intellectually but sensorially, this reciprocal belonging with the earth? This study suggests that synaesthetic modes of being can jar us to be mindful of our rootedness in the earth, help us to find our bearings, “the sense/Of where we are” (Oppen, 2003, p. 78). It suggests that greater synaesthetic awareness is promoted by being in the presence of the poetics of everyday wildness: the beauty, wonder and multiplicity of the natural domain. Finally, it proposes that the practice of synaesthetic participatory modes of being might promote a reenchantment of everyday living among wild others and prompt us to realize a hope for a more habitable earth home for both human and non-human.

While I am aware of the way cultural narratives shape our understanding of the relationships between humans and nature, body and mind, and am cognizant of the systemic links between the domination of nature, the denial of the wisdom of the body,
and human oppression, my focus here is restricted to synaesthetic modes of being amid wild circumambient natural communities. It is undeniable that many in the world live lives riven by social abuse, dislocation, and ecological desecration. They have little or no opportunity for any meaningful encounters with wildness and, thus, with a sens of the poetics of place. I feel that we must continually ask ‘what sustains us,’ “[w]hat do we believe/To live with” (Oppen, 2003, p. 16) and “[w]hat is to be done” (Nancy, 1997, p. 157)? I don’t have answers, only more questions. I merely put forward the possibility of a positive transformative power brought about by a harmonious reconnection with our sensuous embodied selves, with wildness, with an awakened sens of place, and with the poetic—“for here there is no place/that does not see you./You must change your life” (Rilke, 1982, p. 61).

I turn to poetic writings that offer us a site in which to engage and learn to trust synaesthetic, nonlinguistic, participatory ways of being that connect us to the earth, to our inner reality and to each other, and promote relationships of reciprocity. I am speaking here of a certain kind of poetry, sometimes referred to as nature or ecopoetry, that sings of the natural realm and is grounded in the poet’s direct sensuous experiences in the wild. Poetic language, which is rooted in the sensuous, eschews what Heshusius and Ballard (1996) refer to as “the conceptual internal divisions of mind, body, emotion” (p. 3) and speaks to us of the ineffable, that which can only be felt and sensed, but cannot be completely disclosed in words. I find confirmation for stressing that poetic language begins in the senses in Milton’s statement that “the language of poetry is simple, sensuous and impassioned” (Hirsch, 1999, p. 299, italics added). Poetic language grounded in perception, is a return to the perceptual, pre-conceptual experience of childhood. “The poet, like the child, is dependent on sense experience rather than abstraction, and his primary units of expression are images, not ideas or concepts” (Frye, 1972, p. 8).

Sensory-perceptual acuity, then, is an essential attribute of the nature poet and the poetic language they use is founded in the language of the senses. The sensuousness of expressive poetic speech can evoke a deeply felt sensuous response in the reader. It can remind us of the reciprocity between our sensuous embodied self and the sentient
aliveness of wild others. Poetic language of nature poems, embedded as it is in the sensorial, reminds us to be sensuously present in the world, to pay attention, to be aware, in a “return to things themselves” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. ix).

Between the poet and the reader there is a kind of tacit understanding of a certain ineffability of both the experience the poem speaks of and of reader’s experiential response, an understanding that there are experiences that words cannot describe. Words point to something beyond themselves, which the poet summons forth. Poetic speech “guides our reflection. It actualizes an intuition flowing deeper than the intellect” (Hirsch, 1999, p. 24).

In general those aspects of poetic speech which are primarily aural and appeal to the sense of hearing (such as rhythm, rhyme, onomatopoeia, cadence, alliteration), and those elements which are primarily visual (imagery, metaphors, similes, figurative language, layout on the page and stanzaic structure) work together to excite responses from readers. The poetic speech of certain nature poems, through rhythmic and imagistic language, has the power to send the reader out into the natural realm with what McKay (2001) calls “poetic attention,” that is, with an “openness in knowing” (p. 29). I further address the capacity of poetic language to accomplish this in Stanza IV, *Crossings of the Senses and the Poetic*.

McKay talks about the “persistence of poetic attention during the act of composition”(p. 29), and uses the phrase specifically for a state of mind in which the nature poet “celebrates the wilderness of the other” and maintains “a kind of knowing” that “remains in touch with perception” (pp. 26, 27). I have used the phrase poetic attention throughout the inquiry to suggest a perceptual acuity, an unusual awareness, a poetic attentiveness to the poetics of the wild that inheres in synaesthetic perception as a mode of being. This is an experience of the ineffable that confirms that “radical otherness does exist” (McKay, 2001, p. 29). I want to stress that it is through both the cultivation of synaesthetic perception and an engagement with nature poetry, which can evoke a synaesthetic mode of being, that we can learn to be in the presence of wildness with
Synaesthetic Perception as a Mode of Being

poetic attention, that is, in a crossing of the sensuous and the poetic. Such an attentiveness might be inspired by the rhythmic qualities of poetic language.

When speaking of the language of poetry my main focus is on rhythm, which “is a central concern, having to do with the relation of our language and body, the fundamental character of our thinking and the very tenor and tone of our lives” (Burch, 2002, p. 7). It is primarily the rhythmic aspects of poetic language that the reader responds to and that evoke a sense of poetic attention. The poem’s content, form, and effect are bound together through rhythm. Through poetic speech the poet gives rhythmic expression to his/her intense, emotional and imaginative perceptual experiences of nature, and thus, engages the reader in the flow and sens of the poem. Readers “simultaneously produce and perceive rhythm” (Hirsch, 1999, p. 306). “Rhythm is not measure, or something outside us, but we ourselves are the ones who flow in the rhythm and rush headlong toward ‘something’” (Paz, in Hirsch, 1999, p. 306), something that we approach with “poetic attention.” It is my conviction that considering the rhythmic qualities of poetic language is essential for the reading, practice and teaching of poetry.

The rhythmic effects of a poem are best experienced by either hearing it read or by reading the poem aloud in a performance of the poem. The oral voicing of a poem can be a kind of enchantment that brings sound, images, words, and gestures together. The rhythms of the wild are reflected in the rhythms of the poem to which one responds with one’s own bodily rhythms. The poem arises out of the poet’s sensuous, bodily entanglement with the natural realm, but the “medium of poetry is the human body … the reader’s breath and hearing embody the poet’s words” (Pinsky, 1998, p. 8). An intimate, reciprocal relationship between reader, the poet, and the poem emerges.

Through images, sounds, rhythms inspired by nature, the poetic language of nature poems calls up tactile, visual, auditory, olfactory memories and responses in the reader, and reflects the reciprocity, the intertwining of our senses with our immediate natural surroundings, and our embeddedness within the natural realm. When we are enfolded in the world of the poem the poet gifts to us, listening with all our senses, attuned and open to sensuous, meaningful moments which speak to the core of our being,
we may have an epiphanic or transformative experience reminiscent of a deeply intimate synaesthetic experience amid wildness. The capacity of poetic language to evoke such experiences in the reader depends on the poet’s authentic sensuous experience in the wild, as well as on the reader’s own experiences among wild otherness and his/her sensorial reciprocal relationship with the poem.

Can an engagement with certain poems aid us in awakening a synaesthetic mode of being, guide us in trusting the wisdom of the senses by recalling us to the evidence of what we hear, see, smell, touch and taste, and encourage the “bringing forth” of a more wholesome relationship with wild otherness, with the sustaining earth and with each other? Can it awaken us to the surf song of stones, the season-scented air?

In certain poems I find a sensibility that acts as a critical counterforce, a site of creative resistance, to the undeniable encroachment of technocratic, dehumanizing controls in many aspects of life. Can an engagement with such poems, that recall us to those gritty, captivating, poetic, exhilarating, ‘real’ sensorial experiences, inspire us, even incite us, to turn away from virtual reality and the shadow world of screens where many children and adults live and learn, and toward each other in awareness of our shared life living with the earth?

My intent is to encourage the poet in all of us, and a mode of living poetically, that includes cultivating “poetic attention” (McKay, 2001, p. 26), amid the poetic wildness of places in which we dwell. I hope to reveal that a synaesthetic mode of being can be a poetic way of being.

The movement of the inquiry is one of éclosion, by which I mean it is disclosive in the sense of “unfolding, birthing, emerging” (Baker, 2005, p. 101). I am concerned with revealing the interrelationship, that is, “disclosing an expansive harmony” (Baker, 2005, p. 99), between synaesthetic modes of being, wildness, an ecopoetic sens of dwelling, the realm of the poetic, and education as educare (educate is attributed etymologically to the Latin, educare, to rear, which is related to educere—to lead forth, (OED, I, p. 630), the bringing forth of the whole person.
Education that places a greater emphasis on synaesthetic perception as a mode of being and knowing can begin to heal the mind-body and human-nature dualities which still direct our thinking. “Deleuze suggests that genuine education proceeds through a deregulation of the senses and a shock that compels thought against its will to go beyond its ordinary operations” (Semetsy, 2004, p. 230). A recognition of the participatory nature of our perceiving senses opens us to a recognition of and harmony with an intimate place of poetic dwelling, and to a desire to create a life world where education, as educare, a “bringing forth” of the whole person, has possibility. My concern for what will sustain us, children and adults alike, in societies increasingly dominated by the scientific-technological worldview, informs this inquiry. I feel that our sensuous receptivity to wildness is often usurped by the simulated sensuous experiences that constantly accost us in the contemporary human-made mechanistic world. I am concerned with the potentially dehumanizing impact of the new ‘cyberspace’ technologies on the lives of children. Are children out climbing trees, collecting stones, watching the shape changing skyscape of clouds, are they outside at all? I am not anti-technology. Humans have always had technologies, we are after all, among other things, homo faber, but I believe that it is imperative to question the technological choices we are making for children, for ourselves, for the earth. Thus the question which weaves through the inquiry: ‘What sustains us?’ I believe that the positive transformation brought about by a reconnection with our sensuous embodied selves, with wildness, and the poetic could further a “reenchantment” (Berman, 1981, p. 24) of the earth as our place of dwelling, as home.

This inquiry is grounded in a deep and abiding familiarity, rooted in my earliest childhood memories, with the voices, presences, and spaces of wildness and with the earth as “home,” a poetic place of belonging. My long and sustaining conversation with poetry, in particular with those poems that are a singing of the earthworld and that have the transformative power to incite me to change my life, also informs the study. My experience of contiguity of nature and poetry has undeniably shaped my mode of being and my hopes for education, and has influenced the raison d’etre of this inquiry. What was it about the experience of being in the presence of certain poems that occasioned
such a deeply felt, intimate, often transformative effect on me, one that I couldn’t express in words? I was engaged sensuously by the poem, its rhythm, words, images. I participated sensuously in the poem’s evocations. The appeal was first to the senses rather than being addressed primarily to the mind. This was an experience similar to sensuous encounters in the wild, an ineffable experience which goes beyond language. Both these experiences were disclosive and spoke to me of a deep inner sens of being an earth dweller. I have a profound trust in the wisdom of the body, which informs the intellect, and in synaesthetic perception as a mode of being and a tenor of knowing that reveals both a personal inner and outer reality and a communal ecopoetic possibility.

**Finding My Voice**

Deleuze (1987) speaks of style as a mode of being, an expression of becoming, and as an “assemblage of enunciation” (p. 3). Style is “managing to stammer in one’s own language” and is “the source of writing” (pp. 4–5). This is what Heaney (1985) calls “finding a voice [which] means you get your feeling into your own words and that your words have the feel of you about them” (p. 570). It is a stance, a lean toward confidence, and “involves the discovery of ways to go out of [one’s] normal cognitive bounds …” (p. 572). Finding my voice includes wandering, a way of going beyond “normal cognitive bounds” to “raid the inarticulate” (p. 572).

In wandering, unlike a journey, I go without an itinerary, without a preconceived idea of my destination, and without a sense of pursuit. Even though “wandering includes the risk of error and distractions” (Serres, 1997, p. 98) and I may venture into deep waters, fog filled valleys, or to the edge of the abyss, I have chosen not to follow a prescribed path. As Machado (1976) puts it, “There is no road, walker/ you make the road by walking” (p. 318). In wandering, which is not aimless even though there is no established, preconceived goal, I rove along untrodden ways into the unknown and the unexplored, and roam among the strange, the startling, and the sensuous. I am free to practice slowness, to browse and ruminate, and to stop for those simple things, what Bonnefoy calls “a richness close by” (in Naughton, 1984, p. 22). I gather those few
images and perceptions, replete with sounds, tastes, textures, sights, and smells, that speak to me and vibrate within me, and that I then send forth. Wandering, as a synaesthetically charged mode of being among wild others, does not provide a methodology for this inquiry, rather it is what the poetizing methodology\textsuperscript{14} comes out of.

\textit{Crafting a Poetizing Inquiry}

The crafting of a poetizing inquiry is congruent with the main topic of synaesthetic perception as a mode of being and with the central position of the poetic. My methodological response to the question that informs the topic of the inquiry is the creation of a poetic style of expression that contributes to a performative dialogic format. Invoking a kind of verse line to give the ideas presented here connection and credibility is my way of crafting the inquiry and of “keeping under way” (Caputo, 1987, p. 213). It is implementing a form of writing, unlike the mode of the dominant discourse, that is natural to me and that reflects the connection between my poetic voice and my mode of being. This attempt to speak poetically about synaesthetic perception is enhanced by the resonances and reverberations of my sensuous embodied lived experiences among wild others.

As a poetizing project this inquiry is engaged in \textit{poiesis}: the creative action of making, of bringing something forth from concealment to unconcealment (Heidegger, 1977, pp. 10–11). I find it confirming to recall that \textit{Poiesy}, from the Greek word meaning ‘creation’ and ‘to make,’ from which our word poetry is derived, is a noun of \textit{process} (Lucy, 1997, p. 65). As the “creative production of meaning” (Burch, 2002, p. 3), \textit{poiesis} honours the disclosive nature of the study that is concerned with revealing the harmonious interrelationship between synaesthetic perception as a mode of being, wildness, a renewed \textit{sens} of dwelling, the realm of the poetic, and education. Both poetry and synaesthetic perception, which are \textit{éclosive}, that is, engaged in bringing forth from concealment to unconcealment, have provided me with models to fulfill the disclosive aim and movement of the inquiry. My intent is to provide insight for the reader into a
mode of being that I am calling synaesthetic. To this end I have attempted to honour van Manen’s assertion that

poetizing is not ‘merely’ a type of poetry, of making verses. Poetizing is thinking on original experience and is thus speaking in a more primal sense. Language that authentically speaks the world rather than abstractly speaking of it is a language that reverberates the world, as Merleau-Ponty says, a language which sings the world. (1990, p. 13)

As Serres (1995a) puts it “[i]n the beginning is not the word …. In the beginning is the song” (p. 138).

Although it seems peculiar to use the term methodology in the context of crafting a poetizing inquiry, it is concinnate with what Caputo (1987), in his reconception of methodology, calls “methodos, meta-odos” [from the Greek, meta, with, hodos, way, OED, II, p. 1317],

an acuity which knows its way about even and especially when the way cannot be laid out beforehand, when it cannot be formulated with explicit rules. Meta-odos is a way of keeping underway, in motion, even when it seems there is no way to go—the repetition which repeats forward. (p. 213)

He stresses the importance of avoiding “methodological constraints when what the matter … requires is plasticity, inventiveness, suppleness, the ability to play along with the matter” (p. 212). Synaesthetic perception, the overlapping and intertwining of senses, is itself a meta-odos, a poetic mode of keeping underway.

Poetizing, as a methodology, is in keeping with the creative action of poiesis and allows me to keep “in play.” It is a practice of carrying forward with a creative movement of disclosive intent. It becomes a way of proceeding while maintaining “an openness toward what cannot be encompassed” (Caputo, 1987, p. 214) in language. Writing poetically is a methodological mode of making my way which emanates from the themes of the inquiry, all of which are concerned in some way with bringing forth in the sense of revealing, and is congruent with the overall movement of the piece which is one of
disclosure. Poetizing, as poetic thinking on original experience, avoids “over dependence on methodology” and allows for “surprise, novelty, [and] the wider relational fabric” (McDermott, 2003, p. 133). It is also an engagement with a way of knowing which honours “feeling and sensing” (Berman, 1989, p. 131), rather than a pursuit of knowledge. Poetizing as a methodology, then, is not concerned with mastering data but with the disclosive movement of the inquiry as an opening to the unknown. This is accomplished through a dialogic format of intermingling voices that is intended to be performative in nature and practice.

Because prose, from the Latin prosa, carries the sense of “straightforward, direct” (OED, II, p. 1690), a linearity which does not cohere with the intertwining movement of this inquiry, I have chosen to compose my narrative voice in a quasi-verse style in which I exploit certain rhythmic aspects of poetic form. These include the staggering of lines, line length, pauses, placement of words and quotes on the page, word and phrasal repetition, as well as typographic variation, all of which are geared toward inciting the reader to slow the tempo of reading, to pause and consider the ideas presented. I recall the West Coast indigenous concept of “Kat’il’a—the act of becoming still, slowing down, despite an ingrained and urgent need to know and desire for busyness” (Tanaka et al., 2007, p. 99). I hope to encourage the reader to enter into the practice of slowness. Slowness doesn’t mean that you don’t get anything done but that you pay attention to the doing and the thinking—to being present among presences.

Verse comes from the Latin versus, meaning the “turn of the furrow” and “a line of writing” (OED, II, p. 2466). It is this sense of verse as a turning (of lines, words, and ideas) that appeals to me. The word turning used in this way holds within it a sense of disclosure, of revealing, as happens in the turning of a furrow. What was once concealed yields to the plough, is turned up, and mixes with that which is unconcealed. This extends to the recursive non-linear movement of the inquiry where themes merge and reemerge, thought leads into thought, and analogies come forth. Writing in verse, then, is appropriate to the intertwining movement and disclosive nature of both the topic and the inquiry itself.
Composing in verse avoids the linear density of prose, highlights certain words and phrases, and allows for spaces that encourage the reader to pause within the flow and to contemplate what falls between the word thoughts. Encountering ideas and thoughts in verse form might incite one to read differently: to pay particular attention to the nuances, the silences, the implicit feelings and meanings, and thus become open to that which cannot be spoken, “deeper than any word, found beyond telling” (Rudolf, 1995, p. ix). Verse prompts one to read slowly, perhaps even aloud, tasting the words, feeling the rhythm of sounds and phrases, and lingering with an image without ladening it with analysis and concepts. This kind of reading “asks us to lift our eyes from the page and to contemplate the world” (Bonnefoy, 1990, p. 806), to stop for a passing thought, a memory, a moment of imagination, or to notice birds flitting past the window, maybe even to wander out among wild otherness.

The reader, then, needs to be in play, that is, to be engaged in the movement of the piece, awake to the reverberations, and open to what Bachelard (1994) refers to as “a feeling of participation in a flowing onward” (p. xvi). The inquiry becomes a poetic experience in which the reader/listener, as an imaginative sensuous embodied being, participates. By bringing her/his own synaesthetic perceptions and experiences, ways of being with wildness, and knowledge of poetry to the piece, and thus, entering into a dialogue with the chorus of voices which make up the text, the reader becomes a co-creator of the inquiry.

I further invite the reader to accompany me in an engagement with certain poems and poetic moments. My intent is to prompt them to read the poems aloud as an inducement to continue the oral voicing of poetry in her/his life. I have ventured here an evocative poetic speaking as a kind of enchantment—invoking my voice and the voices of others in a singing. I hope the reader will join in this singing by performing aloud the stanzaic dialogues.
Poetic Performative Formatting

The inquiry has four stanzas plus this prelude, which is the entry threshold, and an education coda that becomes an opening out threshold, in the sense of crossing beyond the limitations of this inquiry to further questions and possibilities. Although the term stanza often refers to a recurrent grouping of two or more lines of a poem, it is also used to designate longer divisions in a composition according to thought, rather than form, such as a prose paragraph. In keeping with the poetizing nature of the inquiry I have appropriated the term to designate the four main sections of the inquiry that I have composed as thematic units.

The intersense harmony among the senses, and the way they have of evoking each other, which is characteristic of synaesthetic perception, has provided me with a model for crafting each stanza as a heterogeneous commingling of fragments from several genres (poems, scholarly works, plays, novels) with my own thoughts and the voices of others. Rather than data gathered from observations, interviews, and surveys, my sources are the philosophical, ecosophical, theoretical, and poetic thoughts of writers and poets whose voices contribute in some way to the elucidation of the topic, and a selection of lyric poems that exemplify these thoughts and ideas. These voices, far from incidental to the presentation, are indissociable from it. I bring these voices together in recognition of the hope Milosz (2003) expresses in these lines from Incantation (p. 239):

Beautiful and very young are Phil-Sophia
And poetry, her ally in the service of good.
As late as yesterday Nature celebrated their birth,
The news was brought to the mountains by a unicorn and an echo,
Their friendship will be glorious, their time has no limit.

A feature of the inquiry, then, is that each stanza is fashioned as a polyvocal dialogue in which the voices of poets, writers, philosophers, ecologists, and educators intermingle with my verse-voice. By including voices from different disciplines, cultures, and times (juxtaposing voices from the distant past with more recent and contemporary
ones) which bring diversity and depth to the topic, I undertake to reveal the historical thread of support for a way of embodied being that is harmonious with a concern for the health of the sustaining earth.

The stanzas, as poetic dialogues made up of collaborative interwoven voices, are designed to be performed.¹⁶ I find support for stressing the performative aspect of the inquiry in Oliver’s use of the word “performance” instead of the word “reading” when talking about poetry, and his assertion that “artistically that’s where the action is, where the possibilities begin” (in Middleton, 2005, p. 28). Performative is a term from speech act theory, invented by J.L. Austin. “From the point of view of speech act theory, any utterance is not only constative (saying something) but also performative (doing something)” (Phelan & Rabinowitz, 2005, p. 550). According to Austin’s view, performative “utterance is not setting out to describe a situation; it … is an event or an action” (Loxley, 2007, p. 8). My intent is to engage the reader sensorially in the disclosive, performative aspects of these dialogues, that is, to listen with all their senses, to be in play, open to the unexpected and the sprouting questions, to pay attention to the intertwining themes, and to the possible reverberations for their own lives. As Loxley (2007) suggests, “performance is embodied practice” (p. 154). I invite readers to participate in the dialogues as “word-singers” (Simms, 1984, p. 9) (a term I bring forward from traditional oral literature), and to read aloud, to savour the words carried on the breath, to stop in contemplation of the ideas expressed. Performance in this sense becomes an “occasion for experience” (Cage, in Perloff, 1981, p. 288).

The ideas presented in the dialogues are meant to resonate with the reader’s own sensuous and poetic experiences. By the creative act of ‘turning’ over these ideas and intertwining her/his thoughts with those presented, the reader becomes a co-author of the inquiry.¹⁷ By participating in the stanzaic scenarios, the reader takes on various roles: performer, spectator, witness, critic, commentator, contributor, and is in a reciprocal relationship with the text. Presenting the inquiry in the form of dialogues is designed to engage the reader sensorially in the poetic and disclosive movement of the piece. In negotiating this unconventional text, the reader needs to engage in a playful non-linear
reading, that is, moving back and forth between my verse voice and the other voices, thus joining in the dialogue. I encourage the reader to listen to the voices from past and present, from a variety of cultures, and the way they converge with my voice, that is, to actually hear the voices of Galen, Thoreau, Whitman, Merleau-Ponty, Evernden, Bonnefoy, Oliver and others, and the way their ideas resonate with the themes put forth in the inquiry. As Middleton (2005) points out, “meaning is extended, complicated, and sometimes transformed by performance” (p. 28).

The reader is also encouraged to perform the poems by reading them aloud. A poem according to Olson is “energy transferred from where the poet got it … by way of the poem itself to, all the way over to, the reader … an energy peculiar to verse alone and which will be … different from the energy which the reader … will take away” (in Middleton, 2005, p. 28). Middleton asserts that “this dynamic would seem likely to be most fully realized in the interactive performance of poetry” (2005, p. 28). Intense, involved, careful reading of a poem “is an event because performance is necessarily an embodiment of the poem in time and space.” (p. 28).

The movement of the inquiry is similar to a sonata or symphonic composition. The themes of Stanzas II, III, and IV appear briefly in Stanza I, and then reappear more fully later as each stanza is developed. The movement is also recursive, iterative with thematic aspects from all the stanzas interwoven throughout. The reader will notice both a revisiting of thoughts and a carrying forward of what has gone before to a new and different perspective, a repetition which illuminates. Certain terms and phrases, such as ‘éclosion,’ ‘reciprocity,’ and the ‘wisdom of the senses,’ are repeated throughout the inquiry and act as linking leitmotifs.

Each of the four verse stanzas deals with a theme that illuminates the topic and is introduced by a Proem, (Pro+song, thus, before the song) an ‘introductory discourse’ (OED, II, p. 1679) which briefly outlines the contents of the stanza. In Stanza I, *Synaesthetic Modes of Being*, I explain what I mean by synaesthetic perception as a mode of being and a nonlinguistic mode of knowing. I address the forgetting of nonverbal sensuous experience and question the privileging of language as the primary way of
knowing. Stanza II, *Pulse of Knowing*, focuses on the importance of childhood synaesthetic experiences amid wildness for both children and adults. Stanza III, *Toward a Sens of Place*, has three sections: Created Nature, Awakening the Connatural, and Poetic Sens of Dwelling. Stanza IV, *Crossings of the Senses and the Poetic*, includes three sections: Singing of the Wild, Found Beyond Telling, and Poetic Voicing. Here I look at certain aspects of poetic language, and consider the engaging and voicing of nature poems as an experience that challenges the forgetting of nonverbal sensuous experience. While comments about education appear throughout the inquiry, the Education Coda stresses the importance that the awakening of synaesthetic perception and the voicing of poetry can have for education.

The voices of others, philosophical, theoretical, and poetic, are intertwined with my verse voice to convey, extend or lend support to my convictions. Prose and poetic quotes are set off from the main verse and are designated as *A Voice*, *A Chorus*, *A Poem*, *A Fragment*, or *A Moment*. These pieces come after my own ideas, precede them, or enter *en medias res* to flesh out a thought. They become *touchstones* that offer openings for the reader to pause and reflect. My verse thoughts are in bold print and those of others are in regular print. The poems and poetic fragments of others are in regular italics, mine are in bold.

While writing this inquiry I have kept in focus the etymology of the term “inquire,” *in* plus the Latin *quaerere*, meaning “to search into … to seek knowledge of (a thing) by putting a question; to ask about” (OED, I, p. 1079). As Burch (1986) reminds us, a question “concerns … an issue that pertains to our very being in the world” (p. 6). Questions are “intrinsically disclosive, integrative and invocative with no goal beyond the on-going and open-ended venture” (p. 6). An inquirer, then, is a seeker, a questioner, one who knows that “we do not so much posit a question as we are encompassed by it” (Burch, 1986, p. 7). As van Manen (1990) asserts, an inquirer “must live the question” (p. 19). The question I live through is: can practicing a synaesthetic mode of being in the presence of wildness and an engagement with certain poems and sensuous poetic moments guide us in trusting our inner knowing by recalling us to the evidence of what
we hear, see, smell, taste, and touch, and thus encourage a more wholesome sense of dwelling with the earth and with each other? An essential aspect of this inquiry has been to explore the congruency between what I am feeling and experiencing, what I care about, and that which I am writing about, thus accepting the responsibility to reflect on the quality of my own synaesthetic poetic mode of being.

Writing Conundrums

In creating this poetizing inquiry I continually found myself in the paradoxical situation, well known to poets, of “communicating through language what is impossible to communicate in language” (Brazilai, 2006, p. 118), in my case the nonlinguistic experiences of synaesthetic modes of being which defy conceptual categorization and superficial representation. Plagued by the ungraspability of what is sensed in the bodymind, and constantly grappling for just the right poetic words to convey what I felt, I was engaged in an ongoing struggle with language to describe the ineffable.

Throughout the writing of this inquiry multiple threads, luminous and rainbowed like the threads of spider silk drifting on currents of air in the autumn sunset, would emerge for inclusion. In attempting to deal with one thread at a time, I was constantly enmeshed in a seemingly endless deluge of tantalizing bits, analogies, thoughts, and ideas. Knowing that there is no end to the detail one might include in even the simplest of stories and wanting to take a lesson from the pared down simplicity of skeleton leaves, I strove to resist the temptation to include all that beckoned to me, and to avoid employing multiple ways to say the same thing.

Sometimes I have felt lost in a cloud of unknowing, and besieged by questions, doubts, and wonderings. It seemed that the way forward was concealed from me, and I longed for an epiphanic coming together of thoughts into a clarity that eluded me, a revealingness as when the fog lifts. Needing to literally ground myself in a recalling and reassembling of ideas, I would “sort it out by walking, Solvitur ambulando” (Blythe, 1999, p. 26), amid wild otherness. I would remove myself from my mental fog and let my senses remind me of where I was. Gradually the clarity would re-emerge and the words I
sought would surface. Something had been found, something else discarded. Both the inquiry and I had shifted. I realize that some part of crafting this piece was “only [a] seeking to lose something/ not to find something/ when (I) went forth so vigorously in search” (Lawrence, 1971, from Seekers, p. 661).

While writing a poetizing inquiry on synaesthetic perception, I have often felt caught between the dictates of academic discourse, on the one hand, and the pressures and stresses of life, including the ironic, always encroaching frustrations of dealing with the tools of technicity, on the other. Many times I have recalled the Zen story of the traveller, who, facing certain death dangling on a thorny vine on the side of a cliff, with a hungry tiger at the top, a yawning chasm below and two mice gnawing on the vine, plucks a wild strawberry. His enlightened exclamation “How sweet it tasted!,” has kept me tasting the strawberry (Reps, 1957, pp. 22–23).

**Presenting the Terms**

In writing this inquiry I have been constantly reminded that “[t]he main source of our failure to understand is that we do not command a clear view of the use of our words” (Wittgenstein, in Perloff, 1996, p. 206). I have attempted to maintain a “clear view” of the way I use words. The following explanation of what I mean by and the way I am using certain terms is not an attempt at definition. The word ‘define’ suggests the opposite of open. It means to bring to an end, to limit, to confine, to state precisely (OED, I, p. 507). I have endeavoured to use these terms in an open, expansive, and disclosive way which confounds narrow and static interpretations. Because it is “[i]mpossible to use a word without finally wondering what one means by it” (Oppen, in Davidson, 1997, p. 73). I have carefully considered my use of the following terms and phrases: *aletheia*; *bodymind*; *crossings*; *earth, earthness*; *éclosion*; *educare*; *ecosens*; *enfoldment*; *epiphany*; *haecceity*; *mode*; *natura naturans*; *natura naturata*; *poiesis*; *sens*; *wildness*; and certain ‘re’ words. Some of these words become *leitmotifs* (from *leit* meaning leading plus *motiv*, (OED, I, p. 1197) which is a term used in music and literature. I am using these words as recurring, prevailing threads that interconnect the themes, link the topic to education, and
inscribe the movement forward. The term *leitmotif* is salient to this discussion in another sense as having the quality of initiating movement, that which moves or tends to move a person to a course of action. Synaesthetic modes of being, poetry as *poiesis*, and *educare* are all movements engaged in bringing forth.

*Aletheia*

Heidegger (1971a) reminds us that “[for] Greek thought the nature of knowing consists in *aletheia*, that is, in the uncovering of beings” (p. 59).

*Bodymind*

I am using “bodymind” as a composite term instead of body-mind which suggests relations and body/mind which suggests a problematic gap, cleavage or rupture. In this I am influenced by Mitchell’s (1994) use of imagetext as a composite term (p. 89). The term bodymind challenges the traditional mind and body binary opposition and reflects a wholeness.

*Crossings*

The word ‘crossings’ in the title resonates with the intertwining movement of the inquiry: the synaesthetic crossings of various sense modalities, the crossings of the senses with wildness and wild others, and thus with the poetics of a place. These are crossings that counteract the divide that separates nature and culture, body and mind. I am also interested in tracing the crossings between poetry and wildness, the crossings of the reader with the sensuous worlds of poems, and the crossing of inner and outer selves. The inquiry itself becomes a crossing of my thoughts on and experiences of synaesthetic perception and the reading of poems with those of the reader.

*Earth, Earthness*

I have tried to avoid using the word ‘world’ myself, although it is used by others whose thoughts contribute to this inquiry, and have used the terms ‘earth’ and ‘earthness’ instead. Etymologically, world (worold) comes from Old English and refers to the “life of man.” It means “human existence” (OED, II, p. 2572), and is primarily concerned with
the “state of human affairs,” and carries a sense of human made. Although world also holds the meaning “earth or region of it” and “all created things upon it” I have noticed ‘world’ is often used in a way that does not include nature. I am concerned with revealing synaesthetic perception as a mode of being in our sensuous encounters in the wild, not in the human made realm of world. I am not setting up a duality. Earth and world are enfolded together. As the poet Bernstein (1992) puts it

[as long as the earth lives, there can be hope that the world can be transformed; but the world can destroy, though perhaps not kill, the earth … or it can occlude its communion with it (which happened long ago, perhaps when history began.
(p. 184)

Éclosion

Éclosion is a term used by French Romantic poets, in particular, Rimbaud, which conveys the experience “of unfolding, birthing, emerging” (Baker, 2005, p. 101), an experience which is a recurring leitmotif throughout the inquiry. It has a special resonance with the topic because of Rimbaud’s perception of “synaesthetic harmony [as] involving above all metamorphic éclosion” (p. 101). This term has links with several threads that are interwoven into the inquiry and put forward the idea of disclosure. Briefly there are connections with the disclosive power of synaesthetic modes of being, as an opening out, with the original sense of nat-ure as a process of being born (nat from nasci—to be born and ure—process) (OED, II, p. 1387), with the creating of poetry and a poetic way of dwelling, and with the idea of educare as a bringing forth.

Ecosens

What I am calling ecosens is an intimate knowing of the web of reciprocal relations between all things of the earth and between our sensuous embodied selves and wild otherness, a knowing that will inform our life living.
**Educare**

Educate is attributed etymologically to the Latin, *educare*, to rear, which is related to *educere*—to lead forth (OED, I, p. 630).

**Enfoldment**

I am using the term enfoldment in the usual sense of encompassing but I also want to evoke a deeper involvement or entanglement when I speak, for example, of the experience of synaesthetic enfoldment with wildness. I turn to the way physicists Bohm and Peat (1987) apply their concept of implicate order to consciousness. “The very word *implicate*, meaning enfolded, suggests that one thought enfolds another and a train of thoughts is actually a process of enfoldment of a succession of implications” (p. 185). The “inseparability and interwoveness of the generative [a deeper and more inward order out of which the manifest form of things can emerge creatively, (p. 151) and implicate orders is clearly the ground of all experiencing” (p. 190). I particularly like their suggestion that the implicate or enfolded order has the potentiality to “allow for the emergence, in creative perception, of new generative orders, which go beyond the individual content and involve the whole, common cultural experience” (p. 172).

**Epiphany**

Epiphany, from the Greek word meaning “to appear” (OED, I, p. 671) is another term which connects with the disclosive movement of the inquiry. Synaesthetic moments are often moments of epiphany, of showing forth, of revealing. I am not employing the term in the usual sense of the manifestation of a divine being. Because of the occurrence of epiphanies in his writings, the term is particularly associated with James Joyce. He uses the term to designate an event in which the essential nature of something commonplace is suddenly perceived. I am using the idea of an epiphany as an awakening, a flash of recognition, caused by a manifestation of something felt in the body, a striking, startling moment occasioned by a synaesthetic encounter with wildness or being in the presence of a poem. Thus, a synaesthetic epiphany is an intuitive grasp of reality occasioned by a simple, uncanny or striking presence.
**Haecceity**

The quality implied in this use is, as this man; thisness; hereness and nowness that quality or mode of being in virtue of which a thing is or becomes a definite individual; individuality (OED, II, 1989).

**Mode**

I have chosen to use the term ‘mode,’ in synaesthetic perception as a mode of being, in order to evoke the idea of a manner and practice of being which leaves room for divergence, diversity, and wandering, rather than ‘way’ which usually has the linear sense of a route, a path, or a map to follow as in a journey toward some particular end (OED, II, pp. 2516–2517). A synaesthetic mode of being could be considered a ‘way’ of being in the special sense in which the word “way” is used in the *Tao Te Ching*, as that which cannot be “described in words … [there are] things for which language has no names” (Waley, 1968,p. 142).

*The Way that can be told is not an unvarying Way;*

*The names that can be named are not unvarying names.*

*(Waley, 1968, p. 141)*

Mode also has reference to music—a tune, an air, a song—which links a synaesthetic mode of being to nature poems that are a singing of the wild. I use ‘mode’ in the singular with synaesthetic perception as a mode of being. Depending on the context, I use either the plural or the singular when referring to synaesthetic modes of being or a synaesthetic mode of being.

**Natura naturans**

Nature creating the essential creative power or act (OED, II, 1989). A Latin term coined during the Middle Ages, mainly used by Baruch Spinoza, meaning “Nature naturing” or more loosely, “nature doing what nature does.”
**Natura naturata**

Nature as a created entity or system (Retrieved April 27, 2009, from Oxford English Dictionary Online database). A Latin term, coined in the Middle Ages, mainly used by Baruch Spinoza, meaning “Nature natured” or “Nature already created.”

**Poiesis**

*Poiesis,* the creative action of making, of bringing something forth from concealment to unconcealment (Heidegger, 1977, pp. 10–11).

**Re-words**

I want to retain a *sense* of the movement of *écllosion*, emergingness and a carrying forward of a possibility that goes beyond what we have known in the past, that is, a freshness in a way of being, rather than a nostalgia for something lost and a desire to *return* to a past place or way of living. I am, therefore, careful about how I use certain re-words, for this hope necessitates not *just* to revive, relearn, reawaken, but also to awaken, to learn newly, and to enact a transformation, a metamorphosis. In bringing forward what we have misplaced, we need to go beyond to a different richer possibility, not the disconnect of either/or but rather a both/and.

**Sens**

The English word *sense* is used for both “the senses” and for ‘meaning’ depending on the context. Because I wanted to add nuance to the inquiry, I turned to the French word *sens*, which “suggests at once perceptual senses, discursive meanings and spatial direction” (Baker, 2005, p. 99). I wanted to bring out the inclusive nature of these terms and suggest a harmonic interconnection between the five ‘senses,’ a sense of meaning and a field of concern, a place of dwelling which includes wildness. This endows sense perception with a deeper, epiphanic meaning. When I use the word *sens* I am incorporating all these meanings. The English word ‘sense’ I reserve for speaking of a specific sense, i.e., touch, and the fusion of the senses.
**Wildness**

Instead of using the terms nature and Nature, (both have been appropriated to refer to nature as a concept, an object, a resource, a realm separate from us), I turn to the word ‘wildness’ as Thoreau (1947) uses the term: “In wildness is the preservation of the world” (p. 609). As he stated it, “I believe in the forest, and the meadow, and in the night in which the corn grows …. Life consists of wildness” (pp. 610–611).

I bring forward certain meanings of ‘wild’: “living in a state of nature, disposed to take one’s own way, of strange aspect” (OED, II, p. 2548). I want to stress that wildness is not a domain, a realm, a wholeness over there, elsewhere, removed from our life living, something that we are free to dominate, utilize, destroy. Wildness is all around us, is circumambient, whether we are living in a rural, suburban or urban setting, and we are part of it. Wildness is both that which has not yet been subdued by humans (woods, rocky sea coast, high mountain ridges, impassable swamps, clouds, winds) and that which is part of everyday experiences. I include in the phrase ‘wild others’ all we consider natural, of the earth, that is other than human: forests, seas, soil, plants, clouds, birds, animals, scent of cedar, and even a few straggling weeds emerging from pavement crevices.

Wildness has an ungraspable, unknowable, ineffable quality, a ‘strange aspect’ that eludes us. It is a “word we use for that nameless essential core of otherness, that which animals and trees exemplify” (Evernden, 1992, p. 121), a quality ‘sensed’ through attentive perception, of which nature poetry seeks to speak. I am an advocate for wild others, those animate and inanimate natural entities of the non human realm, both the threatened and the unthreatened. This is a political as well as an ecosophical and aesthetic position. I am not setting up a human made world vs. natural world duality but rather voicing my concern for the diminishing wild places of the earth.

I have avoided using the term wilderness which I reserve for those mostly inaccessible areas of the wild that are untrampled, uncultivated, uninhabited by humans. McKay (2001), however, uses the term wilderness to “mean, not just a set of endangered spaces, but the capacity of all things to elude the mind’s appropriations” (p. 21) and he
sees wilderness as “implicit in the things we use everyday” (p. 57) such as tools and furniture.

Other words that convey a sense of the wild are: wild otherness, earthness, natural communities, earth house hold, and natural habitat. I have searched for a word for ‘nonhuman more’ which does not refer to the human, that puts value and respect on wild beings and things, and that includes both the animate and inanimate. In English we don’t have a word to encompass this. By using the word wildness I avoid terms like ‘non human other,’ ‘ultra-human,’ ‘anti-human,’ in which the human perspective is implicit—what Evernden (1992) calls the “centrality of the perceiving human” (p. 102). Wildness can not be defined as non human. It is other than nonhuman. It is unknowable. Although I am adverse to using terms like ‘non human other,’ I do use them occasionally for the sake of variety, but under erasure. Another problem with using the word non-human is that, in a technologically constructed world, this term potentially encompasses more than just the non-human wild others of nature, and could also refer to machines and tools of all sorts which are also ‘non-human.’
Stanza I: Synaesthetic Mode(s) of Being: Sensuous Harmonies

Proem

In this stanza I present the theoretical grounding of the inquiry. I am indebted to Merleau-Ponty’s thoughts on synaesthetic perception, as set out in *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) and *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968), and to Abram’s interpretation of and additions to Merleau-Ponty’s ideas, which he presents in *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996). I consider the etymology and meanings of the word *synaesthetic* and explain what I mean by ‘a synaesthetic mode of being,’ a non linguistic experience that opens us to a mode of knowing not encompassed in language, an experience that may be traced, hinted at, in poetic language.

The movement of this stanza begins with an explanation of what I mean by synaesthetics and continues with a discussion of the participatory nature of synaesthetic perception, both in the intertwining of the senses and in a reciprocal relation to circumambient wildness. Next I approach the issue of the inability of language to describe these ineffable experiences. I address the neglect and denial of the wisdom of the senses, the “forgetting of nonverbal somatic sensuous experience” (Bell & Russell, 2006, p. 3) and the privileging of language as the primary way of knowing. After an interlude on thinking comes a brief consideration of memory as an inner sense. Finally, I look at the encroachment of aspects of contemporary technology on the possibility of practicing a synaesthetic mode of being.

I follow Merleau-Ponty and Abram in seeing perception as not just visual but as involving all or some of the senses. Henceforth, the term ‘perception’ will refer to synaesthetic perception, the intertwining of the senses. Because my focus is on the commingling of the senses, I do not focus on individual senses or address the way the five senses are differentiated from one another. I will be using other terms such as intersensory, merging, mingling, commingling, fusing, interweaving, as well as multisensory, imbrication, overlapping, and trans-sensory, all of which suggest synaesthetic intertwining. I will use the French word *sens* when the fusion of perceptual senses, discursive meaning, and direction toward is meant, and the English word sense when referring to the five senses.

The themes of the other three stanzas, *Pulse of Knowing, Toward a Sens of Place,* and *Crossings of the Senses and the Poetic,* appear here briefly.
nihil in intellectu nisi prius in sensu  
Nothing is in the intellect unless first in the senses  
(Majoy, 1996, p. 10)

And out of what one sees and hears and out  
Of what one feels, who could have thought to make  
So many selves, so many sensuous worlds,  
.................................  
Merely in living as and where we live.  
(Stevens, 1954, p. 326)

**Synaesthetic Perception**

Synaesthetic modes of being,  
sustained by sensory perception,  
in a commingling and overlapping of the senses,  
are modes of awareness and knowing  
not encompassed in language.  
They open us to being attentive  
to the unique qualities and demands  
of a moment  
of direct sensorial experience in a participatory engagement  
with our natural surroundings.

Synaesthetic perception  
is an essential aspect of embodiment,  
the blending of the sensuous, the emotive, the intellect,  
and is a major source of knowledge,  
although non-linguistic,  
that relates us to both material and nonmaterial reality,  
a knowing that the mind alone cannot fathom.

**A Voice**  
The truth of experience is sensory and cannot be linguistically defined; it eludes words, it is present in the elements of light and sound, in the primary world of children whose sensory experiences constitute a truth which demands no language to verify it.  
(Barzilai, 2006, p. 187)
As an antidote
to the forgetting
of the wisdom of the senses,
a synaesthetic mode of being
alerts us to our interdependence
with the “more-than-human” (Abram, 1996, p. 64),
a relationship possibly misplaced, neglected, ignored
that may have been overlaid
with the dictates of the purely rational, the conceptual,
and with the informational, the artificial and the virtual—
the cohorts of technicity,
and discloses an entry
into a deep conversation
with our inner selves.

The word synaesthetic
derives from
syn, together,
and aesthesis,
perception by the senses (from the Greek—OED, I, pp. 2222, 2232)
and refers to a joint perception or awareness,
a harmonious mingling of the senses.

In a synaesthetic mode of being and of knowing,
all of our senses,
“inherently interdependent” (Morris, 2004, p. 5),
work together in concert,
rather than merely interacting as independent entities.5
We experience aural, visual, tactile, olfactory and taste modalities,
intertwining, intercommunicating,
opening to each other,
insisting on participation.

The term ‘aesthetic’6 in synaesthetics
evokes
a bodily art of sensuous perception,

A Voice Aesthetics is born as a discourse of the body
… [and refers to] the whole region of human
perception and sensation, in contrast to the
more rarefied domain of conceptual thought
… The aesthetic concerns this … palpable
dimension of the human, which post-
Cartesian philosophy, in some curious lapse of attention, has somehow managed to overlook. (Eagleton, 1990, p. 13)

and a poetic attentiveness
to the beauty, the wonder of the wild,
and “how we take root,
day after day,
in a ‘corner of the world’” (Bachelard, 1994, p. 4).

A Voice Common things, a flower, a gleam of moonlight, the song of a bird, not things rare or remote, are means with which the deeper levels of life are touched so that they spring up as desire and thought. (Dewey, 1954, pp. 183–184)

“Synaesthetic” perception encompasses more than the perceptual ability described in psychology as “synesthesia,”
“a condition in which stimulation in one sensory modality also gives rise to an experience in a different modality” (Robertson & Sagiv, 2005, p. 3), an evocation of one sense by another, as when sounds, smells or tastes are received as colours (a green taste, a silver sound),
a condition which seems “unusual, estranged as we are from direct experience (and hence from primordial contact with entities and elements surrounding us)” (Abram, 1996, p. 60-61), but it is a common nonverbal experience in daily life.
The term synaesthetic,
in a synaesthetic mode of being,
combines both
a cross-sensory association,
“blackness .../whirring and beating” (Merwin, 2000, p. 166),
and a sensuous intermingling,
an actual “fusion of the senses” (Abram, 1996, p. 59),
a “synaesthetic harmony...
the supple,
the undulant,
the synaesthetic amplitude of interwoven senses” (Baker, 2005, p. 100).

A Fragment
This dawning fills the earth
With soft green light like tender lemon
leaves;
Grass as green as the unripe pomelo—such
a fragrance—
The does tear it with their teeth!
I, too, crave this grass-fragrance like green
wine;
I drink glass after glass.
(Das, 1976, from Grass, p. 17)

The poet experiences
in the immediacy of presence,
the converging, intermingling of the senses,
an all encompassing simultaneity of perception.

A synaesthetic mode of being
is a ‘natural’
uncomplicated bodily art
requiring nothing but an attentive bodymind—
no technological paraphernalia,
programmed entertainment,
or self-help guides,
no joining of groups, taking of classes, or buying of gear.
It is a mode of being which kindles
an increased awareness
of my interdependence with the earth,
of self-other reciprocity,
of who I am
because I am always learning to know where I am,
and admits of the possibility
of the poetic in my life and dwelling.

Far from being
mysterious, mystical, unattainable, or elusive,
synaesthetic perception is a part of the experience of being alive,
part of an “expressive wholeness” (Taylor, in Baker, 2005, p. 314),
a possibility beckoning to us—
a nonlinguistic capacity
crossing class and culture
with a sameness,
as well as difference
in the way senses are perceived and valued.\(^8\)

Sensous responses,
inhere in the encounter.
We are not hard wired or programmed
to experience wildness
in a particular way.
Everyone,
everywhere,
brings a unique
frame of reference to the event.

If estranged from my senses
“the synaesthetic
flowing together
of different senses
into a dynamic
unified experience” (Abram, 1996, p. 125)
may elude me.

_A Voice_ Synaesthetic perception is the rule, and we are unaware of it only because scientific knowledge shifts the center of gravity of experience, so that we have unlearned how to see, hear, and generally speaking, feel …. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 229)
Synaesthetic perception is “inherently participatory” (Abram, 1996, p. 90)
both in the way the senses participate with each other in an intertwining,
and in the way they participate in the dynamic crossings between our bodies and the nonhuman realm of wildness.

Intertwining of the Senses

Perception includes but is not limited to ‘visual’ perceiving,
and refers to “the concerted activity of all the body’s senses as they function and flourish together” (Abram, 1996, p. 59).

In the interplay of senses, each sense involves the others,
one sense can nudge the other senses into an awakened commingling.

A Poem
They call all experience of the senses mystic, when the experience is considered.
So an apple becomes mystic when I taste in it the summer and the snows, the wild welter of earth and the insistence of the sun.

All of which things I can surely taste in a good apple. Though some apples taste preponderantly of water, wet and sour and some of too much sun, brackish sweet like lagoon-water, that has been too much sunned.

If I say I taste these things in an apple, I am called mystic, which means liar.
The only way to eat an apple is to hog it down like a pig and taste nothing that is real.

But if I eat an apple, I like to eat it with all my senses awake.
(Lawrence, 1971, from Mystic, pp. 707–708)

An intensity of the senses, evokes an exhilarating clarity, a freshness amid the diversity of sensory perceptions, a unity in the way the senses intermingle, synchronistically, at a given moment, enhancing each other in transaction.

A Voice To give attention to something aligns us physically and mentally with that thing, inciting sympathetic movements within us and unlocking deeper levels of perception.
(Pringle, 2005, p. 141)

With the loss of one sense, such as the visual, while wandering in the dark or the fog, the other senses come to the rescue.
In my “blindness” I rediscover the vibrancy of my other senses as they interlace giving me access to my surroundings, and I experience a deepening of perception which occasions an epiphanic moment.

A Voice Molly: Just offering yourself to the experience—every pore open and eager for that world of pure sensation, of sensation alone—sensation that could not have been enhanced by sight—experience that existed only by touch and feel; and moving swiftly and rhythmically through that enfolding
[watery] world; and the sense of such assurance, such liberation, such concordance with it … the sighted people … their pleasure was actually diminished because they could see, because seeing in some way qualified the sensation. (Friel, 1994, p. 249)

The intensification and interpenetration of the senses in a transitory moment of sensuous entanglement can be a form of profound communion with wild otherness.

Individual senses may join together in a collaboration which brings startling and unusual vivacity to an encounter.

Poets attest to the experience of the playful crossing between seeing and hearing which is evoked in certain poems.

Voices
If you want to see, listen (Bonnefoy, 1984, in Naughton, p. 151)

When the ear sees
And when the eye hears,
One cherishes no doubts:
How naturally the rain drips
From the eaves. (Kokushi, 1987, in Organ, p. 118)

We know in what we see, what we feel in what/We hear (Stevens, 1954, from Looking across the fields and watching the birds fly, p. 517)

Synaesthetic perception, the senses simultaneously, rather than sequentially experienced, is nonlinear and recursive, an ever shifting, changing, emerging
collage of the senses,
an intertwining, discontinuous vibrant dance
in rhythmic response
to the rhythms of wildness.

This is not a ‘package’
of experience
that I can possess
and label,
the immediacy of the sensuous moment
cannot be pinned down,
captured in a photo or recording.
In the fleetingness of the synaesthetic encounter,
all is process,
in constant flux,
with no point of closure,
but the moment
can be stopped for
in the practice of slowness and poetic attentiveness.

Synaesthetic modes of being
help me see natural spaces as processual,
ever changing—
not as product—
just as I perceive myself
as process,
open to continual change.

The experience of synaesthetic perception,
particularly in an urban setting,
is threaded through
with sensuous disruptions,
eddies of turbulence.

Shifting, interlacing
sensuous multiplicity
accosts my senses,
a melange of scents
a chorus of sounds
a mosaic of sights
which may be jarring or harmonious.
Part of the art of a synaesthetic mode of being
is the capacity
to maintain a sensuous presence
amid wild otherness
in spite of disruptions
that would scatter the senses into disarray,
to retain an awareness
of the sensuous vibrancy
of things of the wild.

Sounds
of human making
interwoven
into the sensuous fabric of the moment
intermix in a crossing
with the wild sens-cape.

_A Haiku_  Bell Tones

_As bell tones fade_
blossom scents take up the ringing
evening shade!
(Basho, in Henderson, 1958, p. 48)

_A Fragment_  Wandering with the solstice moon
along the pebbled shore,
_I hear the voice of a flute—_
crystalline in the cold crystalline night,
floating out along the moon path,
m mingling with the voices of the sea,
with the surf song of stones.

_The player,_
_a silhouette on a silhouette of boulders._
_I am held_
in this dissolving moment
_of light and song._
(Vernon, 2008)
Dynamic, sensuous encounters
    of synaesthetic modes of being
keep me from letting wildness
    slip past
    in a fog of inattention.

*Intertwining of the Senses with Wildness*

The sensing body
    is inextricably, continuously entangled with
the sentient living earth
in a participatory, reciprocal engagement.
The senses are the threads
    uniting me to my surroundings,
evoking an inescapable affinity
    between wild otherness and myself.
Crossings of the senses with the sensuous.
    Crossings of body and nat-ure.

*A Voice*  
Our perception is made not by the passive processing of sensory information but by an active engagement between ourselves and the world, a reaching out to the world in a participatory process.
(Pringle, 2005, p. 143)

I enter
    into a moment of synaesthetic perception—
    not as a passive spectator.
The sensitive body,
    in deep communion with nature,
    is not a biological object body
but a living body,
    “a knowing body” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 208).

I experience a synaesthetic harmony,
    a sensuous crossing
    of my intertwining senses with the sentient,
    circumambient realm of the natural,
an ever-changing weave of relations
    with the things and beings of the earth.
In this merging of sensuous bodily event and the event of things binary oppositions collapse.

I have a “startling realization of intersubjectivity” (Vallega-Neu, 2005, p. 126).

A Voice

Visible and mobile my body is a thing among things; it is caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing … the world is made of the same stuff as the body … the undividedness (l’indivision) of the sensing and the sensible.
(Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 295)

A Fragment

Sitting quietly, doing nothing¹¹ in the presence of winter feeding birds, feeling wisps of wind that ruffle feathers, listening to chitterings and scoldings, pond splashing dashes, smelling the green fecundity of moss.

Gradually the lingering swatch of sun is eclipsed by a hesitant drizzle.
We are enfolded
    in shifting sensuous scapes—
    landscape, soundscape, sunscape, waterscape.
(Vernon, 2008)

The disclosive nature of synaesthetic perception initiates me to the sentence of wild otherness.
“By an associative empathy the embodied subject comes to recognize these other bodies as other centers of experience, other subjects” (Abram, 1996, p. 37).

I become aware of the intrinsic value of others, and know that I am inextricably intertwined
Synaesthetic Perception as a Mode of Being

within a larger domain, however diverse and changeable.

A Moment

They sang as if the song were urged out of them by the pressure of the morning. They sang as if the edge of being were sharpened and must cut, must split the softness of the blue-green light, the dampness of the wet earth …. On all the sodden, the damp-spotted, the curled with wetness, they descended, dry-beaked, ruthless, abrupt. (Woolf, 1992, p. 81)

In the merging of the senses

with the sensuousness of the wild—
feeling the whip of wind
smelling the sea seasoned weeds
watching the undulating ribbons of kelp
hearing the hiss of the surf on the sand—
there is a rhythm,
a rhythm that is in the sensible,
that we feel in our bodies
a “certain living pulsation” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 129)

which prompts

a sens of éclosion—
of emergence,
exansiveness,
an opening out—
a sens of harmony,
an attunement to a larger sentence,
a receptivity to places of wild otherness.

A Voice

Perception, in Merleau-Ponty’s work, is precisely this reciprocity, the ongoing interchange between my body and the entities that surround it. It is a sort of silent conversation that I carry on with things, a continuous dialogue that unfolds far below my verbal awareness—and often, even, independent of my verbal awareness. (Abram, 1996, p. 52)
Being there, being present
before the mind intrudes with words,
before thoughts
pull me away from the sensation
that courses through my body—
just letting the moment flow over and through me—
the high spiraling courting ritual of eagles,
the pungent odour of forest bog,
the misty embrace of a waterfall.

A Voice
[My] senses reach out to the world, respond
to it actively engage with it, just as the
world, at the same time, reaches into the
depths of my sensory being. As such, the
human perceptual system is not a quasi-
mechanical apparatus that exists only to
facilitate representational thinking, to
produce reified ‘concepts’ or ‘ideas’; rather
it is radically intertwined with the world
itself.
(Gardiner, 1998, p. 133)

Resisting intellectualizing,
explaining, interpreting,
thinking,
‘now I am in the embrace of the waterfall,
mist on my face, thunder in my ears,’
quieting the mind,
stilling the desire to frame this moment in words.
Being fully present,
so a part
of the intertwining of my senses
with the wild
that I am filled for a timeless,
frameless moment
of attunement
letting the music of the wild fill my being.

The sensuousness of the encounter
gathers to it
my perceiving multi-sensory response.
A Voice

The intimacy of one’s own experience is always bursting out, veering into the world, finding itself there, experiencing this warm sun which is not an experience but rather something experienced … it is not an object cut off from experience and the experience. (Jardine, 1992, p. 74)

A Poem

Blackberry Picking

*The heady smell of ripe dark fruit
swollen with warmth and rain,*
*the russet odours of waning summer,*
*winged sippers whirring
through the netting of vines*
*and torn leaves,*
*and the juicy seed crunchy taste*
*of sun and earth,*
*each berry full of this place.*

One for me,
One for the dragonfly
settling on a big one.

None for the basket—
ever mind
they never taste the same later.

*Striking deeper into the thicket,*
*trying for the plump high ones*
*in the province of birds,*
*I’m caught—*
*entangled
in the uncanny grasp of brambles—*
*slowness is needed,*
*to remove the sharp clingings.*
*Just a tasting,*
*lingering awhile
amid the flow of sensations—*
a moment of fleeting exhilaration,
*“senses … flung wide open upon the real.”*12

(Vernon, 2008)
A Voice  Perception has a “vivacity”, (from vivre to live), the sensorially alive experience of seeing, smelling, touching, tasting, thus one’s own aliveness is experienced and seems to certify the object’s reality, its vivacity.  
(Scary, 1985, p. 47)

Our reluctance
and “our inability
to acknowledge
our human embeddedness
in nature,
results in our failure
to understand
what sustains us” (Bell & Russell, 2000, p. 11).

 Capacities for this acknowledgement,
a recognition of our
concinnity with wildness,
are ready at hand,
they are synaesthetic.

The intertwining of the senses
responding to the vibrant sensorium of nature,
reminds us of our interdependent kinship
with wild otherness.

The sensuous embodied self
is central to direct lived experience.
The living body—
touching, seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling, moving—
a kaleidoscopic sensuousness
is the core,
is central to all experiences
of relationship, rootedness, reciprocity.
Bodily givenness,
sustains us
as a presence among presences, human and nonhuman,
in the possibility of reflection, of thought, of knowledge.
Synaesthetic practice, a nonlinguistic sensuous experience of co-presencing with the sensible, is a way of keeping underway of allowing continual emergings, and a mode of knowing a perspective from which to understand ourselves living with the wild, and how we may dwell well becoming sensuous inhabitants of a sentient earthworld we may have become estranged from. “The world is not what I think, but what I live through” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 73), an experience grounded in a synaesthetic mode of being.

A Fragment

When, even
Though it is spring, and the coldness of winter
And the coldness of morning still in the air,
If you do not think, you can feel already
The turned summer, the daze, the dryness,
    The light heavy in the air.
(Merwin, 2000, from Annunciation, p. 164)

Out of synaesthetic engagement with wildness can arise the desire and strength to move to a creative action, a resistance to that mindset which rejects the vital necessity and reality of the sensuous.

Allure of Language

The importance of language is undeniable, but it is often privileged
as the defining characteristic of being human,
as that which
“completely sundered man (sic) from nature” (Madison, 1988, p. 183),
and is “detached from breath and body” (Dillon, 1988, p. x),
along with an assumption
that language is
the primary and sole mode
through which humans
may experience, think about and know the world.

A Voice Language [can] undermine our embodied sense of interdependence with the more-than-human world. Rather than being a point of entry into webs of communication all around us, language becomes a medium through which we set ourselves apart and above.
(Bell & Russell, 2000, p. 193)

Language understood in this way becomes exclusionary of other human capacities.
A practice of synaesthetic perception as a mode of being, a trusting in the wisdom of the senses, opens me to a way of knowing not encompassed in language.

The realm of direct, sensuous experience, a “felt, visceral level of being” (Berman, 1989, p. 110), is beyond language which is at a loss to convey fundamental experiences that are unsayable, and cannot be defined, or represented, but are a definitive part of our existence.

This is a domain of “raw experience, which cannot be directly assessed; it cannot be processed in a linguistic network ….
[it is] an unmediated, unarticulated state ….
amorphous, ineffable, ineluctable;
nevertheless, it intrudes, it is there” (Barzilai, 2006, p. 24).

Our sensuous interconnection
with nat-ure
is deeply felt
but we have so exalted language
that we position ourselves
to discount what language
cannot express.

With the direct sensuous
experience of the body discredited,
the mind concocts
terms, theories, representations, explanations,
surrogates
mistaken for ‘what is real.’

A Voice Language … is inhabited and articulated by webs of interrelated notions—by concepts … abstraction [that] displaces the activity of our senses with regard to visible and audible things. It is touch and smell, the senses of nearness, that are most cheated, and this in turn disrupts the equilibrium proper to the world’s means of offering itself to us … [When ]a conceptual representation has been unduly substituted for a presence—you feel it.
(Bonnefoy, 2002, pp. 596–598)

The conjuring trick of words
convinces me that concepts,
abstractions
are the things themselves.
Words limit by defining, closing off,
sensuous ‘raw experiences,’
and intrude on my capacity
to pay close attention
to wild otherness.
I need
to rescue a *sense* of the real—
“[t]o live in the world
but outside existing conceptions of it.
Conceptions are artificial.
Perceptions are essential” (Stevens, 1989, pp. 190, 191),

to resist the impulse toward language,
putting words to things,
to describe, name
enclose.

No word or words
can express
the sensuous immediacy
of a synaesthetic moment
“lodged in the bones and sinews of experience” (Brazilai, 2006, p. 31)
amid a multiplicity of sensations
sweeping over us.
Words fragment the encounter, the experience.

* A Chorus I believe what is most worth telling is always what can not be told.
  (Gadamer, 1994, in Grondlin, p. 166, #37)

Things aren’t all so tangible and sayable as people would have us believe; most experiences are unsayable, they happen in a space that no word has ever entered.
(Rilke, 1986, p. 4)

Teachings are of no use to me; they have no hardness, no softness, nor colors, nor corners, no smell, no taste—they have nothing but words.
(Hesse, 1951, p. 118)

I attempt to describe
my multisensory experience of
sitting among the roots of a tree—
leaning against the ridged rough burls,
 enjoying the sweet grainy taste of ripe chestnut meat,
listening to the squeaking rub of branch on branch,
the rustling of leaves,
and warmed by the shafts of the Pyrenean sun
sifting through the shadowy shade—
but these are just words,
not the experience of attunement I may have felt.

We represent things with words,
as a manner of definition
a mutually accepted convention,
but the word is arbitrary—
“That which we call a rose
By any other word would smell as sweet”\(^{14}\) (Shakespeare, 2005, p. 379).
The word does not tell us
about the suchness of these things.

\[ A \textit{Voice} \]
Huineng replied: “Words are not truth. Truth is like the moon, and words are like my finger. I can point to the moon with my finger, but my finger is not the moon. Do you need my finger to see the moon?”
(Hansen, 2004, unpaged)

Synaesthetic perceptions of the wild
are linguistically un-mediated,
but after being in the presence of treeness
when I use the word tree or read it in a poem,
it has a greater depth to it
it is filled out with nuances
and enfolds
an encounter that could not be
found in the word tree before that encounter.

My synaesthetic experiences
flesh out these prosaic words.

Although human language is exclusionary
of wildness languages,
acute sense perception alerts us to
the multiplicity of earth’s languages
heard in the sensuous ‘voices’ of wild otherness.
Synaesthetic modes of being
urge a
‘listening’ to these voices
with all our senses,
a recognizing of other
sense endowed natural beings,

and caution against
the “misplaced presumption of human superiority
based on linguistic capabilities” (Bell & Russell, 2006. p. 189).

A Voice Ultimately, it is not language that is primary,
but rather the sensuous, perceptual life-world, whose wild, participatory logic
ramifies and elaborates itself in language.
(Abram, 1996, p. 84)

Synaestheti
c perception,
is a bodily language,
a dance of the senses,
which speaks to me,
of a deep intuitive interconnection with wildness—
which words cannot convey.

It is about being in the presence of wildness
without conceptualizing, categorizing,
without the trappings of definitions,
eliding the desire for words
letting the sentient suchness
of the tree, the rock, the cloud
enter bodymind awareness
through the senses,
trusting a felt knowing
a harmony,
an inner stillness.

A synaesthetic mode of being
is about learning to
“encourage’ meanings to emerge from all of our senses.
And that will be difficult
because so many of us live
in our heads
and … believe one knows only
what one can tell with language” (Poplin,1996, p. 49).
Synaesthetic Perception as a Mode of Being

Thoughtful Interlude

Synaesthetic modes of being far from being self-indulgent, isolating individualist adventures where one is “trapped in what Shelley called the prison of immediate sensory impressions of a purely material environment” (Kroeber, 1994, p. 54), are rather sources of sensuous and emotive knowing that “guide the deeper course of our intellectual lives” (Heshusius & Ballard, 1996, p. 14) and challenge Cartesian dualism, the split between sensing and thinking, body and mind.

Sensory perceptions, rather than being in opposition to the intellect, the inner life, are intertwined with them, and are sustaining of the senses of memory, intuition, imagination which are enlivened by bodymind experiences.

A Voice

Our thinking should have a vigorous fragrance like a wheatfield on a summer’s night. How many of us today still have the senses for that fragrance?
(Heidegger, 1971b, p. 70)

What will ground this thinking?

Are humans losing access to a sensibility, an embodied reality, which would encourage a thoughtful awareness of and value of
an ineluctable interconnection with earth,
and retreating into a kind of disembodied state
where
“thoughts fall apart
so that nobody thinks through their fingertips anymore” (Eagleton, 1990, p. 366)?

A Voice Can humans even think outside the regime of modern technology? Has modern technology foreclosed the possibilities of thinking of the way of Being-in-the world on earth?
(Deluca, 2005, p. 81)

We need an embodied thinking
nourished by synaesthetic experience—
senses vibrantly intertwined with thought and feeling
in a joint perception.
Such thinking
“needs to find again
an original commonality
with other living and nonliving things,”
and to explore the sensuous threads that
“weave thinking
into the fabric of things in their happening” (Vallega-Neu, 2005, p. 121).

The senses are a major source of knowledge,
although nonverbal,
that is both deeply personal and expansively communal.

Rather than an artificial,
superficial, solipsistic experience,
synaesthetic perception
is intense, intimate, and profound,
in one’s responsiveness
to the integrity of
both animate and inanimate forms,
in a recognition of oneself as intimately interwoven
within larger realities,
and knowing these realities as an integral part of oneself.
Such modes of being on earth
further the reality of bodymind unity
which illuminates what Heshusius (1996) calls “self-other unity” (p. 133).

A Voice Isn’t the human intellect rooted in, and
secretly borne by, our forgotten contact with
the multiple nonhuman shapes that surround
us?
(Abram, 1996, p. 49)

The Wellspring of Memory

Memory,
a non-linguistic fount of sensuous experience,
is an inner sense.16
As a multisensory dimension
where textures, odours, tastes, sounds, sights intermix,
memory holds,
among other things,
the sensuous weave
of our direct synaesthetic encounters
amid wild otherness
and summons us
to attend
to our life sustaining
enfoldment with nature.

Practicing a synaesthetic mode of being
enriches memory
which provides
touchstones for a richer
more enhanced
sens of place.
The body,
not only the mind,
remembers.
A cry, a smell, a touch
may course through us unexpectedly,
recalling us
to some forgotten moment.
“[B]y some flick of a scent
or a sound on a nerve” (Woolf, 1992, p. 206)
we recover
the sensuous memory
of another time and place,
“[a] squirt of green memories
like a brief taste on the tongue” (Fowles, 1998, p. 266)
makes
long past presences,
present again.

A disturbing smell
can evoke
synaesthetic resonances,
etched in the depths of embodied memory,
that deep pool where past and present meet,
sensuous encounters
pleasant or painful
undeniably altered,
revisited,
which speak to the here and now.

A Fragment

Blackened odours of woods burning
halted her wanderings,
memories of another burning
surged through her body—
a farmer’s bush fire
sweeping the wild forgotten headlands
where the yellow-eyed penguin
nested among the forest remnants,
crackling collapse of trees
trilling calls
of distress,
of warning
slicing through
the suffocating smoke,
burning of
nests
feathers
flesh of molting penguins—
the sea so close
yet so fatal.

She was plunged
into the wordless silence
of the body remembering
the sickening taste of helplessness,
some inner spark
dying.
(Vernon, 2008)

A scent, a sound, a finger tip memory,
at first elusive,
becomes a link to the past,
opens a flowing forth
of sensory impressions and reverberations—
“[w]hat is remembered in the body is well remembered” (Scary, 1985, p. 109).

A Voice
The body … does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it enacts the past, bringing it back to life. What is ‘learned by the body’ is not something one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is.
(Bourdieu, 1990, p. 73)

Have we exchanged sensuous embodied memory
for a “virtual” electronic memory,
stored in cyberspace
which neither forgets nor alters the content?
What happens to the richness of remembering
when synaesthetic modes of being
are curtailed,
when the human sensorium dwindles
to just seeing and hearing hyper-reality
and life is turned into a spectacle to be enjoyed now?

A Voice
There is no need for memory, at least for long term memory, when one lives exclusively in and for the moment.
(Stivers, 2004, p. 497)
Lure of Technology

The “flickering high tech landscape” (Baker, 2005, p. 187) offers glittering, thrilling simulations that hold infinite possibilities without deterioration, no faded edges, no aging, that are undisturbed by “a dense, swarming territory … nothing less than the whole sensate life together—the business of affections and aversions of how the world strikes the body on its sensory surfaces, of that which takes root in the gaze and the guts and all that arises from our most banal, biological insertion into the world” (Eagleton, 1990, p. 13).

The harmonious interplay of senses is supplanted by fragmentation.

The lure of technology, is in the promise of a superior version of reality.

Living life within the hyper-real frames immerses us in the “culture of forgetting” (Ellul, 2004, in Stivers, p. 491), a forgetting of the wisdom of the senses by “replacing immediate sensory contact with the orchestrated sensory world of technology” (Majoy, 1996, p. 7), where the dominance of sight and sound has created a reality without reference to the other senses.

Outside the speedy scintillating frames simple things of the wild (falling leaf, dampness of moss, hoot of owl) begin to seem drab, colourless, and unreal—“the senses are befuddled by artificial worlds, over strained by incessant stimulation” (Jutte, 2005, p. 16).

Artificial realities are inclusive, our entire sensory embodied being engaged, somatized, preoccupied.
Enfolded in
“the irreducible multiplicity of technologies” (Nancy, 2003, p. 24),
senses constantly titillated,
we are willing captives\textsuperscript{17}
to the irresistible seductions and temptations
of luminous screens—
shadow images and simulated sound—
and accept simulacra for the real,
in these “fragments of a buried life [we] once knew”

We turn toward screens
which everywhere accost us,
away from wild others
and each other.
Apathy pandered to,
empathy curtailed,
innoculated against thinking,
we forget our sensuous rootedness in the wild,
we are distracted from the pillage
of the “earth house hold” (Snyder, 1969, title of book).

Why this \textit{con amore}, this delight, with technicity,
this compliance,
the ushering of the technological into
every sphere of life?
Is it a learned distrust
of the sensuous embodied self,
and a denial
of a sustaining sensuous
interrelationship with earthiness?

\textit{A Question} \[W]hat is it in many of us that wants this
discourse to be a persuasive account of the
way things are?
(Nietzsche, 2005, in Baker, p. 256)

What is in many of us that wants the technological to be
“a pervasive account of the way things are,”
or what is \textit{no longer} in us?
Synaesthetic capacities misplaced,
direct sensuous experience discounted.
Synaesthetic Perception as a Mode of Being

_A Voice_ [There is an implicit attempt to keep people from challenging technology by making their direct experience appear marginal and irrelevant. (Franklin, 1990, p. 127)

Are we becoming disembodied, “posthuman” (Hayles, 1999, p. 3), losing a _sens of our sensate_ bodily being in the world, retreating from the sensorial flux of the circumambient “more-than-human” realm?

_A Voice_ As disembodied spirit, I lose my compellent ought-to-be relationship to the world, I lose the actuality of the world. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 47)

Synaesthetic perception Atrophied from disuse, Our sensitivity To wild otherness That calls to us of relationship And reciprocity, Is diminished.

_How to get at_ “the sense of ‘technology’ as the sense of existence” (Nancy, 2003, p. 26) now that we are captives within its embrace?

Is there a sense of loss, of something amiss and out of place?

Can we know ourselves beyond the frames of technicity in a relationship with wild otherness?
Regardless of what a person visibly presents to the world, they have a secret life, one that is grounded in their emotions, their bodily relationship to the world and to themselves. (Berman, 1989, p. 110)

Is it not this secret inner life which is at stake when we embrace that which colonizes and fragments our experiences, our sensorial life, our emotions, our consciousness?

What sustains us?

Vicarious,

virtual realities—

momentary simulations of smells, sounds, sights whisked away without a trace—

that we accept as surrogates for the real thing?

Human needs run deep, and they run deeper than the reach of technology. (O’Har, 2000, p. 864)

A possibility lies in recultivating the natural senses, following the elusive scent of blossoms, tracing the scrimshaw of time on a weathered shell, gathering in my hands golding leaves smelling of must and oldness, savouring the melting cold of snowflakes,

entering into a sensuous dialogue with the things of the earth—a wordless conversation—that inspires a deep conversation with my inner self, renewing of a sens of existence which values the poetic art of dwelling in co-habitation with wild others,
a conversation which finds
   in the breath of poetry,
       another language, beyond the instrumental,
   a poetic language,
       which seeks to tell
       in a few lines
       of the crossings of sensate embodied being
           with the simple things of the wild,
           pebbles, puddles, seaweeds, snowflakes
               themselves the poems.
Such a “synaesthetic voyage ….
   an experience of palpable metamorphosis:
       metamorphosis of language, of perceptions, and of self” (Baker, 2005, p. 100)18
could begin
   in childhood.
Children,
   embodiment still intact,
are close
   both physically and mentally,
       to the natural,
   to synaesthetic encounters with
       wild otherness.
Stanza II: Pulse of Knowing

*Proem*

The first part of Stanza II is concerned with childhood multisensory engagements with wildness. Technological encroachment on this direct lived experience is addressed. The second part deals with memory, and the retrieval, by adults of these childhood experiences which might become a beacon for a way forward to relearning earth grounded sensuous being. The focus here is on the poet who is close to childhood and synaesthetic modes of being and attempts through poetic language to hint at the ineffable, and the educator who can relearn to value the wisdom of the senses and thus ensure that children have opportunities for this way of being and knowing.

*We never could have loved the earth so well if we had had no childhood in it.*

(Eliot, 1996, p. 41)

*Going Forth*

**Children,**

“still know
in an embodied way,
relying on their somatic and affective knowing
as a primary source of information” (Heshusius & Ballard, 1996, p. 3).

**Becoming part of the earthworld they inhabit,**

sensorially awake to where they are,
to fleeting sensations
felt in the bodymind,
communing with
things growing,
and becoming,
they have a *sens* of a mutuality of experience.

*A Fragment*  
There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he look’d upon,
that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the
day or a certain part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of
years.
The early lilacs became part of this child
………………………………….
... and the song of the phoebe-bird,
………………………………….
And the noisy brood of the barnyard or by the mire of the pond-side,
………………………………….
The horizon’s edge, the flying sea-crow, the fragrance of salt marsh and shore mud,
These became part of that child who went forth every day and who now goes, and will always go forth everyday.
(Whitman, 1982, from There Was a Child Went Forth, pp. 491-493)

Going forth everyday,
responding to the summons,
the sensuous beckoning of the earthworld,
children are immersed in the fullness of the senses—
touchings, sounds, smells, sights, tastes—
which contain and evoke each other,¹
and may experience
surfacerings, upsurgings, tinglings
of delight, amazement, fear, awe,
an unsayable but felt attunement,
an enfolding.

A Moment
Now we have fallen through the tree-tops to the earth, the air no longer rolls its long unhappy, purple waves over us. We touch earth; we tread ground …. The ferns smell very strong, and there are red funguses growing beneath them. How we wake the sleeping daws who have never seen a human form; now we tread on rotten oak apples, red with age and slippery …. Listen! that is the flop of a giant toad in the undergrowth; that is the patter of some primeval fir-cone falling to rot among the ferns.
(Woolf, 1992, p. 11)
Such bodily felt experience
  is an integrated sensuous wholeness,
  neither disjoint nor jarring,
  in a fusion with the outer world,
  an “experience breaking over us,
  within us” (Yeats, in Woolf, 1993, p. xi)

A child’s “perception of and response to habitat,
to a space of dwelling,
  is multisensory,
  holistically grounded
  in a relational reciprocity
  in which both the environs and child
  are active and modify each other in turn” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 82).

Physically and sensuously
  close to the earth,
  children have an unencumbered
  primordial relationship
  to their surroundings,
  to wild others—
  inhabitants of woods, water, trees.

Children, like poets,
  do “wander about in their imagination[s]
  smelling and hearing things” (Snyder, 1996, p. 109),

  and go without direction,
  without itinerary,
  their awakened senses
  freely associating with all around them—
  absorbed deeply
  or fleetingly.

_A Voice_

One of those warm summer evenings …
three small children chasing fireflies …
[their] humming light … Everything—the
senses, the mind, and the feelings—were in
some balanced state of concentration; and to
separate these elements would have been to
take from these children a perfectly natural
way to discover what they had not known
before …. I keep trying to discover how this
sort of learning be a recognized and
cultivated part of education … since so much of education today is more intent on separating our learning capacities than in bringing them together …. How confusing it must be for children to be told that their senses (hence their bodies) are not where they learn, and that real learning takes place only in the citadels of their intellects. (Lewis, 1989, p. 60)

What if
we had never had
these childhood experiences,
what if
children never do,
and their first experiences,
are primarily with the toys of technicity,
the direct, sensuous immersion in nature—
commingling of smell, touch, sound, sight, taste—
replaced
by screen bred simulacra,
tantalizing unrealities,
where sensuous multiplicity
is reduced to sight and sound?

Will the capacity to wonder,
the openness to the unknown,
the play of the imagination,
be diminished?

Will children grow up
identifying their play, their sensory memories
with secondhand virtual experiences,
misplacing the ability
to focus on anything
other than the “bites” of hyper-reality,
preferring artificial landscapes, soundscapes, seascapes,
to the wonder and mystery
of the real world of natural colour, sounds, sights, smells?

Will their natural
synaesthetic interplay of the senses
atrophy
when children are plucked from a vibrant, sensuous earth-grounded interconnectedness—
wash of waves, grittiness of sand, toe licking salty water—
from “rich, sensual experiences vital for perceptual and creative development”? (Crain, 1996, in Majoy, p. 3).

As educators how much mediated sensory experience will we accept? The ubiquitous tug of technology for the control of the senses is transparent.

We do have choices.

“A sense of inner and outer, of thought and feeling, of body and self, in some extraordinary fashion are working together through children…. The poetry of their knowing tells us much about how we might learn, with them” (Lewis, 1989, pp. 62-63).

What sustains us?

A Voice [In the] unceasing, pulsing, sensing, perceiving responses to the world we inhabit … [w]e apprehend in our bodies a dimension of our being which is prior to reflection, to consciousness, to language … we are sustained by these dimensions, sustaining of our incarnate lives. We encounter the world through the full layered experience of our bodies attend to the fullness of the body’s dwelling—its sounds,
its breathing movements, its fleeting sensations and memories, its atmosphere, its density, its murmuring.
(Walsh, 2001, pp. 80–81)

Engaged in sensuous knowing,
inhabiting wild places bodily,
being in the presence of living creatures, flowing waters, sheltering trees,
the *haecceity*² (thisness, nowness), of earthly things,
in an awareness of self and other
not apart from but a part of their surroundings,
children learn
through the “triad of senses, mind and feelings” (Lewis, 1989, p. 62).

*A Moment*  Rose did go on smelling and breathing and pushing and shoving and rolling, she sometimes just rolled, and moving. Anything on a mountain side is moving, rocks are rolling, stones are turning, twigs are hitting, trees are growing, flowers are showing and animals are glowing that is their eyes are and everywhere there oh dear everywhere there well Rose was there and so was her chair.
(Stein, 1972, p. 61)

In childhood
we experience,
without the need for concepts, analysis, reflection,
an unfettered
“*I-Thou*” relationship of sensuous reciprocity
with the earth and the things of the earth,
of which Martin Buber (1965) speaks,
a kind of prereflective intersensory dialogue.

For the child Buber,
stroking the neck of his horse,
giving him a rich feed
was a “great, friendly
deeply stirring encounter” (Buber, 1965, p. 23).
If I am to explain it now, beginning from the still fresh memory of my hand, I must say that what I experienced in touch with the animal was the Other, the immense Otherness of the other, which … let me draw near and touch it.
(Buber, 1965, p. 23)

The child knows this sensuous turning toward others, with her/his whole being, thus establishing a living mutual relationship.

Much of what a child learns about the surrounding earthworld of other beings and things about self is through touch.

Touch brings with it other senses into a resonant commingling.

Touchings, wet, dry, hard, soft tree bark, bird feather toes in the surf sinking sand being touched, such touchstones³ infuse memories.

A childhood nonverbal immediate sensuous experience, all the senses vibrantly intertwined with thought and feeling in a joint perception, encoded in the body, “both the source and seat of our knowledge of the world” (Pringle, 2005, p. 143), before words rush in describing, defining, naming, explaining,
may be a fleeting moment
of intuitive knowing
of the transitoriness of all things.

_A Memory_

_A child_
running down the mountain,
a gift of sun sweetened wildflowers
clutched in a small hand.

_Arriving on a gulp of air,
palm stained green,
the clammy feel and tang of wilt,
the taste of tears._
(Vernon, 2008)

For the child on the threshold of language
a flowing sense of interconnection and wonder,
a small epiphany,
wind in the hair—a dance felt in the whole body,
may be a momentary sensation
but it will be imprinted,
etched on the bodymind as an engram.

_A Moment_

_A young child_
sitting among field daisies,
in absorbed stillness,
sensing for the first time
the wind ruffling
_wisps of his hair._
(Vernon, 2008)

This sensuous moment
held bodily
in trust for the self of someday
when other hair tossing breezes,
bring back the mingling of
wind sounds,
scent of dry grasses,
click clacking of grasshoppers,
the encompassing warmth.
Will this self stop for such a moment 
once again transfixed?

A Voice There are moments in childhood when every child is the astonishing being, the being who realizes the astonishment of being .... The pure memory has no date. It has a season. The season is the fundamental mark of memories. What sun or what wind was there that memorable day? .... The seasons of childhood are the seasons of the poet. (Bachelard, 1969, pp. 116–117)

Whether we recognize it or not
the body is always present
in a mutuality of sensuous experience—
a part of
not apart from
the living, growing, becoming, vibrant wildness.

The force of impressions,
the multiple nature of synaesthetic reality,
defies objective rational explanation.
The child in an immediacy particular to that moment
gathers images, feelings, sensuous moments and exchanges—
the feel of life—
before thoughts,
before language attempts to put them into words.
We remember what we learn
through the wisdom of the body.

In Friel’s play, Molly Sweeny
Molly recalls her blindness as a child
and the sensuous garden ritual
with her father,
when “he would bend over, holding me almost upside down,
and I would have to count [the flowers]
and smell them
and feel their velvet leaves and sticky stems” (Friel, 1994, p. 14).
After an operation affords her partial sight,
    she must focus on the purely visual
    gradually losing contact
    with a known repertory of sensuous engrams.
Momentarily she retrieves
    the intersensory world of her childhood
    which had enriched and sustained her sightless adulthood,
before sinking into a desensitized fog of unknowing.

A Fragment    Frank: Then suddenly she closed her eyes
                shut tight. She brought the flowers right up
                against her face and inhaled in quick gulps
                and at the same time, with her free hand,
                swiftly, deftly felt the stems and the leaves
                of the blossoms. Then with her eyes still
                shut she called out desperately, defiantly,
                “They’re cornflowers! That’s what they
                are!”
                (Friel, 1994, p. 45)

Sensuous synaesthetic memories
    inform feeling and thought
    throughout life
becoming part of
    what we will become
    and how we will choose to live with the earth.

A Fragment    Swinging
                we don’t forget!
The gradual, rhythmic
    muscle pulling
    pumping up
    higher and higher,
leaving
    then meeting the grassy ground.
The singing of breath
    moving through the body,
    the wind rushing through the hair,
coursing over the skin, hands, face,
the tingling of bare feet.
Vertigo of trees, grass, water,  
cacophony of sounds  
    bird calls, branch creakings.
The senses mingling  
in a profusion  
of simultaneous impression.

Swinging,  
it all comes back to us.  
The body remembers  
the pulse of that motion,  
and some deeply felt enfoldment,  
when feet touched earth again.

(Vernon, 2008)

Mutuality of human sensory experience—  
a child watching another, swinging,  
    the smile of recognition,  
    the eager anticipation,  
An adult watching a child  
in some far off place  
    where the rope swings from a mangrove tree  
    out over a primeval lagoon.

Surfacings: The Waters of Mnemosyne

Memory,  
a still pool in the depths of the mind  
where past and present meet,  
an abode of experiences  
    resonant with the corporeal  
    intermingling of the senses,  
is a multisensory dimension.  
The surfacings  
of textures, odours, tastes, sounds, sights,  
recall sensuous moments.

Intense  
perceptual  
intersensory earthworld experiences  
of childhood,  
revisited in reverie of later years,
guide us toward a renewal
of our multi-sensorial selves,
and a reconnection with wildness,
not as an object
but as a poetic place of belonging.

A Voice

For we live with those retrievals from
countless experiences that coalesce and reverberate
throughout our lives, the way shattered pieces of glass
in a kaleidoscope reappear in new forms,
and are songlike in their refrains and rhymes.
(Ondaatje, 2007, p. 136)

What if we make
no place in our lives
for the spaces of solitude,
for moments of reverie,
where memories can surface
returning us to our sensuous childhood
where “time held [us] green and dying”?
(Thomas, 1971, from Fern Hill, p. 180)

The responsibility
“of relearning
to look at the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. viii)
is not just a visual task
but a synaesthetic one,
bringing all of our senses
to this retrieval.

“We learn very young
to disown a part of our own being
and trade our real existence
for a delusion:
we grow used to ignoring,
the evidence of our own experience,
what we hear or see, what we feel
in our own bodies” (Griffin, in Heschusius, 1996, p. 135).
We need to relearn
why and how
to stop
for a scent, a sound, a sight
that beckons,
to watch
the surfacing of a sensuous memory
that reconnects us with our inner being
and with our intimacy with nature.

A Voice
It is in the intimate awareness of our opaque
dense bodily sensuous entanglement that we
encounter the nature of things … not
through conceptualizing, representing,
naming, objectifying. The power of real
sensory learning reveals our true natures, our
deepest selves, allows us to grasp an
understanding of life and the surrounding
earthworld.
(Majoy, 1996, p. 8)

What sustains us?
What will encourage us
to recultivate
bodily knowing, the wisdom of our intertwining senses,
to renew
an organic interconnection with the earth,
to stop
even in the midst of a walking talk
for a scent or sound,
and enable us to make contact
with a memory
of intense perceptual experiences,
“with a childhood time,
when we felt part of a larger
unbounded continuum” (McSweeney, 1998, p. 69)?

The body remembers
not just the mind,
the smells, the tastes, the sounds
the touchings
the sights,
we knew as children.

Such memories of
“acute sensory response to the natural world” (Cobb, in Evernden, 1992, p. 113),
become the compost
from which the capacity
for synaesthetic modes of being
grows
throughout life.

A Voice
[W]e have to go back to some of the qualities of our earliest learnings … when our learnings were … the entire experience of our bodies, sensorially probing the world around us. We have to find those moments never defined as learnings—but their meanings are still with us … learning as Eudora Welty noted ‘stamps you with its moments …. It isn’t steady. It’s a pulse.’ (Lewis, 1989, p. 62)

Sensory awakening.
What words can communicate
this profoundly non-verbal experience?

Poetic Musings Toward Childhood

Between a poet of childhood experiences
and the reader
there is a sensed communication
“through the intermediary
of the childhood
which endures within us,
a childhood
receptive to any opening upon life” (Bachelard, 1969, p. 101).

In a poet’s openness
to a sensuous playful delight
in synaesthetic perception,
one discovers that there is
“an excess of childhood is the germ of a poem” (Bachelard, 1969, p. 100).
A Poem  Orange*

I want to take a bite
out of that sunset sky,
letting the juices
run down my chin,
spitting out the pulp
onto the rocks below.
(Yolan, 2000, unpaged)
*See Appendix A

Poems can be
  touchstones
  retaining the aliveness
  of primordial direct experience,
  opening the reader
  to the recovery
  of sensuous childhood memories.

The child figure
  becomes a guide
  and an emblem of hope,
  in the midst of dislocation and devastation,
  that the future will be less anguished and severed.

A Fragment  When you speak, child, when you sing,
All at once I dream that the entire earthly
Trellis has grown bright ...
(Bonnefoy, 1984, from In the Lure of the Threshold, in Naughton, p. 152)

Far from nostalgic this reconnecting
  with childhood’s
    direct multisensory encounters—
  but an act
    of recovery,
      a gathering up
        of misplaced tokens,
  an act of resistance
    in order to change one’s life.
Poems can “take us back to our childhood
   or rather to a childhood,
   the childhoods we should have had.
For not many of us
   have been endowed by life
   with the full measure
   of its cosmic implications” (Bachelard, 1994, p. 93).

The child
   in the presence of
   those simple things,
is connected still
   to the primacy of sensuous experience,
   to the very presence of the wild.

A Poem

May the great snow be the whole, the nothingness,
Child, trying your first unsteady steps in the grass,
Your eyes still full of origin,
Your hands clinging to nothing but the light.

May these branches that sparkle be the words
You must listen to but without understanding
The meaning of their pattern in the sky,
Since anything you name you might destroy.
(Bonnefoy, 1995, from The Beginning and the End of Snow, p. 187)

A poet speaks of being a child
   coming upon an unknown “radiant valley”
   when “suddenly the world opened and unrolled” before him—
   an encounter sensed, felt
   but ineffable.

A Voice
I tried to say something … and I knew as I tried to that words conveyed nothing at all about it.
(Merwin, 2002, pp. 46–47)
Lingering in the presence of gathering snow,
the poet,
in a moment of reverie,
recalls a shimmering childhood encounter
with those simple things,
the stuff of nature,
that becomes the wellspring of his poem
in a crossing of the poetic and the wild.

A Fragment

What is there in the depths of these walls
That open before me?

................................................

And all at once it is a meadow I walked in at ten,
The bees are buzzing,
What I have in my hands, these flowers, these shadows,
Is it almost honey, is it snow?
(Bonnefoy, 1995, from The Beginning and the End of Snow, p. 191)

To express the truth of what
the poet perceives and feels
involves a creative struggle
with language
to disclose
a sensuous moment of perception, a moment of inner knowing.

A Fragment

One thinks of steep fields
Of brown grass
In the mountains it seems they lie

Aslant in the thin
Burning air and among clouds the sun
Passes boulders grass blades skyclad things
In nakedness  
Inseparable the children will say

Our parents waited in the woods  precarious

Transparent as the childhood of the world
Growing old  the seagulls sound like
the voices of children
  wilder than children wildest of
children the waves’
  riot
Brilliant as the world...
(Oppen, 2003, from West, p. 125)

In voicing such a poem,
feeling the rhythms,
tasting words that strive to communicate
a profoundly non-verbal experience,
I am drawn to a response
immediate, synaesthetic,
prior to words and concepts.

A Voice  [T]he poem depicts, through the words, the
idea that the truth of experience is sensory
and cannot be linguistically defined; it
eludes words, it is present in the element of
light and sound, in the primary world of
children whose sensory experiences
constitute a truth which demands no
language to verify it.
(Barzilai, 2006, p. 121)

Poems which are grounded
in the texture of our ordinary experiences
amid wild others,
can reawaken sensuous childhood moments
and a sens of closeness to the earth.
“The poet walks the way
from the living experience
to the word,
recollecting the original emotional contexts ….
That is why his words
often echo
the magic of childhood” (Sini, 2002, p. 23).

A Voice

I am alone
in the natal jungle
in the deep
and black Araucania.
There are wings
which scissor at the silence,
a raindrop which falls
heavy and cold
like a horseshoe.
The forest sounds and is silent—
it is silent when I listen.
It sounds when I am asleep.
(Neruda, 1981, from The South, p. 21)
Stanza III: Toward a *Sens* of Place

*Proem*

In this stanza I look briefly at the denaturing of nature, the impact of the scientific revolution and dualistic thinking on the human perception of, and relationship to, nature, and the concomitant development of disembodiment resulting from the mind–body split. Following this I present the possibility of awakening a “connatural” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 131) sensuous intimacy with wild otherness that opens us to the poetics of the place in which we dwell. I stress the importance of childhood synaesthetic experiences in this movement toward a more habitable earth home. The poems I present speak of our sensuous enfoldment with wildness and a renewed *sens* of home, an *ecosens*. Both synaesthetic and poetic modes of knowing disrupt the arrogance of a purely rational knowledge that upholds the tyranny of dualistic thinking.

As already mentioned in the Prelude, sometimes I use ‘nat-ure’ to indicate that I am speaking of wildness, not of objectified, excluded Nature. I also use other terms which convey the same sense of uncaged nature: wildness, natural communities, wild otherness.

*Created Nature*

*a separate realm of surfaces stretched taut over a skeleton of reasons.*

*(Evernden, 1992, p. 102)*

*In a time long past*

*human beings,*

*sensuously attuned to wildness,*

*obtained their sense of harmony*

*within the cosmic dimension*

*through direct contact with natural communities.*

“Learning went on at the level of the body,
knowledge was … directly experiential;
there was no (or little) separate,
intellectual analysis
that commented on the world
and regarded it from a distance” (Berman, 1989, p. 112).
Over the centuries,
with an ever deepening sens of separation
between humans
and the force field of natural things,
nature becomes a concept (Evernden, 1992, p. 102).

The multitude of natural phenomena
become mere objects,
vulnerable
to pursuit and control.
In our estrangement from wildness
we learned to mistrust
sensuous embodied knowing
and misplaced a sens of wonder, of awe.

What happened in the West
that we became creatures
defined
primarily by two interlocking
mutually supporting dualities:
body separated from mind,
humans separated from nature,
that we nurtured
a forgetting
of creative nature, natura naturans
a forgetting
that nat - ure (nat from nasci, to be born, and ure, process)
is a process
of continual emergings,
of things being born,
and of things dying?

This repositioning
of humans and nature
of bodies and mind
begins in the Renaissance (Evernden, 1992, p. 51).

The green world of vibrant multiplicity,
diminshed to natura naturata,
created nature,
becomes a realm set apart
from humanity
objectified
knowable only to the mind.
A Fragment  pity this busy monster, manunkind,

not.

A world of made
is not a world of born—pity poor flesh

and trees, poor stars and stones, ....
(cummings, 1968, from pity this busy
monster, manunkind, p. 554)

The Renaissance mistrust
of the human perception of nature,
based on sensuous embodied knowing,
“contrasted with the Medieval approach
of empathy and union” (Evernden, 1992, p. 51)
with the processes of natural world.

An intimate reciprocity
between humans and wildness,
was supplanted by a regime of exclusion.

Empathy, the power of identifying oneself
mentally with the other,
emerges from direct sensuous existential experience,
from encounters with the known, the unknown,
the strange, the startling,
and from a sens of kinship,
and attunement,
an “I-Thou” relationship of reciprocity.

A Voice  [Empathy] is only possible if the subject and
the object, the knower and the known, are of
the same nature; they must be members and
parts of one and the same vital complex.
Every sensory perception is an act of fusion
and reunification.
(Cassier, 1992, in Evernden, p. 41)

In an empathetic response to nat-ure
one has a sens of interdependency
rather than a feeling of alienation.
One has a *sens* of trust,
of generosity.

Reconceptualized during the Renaissance,
nature
  becomes an invented realm
  of material objects,
  “a human artefact,
an idealized abstract system called Nature,
explicitly nonhuman.
Nature becomes *ours*” (Evernden, 1992, p. 60),
to define, exploit, dominate.

The truths of Nature,
expressed in instrumental language,
become accessible only to the mind and reason.

With embodied sensuous knowing of the wild discounted,
  “[s]ense, sensation, or the immediate feeling for life
  can no longer serve as the means by which
  we assimilate nature and discover her secrets.
Only thought proves to be truly equal to nature” (Cassier, 1992, in Evernden, p. 59).

These severings,
  human from nature,
  body from mind,
this “tyranny of dualistic thinking” (Hayles, 1991, p. 3)
still informs the dominant ideology of our time.

Galileo speaks with authority,
a view of perception and knowledge
  that still resonates today as ‘truth.’
“The ‘real’ properties of nature … do not rely
  on the senses of the human being”(Evernden, 1992, p. 51),
  the sense of nature is a logical sense.

* A Voice  * [T]he individual sense perception, no matter how intense or forceful it may be, is a mere ‘name,’ it neither ‘says’ anything nor has any objectively definite meaning. Such meaning is born only when the human mind relates the content of the perception to the basic forms of knowledge, the archetypes of
which are in the mind itself. Only through this relationship and this interpretation does the book of nature become readable and comprehensible.

(Galileo, 1992, in Evernden, pp. 51–52)

Descartes, Bacon and Newton, 17th Century proponents of the Scientific Revolution, of Mechanical philosophy, continued and embellished the Renaissance project which had sundered human from nonhuman, a relationship, hence forth defined by mastery and possession.

By denying the “Aristotelian idea of an intelligent sensorium” (Jutte, 2005, p. 52), Descartes’ security in the surety of the body as automaton, a functioning machine, initiated the mind-body split.

A Chorus

I shall consider myself having no hands, no eyes, no flesh, no blood, nor any senses .... I shall now close my eyes, I shall stop my ears, I shall cast away all my senses .... I am, I exist, that is certain. Cogito ergo sum.

(Descartes, 1991. in Synnott, p. 70)

I think therefore I am is the statement of an intellectual who underrates toothaches.

(Kundera, 1992, p. 200)

The Cartesian error of reading life mechanically, created the pursuit of secure knowledge in an external world
from the perspective of a disembodied mind
certain of its own existence.

The result—
self-alienation,
and the detachment from the earthworld.

With the Enlightenment
repositioning of
the green natural world as a concept,
nature became Nature,
a created realm,
of material insentient objects,
“knowable only to the human mind and reason” (Evernden, 1992, p. 59).

The Romantics harboured
“a deep-seated suspicion of mechanistic philosophy
and its accompanying subordination of nature
in the service of technology” (Lussier, 1996, p. 394),
and were aware of the increasingly negative impact
of the mechanistic version of nature
and the scientific experimental method,
as the dominant path for knowledge
one which “killed the living and habitable world
of ordinary experience” (Coleridge, 2000, in Lussier, p. 23).

They “believed
that humankind
belonged in,
could and should
be at home within,
the world of natural processes” (Kroeber, 1994, p. 5),

resisted
the dissociation of self and nature
the split of the thinking mind
from the sensing body.

A Fragment  The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
…………………………………………
... we are out of tune;
It moves us not.
(Wordworth, 1987, from Sonnet 14, p. 457)

The Romantic project,
which spread throughout Europe
and has renewed significance
for us today,
“was to reconstitute
the grounds of hope,
to announce the certainty,
or at least the possibility,
of a rebirth in which
a renewed mankind (sic)
will inhabit a renovated earth
where he will find himself
thoroughly at home” (Abrams, 2004, in Rigby, p. 11).

In this “destitute time” (Heidegger, 1971a, p. 91)
embarked as we are
on an unprecedented technological adventure,
“Romanticism remains

The sens of separation
between the human subject and the community of natural things
has deepened,
since social, political and intellectual pressures
overwhelmed the Romantic movement.²

Nature, “a convenient fiction” (Evernden, 1992, p. 102),
is viewed as just a social construct,
where the multitude of natural phenomena
become objects subject to pursuit and control.

Mechanistic ideology
descended from Newtonian and Cartesian ideologies,
now integrated into all arenas of our world,
has “led to alienation
between our thoughts and our bodies,
between our bodies and the Earth,  
between humans and other species” (Hayward, 1990, p. 64).

The Cartesian denial of sensuous awareness,  
is reconceptualized  
by the techno-exploitation  
of senses  
in an exaggerated  
reinvention of the sensorium—  
a spurious “spell of the sensuous” (Abram, 1996, title of book)  
crafted in the labyrinths of technicity.

A Voice

It would appear that we have travelled so far in our cultural self-deceit that we actually believe that we have no need of sensory stimulation or nutrition beyond that provided by ourselves. No need of an influence that is not of human design and fabrication. (Livingston, 1994, p. 136)

Without choice,  
without comparison,  
without contraries,  
will our senses capitulate, succumb—  
will we even know that they have, as we join in the dance macabre of simulated senses?

A Voice

They [humans] are deeply immersed in illusions and dream images; their eyes merely glide over the surface of things and see “forms.” Their senses nowhere lead to truth; on the contrary, they are content to receive stimuli and, as it were, to engage in a groping game on the back of things. (Nietzsche, 2005, in Jutte, p. 197)

Is there some Ariadnean golden thread to lead us
beyond the Minotech labyrinth,
that creation of shifting
shape changing
ever beckoning tantalizing
sensuous corridors?

What sustains us?
In what does hope reside
for co-existence—
engaged bodies, minds, selves in a planetary community?

What can heal the severing
of thinking from sensing,
of sensing self from nature
can move us toward
renewing these natural interconnections?

An awakening of an embodied perceptual capacity,
a synaesthetic mode of being
which renews body, mind and spirit
enlivening a consciousness toward
relatedness, reciprocity and rootedness
with wildness
offers a possibility.

Too often my tingling, startling,
ever shifting
multi-sensory relation to the world
becomes
a purely contemplative affair,
and I retreat from lived experience,
the practice of life living,
my bodily roots in the earthworld severed.

“Does the human intellect
or ‘reason’
really spring us free
of our inheritance
in the depths
of the wild proliferation and diversity
of sensuous forms?

Or … is the human intellect
rooted in,
and secretly borne by,
our forgotten contact
  with the multiple non-human shapes

*A Fragment*

In a place
  where craggy rocks,
  (creations of ancient crumblings,
   narratives of leaf, shell, and bone
     which enfold
   the forgotten deeds of earth),
  lean against the sky,
  the slow drip of water
  fills and refills
  a basin of stone.

The blossoming of the withered tree
  is mirrored there,
  and the endless flowering of dust.
(Vernon, 2008)

The wildness of the natural world,
  a sentient presence,
  is veiled from us through our own sensate closure,
  the arrogance of the mind
  that claims for itself all reality.

*A Zen Story*

“You often say that everything is
  consciousness and mind.” Fayan nodded in
agreement. “Could you tell me, then,”
continued the master Guichen, pointing to a
large rock nearby, “is this rock inside or
outside your mind?” “It is inside my mind,
of course.” “Your head must feel quite
heavy, traveler,” noted the master, “carrying
around a rock like that.”
Humbled, Fayan … stayed to study further
with the master.
(Hansen, 2004, unpaged)
Fayan’s epiphany awaits me,
with the poetic practice,
of the mingling of my senses,
and wandering
in sensuous attunement with wildness,
among the things themselves.
An experience radically different
from carrying rocks
about in my head.
Put simply,
the mind cannot grasp, know, feel, sens things,
if we are out of our bodies
“walking around in our heads” (Poplin, 1996, p. 149).

The body in western civilization
has been at odds with a mind
that is caught in the illusions of ideology.

A Fragment ........................................the genius of
The mind, which is our being, wrong, wrong,
The genius of the body, which is our world,
Spent in the false engagements of the mind.
(Stevens, 1954, from Esthetique du mal,
pp. 316–317)

The senses
speak out.
“Wretched mind, do you,
who get your evidence from us,
yet try to overthrow us,
our overthrow will be your downfall” (Galen, 2005, in Jutte, p. 33).3

Direct sensuous bodily experience
discredited,
the mind fabricates surrogates—
concepts, theories, explanations, representations—
mistaken for ‘what is real.’
The world is not what I think, but what I live through. I open to the world, I have no doubt that I am in communication with it, but I do not possess it; it is inexhaustible.
(Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 73)

As disembodied mind
I am removed from the flux
from becoming,
from my ineluctable interconnection
with the earth.
With alienation
between body and nature
self and others
the ground of being falls away.

With relationship denied, there is no reciprocity …. Deafness, blindness, and insensateness are essential, for any hint of subjectivity emanating from the world would be evidence of relationship. Shunning contact and symbolically cutting the vocal cords of the world guarantees isolation.
(Evernden, 1985, p. 99).

Disembodiment—
body-mind duality,
disembeddedness—
human-nature duality
are entangled fallacies
that substantiate and nourish
each other,
a collaboration of exclusion and control essential
to maintain the contemporary technological worldview.4

Body, mind and nature
are not separate
but overlapping and intertwined.
We are embedded
in the processes of the earth community
and the cosmos.
“[A]ccording to this perception,
nature ceases to be viewed
as mere raw material,
as pure object,
but as a partner in this overarching
developmental process
in which we are inextricably embedded” (Gardiner, 1998, p. 141).

Nature has become a concept.
Things of nature,
set off from us, against us,
no longer in a relation of kinship,
become objects we have no real intimate connection with—
which we analyze, observe, record,
rather than smell, taste, hear, touch.
We move from being receivers to interpreters
who then become takers.
Wildness
is not ours
to ramble in, to exploit, to be entertained by.

I am not the centre of a circumambient life world,
but a part of an endless intertwining sentient network.

This is not about imaging
a return to some idyllic state,
but a turn toward wild otherness
which I have never left.
Wildness, though now diminished,
has been, and still is
very much with me.

I need to trust
my body’s sensuous
synaesthetic immersion in earthness,
a visceral reality experienced in the body,
yet I have a persistent,
disturbing sens of disembeddedness.
Distrust of the senses is learned—a habit.
The quality of wildness,
uncanny, elusive, unknowable,
eludes definitional pursuit.

It is unnameable,
beyond saying—
the word stone is not stoneness—
but a quality that can be encountered sensuously,
experienced nonverbally,
synaesthetically.

Alienation from nature,
the loss of opportunity to bond with wildness,
results from
humanity’s attempt to conquer nature.

We exclude the natural world
deny its existence and value
except as an economic and recreational resource,
what Heidegger (1977) calls “standing reserve” (p. 17).

In the process of excluding nature
we have effectively excluded ourselves from
an intimate participation
in the life of the earth
of which we are ineluctably a part
and dependent upon.

All life,
“grows out of the soil and the atmosphere,
depends on them,
interacts constantly with them,
shapes them,
and remains deeply continuous with them” (Midgely, 1996, p. 149).

Setting up
impenetrable barriers
to direct intersensory communication,
“We have become persons
who are unable to hear the world of life.
The world continues to speak and
we continue to ignore the voices,
to not hear and not listen.
Deafness is becoming
a defining characteristic of *homo sapiens*” (Evernden, 1985, p. 101).
By excluding nature
depriving it of a voice
we “sever the vocal cords of the earth” (Evernden, 1985, p. 103).

But nat-ure—
still unknowable,
unpredictable,
Protean,
earth, air, fire and water
planetary shape changers
not created, invented, submissive
not yet conquered—
is responding:
am I listening, seeing, smelling,
am I present?

‘Nat-ure’ as ground
for our sens of community
is disappearing.
What we have lost, are losing
is apparent to our senses everyday—
out the back door, down the street, along the shore,
in polluted streams, and
defiled air.
What will be left?

Have we,
“eliminated any fear or awe
or reverence or humility
or delight or joy
that might have restrained us
in our use of the world” (Barry, in Majoy, 1996, p. 5),

misplaced
sentient acuity
no longer recognizing
our sensuous alienation
from originary nat-ure,
scattered the ability
to step away
from self-absorption
in the ‘society of spectacle,’
and to turn in synaesthetically awakened openness
toward the earth and each other?
A Voice … it is time for Man (sic) to change his beliefs and become what he is, another species that desires survival not at the expense of but in concert with the other organisms of the planet…. Man needs a new humility, a new belief in the abilities of these species to communicate with him. He needs to be freed of his suffering from interspecies deprivation.
(Lilly, 1996, in Lussier, p. 395)

Thirty years have past
since this observation—
where are we now?

A Fragment … it is dreary
to descend

and be a stranger how
shall we descend

who have become strangers in this wind that

rises like a gift

.................................................................
in light

and wind
and fire and water and air the five

bright elements
the marvel

of the obvious and the marvel
of the hidden is there …. 
(Oppen, 2003, from Disasters, pp. 161–162)

Can humans still
perceive needs versus wants,
imagine the possibility of another way of life,
foster sensorial focusing and nearness?

Will humans seek out and accept, “membership—which is to say ‘place’— in the beauty that is life process” (Livingston, 1981, p. 117),

embrace relatedness, rootedness responsibility reciprocity as sensuous earth dwellers?

_A Voice_ Such an act—a conscious and willing act of self recovery—would require the re-cognition of options that have long been masked from us by our accumulated tradition. It would require a healing of perceived dichotomies, the mending of conceived alienations, the redirection of our fabricated imperatives toward reconciliation with that long-forgotten quality that is the nature of being. It would be the dissolution of the ancient western divorce from nature. (Livingston, 1981, p. 117)

What can assist in this recovery?
What sustains us both human and nonhuman?

Serres (1992) asserts the need for a “natural contract” (p. 38) to be acknowledged and upheld, along with the social and scientific contracts.

_A Voice_ We must add to the exclusively social contract a natural contract of symbiosis and reciprocity in which our relationship to things would set aside mastery and possession in favor of admiring attention, reciprocity, contemplation and respect… (Serres, 1995, p. 38)
But
given the human/nature
dual exclusion
so entrenched
so profitable,
why would desire
for a natural contract emerge,
from what experiential existential fount?

Just thinking, theorizing, reasoning
doesn’t make it so.

Contracts,
artefacts of words,
though easily broken, misinterpreted, misplaced, ignored,
may reassure the mind.

“[T]he Earth speaks to us
in terms of forces, bonds, and interactions,
足够的 to make a contract” (Serres, 1995, p. 39).

But do we hear the multiple voices?
Do we listen?
Are we present
synaesthetically
with a vibrant awakened sensitivity
to a vast sentient otherness?

The possibility of humans practicing a symbiotic
interdependent relationship
with wild otherness
depends “on an empathy
which can only come about
in the wake of unmediated
unadulterated sensuous exposure
to the otherness of nature” (Evernden, 1992, p. 114).

In resistance to
the tantalizing tug of technicity—
poetic and
ecological writings
continue to insist that
“our relationship with the natural world
is now an urgent social and political
as well as an abiding
eexistential and artistic question,
[and] suggest that the otherness of the natural world
has not,
in any simple way,
lost its animating pull on our psychic life” (Baker, 2005, p. 284).

A renewal,
a restoring
of our “connatural” relationship with wildness
demands
a resensualizing of ourselves
toward sentient wild otherness,
and the nonhuman natural cyclical processes,
with which we co-exist.
The voices of the wild will once again be listened to.5

Awakening the “Connatural”

_In wildness is the preservation of the world._
(Thoreau, 1947, p. 609)

_Where people once felt more or less like branches or leaves or fruits on a tree,
they now often feel more like stones in a concrete mixer._
(Midgley, 1991, p. 51)

_What do we believe/ To live with?_
(Oppen, 2003, from Blood from the Stone, p. 16)

Cultivating anew
our “connatural” relationship
with wildness,
depends on a “reawakening
of the basic experience
of the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 65),
an embodied sensuous experience
in which we “return to the things themselves … to that world
which precedes knowledge,
of which knowledge always speaks” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 65),6
and encounter wild otherness,
freeing ourselves
from the fetters of conceptualizations,
the trappings of objectification, which enclose and exclude wildness.

Depends on
a resensualizing of our way of being,
a resensualizing of nat-ure.
Depends on learning anew
to be perceptually present,
in attunement with nat-ure.

_A Voice_ When I say that I have senses and they give me access to the world, I am not a victim of some muddle .... I merely express this truth which forces itself upon reflection taken as a whole: that I am able, being _connatural_ with the world, to discover a sense in certain aspects of being without having myself endowed them with it through any constituting operation.
(Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 131, italics added)

To be “_connatural_”
is an inherent
belonging together
with a natural domain,
a commingling _sens_ immersion
of harmony.
“The perceptual capabilities of the lived body do not remove it from the phenomenal world or transform it into a transcendental subject .... It is ultimately through one’s body that one is able to begin to understand the world” (Dillon, 1988, p. 150).

_Becoming “_connatural_”
is not a pursuit
to discover,
through some essential human nature
the essential nature of nat-ure,
to possess some piece of knowledge, data, or fact, to conform to, or comply with some externality.

Rather it is an enfoldment
an involving, encompassing relationship, a living relation, guided by a synaesthetic mode of being, a sensuous interconnection between myself and natural communities, a recognizing of wild otherness, which is neither like me nor I like it.

I enter without an agenda opening to a hidden greenness within me.

_A Reflection_ As I contemplate the blue of the sky I am not _set over against_ it as an acosmic subject; I do not possess it in thought, or spread out toward it some idea of blue such as might reveal the secret of it. I abandon myself to it and plunge into this mystery.

(Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 214)

Recovering a “connatural” way of being hinges on awakening a “living relation of the perceiver to his (sic) body and to his world” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 128).

By inspiring a resensualizing of myself, I grasp more acutely my sensuous surroundings which are then resensualized.

Awakening the senses, through multi-sensory awareness and practice, the interweaving of sensuous threads, allows me to “plunge” into wildness, not to survey or dissect it, but to be wholly in the presence of the astonishing encounter.
A Fragment

Plunging into the tingling cold,
vigorous splashing of arms and legs,
then slowing,
the mind quieting.

Sensing
the rhythmic pulse of my body
moving through the pulse of water
the rippling waves,
through patches
of warmth, coolness,
of feathery undulating weeds.

With each stroke, each breath,
watery glimpses
of bright glintings,
green lakey tastes and smells,
sounds ebbing and flowing.

Immersion of
moving body enfolded in moving water—
no-mind.

Where does my body end,
where does the water begin?
My body and the water’s body
are undivided-inseparable.

This enfoldment of the sensing
with the sensible
is more felt than thought,
is indescribable,
as I give over to an expansive harmony.
For these moments
I bodily inhabit the water wildness.

The rush of thinking comes later:
the deep sens of inextricable
interconnection,
the empathetic reflection
on the wonder and wounds of water.

(Vernon, 2008)
I am not
the water I swim through,
but neither am I separate from it.

A Voice
Visible and mobile, my body is a thing
among things; it is caught in the fabric of the
world, and its cohesion is that of a thing ….
Things … are encrusted into its flesh, they
are part of its full definition; the world is
made of same stuff as the body ….
(Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 295)

“The wisdom of the senses
creates our capacity to be present and aware” (Bolster & Dussalt, 2001, p. 100),
to be aware of those simple things, of wildness, of place,
aware of our interconnection with the wild,
felt through our synaesthetic interwoven involvement
which can be ‘known’
recognized by the mind
yet is outside the scope of the purely mental.

Though often disregarded and discounted,
synaesthetic modes of being,
as capacities beyond language,
are an essential and enriching characteristic
of being homo sapiens.
Sapiens, as Serres (1997) reminds us,
“first of all means to feel or suffer
flavour and fragrances” (p. 73).

We are creatures who taste, touch, smell, hear, see,
our “field of perception
is constantly filled
with the play of colours, noises
and fleeting tactile sensations” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 67).
A Poem  Touchstones

Flopping down among the pebbles 
choosing stones 
one-by-one, 
some crusty and craggy,  
some silky and smooth 
others ridged round  
with fairy rings  
or wrapped in sea salty weeds,  
tokens of mysterious origins,  
of unknown destinies.

Holding the warmth,  
the coolness,  
the weight of stillness  
in the palm of his small hand,  
and over and over  
dipping faded fragments  
into clear pools  
to see the magic,  
the sudden emerging  
kaleidoscope of colours.  

(Vernon, 2008)

Consider the impossibility of “grasping  
the unfathomable reality  
of a pebble on the seashore….  
a pebble is not-Mind.  
To apprehend the reality  
of that which is not-Mind,  
is the severest challenge  
that the human intellect can encounter” (Coe, 1984, p. 116).

Encountering radical otherness,  
beyond the merely conceptual,  
is a revelation of something  
for which there is no adequate language.  
Such an intuitive primodial experience,  
of pure sensation  
of wonder, of magic,  
can only be hinted at by the poetic speech.
Sensuous participation puts us directly in touch with the circumambient natural environs, for the body “inhabits space and time… the body is our general medium for having a world” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 123).

All my senses tell me of my inseparability from places where I wander, from the rustling gold of falling beach leaves in the Catalan fageda, the splashing, soaking torrents of the Solomon Island rain forest, the kea raucous, reverberating calls in the New Zealand bush, the surf song of stones along the sea coast, the scented shower of sakura blossoms, and alert me to an ineluctable belonging with my surroundings.

My senses merge with the sensuousness interweave of the living earth— allowing me to respond to the call of things “independently of any representation” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 123).

Ever changing, this weave of emerging relations, a “connatural” sens of harmony, not alienation, of richness, not poverty.

Our perception is limited— always there is something more, something unknowable, we cannot sense or fathom.

A Voice

The particular human subject is just one amongst other such sensible beings and things, with whom and which it is engaged in a constant process of reciprocal interaction and modification … but there is always more to be perceived always more than can be contained in any present moment of perception or sequences of actions …. In so far as we are one sensible
item in a world of other such items, our most fundamental relation to this world is not that of inner ‘thinking subject’ gazing out upon an ‘external’ world. Rather, we inhere in the sensible.
(Crowther, 1993, p. 1)

My body
is not an ‘object’ within a world of ‘objects,’
but a perceiving subject,
an other
among other subjects
“for I is an other” (Rimbaud, 2005, in Baker, Je est un autre, p. 99).
The dualism of subject and object
is resolved as I become part of nature’s processes.

A Voice

[W]e shall need to reawaken our experience of the world as it appears to us in so far as we are in the world through our body, and in so far as we perceive the world with our body. But by thus remaking contact with the body and with the world, we shall also rediscover ourself.
(Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 126, italics added)

Synaesthetic modes of being—
my means of entering into relationships with all things,
an entanglement
in the intersubjective poetic spaces of the earth
an experience of encountering myself—become a way of life living.

A Fragment

There are things
We live among ‘and to see them
Is to know ourselves’
(Oppen, 2003, from Of Being Numerous, p. 83)
Venturing forth
into a “connatural” relationship,
“[w]e live among”
the things of the wild,
in “ontological reciprocity—
the dynamic action
of embodied subject and phenomenal world
upon one another” (Crowther, 1993, p. 149).

I put aside the desire,
the urge to be elsewhere.
I am a presence
in the presence of the things themselves—
“in a constant state of reciprocity
with the world
in which [I] inhere” (Crowther, 1993, p. 152).

A Voice
Our most immediate experience of things, according to Merleau-Ponty, is necessarily an experience of reciprocal encounter—of tension, communication and commingling. From within the depths of this encounter, we know the thing or phenomenon only as our interlocutor—as a dynamic presence that confronts us and draws us into relation .... To define another being as an inert or passive object is to deny its ability to actively engage us and provoke our senses; we thus block our perceptual reciprocity with that being. (Abram, 1996, p. 56)

In a synaesthetic mode of being
amid things of the wild—boulders, birds, blades of grass, bark of trees—
I give “poetic attention,”
a “kind of knowing
[that] remains in touch with perception” (McKay, 2001, p. 27),
to these presences.
I undergo an intimate sense
of enfoldment with them,
difficult to describe in words,
and an apprehension
of the unknowableness of wild others.
“Natural objects ... are like a language
we only faintly remember”,
and a “sympathetic perception of objects
is a remembrance
of the wholeness of things” (Hyde, 1983, p. 174).

A Fragment

What we know in what we see, what we feel in what
We hear, what we are, beyond mystic disputation,
In the tumult of integrations out of the sky,

And what we think, a breathing like the wind,
A moving part of motion, a discovery
Part of a discovery, a change part of a change,

A sharing of color and being part of it.
(Stevens, 1954, from Looking Across the Fields and Watching the Birds Fly, pp. 517-519)

Flowing over and through us,
“the rhythms of the things themselves,
their own tones and textures” (Abram, 1996, p. 54),

may be tangible, audible, visable,
in harmony with our embodied rhythms,
and still not graspable.

Yet, such experiences
summon a deep awareness
of our reciprocal enfolding in the natural realm.
We are absorbed in an “improvised duet
between [our] animal body
and the fluid, breathing landscape
that it inhabits” (Abram, 1996, p. 53).

A Chorus

I am breathing deeply and slowly in order to summon sleep, and suddenly it is as if my mouth were connected to some great lung outside myself which alternately calls forth
and forces back my breath. A certain rhythm of respiration ... now becomes my very being ....
(Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 211, italics added)

Breath is the outer world coming into one’s body. With pulse—the two always harmonizing—the source of our inward sense of rhythm.
(Snyder, 1969, p. 123)

The breathing, sensing body draws its sustenance and its very substance from the soils, plants, and elements that surround it; it continually contributes itself, in turn, to the air, to the composting earth, to the nourishment of insects and oak trees and squirrels, ceaselessly spreading out of itself as well as breathing the world into itself, so that it is difficult to discern, at any moment, precisely where this living body begins and where it ends.
(Abram, 1996, p. 46–47)

In a synaesthetically imbued reciprocal engagement wild otherness is received as a gift.

As a sentient embodied receiver of the sensuous knowledge of wildness,
I am in “a gifted state,”
also experienced by poets.

Like the poet I “receive (inhale, absorb) the embodied presences” (Hyde, 1983, p. 171) of the wild.

It is a state in which one “is naturalized in one’s environment ...
‘native in native time’— things may now be encountered ready-to-hand” (Oppen, in Davidson, 1997, p. 72),
spontaneously, freshly, 
unfettered 
by preconceptions, instrumental reasoning, 
by a dualistic mindset 
intent on sundering *homo sapiens* from nat-ure.

*A Voice* To learn about the pine, go to the pine. To learn about the bamboo, go to the bamboo .... You only learn by becoming totally absorbed in that which you wish to learn .... [T]he poem flows] from that delicate entrance into the life of another object ... it is a major mode of knowledge—to learn about the pine from the pine rather than from a botany textbook. 
(Snyder, 1980, p. 67)

In a gifted state of reciprocity—
“the inhalation and exhalation, 
the reception and the bestowal” (Hyde, 1983, p. 171)—
one does not so much contemplate the natural realm 
but becomes part of its living process, 
keenly aware 
that the things of the wild 
are also in an ongoing sustaining interchange 
with the circumambient *sens*-scape 
of which they are a part.

One experiences 
“[m]oments of sharing, of kindness, of compassion 
[that]are moments of poetry” (Naughton,1989, p. xx), 
*moments of poetic awareness,* 
of living poetically in reciprocity 
and empathy with wildness.

**Gestures of caring are poetic gestures.**

I am transformed by this “I-Thou” affair of the body, mind, heart and spirit. 
I “must change [my] life” (Rilke, 1982, p. 61, italics added)— 
*no return to a previous unawareness,* 
a fog of inattention, 
is possible.
A Fragment

Not I, not I, but the wind that blows through me!

.........................
If only, most lovely of all, I yield myself and am borrowed
By the fine, fine wind that takes its course through the
chaos of the world ....
(Lawrence, 1971, from Song of a Man Who Has Come Through, p. 250)

Experiences with nature poetry and amid the poetics of the wild
“play an important role
in harmonizing the basic ontological reciprocity
between embodied subject and the world” (Crowther, 1993, p. 205).

Poetic speech can reflect this reciprocity—
“the ongoing interchange between my body
and the entities that surround it” (Abram, 1996, p. 52)—
occasioned by synaesthetic perception,
the reciprocal intersense harmony among the senses.

The poet strives
to “create inventions
that can be smelled, touched, heard” (Rimbaud, in Baker, 2005, p. 100).

A Fragment
I raise this greenness to my lips
This sticky promise of leaves,

.........................
See how I’m dazzled, exalted,
Obedient to the lowliest root.
Aren’t my eyes miraculously
Blinded by the explosions of this park?

A green croak of frogs concatenates
Like balls of mercury;

.........................
(Mandel’shtam, 1989, from #388, p. 84)

It is the breathing with “the great lung” of the earth
that Merleau-Ponty recalls us to,
which bestows an astonishing,
profoundly felt reciprocity with earthness,
that the nature poet seeks to articulate
in a language not detached from nature,
in words that celebrate this inherence,

A Voice

The ‘self’ that Whitman’s [Song of Myself] presents to us is a sort of lung, inhaling and exhaling the world. Almost everything in the poem happens as a breathing, an incarnate give-and-take, which filters the world through the body .... Whitman speaks of his inhalation as ‘accepting’ the bounty of the world, his exhalation as ‘bequeathing’ or ‘bestowing’ (himself, his work). (Hyde, 1983, p. 170)

The “more-than-human” inhabitants of the wild
are unable to ‘speak’
even though they have languages,
languages of the wild.
The nature poet speaks of and for them,
knowing that “[o]nly by affirming
the animateness of perceived things
do we allow our words
to emerge directly
from the depths of our ongoing reciprocity
with the world” (Abram, 1996, p. 56)

knowing also that words are limited—
“language experienc[es] its speechlessness ...
and need to stretch itself” (McKay, 2001, p. 30)—
that there is a ‘forgotten’ language
which the poet cannot enclose in human words.

The nature poem is gifted to us by the poet,
it “reflects our mode of embodied inherence in the world,”
which I am calling a synaesthetic mode of being,
“and by clarifying this inherence
[the poem] brings about a harmony
between subject and object of experience” (Crowther, 1993, p. 7).
Our reciprocal engagement with the poem

is an affair

that “moves the heart, or revives the soul,
or delights the senses,
or offers courage for living” (Hyde, 1983, p. xii).

Even if we ourselves have never entered

into the kind of reciprocal experiences

that the poem evokes,
it may kindle our imagination.

The poet “speaks to our capacity

for delight and wonder,
to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives;
to our sense of pity, and beauty, and pain;
to the latent feeling


The poem may usher us out into the wild

with “poetic attention” (McKay, 2001, p. 27),

and a desire to establish

a reciprocal “connatural” relationship with the earth.

Awakening

to a “connatural” mode of being

also depends on

“relearning to look at the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. xx).

But not just to relearn,

I need to learn differently—

being amid a fusion of my senses

in seldom engaged presences and places,
going beyond what is known

and perceiving the familiar freshly—

and opening to possibilities for another way of being.

Not just “to look”

but to smell, taste, hear, touch,
to perceive holistically
to be present—

my senses alert, commingling with each other

and interweaving with the sensible.
Not just *how* to be in dialogue with wild otherness,
but *why*.

**Trusting the wisdom of my senses,**
practicing synaesthetic perception as a mode of being
restores me
to a *sens* of the poetics of place.

**Can I learn to know,**
and to say of such encounters
that I hold them,
nourished by the fusion of the senses,
in my mind *and* my body?

**It will take wanting to,**
and the courage
to change.

**Encounters with sensate**
and non sensate beings
are experiences of wholeness—
of the way things are enfolded
one with another,
not fragmentation.

**When I experience this**
I perceive the senselessness
of segregating practices—
body from mind, human from nature.

**I am in the presence of a tree—**
leaning against the gnarled trunk,
sitting among the knotted roots
leaves
  tattered and torn,
  brittle and dry,
  smelling of nuts and oldness,
drift down around me.

**This tree**
is not merely an object, an “It;”
waiting to be conceptualized, analyzed.
What does it mean to ‘know’ something? Naming treeness, tree, describing or representing it, is not knowing it. Treeness is unknowable.

Being perceptually in the presence of a tree, in a synaesthetic multisensory encounter, we may grasp that this wild treeness is not an “It,” but a “Thou,” part of the “flesh of the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 250) that we too are part of. We become empathically attuned, in an awareness essential to transformation, to “the mending of conceived alienations, the redirection of our fabricated imperatives toward reconciliation with that long-forgotten quality that is the nature of being” (Livingston, 1981, p. 117).
Knowing,
  based on reason, facts, data,
  on instrumental thinking,
  is “to know”.
Somatic, emotive knowledge
  is often discredited—
  a forgetting that
  “the body… knows along with the mind” (McCarthy, 2001, p. 165).

Synaesthetic perception,
  the senses merging
  evoking each other,
  a way of knowing
  not dictated by the mind.

_T]rue knowledge cannot be obtained simply
by means of theoretical thinking, but
through the utilization of one’s total mind
and body ... this is to “learn with the body,
not the brain.”
(Yuasa, 1987, p. 25)

The knowing I experience
  is a knowing of harmony
  and intimacy
  not disclosable in words,
  nor an event of
  ‘virtual reality.’

Mind and words,
  “tools” of knowing,
  are often valued more than the sensuous perceiving body.
But the mind
  does not stand
  outside of wild existence
  as overseer
  as interpreter,
but is somatically, sensuously
entangled with
  the myriad things.
A perceptual event is
“not [simply] a cerebral event
but a direct and reciprocal interchange
between the organism and its world.
A dialogical imperative [becomes]
operative between an individual, visioning subject

The sensuous body,
awake to the intertwining of the senses,
and sentient wildness,
and the earth
“are inherently interdependent …
in a living tension” (Morris, 2004, p. 5).

If perceiver and perceived
are in a trans-existential relationship,
“if there is a relation
between the phenomenal body and other worldly phenomena,
then the ontological wedge,
traditionally driven to split these pairs
and force the members of the sundered couples
into mutually exclusive domains of being
must be withdrawn,
and the language of subject-object disjunction
replaced with that of communion and reciprocity” (Dillon, 1988, p. 150).

If we are “connatural” with the things of wildness
then we are aware of our connectedness
we care—
we have empathy.

Can I cultivate
a sensuous,
transformative transaction with the earth
which structures its meaningfulness to me,
my understanding of it?

Can I learn to honour
my nondiscursive,
sensory experience
which imbues my thinking,
is the fount of my knowledge
of the place I inhabit,
and to trust that a self-other relationship
can be mediated by other than language?

Can I become
synaesthetically
more deeply attuned to the earth
to that “richness close by” (Bonnefoy, 1984, in Naughton, p. 22),
alert to the poetics of place,
and know myself
in relation to wildness—
awed
startled
reassured by the evidence of my senses,
the magic of my retinas, eardrums, tongue, nostrils, skin,
multiple witnesses
which immerse me
within the circumambient natural communities—
engaged as a receiver, not a taker,
through
direct
unmediated
sensuous experience?

A Voice The ground of man (sic) is not only of a kind
identical with that of plant and beast. The
ground is the same for both. It is nature.
(Heidegger, 1971a, p. 100)

I hold
in the wisdom
of the sensuously awakened bodymind,
the wonder and abundance
as well as the craggy edges
of existence,
ever alert to the wounds of the wild,
and tune into something within me
which resonates
with the living earth.
A Fragment
Winter wrings pigment
from petal and slough
but thin light lays
white next red on sea-crow wing.
gruff sole cormorant
whose grief turns carnival.
Even a bangle of birds
to bind sleeve to wrist
as west wind waves to east
a just perceptible greeting—
sinews ripple the weave,
threads flex, slew, hues meeting,
parting in whey-blue haze.
(Bunting, 1966, #51966, p. 35)

One enters into
a multi-sensory merging,
a co-presencing
encounter with the perceived,
a non-linguistic conversing,
an ambiance shared.

A Moment
Sensing a presence,
I look up from browsing
on wild strawberries.

A doe is calmly watching me.

Both of us still,
enfolded in the morning stillness.

Slowly,
nostrils twitching,
she lowers her head
and folds her lips around a red berry.
Tasting her tasting
I have one too.
(Vernon, 2008)
In this sensuous awareness of each other
“the spark is lit between the sensing and the sensible ...” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 295).

We are both made of the same stuff the “flesh of the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 53).

I become aware “that any visible, tangible form that meets my gaze may also be an experiencing subject, sensitive and responsive to beings around it, and to me” (Abram, 1996, p. 67).

A Fragment Oxen .... What is that you express in your eyes? It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my life. (Whitman, 1982, p. 199)

Without such sensorial moments of enfoldment, of wholeness, one has no direct experiential memory to recall, only a vague sense of something lost, misplaced,

A Fragment So they [animals] show their relations to me and I accept them, They bring me tokens of myself .... I do not know where they got those tokens, I must have passed that way untold times ago and negligently dropt them. (Whitman, 1982, p. 218)
The poet
enters into
an experience
of an incarnate sens of the earthworld—
“By taking his nourishment
through his senses … his participatory sensuality
‘informs’ him in both senses—
it fills him up and it instructs” (Hyde, 1983, p. 173).

Such empathetic perception—
is a communion
a remembrance of the wholeness of things.

Reawakening
resensualizing my direct experience,
learning
to resist
the grasping need to know, to identify, to possess,
and the hurried passing by
leaving vibrancy unnoticed,
to resist
the objectifying “I-It” relationship
that barricades against reciprocity,
the withinness of self and earth.

Learning slowness—
perception as the practice of slowness—
which “opens the world to me ….
the sensible initiates me to the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 218),
learning to register
my sensorial immediacy,
to awake to things
in co-presencing,
the wild and we are entangled in a sensuous dialogue,
my whole bodymind engaged,
gathering a sense of wildness
in tune with the poetics of this place where I linger.

Noticing with surprise
what had escaped me before—
the nose twitching barnyard odours
rising from a neighbour’s garden,
the new sensuous green skin of an old arbutus,
the crow soaking bits of bread in the bird bath.

Forgetting myself,
perceiving beyond names
the “feel” of things themselves.

Learning
to allow
the gradual awareness
of my commingling senses,
to stop
and savour
what I hear, smell, feel, see—
this shudder of wind,
the fragile fall of plum blossoms
like a scented whisper,
a flowing intertwining
of sensible with the sensible,
changing even with my very immersion—
a passing
never to be repeated.

Knowing the ungraspability
of this finite fleeting moment.

Humans,
in innumerable places,
are in the presence of
such moments,
of things passing.
A Moment

I sit ridge high
in the cool sunrise,
beside me
a drop of dew
lingers
on a yellow petalled ranunculus—
for a moment.

(Vernon, 2008)

With recognition and acceptance
of finitude,
of my place in time,
in an illuminating epiphany,
I give up the illusion
“of an existence apart from wildness” (McKay, 2001, p. 25).

Wild otherness—
a constant reminder
of my inevitable reconciliation with it,
of the cyclical life and death of earthly existence.
Every wander in the garden,
on wooded paths,
among shore leavings
city streets
is replete with reminders of this cycle.

A Fragment

Look, you will say, at this stone:
Death shines from it.
Secret lamp it is this that burns under our steps.
Thus we walk lighted
(Bonnefoy, 1995, p. 23)

By objectifying nature
as something rule bound
that can be dissected, known,
an entity outside the human realm,
I can avoid the necessity
of facing my mortality.
I become disinherited from sensuous wildness
I turn away.....
In Blake’s (1953) *Book of Thel,*
Thel learns, as I can,
from sentient simple things of nature—
lily, cloud, clod of clay, a worm—
of one’s place in the natural process.

*A Fragment*

...

*Everything that lives*

*Lives not alone nor for itself*

(Blake, 1953, from *The Book of Thel,* p. 103)

By denying my sensuous,
life giving
“connatural” intimacy
with wild communities,
I deprive myself of the fullness of living—
being here now,
for a short while.

*Being aware sensuously of my finitude*
requires a *sens* of interflowing,
perceiving the wonder of a symbiotic existence,
my life,
my death entangled with earthness.

*As we bend nature to our domination*

denying the “thouness” of nat-ure,
so we bend our sensuous embodiedness
to a forgetting of the wisdom of the senses,
and escape into whatever
will shield us from this reality.

*—A Voice—* We are radically intertwined with the world,
we are bound up with the dynamic cycles
and processes of growth and change, birth
and death, that are characteristics of nature
as a whole.

(Gardiner, 1998, p. 135)
A Poem

In the stillness of green and shadow
amid the slow softening of stone,
small creatures
are lulled to sleep
by Shiva’s sweet stench.
A sudden shaft of light
reveals an old tree
leaning into the silence.

Our voices
are but whispers
among the crevices of time.
(Vernon, 2008)

A Voice

Recognition of our finitude—of our place in
time, of the role of chance in human destiny,
of mortality—is an existential starting point,
since this recognition unites us with others
who share the same fate, and since in
moments of extreme illumination this
awareness allows us to perceive the greater
unity in which all finite things participate.
(Naughton, 1984, p. xv)

A Question

The fear of death—does it drive the
desire, the struggle to eclipse wildness, to
remove vestiges of this sentient reminder
of finitude and to seek the fount of eternal
life in technicity?
(Vernon, 2008)

A Fragment

We must talk now. Fear is fear. But we
abandon one another.
(Oppen, 2003, from Leviathan, p. 30)

Empathy,"9

“Einfühlung,
feeling one’s way into
something” (Keen, 2006, p. 209),
is a conscious sensorial bonding
between human and wild otherness
without which we are not fully human,
is the ability
“to propel ourselves
into the location of the other …
heals the fissure between individual
perceiving subject

Perceptual experience
“a feeling of participation in a flowing onward” (Bachelard, 1994, p. xvi),
fosters an ethics of otherness,
“a calling-into-question
of our freedom
to control, process, or reduce the other” (McKay, 2001, p. 96),
and motivates us toward an ecopoetic sens of dwelling.

I share with others,
human and nonhuman,
in jungles and deserts,
on mountains and prairies,
by seas, lakes, rivers,
in city parks, urban ghettos and refugee camps,
the presence of wildness—
senses fused, reverberating,
bodymind alert
in the totality of such an encounter.

Being “connatural”,
synaesthetically awakened to the wild,
means being with the strife,
the passings,
the harrowing meaningless desecration,
as well as with the beauty and the wonder.

A Voice

[O]nce a body-world is recognized, there is a
ramification of my body and a ramification
of the world and a correspondence between
its inside and my outside, and my inside and
its outside.
(Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 270)
A Poem

I come upon
a scene of slaughter
a vast graveyard of trees—
tangled leavings
severed limbs
splintered remains
wrenched roots
strewn over the bruised earth.

A gray senseless stillness
spreads out
like a shroud
over the shadowless ruined land,
only the moan
of the sea born wind
gives voice
to the silenced.

The impact of loss
is visceral
felt as a jolt
numbing my senses, my mind.

A lone tree stands
a spectral sentinel
a ghostly presence
on the ancient growing ground
where I wander
desolate amid the desolation
“and no birds sing”
(Vernon, 2008)

If I am wide awake in the world
my eyes, my nose, my ears
the taste in my mouth,
tell me of the wounds of the wild
brought about through human ignorance, indifference, and greed.
All of us perpetrators
and
victims.
A Voice

What is man (sic) without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, man would die from a great loneliness of spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts soon happens to man. All things are connected.
(Chief Sealth, 1989, in Berman, p. 63)

I need to engage
in a participatory reciprocity
with the shared earthworld,
letting the sensuous self meet
and commingle with the sensuous earth world,
in a practice of sensuous openness,
a pulse of living,
a “pulse of learning” (Lewis, 1989, p. 62).

How often do I notice
the illusive scent of plum blossoms,
the imprint of autumn leaves—
sidewalk shadows,
the silhouette of bare branches
against a flaming sunset,
or stop
to listen to the cacophonous sweep of a flock of geese,
to watch the slow melting of a rainbow,
to rescue a struggling worm?

A Moment

a light spring rain,
nostrils accosted by
that peculiar
dusty-wet odour
rising from the pavement

slimy pink softness wriggling
off my fingers
into the moist soil.
(Vernon, 2008)
If “in wildness is the preservation of the earth” (Thoreau, 1947, p. 609) then we all need to seek out those simple things “manifestations of earth and sky, in the midst of those places, however urbanized, in which we dwell, tarry, or stray” (Rigby, 2004, p. 261).

The urban dweller, despite the paucity of wildness, the constant pressures of a speedy, mechanized life, by engaging in synaesthetic perception may experience a profound sens of co-existence with place.

_A Fragment_ It takes very little, a weed in flower at the foot of a concrete wall, the flight of a bird across a city window. (Fowles, 1977, p. 81)

Can I learn to trust my synaesthetic mode of being, to be sensorially awake to the unfamiliar in the familiar, when the fusion of the senses opens me to a different perception, to an uncanniness, something unusual not noticed before, and to register this “newness” in bodymind?

_A Voice_ The breathing, sensing body draws its sustenance and … substance from the soils, plants and elements that surround it; it continually contributes itself, in turn, to the air, to the composting earth, to the nourishment of insects and oak trees and squirrels, ceaselessly spreading out of itself as well as breathing the world into itself…. (Abram, 1996, p. 46)
All my imbricated mingled senses
caught up in things,
my body actively,
sensorially allied with its surroundings.

Where
does the living body, the tree, the rock, the cloud
begin,
where end?

“We inhere in the sensible” (Crowther, 1993, p. 1),
our own existence inseparable from that of all others,
and become
“sensuous inhabitants of the forests of ourselves” (Bachelard, 1994, p. 187),
and the places in which we dwell.

A Fragment
I remember elm trees that were
the thing of beauty on grimy
smoke-bleared streets stinking of death
and garbage, but over the cramped
rotting houses, the elms arched.

They were cities of leaves.
I would lie under them
and my eyes would rise
buoyed up and surfeited
in the immense rustling viridescence.

... their embrace was strong.
(Piercy, 2006, from The Streets of Detroit
were Lined with Elms, p. 15)

“Messages received from our senses
are guides, beacons
to a more profound and authentic relationship
with our self living
in an ever changing relationship with the surrounding.
(Bolster & Dussalt, 2001, p. 100)
Forgetting of the wisdom of the senses, 
is a physical and mental disability 
in which I am in some basic sens 
both disembodied and incapacitated.

I experience 
a vague impression, 
a gnawing feeling, 
of the absence 
of some vital earthlife connection.

A Voice To be alive means to be sensate means to be 
in touch, where to maintain contact with 
something—anything—that is alive. It is the 
most fundamental part of being. The 
geranium on the tenement window is both an 
offering to the mysterious tidal pull of some 
distant biological memory, and a 
heartbreaking cry for help. 
(Livingston, 1981 p. 94)

Forgetting the wisdom of the senses 
prevails 
when natural synaesthetic perception 
is devalued, 
thwarted, 
and has atrophied, 
when the bodymind 
“is insufficiently or inappropriately attentive 
to the beings among and by which it is placed (Helgeson, 2005, p. 124).

What sustains us— 
“flight from the immediacy of the senses 
and the gradual attempt 
to replace this immediacy through technology” (Majoy, 1996, p. 5), 
through the creation of a convincing, 
uninterrupted illusion of life 
assuring us through simulations 
that this is what smells, sounds, sights, tactile feelings really are, 
or an immersion 
in sensate vibrant wildness
as sentient “connatural” beings
becoming earthwise?

Submitting to the spell of
immersion in a sensuous encounter
with wild otherness
the subject/object dichotomy
breaks down.
I feel identified
with what I perceive—
a participating consciousness.
“Participation, or identification,
highly sensuous in nature,
is a mode of knowing.
Its immediate, visceral quality
cannot be intellectually refuted,
but can be intellectually rejected, repressed” (Berman, 1989, p. 112, italics added)

When synaesthetic perceptual capacities
are usurped by the lures of technicity
in the service of the marketplace,
when “our spontaneous preconceptual experience …
is referred to as “merely” subjective ….
the fluid realm of direct experience …
seen as a secondary derivative dimension” (Abram, 1996, p. 34),
our trust in a sensibility,
an embodied reality,
which would make us aware of
and value our life sustaining intimacy with wildness
is diminished.

A Voice [T]here is an implicit attempt to keep people
from challenging technology by making
their direct experience appear marginal and irrelevant.
(Franklin, 1990, p. 127)
I need
to guard against alienation
and yes,
distance myself from
the playfields of simulated senses
which remove me
from synaesthetic life experiences amid wild otherness,
upon which the bodymind is nourished,
to turn away
from disembodied ‘realities’ of screens—
figures, images, voices
momentarily treading an insubstantial space—
from tawdry simulations of the living, breathing earth,
toward a reawakening,
resensualizing of my being
as a way of living and dwelling.

Now when our embodied sensuous being
is accosted by virtual worlds of unreality,
wildness has great potency.

_A Voice_  
Ah, not to be cut off,
not through the slightest partition
shut out from the law of the stars.
The inner—what is it?
if not intensified sky,
hurled through with birds and deep
with the winds of homecoming.
(Rilke, 1996, p. 219)

_Poetic Sens of Dwelling_

There was nothing either above or below him .... He [Kurtz] had kicked himself loose of the earth ... he had kicked the very earth to pieces.  
(Conrad, 1983, p. 107)

When are you going to start living as if you plan on staying?  
(Hesquit)\(^{11}\)

Nothing more/But the sense/ Of where we are/...  
the open Miracle of Place  
(Oppen, 2003, from A Narrative, p. 78)
Home,
*oikos* from the Greek, is a place, *topos*, of dwelling, of belonging, a habitat, residence, is where I abide bodily, sensuously, attentively, with generosity in the presence of the wild in the presence of my embodied self and others like me, in the practice of rootedness, reciprocity, responsibility.

*Home*
“is the action of the inner life finding outer form; it is the settling of self into the world” (McKay, 2001, p. 22),

*is a place of dwelling*
“which humans make in concert with the non-human” (Cantrell, 2003, p. 8).

*Dwelling,*
an “at homeness” (Bate, 1996, p. 444) on the earth, becomes possible when we become familiar with the qualities of a place, with the lay of the land, immediate and surrounding.

“But what is the state of dwelling in our precarious age” (Heidegger, 1971a, p. 161)? Have we “kicked [ourselves] loose of the earth” (Conrad, 1983, p. 107), mired as we are in a “forgetfulness of the art of dwelling” (Rigby, 2004, p. 261)?

*A Chorus* Can an ideal for our time be one of expressive wholeness, substantive
participation in a natural and social world where one is “at home” as well as “free”?
(Taylor, 2005, in Baker, p. 314)

In this bleak period of triumphant corporate capitalism and pervasive technocratic reification, how are we to find some way toward an embodied freedom in those worldly places we are at once bound to inhabit and called to inhabit otherwise?
(Baker, 2005, p. 174)

Such questions recall us to human homelessness, felt in the body, that wrenching apart of human and natural into two opposing realms, an alienation from earth, from wild otherness, unprecedented.

Estranged from wildness— air, soil, fire, water, tree, rock, shell, feather—groundless, and sens-less, a closing off, a subtle withering, begins.

A Fragment The greatest poverty is not to live in a physical world. (Stevens, 1954, p. 325)

Cyberspace, a ‘world’ far from ‘home,’ from sensuous entanglement with the earth household, a travesty of sounds and sights,
heedless of the finite craggy edges of existence,
offers a shabby simulation of dwelling,
an impoverished rootless sens of place,
as fleeting fragments
flash by
“reconfiguring a life

We will suffer,
“without having known how to reach the brief earth” (Bonnefoy, 1995, p. 119),
the poverty of
trying to live
excluded from wild otherness
a poverty of body, mind, heart and spirit.¹⁴

A Fragment  Exclusion
is the experience of many
in places bereft of wildness—
the rooted,
the winged,
the ambulatory—
where life
is but survival in the return to dust.

Someplace in Cuba,
flower boxes,
gifts from a distant land,
are tended with hope and care,
in an openness to possibility.
Coloured scents spill forth
brightening noisy denatured streets.
Seeds, perchance, drift to cracks
to a meager bit of soil.
Small beginnings, small changes.¹⁵
(Vernon, 2008)

No natural thing,
non-human or human,
floats free of earthly residence,
“[a]ny life is a life lived on the earth” (Edwards, 2002, p. 69).
Events of our rootedness in wildness
ground us—
how can we know
who we are,
if we don’t know
where we are?  

The commingling of my senses
tells me
that ‘where’ I am
is not only a ‘seen’ place,
it is where,
as an embodied being—
I experience
a diverse alterity of flavours, voices, textures,
which informs
of the inseparability of self and place of dwelling,
of human culture
interlaced with sensorial threads
of wild otherness.

A Voice
[A] significant meeting place between nature and culture, mind and world … is also a site of dependency, for no embodied being can live independent of place; … we are utterly dependent on specific features of our bodily location.
(Cantrell, 2003, pp. 8–9)

Earthhome
is mostly ‘seen’ as
merely a landscape,
abstracted from empathy,
a vague background
against which
the human figure is placed,
just a scene
in the ‘story’ the West has written,
embellished, believed over the centuries,
a place of entertainment,
of solace, of self-enhancement.
Wildness is not an ultimate rescuer,
nor a cornucopia of resources for the taking—
a “standing reserve” (Heidegger, 1977, p. 17).

The circumambient
natural world does not belong to us,
is not ours to protect, control, or exploit.

“To live as if [we] plan on staying”\(^{17}\)
we do not possess
but co-inhabit a place
with nonhuman others.

“Dwelling is not owning” (Bate, 1998, p. 62)
it is “the manner in which we humans are on the earth” (Heidegger, 1971b, p. 47).

Identity,
individual, communal,
is “forged in place” (Bate, 1998, p. 63)
within natural communities.

Resensualizing myself
amid this melange of wildness
alerts me to the interpenetration of self and nonhuman others,
prompts me
to be aware of the conditionality of life,
to see myself as formed,
as a sensuous being among others,
and calls me
“to a deep reflection
of my own condition (Edwards, 1997, p. 186),
my finitude.

\textit{A Fragment} \hspace{1cm} \textit{You will lie down upon the simple earth,}
\textit{Who told you it belonged to you?}
(Bonnefoy, 1985, from \textit{The Lure of the Threshold}, p. 52)

Getting to know a place,
itimately,
in a flux of reciprocity,
prepares one
to overcome
the forgetfulness of the art of dwelling
sustains
an appreciation of the poetics of place,
  a deeper understanding of ‘home.’

Getting to know
a sens
of place
speaks of a fusion of intertwined meanings:  
sens of perception,
sens of meaningfulness,
sens of direction—
a moving toward home,
a true place of habitation
  which includes wildness.

Becoming familiar with
the fold of the land—
  the splendour, the harshness—
sensing its moods,
capacities, limits,
dangers,
experiencing it as unpredictable,
  accepting it as uncontainable, unknowable,
as that which cannot be made,
I open to the unexpected, the mystery.

Attentive to the poetics of place,
the mosaic of wildness I am gathered to,
an embodied belonging,
I am
“in touch with
its particular soils,
its waters,
its winds” (Sale, 1998, in Bate, p. 54),

becoming sensuously attuned to
beauty, wounds,
deaths, renewals,
shifts and seasons.
To discover summer and know it, To
discover winter and know it well, to find
Not to impose, not to have reasoned at all
(Stevens, 1954, from Notes Toward a
Supreme Fiction, p. 404)

I sens
the way this place of dwelling
is a habitat for others, co-inhabitants.

Lysichitum americanum

The light of the forest,
first colour of spring,
rises pungent from shadowy bogs,
host to winged gatherers
who await the dawn
on chilly nights
enclosed in yellow hooded warmth.
(Vernon, 2008)

Not to let natural things
become invisible to me,
cloaked in my indifference,
to my and their diminishment.
but to be sensorially attentive,
halting an inclination
to be on automatic pilot—
walking to work,
wandering through the woods,
sitting by the sea—
to drift elsewhere,
rummaging through the corridors of my mind,
and to stop,
to give a thought
to that to which a plant,
is nourished by.

What is there
like fortitude! What sap
went through that little thread
to make the cherry red
Synaesthetic Perception as a Mode of Being

(Moore, 1987, from *Nevertheless*, pp. 538–539)

The challenge—
not to “kick [ourselves] free of the earth” (Conrad, 1983, p. 107),
but to overcome
the forgetfulness of the art of dwelling.

The place of dwelling
we desire and create
is determined
by the way we bodily inhabit place,
by our relationship
to those natural communities we live within,
for “the body is our general medium
for having a world” (Merleau-Ponty, 2004, p. 123).

Living attentively,
noticing
how the senses intertwine,
opening me
to the poetics of place
where I dwell,
learning
to experience place
“from the perspective
of a child
who (has) not yet
fallen prey to the tyranny
of the eye,
who ‘sees’
with the whole body—
sensory perceptions
nourishing a fertile imagination” (Rigby, 2004, p. 82),
reinvigorating
an intimate
embodied awareness,
of spaces of mutual habitation,
I overcome estrangement from wildness,
reconcile the split
between self and other.
A Voice    A recuperation of the incarnate sensorial dimension of experience brings with it a recuperation of the living landscape in which we are corporeally embedded. (Abram, 1996, p. 65)

Wildness, ever emergent,  
   takes place before me, around me.  
I engage it naturally,  
   sensorially  
   without technological intervention or disruption.

Becoming acquainted,  
   conversant,  
with wild acquaintances  
   in an intertwining reciprocal performance of self and other  
reminds me  
   that I am not apart from  
   but part of  
   an inhabitated earthplace.

A Fragment    Gift Exchange—Morning Ritual

The sens-cape

still grayness of dawn  
muted green of Fiordland mountains  
bank of a seaward rushing river  
grass crisp with frosty dew.

The meeting

kea swoops down  
   struts along a branch  
eyeing me as I breakfast  
on sunflower seeds  
take off and return  
   a straggly bit of old man’s beard  
draped on the branch  
a cock of the head  
I accept
seeds from my pocket
placed on the branch
kea crunching shelling seeds
croaking softly

take off, return
a scented beech twig
I accept.
red pahutakawa blossom
I accept

sun spills from Fiordland peaks
dissolving the dawn
kea in sudden orange winged flight,
to craggy nesting reaches
raucous cries
reverberating with the morning.
gifts fill my pocket,
and tomorrow?^{20}
(Vernon, 2008)

We awaken to a sens,
an acute perception
of the essential unity
between ourselves
and our place of dwelling
a place filled
with richness
that “we cannot or will not see” (Bonnefoy, 1985, p. 97).

A Fragment
I cry. Look,
The light
Was living there, so near us! Here, its store
Of water, still transfigured. Here the wood
In the shed. Here, the few fruits
Left to dry in the vibrations of the dawn sky.

But, look, in you, in me,
The undivided, the invisible are gathering.
(Bonnefoy, 1995, p. 89)
Attentiveness to voices, presences—
the strange, the familiar—
beckoning to us,
is a way of being and learning from the ways of the wild, of getting to know the poetics of place in which and with which we dwell.

A Fragment

If you notice anything, it leads you to notice more and more
(Oliver, 1986, from *The Moths*, p. 77)

Enlivening the senses perceiving with freshness, allowing myself to be startled, amazed, ever open to the unexpected, experiencing the world as if for the first time, I begin to notice presences, not heeded before, and absences, evidences of woundedness, of endings.

A Poem

Impress of Leavings²¹

What once the pebbles held—
brown belly rub of river otter comings and goings—now faded.
A skull, bleached white, rests—
a shard among shore leavings.
Seabirds swoop and scream.
The surf sings on.
(Vernon, 2008)

Even though,
“our place is multiple,
our selves capable
of exploring that multiplicity
in all its elements,
in every secret corner” (Garber, 1995, p. 23),
to resist
the urge to such full disclosure,
to value
the unknowableness, the mystery,
the unconcealed,
as part of the poetics of place.

Wildness
is not merely an extension
of my sensuous body
my embodied self not
just an appendage of nature,
but rather
synaesthetic awareness
merges feelings, thoughts, with wild otherness
bodymind attending to a sens of place,
reinhabiting with wisdom.

Not a return

to the earth—
I have never left—
but to ‘retune’ to
earth wildness,
those simple things
which enrich bodymind,
recognize my irremediable lack of wholeness—
the presumption of thinking
that I am ‘whole’ in and of myself.

Ever in process, metamorphic
changing
evolving,
myself, place, and all the nonhuman entities
of this place,
intimately
entangled together,
a mutuality of experience,
mutually enhancing, enriching,
a closeness—
intimations of belonging
inhabiting my inmost thoughts and feelings,
my “being one with my senses, my intellect with my body” (Caws, 1984, p. 2).

I become sensuously aware
of my intrinsic, fragile
and wondrous
embeddedness
with flourishing natural surroundings
and of my passing through.
Transformed by my intimacy and love,
this place
becomes a focus of care,
of receiving
and giving back,

How does it feel in the body,
coming upon
those ‘home’ places
once inhabited,
now uninhabitable?
Stench of a fouled stream—
rot of garbage, carcasses—
the flow stilled,
silence
but for the buzz of flies on the oily scum,
“the pores of our skin,
our eyes, ears, and nose,
tongue will tell us of this degradation” (Prakash, 1994, p. 329).

Deadening the senses
makes me unaware,
enlivening them makes possible
the overcoming of my
estrangement from wildness
and an attunement with my place of dwelling.
It isn’t enough to merely talk about this possibility—
    words are words, not experiences—
to ruminate about someday, somehow,
or be mesmerized by insubstantial images.

I need to be in tune with the interplay of my senses.

_A Voice_ A man (sic) may have lived all of his life in the gray, and the land and trees of him dark and somber .... And then—the glory—so that a cricket song sweetens his ears, the smell of the earth rises chanting to his nose, and dappling light under a tree blesses his eyes. Then a man pours outward, a torrent of him, and yet he is not diminished .... It is a lonely thing but it relates us to the world. It is the mother of all creativeness … (Steinbeck, 2002, from _East of Eden_, p. 445)²⁴

_Practicing the Art of Dwelling_

Overcoming the forgetfulness of the art of dwelling²⁵ involves
    interweaving of my senses to a state of awokeness and disclosure,
    a non-linguistic knowing,
    which alerts me to the inseparability of myself and place,
    my sensuous bonding with its wild inhabitants
    and sharing an ecological niche,
    dwelling “symbiotically” (Serres, 1995, p. 38).²⁶

Learning to dwell poetically, wherever we are, at whatever age, is _poiesis_, an art of making.²⁷
Such learning and relearning
is a life long embodied practice.

It is more like a wander, than a journey,
and is discontinuous, unpredictable,
with a poetic attentiveness

to the simple things of the wild—
“the splendour of the simple” (Heidegger, 1971a, p. 7)—
that contribute to the making of who I am,
to which I am indebted.
I allow for
risk, chance,
open to encounters
which startle, transfix—
with no sens of final attainment, an end point,
when I can say
‘now I dwell poetically, wholly, completely,’
“In this dwelling
there are no guarantees of success,
no assurances of control,
just the on-going venture” (Burch, 1986, p. 19)

A Fragment Solvitur ambulando
“you can sort it out by walking”

In wandering, unlike a journey,
I go without destination
or itinerary,
I go without pursuit,
in the practice of slowness,
paying poetic attention
to where I am—
to the interplay of sensory vibrations—
not indifferent,
or absorbed by mental gyrations.
I am free
to venture along
unfamiliar, uncommon paths,
or retrace my steps,
to stop
for the scents, the sounds, the sights,
the poetics of this place.
(Vernon, 2008)
A sense of belonging,  
rooted in sensuous earth wanderings,  
grounds our inner life  
and inspires a harmonious mode of dwelling.

This place, of both intimacy and immensity,  
where I encounter and  
intermingle synaesthetically with wildness  
is the poetic dwelling  
in which I reside—  
neither utopian, idyllic, mythical,  
nor an elsewhere  
but a multisensory field nearby.

Curbing  
an inclination toward flight,  
a search for the last best place,  
a desire to return  
to a romanticized, idealized ‘home-scape,’

I engage in reinhabiting,  
“seeking out possibilities of dwelling  
in the midst of those places,  
however urbanized,  
in which we dwell, tarry, or stray” (Rigby, 2004, p. 261).

“Living as if you plan on staying”  
means  
being in the presence of those simple things,  
stone, leaf, feather,  
drop of dew,  
voices strung on the wind,  
for “dwelling is always staying with things” (Heidegger, 1971a, p. 151),  
which engage us in all our sensuous being  
amid the poetics of place,

means  
experiencing the beauty, the wonder,  
the shatterings, the churnings,  
dwelling, wholesomely, passionately,  
in an inhabited place of communing and meaning  
that nourishes the inner self  
where the sensorial presence of non-human others  
is recognized, respected, honoured,
resisting the on-going impoverishment
“of the human Umwelt—
the particular niche in which it is
possible for humans to feel at home” (Rubinoff, 2004, p. 18)
reanimating a sens of at homeness.

At-Homeness

Home is threaded through with wildness,
“homecoming is here in the bits of stone” (Bonnefoy, 1984, in Naughton, p. 96).
How will a diminishing possibility
of sensuous embodied interactions with wild others—
insects, animals, plants,
affect our life living, our language, our arts, our culture—
and that of those who follow us,
who may be deprived of these encounters,
dispossessed of connection with wildness,
and hence a sens of home, of rooted dwelling?

A Voice

The biologically diverse and independent ecosystem of soils, waters, and organisms with which the human species has co-evolved, is an essential component of the human Umwelt—... the particular niche or world in which it is possible for humans to feel at home .... By impoverishing the source of the stimuli for which we have a primal need, we may at the same time be victimizing ourselves, depriving ourselves of the very thing that makes us human.
(Rubinoff, 2004, pp. 18–19)

The body remembers,
not merely the mind,
the smells, the tastes, the sounds,
the fingertip memories,
the sights,
the rhythmic sensual physicality of place
experienced as children.

If childhood memories—
the seedbed,
from which
the capacity for
synaesthetic modes of being
springs—
are rich
in experiences of the poetics of place,
experiences which education can foster,
embracing the earth as home,
in a creative act of dwelling,
becomes a possibility.

A Fragment  Home, I said.
In every language there is a word for it.
In the body itself, climbing
those walls of white thunder, past those
green
temples, there is also
a word for it.
I said, home
(oliver, 1986, from The River, p. 21)

Having lived sensuously
empathically
amid wild otherness as a child,
one brings forward
a deeply felt desire
for a mutually habitable
earth home,
and chooses
a way of being,
of living harmoniously, wholesomely
in a wholly living place—
for “all really inhabited space
bears the essence of the notion of home” (Bachelard, 1994, p. 5).

This home is not the omniprevalent ‘house’
that “technology has built
in which we all now live” (Franklin, 1990, p. 11).
A culturally constructed and marketed reality
of what home is
usurps
the bodily felt reality
of a homeplace
embedded within natural communities.

A sens of at-homeness
  textured by the events
  of our rootedness in wildness,
  begins with the love and empathy for
  nonhuman others
  and kindles a way
  of being with people
  within a mutual dwelling place.

A Fragment

Getting to know
  the chestnut tree at the end of the lane,
  amid the enfolding drift
  of the sea-scented mist,
  and the musty-sweetness of autumn.

Tracing the rough,
  armour-like texture of bark,
  listening
  to the syncopated plunk of falling nuts—
  onto crisp leaves of ragged gold,
  to squirrel scurryings and scoldings.

Watching crow cacophonous flockings
  in the top most branches,
  wondering how the world looks
  from up there.

Lingering
  in the presence of
  the unpossessible mystery of its being.
  (Vernon, 2008)

A Reflection

What novelty is worth that sweet monotony
where everything is known, and loved
because it is known?
(Eliot, 1996, p. 41)
In this here and now
arriving at a homeplace,
the intertwining of my senses
are enriched by another,
an ineffable sense,
the sense of memory—
a recollection of previous synaesthetic experiences.

A whiff of something brings forth a sensuous kaleidoscopic
revisiting of another place,
remote in time and space,
I see, smell, hear, taste and touch it once again,
my immediate awareness
intermingling with that of the past,
enlivening
a present sens of dwelling,
sustaining a commitment to
“the sense/ Of where we are/…
the open/ Miracle/ Of place” (Oppen, 2003, from A Narrative, p. 78).

A Voice One turns with something like ferocity
toward a land that one loves …. This is a
vital affair … an affair of the whole being…
an affair of fundamental life.
(Stevens,1989, p. 248)

What does it ‘feel’ like, this at-homeness?
Our view of home
is determined
by what we are
prepared to perceive.
What to care about, what to feel
are culturally conditioned.

We need to renew,
a sens of home,
learning
little by little,
encounter by encounter,
stoppings by stoppings
to love the earth,
to create a place of dwelling
in the practice of *poiesis*—
bodily, mentally, emotionally,
with love.

**Meaning,**
enfolded in the synaesthetic experience of place,
in the relation of humans and wild others,
“unfolds into
our thoughts and feelings” (Bohm & Peat, 1987, p. 185),
and into the desire to
continually renew the poetic art of dwelling.

**Living together with wild others**
inspires
caring and tending,
investing oneself
in a “field of care and concern,”
belonging to a homeplace:
“somewhere in particular that is loved dearly,
known intimately
and tended daily
as a source of vital nourishment” (Rigby, 2004, p. 262)
for body, mind and spirit.

---

*A Fragment*  
He carefully cleaned out his active
volcanoes … pulled up … the last shoots of
the baobabs …
and watered the flower.
(Saint-Exupery, 1945, p. 30)

---

Perhaps awakening
sensuous and emotive modes of being
occasioned by the poetic,
“that creative source of humanness
of the dwelling life of man (sic)”(Heidegger, 1971, p. 92),
can contribute to a transformative shift
toward hope
for a reanimation of the
art of dwelling
when the “troubled voice agrees to love/the simple stone” (Bonnefoy, 1985, p. 149).
A Chorus

The world so unsure, unknowable
the world so unsure, unknowable
Who knows—our griefs may
hold our greatest hopes
(Zeami, 1995, in Carson, p. 132)

But where the danger is, grows the saving power also
(Heidiegger, 1977, p. 28)

Where certainties come apart, there too
gathers the strength that no certainty can match.
(Nancy, 1997, p. 158)
Stanza IV: Crossings of the Senses and the Poetic

Proem

The three themes of this stanza are Singing the Wild, Found Beyond Telling, and Poetic Voicing. I am not claiming that all poetry is a singing of the wild or is rooted in the sensuous. When I use the terms poem or poetry, I am referring to nature poetry which has its grounding in the crossings of synaesthetic perception with the wild, and in the crossings of sensuous experience with one’s inner being. These are poems which manifest what Bishop (1993), in referring to Rimbaud, calls a chiasmal consciousness. This is poetry which “roots itself in sensation … [yet] sights, sounds, smells … escape from their strictly physical rootedness” (p. 257). The poet seeks a language which hints at the ineffable, those deeply felt sensuous moments which direct our lives, all the while knowing that “our deepest sense of what is real and true, must often be conveyed by unlocking what lies between and beyond the words and phrases themselves” (Barzilai, 2006, p. 31). Poets may use synaesthetic metaphors that go beyond the commonplace prosaic ones of everyday speech to suggest those moments. Such poetry addresses the forgetting of nonverbal sensuous experience, challenges the assumption that language has severed humans from nature, and denies the presumption that language can express everything.

The reader is encouraged to voice the poems aloud and to allow them take root in his/her sensuous being.

Singing the Wild

a wildflower planted among our wheat.
(Oakeshott, 1962, p. 247)

Poetry is like a swoon/with this exception/it brings you to your senses.
(Bernstein, 1992, p. 78)

Being in the presence
of certain poems
can be transformative,
can remind us of our
our interconnectedness
our indebtedness to the earth,
and awaken
an intimacy with it
as the poetic space in which we dwell.

I recognize in poetry
which celebrates
our embeddedness with wild others,
a site
for both the expression and experience
of a synaesthetic mode of being.

A Voice

The poet keeps the memory of a lost and fragmented unity, he seeks to reunite, as Claudel says, ‘those things that groan at being separated.’
(Naughton, 1984, p. 11)

In reuniting
these things
the poet reawakens a sens of dwelling.

A Fragment

this land is not
just a place to set my house my car my fence

this land is not
just a plot to bury my dead my seed

this land is
my tongue my eyes my mouth

this headstrong grass and relenting willow
these flat-footed fields and applauding leaves
these frank winds and electric sky

and they become my song
(Dumont, 1998, from Not just a Platform for my Dance, p. 390)
In such poems, animated by the poetics of place, I encounter a reanimation of at-homeness amid wild otherness, a primary experience of dwelling which confounds dualistic habits of thinking.

The poetic here can be both a synaesthetic engagement and “a language (logos) that restores us to our home (oikos)” (Bate, 1998, p. 59).

Such poems emerge from the poet’s direct unswerving engagement with wildness within a dance of the fusion of the senses.

Poetics of the wild animates nature poetry, and “poets must sing or speak from authentic experience… must live close to the earth” (Snyder, 1969, p. 118).

I wander the paths of wildness with the poet. I feel a reanimation of the sensuous world of the poem in my bodymind. I come to know, the fold of the land, to *sens* the earth differently.

An experience, evoked by the poem, may be a feeling of of being gathered into the surrounding environment however harsh or arid.
A Fragment

High up
the bitter broken sound of the grackles.
And up above the land,
Alone (seen) from the heights,
capable, huge, stubborn, off into the
distance.
The land’s extension.
The hand, the womb, the silo, the deep
red clamoring of the dark land,
the solar land.
Threatened
root, never vanquished,
under a merciless sun.
The light bears down. The burning axis
gravitates
over the breast of man,
over his echoless servitude
and the dry weep of centuries.
(Valente, 2005, from Silos, in Metzler, p. 110)

The places these poets speak of
are the poetic places
they sens
with their whole being,
an embodied knowing,
from experience
amid wild otherness.

Poets
from different places and times
envision poetry
as a way of showing forth
the reality of lived experience
through engaging the body, mind and spirit poetically.

They speak
of touching
some deeply buried chord
of memory
of emotion
within us,
of creating a habitable earthworld, they trust in the power of the voice of poetry to “pierce the opacity around us that we take for reality” (Zumthor, 1990, p. 229), they believe that the poetic is “a site of creative resistance.... a ray of hope … in the midst of a mechanized wasteland” (Baker, 2005, p. 21).

The prison cell in Darwish’s poem is a literal place, and a metaphorical one revealing places of alienation, stripped of wild otherness, places devoid of the poetic. Poetry can transform a prison cell, (a war torn plaza, a sterile school room, an urban slum), into a place of enchantment infused with wildness.

A Fragment It is possible for prison walls To disappear, For the cell to become a distant land Without frontiers: …………………………………………………
— Where did all this water come from?
— I brought it from the Nile.
— And the trees?
— From the orchards of Damascus.
— And the music?
— From my heart beat.

The prison guard got mad. He put an end to my dialogue. He said he didn’t like my poetry. And bolted the door of my cell. (Darwish, 1992, from The Prison Cell, pp. 48–49)
Poetry beckons to me
  to animate
    my own lived poem of dwelling
    amid wild otherness,
incites me
  to enliven
my synaesthetic perception.

Certain poems
remind us
  of our entanglement
  with the sustaining earth,
and awaken an intimacy
  with wildness
    as the poetic space in which we dwell,
      where “we find ourselves, once more,
          beneath the sway of simplicity” (Bachelard, 1971, p. 4),
in the presence of those simple things,
    “un bien proche …. a richness close by” (Bonnefoy, 1984, in Naughton, p. 22).

\[A \text{ Voice}\] Ah, this is no small thing! And the world could very well come to an end, absurdly, for not having understood the worth—for the only quest that matter—of the nearby smell of damp grass, of an ant scurrying across a page, of an owl’s hoot at the door as it suddenly illuminates a sign still sealed. (Bonnefoy, 1984, in Caws, p. 88)

Such poems,
  are disclosive of both
    our destitute times and
      a hope, a possibility
        “of what is not yet” (Greene, 1995, p. 19),
and encourage us
  to live
    wholesomely and harmoniously
with the earth—
    “the poem is a hymn to possibility” (Ashbery, 1981, in Perloff, p. 252).
Poems are not detached
from ordinary life
but call us to be in the presence of
bodily felt
synaesthetic recognition
of those simple things
which connect us to the earth.

Poetry
can move us toward
a reenchantment
of what it can mean to be
responsible rooted dwellers
aware of the poetics of place
of the earth house hold.

In singing the wild
poets
are “like an early warning system,
that hears the trees and the air,
the clouds and watersheds
beginning to groan
and complain—
so they try
to send a little bit
of warning” (Snyder, 1980, p. 71).

Disclosive of both our destitute time
and a possibility—a hope of renewal—
a poem incites us
to live wholesomely
harmoniously
with the earth and each other,
to create
a homeplace admitting of wildness,
to perform the poetic act of living life,
not merely surviving
in a mechanized wasteland.

Such a poem
is an affirmation
of the art of dwelling,
“a cure beyond forgetfulness” (Stevens, 1954, p. 526),
and takes us beyond
the narrow confines
of a “type of conceptual thinking
that denies … the dignity
proper to all that exists” (Bonnefoy, 2002, p. 598).

Poets
gather tokens
\textit{en plein air}
amid the convergings
of their intertwining senses
with the light, colours, sounds, smells
of sentient surroundings,
which re-emerge in a singing,
a “synaesthetic harmony” (Baker, 2005, p. 100),
that becomes
a poetic chorus
of the senses,
a poem
to be voiced \textit{en plein air}.\textsuperscript{4}

\begin{center}
\textit{A Fragment} \hspace{1cm} \textit{In the blue summer evenings, I will go}
along the paths,
And walk over the short grass, as I am
pricked by the wheat:
Daydreaming I will feel the coolness on my
feet.
I will let the wind bathe my bare head,
I will not speak, I will have no thoughts.
\textit{(Rimbaud, 1966, from Sensation, p. 17)}
\end{center}

The poet,
in the presence of a few simple things,
traces a complex relation
between things, seen, smelled, heard, tasted, touched.

Poetry does not offer a cure
for our nostalgia
for a lost garden,
is not going to teach us
\textit{how} to dwell—
we do not know
wildness from reading poetry.
The poem
is not the experience of wildness,
but seeks to disclose
something
of the experience of the experience,
and urges us to attend
sensuously to the wild multiplicity of things,
the passing of things,
the experience of being alive.

The poet incites us “to lift up our eyes from the page
and to contemplate the world
always so unknown ...
so full of life” (Bonnefoy, 1990, p. 806),
but also to look beyond
our harried, technologically saturated lives.

This summons
addresses my multisensory enfoldment
with the niche
I share with wildness.

A Poem

*Held in the orange splash*
*of the setting sun,*
*I sit gathering tokens,*
*scribbling a few lines.*

*As the evening chill settles*
*among the plum blossoms,*
*a lady bug comes*
*to rest*
*on my glowing paper.*
*This is the poem I stopped for.*
(Vernon, 2008)

I open

to the strangeness of things
I thought I knew,
things that have always been there,
that I never noticed before.
A Voice

[T]o make sense is to *enliven the senses*. A [poem] which makes sense stirs the senses from their slumber … opens the eyes and ears to their real surroundings, tuning the tongue to the actual tastes in the air and sending chills of recognition along the surface of the skin … to make the senses wake up to where they are.

(Abram, 1996, p. 265)

Practicing a synaesthetic mode of being,
paying attention
to the poetics of place
makes us all poets and makers.
Life living becomes a poem,
amid the poetics of the place where we dwell.

A Voice

The poetic here is the coming to be of the genuinely creative, the struggle to open up new horizons of significance and realize possibilities for human building-dwelling-thinking that are more than exploitation and control. The earth is all that to which we are indebted for our being … that from which our creative activities arise and to which they return. In this dwelling there are no guarantees of success, no assurances of control, just the on-going venture.

(Burch, 1986, p. 19)

Found Beyond Telling

*The true poem is walking that edge between what can be said and that which cannot be said …. The words stop but the meaning goes on.*

(Snyder, 1980, pp. 21–22)

*A light wind/ Writes with the end of its foot a word beyond the world.*

(Bonnefoy, 1995, p. 161)
[The poet] is responsible for humanity, even for the animals; he(sic) must create inventions that can be smelled, touched, heard .... To find a language .... This language will be of the soul for the soul, gathering everything, fragrances, sounds, colors, thought latching onto thought and pulling. The poet would define the amount of the unknown awakening in the universal soul of his time.

(Rimbaud, 2005, in Baker, p. 100)

Poetry is a mode of making, poeisis, that admits of the inability of language to express much of what we experience sensuously and emotionally and psychologically—the inner ground of our thoughts, that ineffable knowing felt in the bodymind which words can only hint at.

“Poetic utterance is not equal to the reality it seeks to articulate” (Naughton, 1995, p. xvi), yet strives to evoke with a few words a sense of the real.

A Voice What are the subtleties of language, after all, even turned upside down in a thousand different ways, next to the perception one can have, directly, mysteriously, of the movement of leaves against the sky, or of the noise fruit makes when it falls into the grass?

(Bonnefoy, 1989, p. 162)

The limitations of language for describing the indescribable call for an evocative poetic language which attempts to speak of “experiences which elude or defy a language to express them” (Barzilai, 2006, p. 21), the experiences of direct synaesthetic encounters with the natural world
which resonate with our inner selves.

The poet
“fumbles for the language
to best convey what
cannot, in essence, be conveyed in words—
that paradox
of communicating through language
what is impossible
to communicate in language” (Barzilai, 2006, p. 118),

knows that
the experience of experience
is un-transmitable,
an unmediated reality—
“is it not humbling to admit
that language is limited, … that there is
‘languageless meaning’” (Modiano, 1993, p. 223).

Words can’t capture
“the infinite depth of crowiness
in the crow’s flight …
the instant glimpse knowledge of the world
of the crow’s wing beat” (Hughes, 1992, in Paul, p. 71).

The poet, finding
“what his (sic) language does not include …
is finally naïve.
Driven to look, to touch, hear, or taste
obliged to wisdom and sagacity” (Serres, 1997, p. 73).

In the search for words
the poet knows
that language arises
from the sensuous experience of the world,
that the poem begins from and returns
to the human experience
of circumambient nature.
A Fragment

*Wandering along the shore*
*I relinquish clinging myths,*
*useless verbage,*
*and listen*
*for ways of expressing*
*the unknowable, the indescribable*
*in the surf song of stones.*

(Vernon, 2008)

A Voice

[The poet practices] poetic attention … a sort of readiness … a form of knowing … [that] celebrates the wilderness of the other … This kind of knowing remains in touch with perception …. The nature poet … keep[s] coming back to the grain of the experience.

(McKay, 2001, p. 27–28)

The roots of poetry
reside in synaesthetic perception,
in the sensuousness of the body,
in the circumambiant wildness.
The crossings of the senses with the sensuous.

The poet seeks a disclosive language,
not language as a tool,
a poetic utterance
which hints at
transitory, inaccessible moments.

The poem is not the experience,
but a “trace on the sand
which is all that remains of the wind itself” (Bate, 1998, p. 58).

A Voice

The difficulty confronting language, its well-known incapacity to express the immediate, has not been solved. … What can [words] retain or say, when presence is offered to us in the universe of the moment? Speech can … celebrate presence, sing of its being ...
can prepare us for encountering it ... but cannot in itself allow us to achieve it.
(Bonnefoy, 1989, p. 113)

The poet attempts a reflection,
of the indescribable:
a poem within a poem,
a poem of the ineffable
within the poem of words
which ventures the impossible.

The poet does not seek a
separate language for poetry
but a “poetics
that has made ‘originary’ language
its locus of attention” (Perloff, 1996, p. 183).
a poetics
which reveals
the strangeness, the uncanniness, the mystery, of everyday words,
and speaks
of those elemental things,
trees, stones, sun, water, fire,
“things that are most full of life on this earth ...
they must be named” (Bonnefoy, 1984, in Naughton, p. 9),
thus returning me to my own
sensuous perception of these things.

Fragments  A way among the words, that would be
The end of our solitude in language.
(Bonnefoy, from The Beginning and the End
of the Snow, 1995, p. 187)

Yes, by words,
A few simple words.
(Bonnefoy, from In the Lure of the
Threshold, 1995, p. 117)
In the simplest of words, which hold more than they tell, the poet addresses the forgetting of nonverbal somatic experience, in a language which does not conceal, but attempts to reveal something which cannot be expressed— “no words are noticed, you look through them” (Levine, in Barzilai, 2006, p. 30) to what is “found beyond telling”\* a glimpse of the unsayable experience.

Enfolded sensorially in an experience with “poetic attention ... in an openness in knowing” (McKay, 2001, p. 29), the poet comes away enlivened, astonished, enlightened, ready to begin the struggle to find words that will hint at the mysteriousness, the ineffability, of the experience.

A Voice Each poem grows from an energy-mind-field-dance, and has its own inner grain. To let it grow, to let it speak for itself, is a large part of the work of the poet. (Snyder, 1985, in Geddes, p. 650)

The poet strives to create a sens of the experience through the sensuous, imagistic, emotional and imaginative use of poetic language.

A Voice What is hoped for from words ... is that they may be able to commemorate an experience of unity, of plenitude, and encourage the reader to rediscover his own such experiences, or to prepare him to meet them. (Naughton, 1995, p. xxxii)
The poet evokes the roaring black wind, the lashing rain, the beauty, the peril, of the churning twister, attempts to recreate with mere words something of an encounter that leaves an imprint on the bodymind, conjures up the experience, not merely a verbal-visual substitute, not “a visage,” a reproduction, but rather a “translation” (McKay, 2001, p. 28), translating from the languages of the wild, a non-verbal text, to human languages.

A Voice Writers writing in different languages, in different countries .... are all translating into their own idiom or idiolect from the same nonverbal source. (Le Guin, 1989, p. 113)

In creating a nature poem, the poet works from a wordless text but delves deep for words that will translate the unsayable, enigmatic experience. “We are turned by [the poet’s] very words toward something that escapes them” (Bonnefoy, 1990, p. 798).

The poem gives me a glimpse of the poet’s sensuous, profoundly felt experience, gifts to me a trace of that event.
A Fragment

The first sight of water through trees
glimped as a child
and the smell of the lake then
on the mountain
how long it has lasted
whole and unmoved and without words
the sound native to a great bell
never leaving it
(Merwin, 2005, from The Wild, p. 515)

The poem speaks of an experience,
the poem itself is an experience,
but the poem does not
take the place of the experience,
does not stand in for
the poet’s direct sensuous encounter.

While poetry might guide us,
it is rather our own sensuous encounters
in the natural domain,
that have ultimate value.
“ Doesn’t [the poet] deliberately
send us away from the work
and into our own life
giving us hints only...
or leading us forth—with mere glimmers” (Naughton, 1995, p. xxxiv),
urging us forth from the written word
to our own poetic makings?

When one is truly absorbed in a poem,
engaged in the rhythmic dialogue of sound and images
“[one] feels encountered and changed by a poem...
poems are experiences” (Hirsch, 1999, p. 6).

A Voice

I need the poem to enchant me, to shock me awake, to shift my waking consciousness
and open the world to me, to open me up to
the world—to the word—in a new way. I am pried open.
(Dickinson, in Hirsch, 1999, p. 9)
Glimmerings of the event
that the words
of the poem hint at
are awakened in the voicing of the poem.
“The written word is a shadow.
Shadows are silent.
The reader breathes life into that unimmortality,
and maybe noise
into that silence” (Le Guin, 1989, p. 180).

In the voicing of poems, silently or aloud,
we sense, hovering behind the words,
the ineffable experience
that the poetic language summons.

A Voice
Poetry is an experience of what goes beyond
words; call it the fleeting perception, then
the more active remembrance, of a state of
indifferentiation, of unity ... that state that
characterizes reality at the level that our
language cannot reach, despite its
definitions, its designations and its
descriptions.
(Bonnefoy, 1991, p. 162)

“Reading poetry is an act of reciprocity” (Hirsch, 1999, p. 5).
As we voice the poem
gifted to us by the poet,
we are in a reciprocal relation
with the poem, the poet,
and the experience that informs the poem.
We gift back to the poem——
infuse it
with our own deeply felt inexpressible experiences.

In a dialogue with the poem
we are at once participant, observer, listener, experiencer, performer,
“we are somehow
all aspects of a consciousness
giving rise to the poem” (Ashbery, 1981, in Perloff, p. 258).
By reciting the poem, lending our breath to it, savouring the sensuous rhythms and images, sensing that unknowable something sought in the language of the wild, we may be reminded of our reciprocity with the earth and go forth, our senses awakened, with “poetic attention”(McKay, 2001, p. 26).

A Voice

When I recite a poem I reinhabit it, I bring the words off the page into my own mouth, my own body. I become its speaker and let its verbal music move through me as if the poem is a score and I am its instrumentalist, its performer. I let its heartbeat pulse through me as embodied experience, as experience embedded in the sensuality of sounds ... the relationship between the poet, the poem, and the reader not as a static entity, but as a dynamic unfolding. A relational process.

(Hirsch, 1999, p. 5)

Nature Poetry

is not set apart from ordinary life living among wildness, but is a celebration of it.

In the poetic utterance we have what is told and what is left unsaid but is still hovering behind the words.

The poet knows, feels, senses but gives us the “impress of leavings” (Zumthor, 1990, p. 135).

A Voice

In an age when time and technique encroach hourly, or appear to, on the source itself of poetry, it seems as though what is needed for
any particular nebulous unwritten hope that may become a poem is … an unduplicatable resonance, something that would be like an echo except that it is repeating no sound. Something that always belonged to it: its sense and its conformation before it entered words.
(Merwin, 1969, pp. 270–271)

Nature poems remind us that the poetic resides in the things and ‘languages’ of wild.

A Fragment
*I shall never want or need
Any other literature than the poetry of mud.*
(Ashbery, 1977, from *Crazy Weather*, p. 21)

It is this poetry these natural poems, found among the poetics of a place, that the poet urges us to stop for, to be with, in an intertwining sensuous attunement, to engage in thought and reverie.

A Voice
In Romantic poetics, poetry is to be found not only in human language but in languages of nature; poetry is not only a means of verbal expression, it is also a means of emotional communication between man (sic) and the natural world.
(Bate, 1996, in Lussier, p. 396)
A Fragment

**Snowflake**

*silent descent*
*wet to the cheek*

*fragile*
*untouchable*
*except*
*to trace with the eyes*
*so unknowable*
*itself the poem*

(Vernon, 2008)

A Voice

How is it with all this language there is still this thing so vast that we have no name for it, even if we sense it as a thing we have seen?

(Silliman, 1986, from *Sunset Debris*, p. 40)

What the poet sees, feels, hears

can only be gestured at,

*no words can reproduce or equal*
*deeply engaged*
*sensuous moments of perception.*

The word conceals
*the freshness,*
*the marvel,*
*the uncanniness*

of being in the presence of wild otherness—
*the playful antics of river otters,*
*the high whispering windmusic in the trees,*
*the slow drip of water into a basin of stone.*

The poem is not the kea
*sweeping down from its boulder strewn home,*
*raucously calling.*

The kea,
*in all its sensuousness,*
*is the poem.*

Poetic speech,
*in seeking to overcome*
the disembodiment of language,

attempts to connect language back
to the land (Abram, 1996, p. 273)
in which written forms have their source
and by which they are sustained.

When the poet uses language expressively
to establish a living relation
with the wild and with the reader,
language is not used in factual and instrumental ways.

A Fragment  
Our natural language is a cry rattling in the night. But tongues are how we touch, how we reach, how we teach, the spine of words. (Pierce, 2006, from The Wind of Saying, pp. 38–39)

In nature poetry,
poetic utterance is grounded in the poet’s sensuous, embodied closeness to the poetics of the wild,
and influenced by the sentient wordless language of the more-than-human realm.

This is a language distilled from the languages of the wild, “when the moss seems a kind of unknown writing” (Bonnefoy, 1991, p. 166),

a language the poet seeks to signify——
“I want to tell what the forests/were like/
I will have to speak/in a forgotten language” (Merwin, 1988, p. 65).

The language of poetry
strives through rhythm, sound and images, “to present the unrepresentable.... located in the enigmatic resonance of the natural world” (Baker, 2005, p. 30),
to speak
  forgotten languages
  of forests
  of insects
  of oceans
  of birds
  of winds
  of rains
  of singing stones
  of silence.

_A Voice_  Language is the very voice of the trees, the waves, the forests.
(Merleau Ponty, 1968, p. 155)

The poet,
  attuned to the rootedness of language in the body and the land,
 releases
  the power that poetic language
  has to break down
  the artificial and technologically induced
      barriers—physical, mental, emotional—
    that exclude us from nature.

_A Voice_  For those of us who care for an earth not encompassed by machines, a world of textures, tastes, and sounds other than those we have engineered .... Our task is _taking up_ the written word, with all its potency, and patiently, carefully, writing language back into the land. Our craft is that of releasing the budded, earthly intelligence of our words, freeing them to respond to the speech of the things themselves .... _letting language take root, once again, in the earthen silence of shadow and bone and leaf._
(Abram, 1996, p. 273–74, italics added)
By means of synaesthetic metaphors, which have perceptual grounding in the wild, the nature poet attempts to bridge the gap between the unknowableness—the mysterious otherness of wildness—and the beckoning sensuous presence of natural phenomena, seeking to translate what is untranslatable.

A Fragment

In its greatness between my eyes and the light.
Was like wings growing, and the blackness Of their shadow growing as they came down
Whirring and beating, cold and like thunder,
(Merwin, 2000, from The Annunciation, p. 166)

Synaesthetic metaphors in nature poems remind me of the “supple, undulant, the synaesthetic amplitude of interwoven senses” (Baker, 2005, p. 100), and exhort me to not just ‘see’, but to ‘feel’ with all my senses the sentient aliveness of nature.

A Voice

The poem moves from eye to ear, to the inner ear, the inner eye. It drenches us in the particulars of our senses, it moves us through the articulations of touch, taste, and scent .... It guides our reflections. It actualizes an intuition flowing deeper than intellect ....We use our senses in poetry. (Hirsch, 1999, p. 24)
Such metaphors defamiliarize words, and create unfamiliar, yet vibrant relations between things. They are “a means of disclosing an expansive harmony” (Baker, 2005, p. 99), and can revitalize language—
a “metamorphosis of language, of perception (Baker, 2005, p. 100).

A Voice

From arrangement of pebbles, from angled forms, from cracks or holes, from cut-out leaves, from colors, from odors and sounds, I saw harmonies emerge that were previously unknown. How, I said to myself, have I been able to live so long outside nature, without identifying with it? Everything lives, everything acts, everything corresponds. (Nerval, 1978, in Marks, p. 228)

Powerful intersensory moments in poems arouse synaesthetic capacities in the reader, “capacities to appreciate the closeness and richness of similarities among visual, auditory, and other sensory qualities” (Marks, 1978, p. 8).

A Fragment

... darkness coming as a cloud—
Is not form—its voice—most palpable and loud?
(Poe, 1978, in Marks, p. 230)

The nature poet, attentive to the blending of the senses as an inner language in a wordless dialogue, exploits the sentient value of words.

Poems become landscapes of the senses, of listening, seeing, tasting, touching, smelling words.
Words that live are words we hear, like ‘click’ or ‘chuckle’, or which we see, like ‘freckled’ or ‘veined’, or which we taste, like ‘vinegar’ or ‘sugar’, or touch, like ‘prickle’ or ‘oily, or smell, like ‘tar’ or ‘onion.’ Words you see, which belong directly to one of the five senses. (Hughes, 2003, in Grigg, p. 135)

In poetic speech, “[t]he words dance in the wind of saying” (Piercy, 2006, p. 38), they summon us to emotional, imaginative states, and remind us of the relationship between language and our inner landscape.

My senses revived, the poem sends me out to pay attention to the poetics of the wild, to practice living synaesthetically and poetically.

Rhythm informs all aspects of poetic speech as well as the structural characteristics of the poem, reflects the rhythms of the wild, speaks directly to our bodymind rhythms, and emerges in the rhythmic voicing of poems.

The verbal-visual music of nature poetry is heard in the sounds, the cadences of words, and in the intertwined silences, seen in images and metaphors, felt in the tension and flow of ideas, and found in the rhythmic physicality of the poem on the page—the arrangement of lines, position of words, punctuation, pauses.

[R]hythm is the entire movement, the flow, the recurrence of stress and unstress that is related to the rhythms of the blood, the
The rhythmic aspects of nature poems are influenced by the rhythms of the seasons, the stars, the flowing waters, growing things, the movements of animals—and by the rhythm of life and death.

The tree in its wholeness is a rhythmic poem—tangled weave of branches latticed against the sky or shadowed on stone, colours, scents, mixed textures of bark, leaves tossing, turning or spiraling down. pulse of sap, intertwining of roots, interlace of clouds, rain, wind, winged creatures.

The rhythms of the wild are embedded in the rhythmic nature of these poems, and I respond with my own sensuous bodily rhythms.

A Fragment

Leaves rip from the trees still green as rain scuds off the ocean in broad grey scimitars of water hard as granite pebbles flung in my face.
(Piercy, 2006, from October nor’easter, p. 61)
The poetic images and sounds
resonate with me.
I sense the rhythmic reverberations of wild others,
a feeling more pronounced
in the oral voicing of the poem.

A Voice

[T]he rhythmic effects of a poem are best
experienced by reading the poem aloud, or
by hearing it read aloud....rhythms only
become fully realized through performance.
(Andrews, 1991, p. 132)

The rhythm of the poem,
which “would lift the poem off the page...
bewitch the sounds of language” (Hirsch, 1999, p.21),
and may be calming
or jarring,
evokes a profound
sensuous response in me,
an emotional, imaginative, intuitive awakeness.

A Voice

Rhythm creates a pattern of yearning and
expectation, of recurrence and difference. It
is related to pulse, the heartbeat, the way we
breath. It takes us into ourselves; it takes us
out of ourselves. It differentiates us; it unites
us to the cosmos.
(Hirsch, 1999, p. 21)

Rhythm is
“the expression of the relations of sounds and of thoughts
among themselves and to one another:
the perception of a larger order
in which sounds and ideas

The poet as word-singer
reanimates language
by using words that sing of the wild
not merely describe it.
A Voice

One writes initially through a wave of music, a groundswell that comes from the background noise, from the whole body, ... carrying its complicated rhythm, its simple beat, its melodic line, a sweet wafting, a broken fall .... In the beginning is the song. (Serres, 1995, p. 138)

Sound is
sensuously experienced
and poetic speech
pays attention
to the sonorous,
rhythmic capacity of words.
By listening with all our senses,
participating
in the poetic resonances,
we are gathered
into the poem’s reverberations.

A Voice

The nearly infinite variety of sounds, enable the poet who can hear them, who truly listens and wants to remain in their domain, to create effects of assonance, alliteration, and rhyme that inscribe themselves on the poet’s body in all their immediacy. (Bonnefoy, 2002, p. 599)

A Fragment:

I hear sheep running on the path of broken limestone
through brown curled leaves fallen early from walnut limb
at the end of summer how light the bony
flutter of their passage I can hear their coughing their calling and wheezing even the warm
greased wool rubbing the worn walls I hear them
passing passing in the hollow lane and there is still time
(Merwin, 2005, from *The Sound of the Light*, p. 277)

Experiences gifted to us in the poem may be unfamiliar to us—a winter sunset mirrored across the snow glazed vastness of the prairies, the turbulent, wind carousing rocky seacoast, but the rhythmic, imagistic, auditory aspects of the poem may stimulate our imaginative inner world.

Through the use of a rhythmic poetic language that is grounded in the sensuous and sustained by the imagination, the poet creates “images which go beyond reality, which sing reality” (Bachelard, 1983, p. 123), images that stem directly from nature.

Prompted by the sonorous, sensuous rhythms, the “word-music” of the poem, and the invocations of wildness, I venture forth among wild otherness, synaesthetically alert, with “poetic attention” (McKay, 2001, p. 26).
Poetic Voicing

The desire for live voice dwells in all poetry.
(Zumthor, 1990, p. 127)

Mere air these words but delicious to hear.
(Saphho, 1999, in Hirsch, p. 9)

Poetry is a vocal, which is to say a bodily, art.
(Pinsky, 1998, p. 8)

The poem
emerges from,
the breathing,
sensing, perceiving
body of the poet.
The poet breathes
sens into the words of the poem—
“I made it out of a mouthful of air” (Yeats, in Hirsch, 1999, p. 5)—
a sens
is recreated
in the breath of the reader,
in the voicing of the poem.

A Voice
Poetry is a bodily art …. The medium of
poetry is the human body…. the reader’s
breath and hearing embody the poet’s words.
This makes the art physical, intimate, vocal
and individual …. Poetry calls on both
intellectual and bodily skills.
(Pinsky, 1998, p. 8)

In the voicing of the poem,
is the singing of the song.

Voicing a poem,
for “poetry is meant to be heard
and spoken in rhythms
and with an expression similar to song” (Pinsky, 2002, p. 42),
I may experience
in the tumble of words
a tumultuous
sensuous experience
that leaves me
momentarily breathless,
then deeply reflective.

A Fragment
Place where desire
Lust of the eyes the pride of life and
foremost of the storm's
Multitude moves the wave belly-lovely
Glass of the glass sea shadow of water
On the open water no other way
To come here the outer
Limit of the ego

(Oppen, 2003, from A Phrase of Simone Weil's and Some Words of Hegel's, p. 121)

I experience an enfoldment
which illuminates
my enfoldment with wildness
which results from synaesthetic perception.

A Voice
The voice of poetry … is intimate, on an individual scale, but far from solipsistic. It penetrates and in a sense originates where the reader’s mind reaches toward something heard or uttered as though vocality were one of the senses.
(Pinsky, 2002, p. 42, italics added)

The poet finds ways,
through images, rhythm, textures,
to create a sens/of direct experience,
“where sens suggests at once perceptual senses,
discursive meanings
and spatial direction” (Baker, 2005, p. 99),
and invites me
to feel, taste, listen, see, smell
the thisness, the suchness, the “haecceity” (Deleuze, 1987, p. 151)
of the event.
Rhythms of the poem,
rhythms of the wild,
rhythms of sensuous experience
enfolded.

In poetry the various resonances of words
and images act together … so that
associations of memory and meaning in an
individual word or image, together with the
particular sounds its vocalization (aloud or
in the mind) evokes, are all enfolded
together
(Bohm & Peat, 1987, p. 189)

Voicing
poetry
slows me down,
a poem
becomes a stroll with words,
as I savour the images,
the rhythm, the sounds
on my tongue, in my mind
it is like wandering by the sea.

I can’t rush the voicing
of a poem
and still be in the presence of the poem.

I listen for the silences
between words—
spaces for reverie.¹¹

From the poet’s image
of a stone on the shore
I retrieve the memory
of another stone
one kept in a pocket long ago.
With my fingertip memory
I trace
the scrimshaw of time etched there,
smell the sea saltiness
that lingered on it.
Even though I am not in the presence of the poet’s stone
I endow it,
with weight, texture, colour,
I am caught up
in the intertwining of sensations
in the presence of stoneness.

A Voice
[It is not within the poet’s scope to reestablish presence but he can recall that presence is a possible experience, and he can stir up the need for it, keep open the path after which one will read him and restore to his poem the benefit of that experience it had been unable to completely achieve. (Bonnefoy, 1990, p. 801)]

The poem
becomes disclosive
of the voicers
own synaesthetic experiences.

In voicing the poem
I “dwell” in the poem
without interpretation or analysis—
“Voice reaches deep
into a region of lived experience
where it escapes conceptual formulas” (Zumthor, 1990, p. 6).

In speaking a poem
I reconnect with the power
that spoken words have
to break down the artificial barriers,
physical, mental, and emotional,
that exclude me from nature.
Voicing poetry, then, is a boundary breaking art.
A Voice  

We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn... to affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts.  
(Thoreau, 1947, p. 243)

The poem incites  
a synaesthetic response  
in the reader  
who becomes  
a co-creator of the poem  
bringing other sensuous perceptions  
to the world of the poem.

The power of certain poems  
is not to transport us  
to some realm of perfection, an idealized elsewhere,  
but to urge us  
to be sensuously entangled  
with the sens of the poem—  
its language, its rhythms, its silences, its images—  
with the poet’s voice,  
with the ineffable hovering behind the words,

A Fragment  

Poetry is like a swoon  
with this exception:  
it brings you to your senses  
(Bernstein, 1992, from Islets/Irritations,  
p. 78)

and thereby to be transformed,  
“to begin to see, hear, and live  
in qualitatively different ways  
within the earthworld  
with those simple things” (Lysaker, 2002, p. 208)  
with which we dwell.

I learn from my singing of poetry  
how to sing the world,  
becoming part of the reenchantment of wildness and place.
The poem leaves a trace
   in the reader's body and mind
   allowing other tracings
   of memory, of imagination to emerge.

The poetic
   can be a mode of éclosion,
   of revealing, of bringing forth
   a sens of being.

As I engage the poem,
   it may engage me in various ways;
   it may enchant, involve, fascinate, inspire me.

I may experience
   a moment of epiphany—
   an awakening,
   a manifestation of something felt in the body—
   a striking, startling moment
   occasioned by being in the presence of the poem.

There is a risk
   in engaging with poetry.
Certain poems
   have the potential
   to unsettle me,
   shake me out of my complacency.

Such an experience of entanglement
   opens up the possibility
   that one can change one's life.¹³

One “returns to the world
   changed by an experience
   that the words generate,
   but deeper than any word,
   found beyond telling” (Rudolf, 1995, p. ix)

A Fragment

The people need poetry that will be their secret
   to keep them awake forever,
   and bathe them in the bright-haired wave of its breathing.

(Mandelstam, 1974, from #355, p. 89)
Education Coda: Openings to Possibility

What is it, then, to educate but to develop these divine germs called the senses.  
(Thoreau, 1980, p. 382)

I don’t always succeed in feeling what I know I should feel.  
My thought swims the river only quite slowly,  
Heavily burdened by clothes men have made it wear.

I try divesting myself of what I’ve learned,  
I try forgetting the mode of remembering they taught me,  
And scrape off the ink they used to paint my senses,  
Unpacking my true emotions,  
Unwrapping myself, and being myself, not Alberto Caeiro,  
But a human animal that Nature produced.  
(Caeiro, 1986, p. 23)

In this study I put forward the possibility of restoring our trust in the wisdom of the senses through the practice of synaesthetic perception as a mode of being. The challenge for education is “to develop these divine germs called the senses” (Thoreau, 1980, p. 382). This may require “divesting [ourselves] of what [we] have learned” (Caeiro, 1986, p. 23), that is, ‘unlearning’ a distrust of the senses as a mode of knowing. Nature poetry, rooted as it is in the sentient “more-than-human” realm, its language grounded in the perceptual, is an ally of education in this endeavour of encouraging synaesthetic perception. I suggest that a harmonious interconnection between our sensuous embodied selves, wildness and the poetic can bring about a positive transformative power that may awaken us to the poetic art of dwelling and inspire us to create a more wholesome, habitable earth home for humans and nonhumans.

I have been concerned in this inquiry with disclosing the interrelationship between synaesthetic modes of being and educare as the bringing forth of the whole person. My interest here is in “thinking in ways that [include and] move beyond schooling to the
larger domains of education … where there are and must be all kinds of openings to possibility” (Greene, 1995, p. 5).

In all areas of education we need to recognize that language is one way of knowing but that there are other capacities for knowing which kindle self-actualization and the development of a sense of communal identity with both human and natural communities. Synaesthetic experiences occasion a mode of knowing that cannot be encompassed in language. These experiences are ineffable, deeply felt in the bodymind as wordless meanings. As educators we need to address the challenge that Heshusius and Ballard (1996) put forth of “how to live and talk about an embodied reality, how to foster, also in our modes of discourse (particularly in our modes of discourse, given the powerful influence of language), an embodied reality that many long to live in” (p. 10). Including “the language of the body in the language of the mind” (Taylor, in Shapiro, 1995, p. 302) and putting greater emphasis on synaesthetic perception as a tenor of knowing, would be steps toward overcoming the mind-body, culture-nature dualities that have encumbered our thinking for centuries. If we accept that the true meaning of education is educare, the ‘bringing forth,’ the emergingness, of the whole person, then we must encourage and honour the surfacings of synaesthetic modes of knowing in our students. In a sense, we adults have to “de-educate” (Snyder, 1980, p. 64) ourselves, that is, “scrape off the ink they used to paint [our] senses” (Caeiro, 1986, p. 23). We need to get back in touch with the wild and “return to things themselves” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. ix), to those elemental things that sustain us, and to those primordial sensuous experiences “which precede knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. ix). If educators and parents themselves practice synaesthetic perception as a mode of being by engaging in direct meaningful sensuous experiences with wildness, and thereby, cultivate a deeply felt reciprocal relation with the natural domain, they are in position to allow and encourage such a mode of being in their students and children.

Synaesthetic modes of being, along with other non-linguistic ways of knowing—intuition, imagination, memory, and tacit knowledge—must be more accepted and valued by educators. As Richard Lewis (1989) puts it “how confusing it must be for children to
be told that their senses (hence their bodies) are not where they learn, and that real
learning only takes place in the citadels of their intellect” (p. 60). As children and adults
learn to trust the wisdom of the senses they become more aware of sensorial knowing in
others, human and non-human, and more empathetic. They also become more attuned to
their places of dwelling among wild others. “Genuinely participative thinking and acting
requires an engaged, embodied relation to the other … . Our capacity for abstract
cognition and representational thinking … cannot comprehend our ‘organic wovenness’
in a shared, social and natural world” (Gardiner, 1998, p. 138). Practicing synaesthetic
modes of being opens us to caring about the earth and wild others, and to cultivating an
ecopoetic sense of rootedness, reciprocity, and responsibility—a consciousness that
extends a sense of caring to other humans and their places of dwelling. When we treat the
earth and wild others as “standing reserve” (Heidegger, 1977, p. 17), as mere resources to
be ordered, so we treat each other.

Education is confronted with a ubiquitous cyberworld that can deliver, via virtual
reality, exciting disembodied multisensory experiences, surrogates for encounters usually
experienced in the natural ‘real’ nonvirtual world. Television, computers, and other
breeds of technology “are now instruments of daily life, just as the coexistence of real,
virtual and imaginary is an everyday phenomenon, to the extent of modifying—in a way
that we might not even imagine— the definition of space and of the self that today’s
children are constructing” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 83). As David Macauley (1991) puts it in his
Caldecott Medal acceptance speech, we need to prevent children from becoming
“isolated, insensitive, incapable and ultimately helpless victims of a world of increasing
complexity and decreasing humanity” (p. 411). We do not want children to become
persons who are unable to hear the world of life. The natural world continues to
speak and we continue to ignore the voices, to not hear and not listen. Deafness is
becoming a defining characteristic of home sapiens. (Evernden, 1985, p. 101)

Young children, in spite of the encroachment of the technological in their lives,
can still have a close interconnection with nature and be keen synaesthetic perceivers.
Education can encourage this closeness and a kind of listening “not just with our ears, but
with all our senses (sight, touch, taste, orientation)” (Rinaldi, 2006, p. 65). Paulo Freire (1991) talks about sensuously reading the languages of the wild as a young child that increased his perceptual capacity:

[t]he texts, words, letters of that context were incarnated in the song of the birds … in the whistle of the wind, the clouds in the sky, the sky’s colour, its movement; in the color of foliage, the shape of leaves, the fragrance of flowers ….

(p. 2)

Learning to dialogue with wildness, with all our senses alert, as part of what Merleau-Ponty (1962) calls “relearning to look at the world” (p. xx), should be an essential aspect of education. Children can develop an ecosens, that is, an intimate knowing of the web of reciprocal relations between all things of the earth and between their sensuous embodied selves and wild otherness, a knowing that will inform their life living. Adults need to remember that “we never could have loved the earth so well if we had had no childhood in it” (Eliot, 1996, p. 41). I recognize that for many children childhood is a time of desperation—suffering, sickness, war, and joyless toil. In many places wildness is barely present, and what there is, is desecrated, fouled. Still, I believe that synaesthetic perception as a mode of being among wild otherness can and should be cultivated whereever possible. As Carpenter (1991) puts it “any sensory experience is partly skill and any skill can be cultivated” (in Howes, p. 168).²

Educators need to grapple with the deep roots of homo sapiens alienation from natural communities. I believe that certain kinds of educational experiences, such as fostering an engagement with the wild and with nature poetry, can move us toward renewing the bond between humans and nature. They can put us in touch with our natural origins that sustain us and encourage us to pay attention to the simple things and sensuous rhythms of wildness, thus prompting a reconnection with the “more-than-human” realm. Educators who themselves practice synaesthetic perception as a poetic mode of being can provide an atmosphere for students, one that is uncluttered by the trappings of instrumental, dualistic thinking and promotes “poetic attention” in the wild. Thus they encourage what Heidegger calls “poetic thinking as a way of living—a way of “bringing
to presence’ that our place is on this earth, in this world of ‘things’ that are not simply ‘objects’ (Lucy, 1997, p. 201). We need to begin with caring about the simple things that poets speak of—a butterfly, a pebble, a drop of dew—and this means being sensorially in the presence of these things.³ As Bachelard (1969) reminds us,

> [w]e cannot love water, fire, trees without putting love into them, a friendship which goes back to our childhood. We love them with childhood. When we love all these beauties of the world now in the song of the poets, we love them in a new found childhood, in a childhood reanimated with that childhood which is latent in each of us. (p. 126)

Poetry and education are both modes of poiesis, of bringing forth. Poiesis extends to a whole way of life living, including knowing how to dwell in reciprocity with the wild. Education needs to provide ‘spaces’ where this bringing forth can take place, where synaesthetic modes of being are acknowledged as essential to human becoming, spaces where the individual can cultivate “poetic attention” as a way of being in the wild. It is my conviction that nature poetry can assist education in this effort. Nature poems are often disclosive of the poetics of the places in which we dwell, and can be catalysts in awakening synaesthetic perception. An intimate familiarity with certain poems might encourage adults “to think seriously about childhood, and better understand the meaning of this period in the structure of life, and vaguely foresee the ways in which it might be capable of solving the problems of … modern consciousness …” (Bonnefoy, 1991, p. 167). Poets, past and present, from many cultures, speak in their poems of the exigency of counteracting the forgetting of the wisdom of the senses.

Oakeshott (1962) speaks of the necessity for the voice of poetry in the conversation of humankind—a conversation which has been dominated by a scientific-technological worldview ideology since the 17th century. He warns against the subordination of poetry to the other voices in the conversation (p. 241). Education can ensure that the voice of poetry is heard.⁴ If “poetry is a form of daily practice” (Davidson, 1997, p. 68) with educators and parents, a practice that includes reading poems aloud, then students might be inspired to do the same in their lives. According to Snyder (1980),
“poetry is our life. It’s not that poetry has an effect on it, or a function in it, or a value for it. It is our life as much as eating and speaking is our life” (p. 73). As Mandelstam (1974) put it—”The people need poetry that will be their secret/to keep them awake forever” (p. 89).

Through poetic speech, nature poems hint at the unsayable and can become guides to awakening a synaesthetic mode of being and to relearning how to “think through our fingertips” (Eagleton, 1990, p. 366). For Heidegger, “poetry is our way of stepping outside the frame of the technological, of reawakening the momentary wonder of unconcealment” (Bate, 2000, p. 259). Certain poems disclose the poetics of wildness in those simple things to which we respond with our whole being. Wherever our ‘home’ is, we are there sensorially with the animate and the inanimate, and with each other, in an inextricable interdependence. Poems which emerge out of the poet’s sens of dwelling on earth can offer an intimacy of connectedness and open us to the poetic qualities of the wild. “Poetry that allows us a taste of our inner destiny … is a function of awakening” (Bachelard, 1983, p. 16).

As an educator I am intent on furthering an interconnection between the experience of nature poetry and the experience of the wild. I have attempted in this inquiry to reveal the harmonious accord, the concinnity, between practicing synaesthetic perception as a mode of being and engaging with nature poetry. Poetry, as Baker (2005) puts it, opens up “fields of otherness that elude conventional structures of knowledge and representation” (p. 33). My purpose here is to stress the importance of inviting poetry into our lives rather than to elaborate ways in which it is possible to educate people in poetry or to provide specific pedagogical tools. Numerous books have been written on the teaching of poetry: how to analyze it, interpret it, read it and write it.5

My emphasis is not on the analytical ‘close reading’ of poetry, what Bonnefoy (1990) calls playing a game with the text, “a game without any other responsibility than intellectual …. An essential dimension of poetry could cease to be felt when one defines it simply as text” (p. 796). We need to encourage students to read poems without pen in hand. When one strips the wings from a butterfly in order to learn the secret of their
colour, pattern and shape, the butterfly thus mutilated cannot fly. Similarly, too much
textual analysis—deciphering, decoding, interpreting—can deaden deeply felt feelings,
halt the surfacing of memories, or obscure the lived experience the poem turns us toward,
and, thus, gets in the way of what could be a transformative moment. The poem is
stripped of its magic—it cannot sing.

Instead of being ‘taught,’ a poem could be offered to readers and listeners as a gift
and “received as a gift is received” (Hyde, 1983, p. xii). In this reciprocal exchange the
poem gifts to the reader and the reader, by bringing gifts to the poem, “may restore to the
poem the benefit of that experience it had been unable to completely achieve” (Bonnefoy,
1990, p. 801). Students should be encouraged to read the poem aloud, to perform it, in
order to appreciate the rhythmic beauty of sounds and images and to experience how the
poem comes to life when “embodied in the voice” (Le Guin, 1989, p. 185). Reciting
poems has the advantage of being both an auditory and a visual experience that can
awaken the senses, including the sense of memory. In voicing the poem we share in the
poet’s imaginative vision, the sensuous, transformative evocations that renew the body,
mind, heart and spirit, and we partake of an experience that goes beyond language. “We
are turned by [the poet’s] very words toward something that escapes them” (Bonnefoy,
1990, p. 798). Thus the reader may discover how the poet

appeals … to that in us which is a gift and not an acquisition—and, therefore,
more permanently enduring. He speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to
the sense of mystery surrounding our lives; to our sense of pity, and beauty and
pain; to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation …. (Conrad, 1983, in
Hyde, p. 153)

Approaching the poem as a gift may kindle a sensuous, emotional response in the reader
that evolves out of engaging both inner and outer self in the world of the poem. As
Polonsky (1998) reminds us “poetry dances carefully in our minds. It teases us, prods us,
invites our involvement in a respectful way, a way that befits the subtlety and majesty of
our rich, complex emotional life” (p. 20).
Perhaps learning to love poetry is a gradually emerging felt experience arising from encounters—captivating, inspiring, astonishing—with poems that resonate with some deep inner awareness and occasion a heightened sense of being alive. Such an experience is comparable to learning to love a tree, a rock, the scent of autumn, or the tumultuous surf. It is a love that grows with familiarity and engenders “a way of thinking-living poetically” (Lucy, 1997, p. 203). We may read a favourite poem many times or at different stages of life. The embodied meaning it has for us may increase or shift as our circumstances and responses change.

Putting aside for a time the analytical, critical faculties, we can enter the world of the poem in the practice of slowness, sensuously, with our ears, eyes, nose, tongue, tactile surfaces alert, and with our intuitive, emotional, imaginative, mnemonic capacities of knowing attuned—an investing which is similar to an embodied synaesthetic response to wildness. We listen to the poem with all our senses and open to the languages of the wild enfolded in the verse. We awaken to the touch of the poem which is felt in the bodymind, and become aware of the texture of the words and silences, the phrasing, the vibrant images, metaphors, and rhythms. We sense that the poem also has its wordless aspect, that is, something in the experience of the poet which cannot be spoken. Our own deeply felt synaesthetic, yet ineffable, experiences among the wild inform an intimate relationship of reciprocity with the poem.

To be receptive readers of nature poems we need to be receivers also of the gifts the wild offers us and

venture out under the sky, into rain and sun. We need to hear the specific calls of specific birds, to startle and be startled by snakes appearing at our feet. To confine our readings and reflections to the library or the classroom [as if we were disembodied, nonsentient beings] would be an impoverishment … a diminishment … Students and teachers must all remember, from time to time, to go to grass. (Elder, 1999, p. 658–59)

Thus, the reading of poems can be enhanced by encouraging the kinds of awareness, observations and experiences the poets themselves had which inspired their poems.
Synaesthetic perception as a mode of being and a tenor of knowing offers a way for opening “vistas on what might be, to form notions of what should be, what is not yet” (Greene, 1995, p. 19). With the forgetting of nonverbal sensuous experiences we can’t imagine such alternatives. Education can provide a place where the reinstating of the wisdom of the senses can happen in the presence of the wild and poetry, and can encourage a way to live more fully, to be “wide awake in the world” (Greene, 1995, p. 4). This is the poetic task of educators.

* A Fragment  Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain are moving across the landscapes, over the prairies and the deep trees, the mountains and the rivers. Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean air, are heading home again. Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination. calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting— over and over announcing your place in the family of things. (Oliver, 1986, from *Wild Geese*, p. 14)
Notes

Notes—Prelude

1. Fog eliminates the visual, felt by some to be our dominant sense. This poem speaks of the recruitment by one sense of the other senses, that is, the way the senses have of evoking each other and of commingling. All the meanings of the French term sens mentioned above—perceptual sense, discursive meaning, spatial direction—are incorporated here. The metaphor of fog refers to my own personal fog of unknowing, of being unsure of my direction in this inquiry as well as to the necessity of carrying forward even though the way is unclear. Fog is both concealing and revealing. A clarity results when fog clears, and things are more than they seem. The poem is endorsing of synaesthetic perception and speaks to the disclosive nature of the inquiry.

   Fog also becomes a metaphor for the opacity that we sometimes accept as reality, the complacency of living in an unexplored world, an alienation from the wisdom of our senses, and the tyranny of the visual.

2. While I am aware of the demands of political correctness when I am quoting passages from another era, I will be using (sic) only once in a given quote.

3. A Prelude is also a piece of music or an operatic overture which introduces a longer composition. A prelude may be a short poem, introductory in character, prefixed to a longer poem.


5. I am using the phrase ‘mode of being’ with the understanding that ‘becoming’ is enfolded in the term ‘being,’ for we are always along the way to becoming.
6. Howes (1991) is referring to McLuhan’s use of the metaphor ‘kaleidoscope,’ an “image that agrees with the fact that it is through a combination of the five senses that human beings perceive the world” (p. 167).


8. At-homeness is a phrase I borrow from Bate (1996) when he speaks of an “at-homeness-with-all-living-things” (p. 444).

9. Reciprocity becomes a motif that weaves like a thread through the themes of the inquiry and is addressed in numerous places: the reciprocal relationship of humans with wildness occasioned by synaesthetic perception as a mode of being, reciprocity between the poet and his/her sensory acuity to the wild that informs the poetic language of the poem, the reciprocal give and receive between the poem and the voicer of the poem. Through the practice of synaesthetic perception as a mode of being we gain a greater awareness of, respect for and desire to cultivate the reciprocal interrelationship between body and mind.

10. I use the term “poetic” throughout the study in different ways. I want to stress that my concern here is not to develop “a poetics,” a literary theory concerning the nature of poetry.

   a. I use poetic as an adjective, as in poetic language, poetic writing, poetic word, which refers to what belongs to or is proper to poetry, that is the style or character of a poem. In reading poetry we have a poetic experience of the poem.

   b. I also use poetic “in the broadest etymological sense to encompass the whole domain of *poiesis* as that of the creative production of *meaning*” (Burch, 2002, p. 3).

   c. Poetic here also refers the poetics of the wild, whether found in a flaming sunset, the lashing winds of a storm, spill of rain on leaves, or the tart, sticky scent of buds, as well as to a way of responding to wild otherness; experiencing sensuously and emotively the poetry of the wild. A synaesthetic way of being emerges as a poetic way of being which opens us to the poetics of the
circumambient natural domain. Poetic then refers to developing a poetic sens of the wild and the possibility of composing one’s life as a poem.

d. Following Heidegger (1971a), I extend the Greek meaning of poiesis, as making, to the creating of a poetic dwelling (p. 214). Such a possibility may result from a sensuous experience of, and recognition of, the “poetics” of wildness, and honours our enfoldment with it. Dwelling poetically is an option which may bring us into harmony with the earth. The term ecopoetic reflects this possibility.

11. I have spoken about and given examples of the way poetic language makes it possible for poetry to hint at the ineffable, in Stanza IV.

12. McKay (2001) uses the phrase to refer to the poet’s state of mind while in the presence of what he is calling “wilderness” and maintained during the poetic act of composition.

   [B]efore, under, and through the wonderful terrible wrestling with words and music, there is a state of mind I am calling poetic attention … it’s a sort of readiness, a species of longing which is without the desire to possess … and celebrates the wilderness of the other. (p. 26)

I have used the phrase poetic attention to suggest a perceptual acuity, an unusual awareness of the poetics of wildness brought about through the practice of a synaesthetic mode of being.

13. Aviram (2002) suggests that thinking about rhythm and language may provide us with an opportunity newly to understand the relation between language and the body (p. 161).

14. Note “there is clearly no universal agreement as to what researchers mean by methodology” (Gough, 2002, p. 1).


   In the beginning is not the word …. The word comes where it is expected.
   One writes initially through a wave of music, a groundswell that comes from
   the background noise, from the whole body, and maybe from the depths of
   the world or through the front door, or from our latest loves, carrying its
complicated rhythm, its simple beat, its melodic line, a sweet wafting, a broken fall. One cannot grip one’s pen but this thing, which does not yet have a word, takes off. In the beginning is the song.

16. I am indebted to Dr. Hoogland for suggesting that I elaborate on the performative aspect of the inquiry. Ideally the inquiry would be enacted in performance as a dramatic dialogue with the interplay of different voices: if not possible, at least the reader could have the imagined vicarious experience of “hearing” these different voices in play with each other and with the ideas and responses of the reader.

17. Through expressive speech “[w]e would mold and animate the reader, we cause him to participate in our creative or poetic action, putting into the hidden mouth of his mind the message of a certain object or certain feeling” (Claudel, in Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 389).

18. Merleau-Ponty (1968) in The Intertwining—The Chiasm (pp. 130—55) “indicates his new conception of the body as a ‘chiasm’ or crossing-over, which combines subjective experience with objective existence” (Baldwin, 2004, p. 247), sometimes stated as reversibility. For a selection of various explications of this notion see F. Evans & L. Lawlor, (Eds.), (2000), Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty’s Notion of Flesh.).
Notes—Stanza I: Synaesthetic Mode(s) of Being

1. It is interesting to note that this quote is also found in Locke’s *Essay on Human Understanding* in which he further described the senses as “this great source of most of the ideas we have” and as one of the two “fountains of knowledge, the very senses Descartes rejected” (in Synnott, 1991, p. 71).

2. I follow Merleau-Ponty and Abram in seeing perception as not just visual but as involving all or some of the senses. Hence forth, the term perception will refer to ‘synaesthetic perception,’ the intertwining of the senses.

3. Merleau-Ponty (1962) goes beyond the biological mechanistic view of the body as fixed and scientifically measureable, a body distant from our experience of it. He starts instead from sense experience (pp. 3–4): “[W]e must begin by reawakening the basic experience of the world” (p. viii). “Bodily experience forces us to acknowledge an imposition of meaning which is not the work of a universal constituting consciousness, a meaning which clings to certain contents” (p. 147). He also reveals the limitations of both the empiricist’s view of the body as a passive receptor of sense data, and the idealist’s disregard for the body in favour of consciousness (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, pp. 207–208).

4. Synaesthetic modes of being encompass both somatic and emotive knowing. Somatic pertains specifically to the body; the corporeal, the physical (OED, II, p. 2048). Emotive from the Latin *emovere* means pertaining to emotion, able to excite emotion, and to move (to an action) (OED, I, p. 648). Synaesthetic encounters might occasion the emotive need, desire, and strength to move to a creative action, which is both a resistance to that mindset which rejects the sensuous and a turn toward hope for a more inhabitable earth.

5. Abram (1996), following Merleau-Ponty, refers to synaesthesia as the “fusion of the senses” (p. 59) and the “overlapping and intertwining of the senses’ (p. 124). I want to stress the fact that even though the senses are distinct modalities, they are “inherently interdependent” (Morris, 2005, p. 5). The senses don’t just inter-act,
they intermingle, simultaneously giving us access to the world. They are involved in a transaction in which they enhance each other.

6. In the term synaesthetics I retain both meanings of aesthetic: sensuous perception and appreciation of the beautiful (OED, I, p. 32), that is, sensuous bodily experience and a sense of the appreciation of the beauty and wonder of wildness. Synaesthetics has the added meaning of “agreement of the feelings or emotions of different individuals, as a stage in the development of sympathy” (OED, II, p. 2222), which connects nicely with my comments on education.

7. Synesthesia, the not uncommon experience of modality of one sense experienced in terms of another, might be considered a bodily trope or metaphor in which one sense is the tenor and another the vehicle: the description of one kind of sensation in terms of another. An example is “sonogenic synesthesia,” in which music provokes intense visual experiences (Stein & Meredith, 1993, p. 9).

Synesthetes are people who experience synesthesia but Robertson and Sagiv (2005) point out that cross-sensory associations (brightness and pitch) and the use of synaesthetic metaphors (sharp cheese, blue note) are experienced by nonsynesthetes (p. 12).

Synaesthetic metaphors are used in poetry. Both Rimbaud and Baudelaire used extensive synaesthetic transport in their poetry (Baker, 2005). Marks (1978) talks about the use of synaesthetic metaphor in the poetry of Shelley, Poe, Swinburne, and Aiken (pp. 211–255).

8. Other cultures, in particular, indigenous ones, have a different number and view of the senses. For an account of how the senses are viewed by different cultures, see Howes (1991).

9. We often extol the visual over other senses. In Brian Friel’s 1994 play Molly Sweeney, the impact of this privileging of sight is borne out in ways that are disastrous and crippling for the blind woman whose ordeal is the centre of play. In gaining partial vision, she loses the ‘sensuous sight’ of her other senses and is no longer able to make sens of the world.
10. I acknowledge Abram’s interpretation of chiasm as resonating with what I am calling synaesthetic modes of being and the crossing of the senses with the sensuous:

[A]ccording to M-P there is a chiasm [a crossing], between the various sense modalities, such that they continually couple and collaborate with one another … this interplay of the different senses is what enables the chiasm between the body and the earth, the reciprocal participation—between one’s own flesh and encompassing flesh of the world—that we commonly call perception. (Abram, 1996, p. 128)

11. This is the first line of a Zen poem:

\textit{Sitting quietly, doing nothing,}

12. I borrow this last line from Zumthor (1990, p. 225).

13. Some would agree with Madison that “the advent of language … represented a complete transformation of man’s animality in that it completely sundered him from nature … man is not a natural given but a cultural, i.e., linguistic, construct” (p. 183). But “language seen in this way legitimizes the right of humans to name and control nature” (Bowers, 1993, p. 27). As Bleich (1978) states it: “rather than raising human beings out of nature, language is part of the human means of adaptation in nature” (p. 28).


15. For an excellent and thorough account of the bodily dimension of thinking—see Vallega-Neu (2005), \textit{The Bodily Dimension of Thinking}:

Questioning the bodily dimension of thinking leads to an understanding of bodily being that is not reduced to human thinking or human being but that also points to a dimension of the being of the world we live in and the beings we encounter. This dimension arises in thought for thought in so far as thinking is bodily woven into the fabric of things in their happening. (p. 125)
16. My idea of including memory as an inner sense is supported by some of the earliest discussions of the senses. According to St. Thomas Aquinas, memory is one of the four inner senses (Jutte, 2005, p. 51). Avicenna, in his doctrine of inner senses, also includes memory, which serves to preserve thoughts or concepts grasped by the senses (p. 47).

17. “Seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching are well on their way to being digitalized, computer-controlled processes that will progressively complement even replace impressions traditionally supplied by the five ‘natural’ organs of sense” (Jutte, 2005, p. 330).

Captives
mesmerized
by shadows flickering
on the cave wall,
all they have ever seen or known,
all there is.
One escaped,
ventured beyond
into the open, incarnate world.
Seized by a strange
multiplicity of sensations,
her senses were swept into disarray—
innumerable sounds rang in her ears,
scents saluted her from all sides,
colours, textures, tastes claimed her:
blue of sky, hardness of stone, warmth of sun, rush of wind,

She returned,
full of wonder,
knowing the shadows on the wall
to be poor, purely visual reflections of a
vibrant, profuse reality beyond the cave.
How could they believe her?
What they saw on the cave wall
was what they lived for. (apologies to Plato)
(Vernon, 2008)

18. Baker (2005) is referring here to Rimbaud, one of the proponents, along with Baudelaire, of synaesthetic transport in poetry, and his vision of synaesthetic
harmony as involving metamorphic *éclosion*, an experience of unfolding, emerging, disclosing (pp. 99–100).
Notes—Stanza II: Pulse of Knowing

1. Synesthesia:

Synesthesia is direct and economical, a salient and compact mode of childhood cognition, laden with the physiognomic characteristics of perception. As such, synaesthesia may play an important transitional role in the sharpening of modes of information processing. It is transitional because it may be superseded by the more abstract representations embodied in the linguistic mode of cognition …. The unity of the senses … transcends the synesthesia of childhood, burrowing deeper into the mind, remaining viable in adulthood, even when only latent. (Marks, 1978, p. 102)

2. Haecceity (from the Latin haecceitas), refers to a person’s or object's “thisness”)—see Presenting the Terms.

3. Cocteau’s childhood memory:

Thinking of the past, [Cocteau] trailed his hand along the wall. But he was not satisfied with the result; he felt something was missing. Suddenly it became clear to him what was wrong: he had been smaller as a child, his hand touched surfaces which he missed as an adult simply because he was drawing a different line. He decided to repeat the experiment, but this time he bent down. He bent down … closed his eyes, and let his hand trace the wall at the height which had been natural in the days he went to school. And immediately there appeared what he had vaguely been expecting. (Van den Berg, 1983, p. 212)

Just as a needle picks up the melody from the record, I obtained the melody of the past with my hand. I found everything: my cape, the leather of my satchel, the names of my friends and of my teachers, certain expressions I had used, the sound of my grandfather’s voice, the smell of his beard, the smell of my sister’s dresses and of my mother’s gown. (Cocteau, 1953, in Van den Berg, 1983, p. 212)
“We no longer believe in the aliveness of things and consequently we are deaf to their entreaties. The habit of tracing the unevennessess of the walls with one’s finger gets lost. We don’t do it anymore” (Van den Berg, 1983, p. 212), and … “thoughts fall apart from feelings, so that nobody thinks through their fingertips anymore” (Eagleton, 1990, p. 366).
Notes—Stanza III: Toward a Sens of Place

1. The direct quote in Synnott (1991) includes the page numbers from Descartes works:

2. Although the Romantics resisted a mechanized world:
   social, political and intellectual pressures overwhelmed the Romantic movement: the disengagement of the human from the natural world, the maintenance of that separation through the ban on empathetic “projection,” and the gradual elaboration of a domain called Nature which is reasonable at the core, and hence open to prediction and control, along with unlimited license to manipulate it. (Evernden, 1985, p. 150)


4. The dehumanizing force of technology:
   The private individual who might creatively resist instrumental imperatives comes to be increasingly organized by them, integrated into the functionalist network that spreads across every sphere of society, hence potentially emptied of sources and recesses of experience that might exceed the routines of that network. (Baker, 2005, pp. 279–280)

5. The continuing rationalized destruction of the earth accompanied by an increasing alienation of humans from nature demands an ecoconscious poetic rethinking of human belonging on earth. The kind of relationship we choose to establish and maintain with the earth determines the kind of world we live in. By denying the subjective existence of everything in the natural world, by viewing the trees, the animals, the rivers and streams, as just material objects and natural resources, as
“standing reserve” (Heidegger, 1977, p. 17), and by foregrounding what Buber (1970) calls the “I–It” relationship rather than an “I-Thou” (p. 56), one, individuals and, by extension, communities and nation states effectively barricade themselves against involvement, reciprocity, and their own experiential existential knowing of self-nature relationship.

6. “To return to the things themselves is to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. ix).

7. Physicists Bohm and Peat (1987) in their discussion of implicate order mention briefly how enfoldment plays out in thought, language, relationships, sense perception, music, and poetry (p. 189).


9. In 1909, the experimental psychologist E.B. Titchener translated Einfühlung, which meant the process of “feeling one’s way into something” as ‘empathy’ (Keen, 2006, p. 209).

10. This is a line from Keats’s La Belle Dame sans Merci, in Waller, McCormick, Fowler (1987, pp. 503–504).

11. Personal communication from Rick Kool.

12. Oikos is used by both Snyder and Bate. “Ecology means house, oikos … from the Greek” (Snyder, 1996, p. 108). “The poetic … may be thought of as that [which] restores us to our home (oikos’”) (Bate, 1998, p. 59).

13. I am indebted to Heidegger’s 1971a, Poetry, Language, Thought, in particular, the chapters on “Building dwelling thinking” and “… poetically man dwells …” for the idea of the art of dwelling.

My particular interest in this inquiry centres on a possibility for poetic dwelling which is occasioned by a synaesthetic perception as a mode of being—a sensuously harmonious interconnection with wildness.
14. I acknowledge that there are those who desire and choose to live in a human made artificial environment, as Ursula Franklin (1990) puts it “the house that technology has built” (p. 12).

15. I reflect here on a gift of flower boxes from the people of Victoria and presented by Dr. Antoinette Oberg and Dr. Laurie Baxter to a neighbourhood in Cuba.

   I want to point out that in some cultures, viewed as totally impoverished by western standards, such as the Melanesian culture of the Solomon Islands, there is an intimacy with their local place, a knowing of the soil, water, plants, and animals, a rootedness and a bond which insures a sense of reciprocity and responsibility that many in developed countries have lost—and yes, a kind love of life (joie de vivre) because of this embeddedness, in spite of subsistence struggles and the lack of material human made things (or due to this lack?).

16. I have adapted a phrase from David Orr (1992). He reminds us that “the sum total of violence wrought by people who do not know who they are because they don’t know where they are is the global environmental crisis” (p. 102, italics added)

17. Heidegger (1971a, p. 146) reminds us that the German word buan means to dwell. This signifies, to remain, to stay in a place.

18. The two separate English meanings of sense foster a dualism of mind and body—one dealing with intellectual meaning, the other with bodily senses. I prefer the French sense which incorporates these two meanings with a sense of direction, a going toward, which brings the two meanings along together, not separately.


20. Kea, the mountain parrot of New Zealand, is a trickster, notorious for being a nuisance, for its disruptive antics, and raising havoc with campers, waking the two-legged interlopers at the “crack” of dawn. I had a different “dawning” experience.

Several writers, including Baker, Bate, Kroeber, Lussier, and Rigby, have commented on the Romantic poets’ belief that humans belonged in the natural realm. Keats, in *To Autumn*, reconnects the thinking man and embodied substance conveying a view of self as vitally interrelated with its environment (Rigby, 2004, p. 4). My focus in this inquiry is to explore, with the aid of poetry, the mode of experience in which this interrelationship takes place—which I am calling a synaesthetic mode of being.

I follow Shigenori (1992) in this use of attunement as the nature of relationship between two entities or groups of entities, coming together—orientation towards—in the sense of harmonious engagement. “Appropriation of somatic knowledge is in proportion to the degree of attunement which obtains between the person and his/her living ambiance” (pp. 184–185).

From *East of Eden*

Sometimes a kind of glory lights up the mind of man. It happens to nearly everyone. You can feel it growing or preparing like a fuse burning toward dynamite. It is a feeling in the stomach, a delight of the nerves, of the forearms. The skin tastes the air, and every deep-drawn breath is sweet … it flashes in the brain and the whole world glows outside your eyes. (Steinbeck, 2002, p. 130)

There is much in this dwelling place—I focus on how the true place of home is threaded through with wild otherness, of incorporating that into our dwelling. I am speaking here of earth at-homeness: not an abode, a particular house, but an alternative to what Ursula Franklin (1990, p. 11) calls “the [technological] house in which we all live.” Heidegger (1979) insists that poetic dwelling comes before building (pp. 214-215). It seems to me that our *sens* of a place will determine how and what we build.

Serres (1995b) is suggesting a natural contract of symbiosis and reciprocity in which our relationship to things would set aside mastery and possession in favor of admiring attention, reciprocity, contemplation, and respect (p. 38). It seems to
me that these virtues don’t just happen because they are named, or talked about but grow out of, emerge from a vital embodied synaesthetic mode of experiencing our interrelatedness with ‘nature.’


29. “[S]uddenly the summons reached him, and took him like an electric shock” (Mole’s reaction to the summons of his old home in *Wind in the Willows*) (Grahame, 1961, pp. 85).

   We others, who have long lost the more subtle of the physical senses, have not even proper terms to express an animal’s intercommunication with his surroundings, living or otherwise, and have only the word ‘smell’ for instance, to include the whole range of delicate thrills which murmur in the nose of an animal night and day, summoning, warning, inciting, repelling. It was one of these calls from out of the void that suddenly reached Mole in the darkness, making him tingle through and through with its very familiar appeal, even while as yet he could not clearly remember what it was. He stopped dead in his tracks, his nose searching hither and thither in its efforts to recapture the fine filament, the telegraphic current, that had so strongly moved him. A moment, and he had caught it again; and with it this time came recollection in the fullest flood. Home! (Grahame, 1961, pp. 85–86)

30. Physicists Bohm and Peat’s (1987) presentation of implicate order is here reapplied to a *sens* of at-homeness. “The word *implicate,* meaning enfolded, suggests that one thought enfolds another … thoughts and feelings unfold into each other, and these in turn give rise to dispositions that unfold into physical actions [creating a place of dwelling] and on to more thoughts and feelings” (p. 185) thus continually renewing the poetic art of dwelling.
31. This expression is used by several thinkers such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Evernden.

32. Zeami and Kanami were the co-founders of Japanese Noh, a poetic form of drama using music, dance and voice.

33. “The closer we come to the danger, the more brightly do the ways into the saving power begin to shine and the more questioning we become” (Heidegger, 1977, pp. 34–35). Heidegger suggests that the saving power can be found in the arts, in particular, the poetic. The danger he is referring to here is primarily the essence of technology. “Poetry builds up the very nature of dwelling … poetry and dwelling belong together, each calling for the other” (1971b, p. 227).
Notes—Stanza IV: Crossings of the Senses and Poetic

1. “The poet of being and dwelling summons the luminosity of the sky and the resonance of the wind into the singing word and thereby makes them shine and sing” (Heidegger, 1971b, p. 225).

2. Marmoud Darwish, the Palastininan Poet Laureate, died August 9, 2008, while still in exile.

3. Synaesthetic transport is one of the major ideals of French romanticism reflected in the poetry of Baudelaire and, particularly, in Rimbaud’s idea of “synaesthetic harmony” (Baker, 2005, p. 100). It is found in modern poetry also as a kind of “synaesthetic amplitude of interwoven senses” (p. 100).

4. I am applying the Impressionist’s term *En plein air* to a kind of poetry which is enlivened by being in the presence of the natural—the shimmering light, the colour, the contrasts—by the crossings of the senses with sensorial wild otherness.

   I imagine children writing their poems *en plein air* and voicing them to a favourite tree, a clump of flowers, a flitting butterfly or a squirrel nutting about.

5. Abram is talking about ‘stories’ which make sense. I have applied what he says to poetry.

6. Burch (1986) is referring to Heidegger’s mention of Holderlin’s response to the question, how do we dwell: “Poetically dwells human being on earth” (p. 19). This idea of dwelling poetically, which Heidegger elaborates on in *Poetry, Language and Thought* (1971a), informs this inquiry.

7. We experience these inexpressible feelings and associations in nature and in art, in the shaped expanding and contracting sequences of music, poetry and dance, their rhythms and contrasts; in the measured extravagance of gesture in sculpture, dance, and drama, in the arabesque of surface and depth in painting, in the feeling of words in our mouth, their shapes and weight on our tongue. In all these things our response is immediate, synesthetic, prior to words and concepts. Along with conceptual meaning is somatic meaning, its
significance seemingly enlarged because we can find no words for it.  
(Dissanayake, 1988, p. 147–148)

8. For this subtitle I am using a line from Rudolf (1995). The reader of the poem “returns to the world changed by an experience only words can generate but deeper than any word, found beyond telling” (p. ix).

9. “Poetry is a voicing, a calling forth …. So, too, does the reader make, or remake, the poem out of a mouthful of air, out of breath” (Hirsch, 1999, p. 5).

Zumthor (1990, p. 8) mentions that ori-gine, going back to the Latin, means to issue from the mouth, which links it to Yeat’s exclamation— “I made it (the poem) out of a mouth full of air,” and Sappho’s “Mere air, these words but delicious to hear,” to the voice-breath of the poet, and to voicing of the poem by the reader. Origin, then, is an arising that is tied to the body. By noticing and experiencing our immersion in the invisible air, we recall what it is to be fully part of this world, to be aware of our origins.

Abram (1996) speaks of air as a sensuous medium “the felt matrix of our breath and the breath of other animals and plants and soils … as a thick and richly textured presence, filled with invisible but nonetheless tactile, olfactory, and audible influence” (p. 226). “The breathing landscape is no longer just a passive backdrop against which human history unfolds, but a potentized field of intelligence in which our actions participate” (p. 260).

Can the experience of poetry as an oral art assist us in breaking down the regime of self-reference so that we can ‘awaken’ to the air, the breathing of the world? It is interesting that the Inuit have a single word to signify both “to breathe” and “to compose a song” (Zumthor, 1990, p. 63).

10. “Enfoldment, the implicate order, manifests in poetry and other arts” (Bohm & Peat, 1987, p. 189).

Explicate orders are especially suitable for large-scale organization and technology …. The implicate and generative world is clearly the ground of all experiencing, and the explicate world of succession is constructed out of this
ground. Through habits of thought and language, people have come to take the explicate world of succession as the true ground and the implicate and generative orders as something that is secondary. (p. 190)

11. I am particularly interested in poems in which there is space for the reader to pause, to listen for the unspoken, space which allows resonances to reverberate through the reader’s bodymind and invites co-habitation of poet and reader in the sensuous space of the poem.

12. “The young reader of poetry does not analyze—he (sic) pledges to the author … that he too will remain in intensity … anxious to go and live out the promise. He has rediscovered a hope” (Bonnefoy, 1989, p. 62).

13. Erfahrung, meaning experience as something undergone to one’s depths, is transformative.

   The hermeneutical scene is one of “conflict and disruption, where experience means Erfahrung, that is, something that one undergoes, something overwhelming and uncanny that exacts a radical transformation that leaves everything otherwise, no longer recognizable in the sense of familiar or the same. (Bruns, 1992, p. 216)

   It is “the experience of being brought up short by the text” (Gadamer, 1975, p. 268). For Gadamer, this kind of experience means a releasement “from some prior certainty, some vocabulary or framework or settled self-understanding” (Bruns, 1992, p. 184) that causes a fundamental shift in our thinking and way of being in the world. Texts—linguistic and nonlinguistic such as a song, a poem, a Zen Koan, a painting, a startling recollection, an event of groundlessness—can, as Bruns (1992) puts it, “explode the conceptual world of the one who seeks to interpret it” (p. 183).
Notes—Education Coda: Openings to Possibility

1. Alberto Caeiro is one of three heteronyms invented by the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa. Each of Pessoa’s poet characters has a complete life history and a discrete body of work. Caeiro is an innocent pastoralist who “redefines one’s simplest creatural response to the phenomenal world as the sole task of the poet. To accept this response is to focus on the sensations” (Honig & Brown, 1986, p. xiv).

2. What I propose is the possibility of educators allowing students to discover and explore wildness on their own rather than from an adult performance of ‘show and tell’ where the teacher directs children who are armed with pencils, diagrams, and pages of questions to answer. What I am proposing is not instead of environmental education—children can learn much about the wild from a botany book and from fact finding missions. However, students also need to have opportunities to be among wild others without pen and paper in hand. Educators and parents must trust students’ own capacities for being synaesthetically present—for noticing things, for having direct intense experiences that touch them, experiences of awe, exhilaration, wonder that they may bring away and incorporate in some way into their daily lives. In short, we must honour their capability for poetic attention to the poetics of the wild. Teachers could be role models of en plein air experiences, as well as practicing poetic attention and grounding teaching in the natural experience from which nature poems emerge. As Elder (1999) puts it—“carrying our reading, reflection, teaching, and writing out under the sky” (p. 650).

3. Peter London (1989) recommends wandering about “seeking natural things—plants stones, bones—whose pattern of growth is apparent and which have some eye-catching, special appeal for you. Allowing your eyes to pass over landscape, registering what they take in rather than seeking out predetermined forms . . . Collect half a dozen things whose rhythm and pattern have this appeal for you” (p. 119).

4. I want to include the voices of students in the conversation Oakshott speaks of—an opportunity for them to express what was deeply felt when in the presence of the wild and nature poems. As I suggested above children might write their poems en plein air and
read them aloud to the rock they sit on, to the crashing waves, the shape changing creature-like clouds, or sing them to the gurgle of streams—their words flung out upon the wind. They might recite their poems at the dinner table, to a pet, or in a secret hideaway with friends—the poem coming to life in the voicing of it.

5. Andrews, Heard, Hirsch, Leggo, Pinsky, Polonsky, and Stibbs are among the many who have contributed to the literature.
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Kool, R. (personal communication, November 1, 2006)


APPENDIX A: COPYRIGHT PERMISSION TO USE JANE YOLAN’S POEM “ORANGE”

January 22, 2009

Adele Vernon
5-1305 Manor Road
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APPENDIX B: DEVIATIONS FROM APA GUIDELINES

Because of the unusual format of this work, I have not been able to adhere strictly to APA guidelines. But I have maintained a consistency in formatting and style.

In lieu of chapters, I have created Stanzas, which are written in verse, and are single spaced. The Prelude and Education Coda, which are external to the stanzaic dialogues, meet APA standards.

I have written my dissertation in verse, which is an increasingly accepted form of qualitative arts-based inquiry. And the Voices, Fragments, Moments, and Chorus are set off from the main verse. Even though they may be less than 40 words, they are presented as block quotes.

I have cited the author or origin of certain terms and phrases, such as “more-than-human,” and “I-Thou,” “connatural,” and “at-homeness” the first time they appear in the document. Thereafter, I put quotation marks around these terms and phrases. I made this decision for stylistic reasons as it would disrupt the flow of the verse to include a citation every time I used one of these words.

Adele Vernon