

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

by

Adele Vernon

B.A., University of Washington, 1962

M.A., University of Montana, 1973

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**Supervisory Committee**

Dr. Alison Preece, Co-Supervisor  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. Antoinette Oberg, Co-Supervisor  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. Robert Dalton, Committee Member  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. Wanda Hurren, Committee Member  
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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.

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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 sense  
of which way to go.*

*Quieting the mind,  
I relinquish vision.  
My other senses rally,  
reaching into the dense opacity,  
gathering a sense 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.<sup>1</sup>*

(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)<sup>2</sup>, 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 prelude<sup>3</sup> comes from the Latin *praeludere*, which combines *prae* (pre—before) and *ludere* (to play) (Oxford English Dictionary [OED], 1973, II, p. 1655).<sup>4</sup> 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,<sup>5</sup> 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)<sup>6</sup> 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, skylscapes, waterscapes, and “soundscapes” (Schafer, 1994).<sup>7</sup> “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 non-material 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,<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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 disinherited, 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 house hold.” 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<sup>10</sup> 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,<sup>11</sup> 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,”<sup>12</sup> 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

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).<sup>13</sup> 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” (Semetsky, 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<sup>14</sup> comes out of.

### ***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 *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 *Poiesy*, from the Greek word meaning ‘creation’ and ‘to make,’ from which our word poetry is derived, is a noun of *process* (Lucy, 1997, p. 65). As the “creative production of meaning” (Burch, 2002, p. 3), *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 *sens* of dwelling, the realm of the poetic, and education. Both poetry and synaesthetic perception, which are *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).<sup>15</sup>

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 lading it with analysis and concepts. This kind of reading “asks us to lift our eyes from the page and to contemplate the world” (Bonney, 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*—involving 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.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> 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’<sup>18</sup> 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

[a]s 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 interwovenness 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.

***Haeceity***

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 *sens* of the movement of *éclosion*, 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 multi-sensory, 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)<sup>1</sup>*

*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,<sup>2</sup>  
 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<sup>3</sup>  
 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,<sup>4</sup>  
 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.<sup>5</sup>

We experience aural, visual, tactile, olfactory and taste modalities,  
 intertwining, intercommunicating,  
 opening to each other,  
 insisting on participation.

The term ‘aesthetic’<sup>6</sup> 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,”<sup>7</sup>  
“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 syneasthetic 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.<sup>8</sup>**

**Sensuous 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. 24<sup>9</sup>)

**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<sup>10</sup>  
between seeing and hearing  
which is evoked in certain poems.**

*Voices*                      *If you want to see, listen*  
(Bonney, 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*-scape.

*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,  
 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 nature.**

*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 nothing***<sup>11</sup>  
***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 sentience 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**

**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,  
expansiveness,  
an opening out—  
a *sens* of harmony,  
an attunement to a larger sentience,  
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—  
never 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.”<sup>12</sup>*

(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),<sup>13</sup>  
 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 nature  
 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  
 concepts, 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.

(Bonney, 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 *sens* 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”<sup>14</sup> (Shakespeare, 2005, p. 379).  
**The word does not tell us  
 about the suchness of these things.****

*A 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, unpagged)

**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)

**Synaesthetic 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).

*Thought-ful 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).<sup>15</sup>

**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.<sup>16</sup>  
 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<sup>17</sup>**  
**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”**  
 (Ashbery, 1981, in Perloff, p. 261).

**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 *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 earthness?**

*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 *no longer* in us?**  
**Synaesthetic capacities misplaced,**  
**direct sensuous experience discounted.**

*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 compelling 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?**

*A Voice*

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?**

*A Voice*

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)<sup>18</sup>**

**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,<sup>1</sup>  
 and may experience  
 surfacings, upsurgings, tinglings  
 of delight, amazement, fear, awe,  
 an unsayable but felt attunement,  
 an enfoldment.**

*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*<sup>2</sup> (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).**

*A Voice*

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 touchstones<sup>3</sup>  
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 Sweeney*  
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 childhood that coalesce and echo 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 Heshusius, 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, unpagged)

\*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.*  
 (Bonney, 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 sky-clad  
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,  
 diminished 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 nature  
 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,  
17<sup>th</sup> 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<sup>1</sup>)

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.*

(Wordsworth, 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  
 inspirational” (Rigby, 2004, p. 261).

**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.<sup>2</sup>**

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  
that surround us?"* (Abram, 1996, p. 49).

*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, unpagged)

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).<sup>3</sup>

Direct sensuous bodily experience  
 discredited,  
 the mind fabricates surrogates—  
 concepts, theories, explanations, representations—  
 mistaken for 'what is real.'

*A Voice*

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.**

*A Voice*

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.<sup>4</sup>**

**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 recognition 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*

[W]e 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,  
 enough 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  
 existential 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.<sup>5</sup>**

*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),<sup>6</sup>  
 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<sup>7</sup>**  
 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.<sup>8</sup>  
**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 primordial 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 *ourselves*.

(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, visible,  
in harmony with our embodied rhythms,  
and still not graspable.**

**Yet, such experiences  
summon a deep awareness**  
of our reciprocal enfoldment 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 nature.

*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,  
in a “reciprocation -by-song” (Hyde, 1983, p. 189).**

*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  
of fellowship with all creation—” (Conrad, in Hyde, 1983, p. 153).

**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.

*A Voice*

Whatever belongs to the tree is included: its form and its mechanics, its colors and its chemistry, its conversation with the elements and its conversation with the stars—all this in its entirety. The tree is no impression, no play of my imagination, no aspect of mood: it confronts me bodily and has to deal with me as I must deal with it—only differently. One should not try to dilute the meaning of the relation: the relation is reciprocity. Does the tree have a consciousness similar to our own? I have no experience of that .... What I encounter is neither the soul of the tree nor a dryad, but the tree itself.

(Buber, 1970, p. 58-59)

**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.

*A Voice*

[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  
and a sentient, vibrant nature” (Abram, 1996, in Lussier, p. 402).

**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” (Bonney, 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.**

*A Voice*

The more one is open to and aware (in being  
t/here) of the corporeal being of beings, the  
more one experiences their strangeness and  
difference and the more one is likely to be  
changed or transformed in one’s bodily  
being by other beings.  
(Vallega-Neu, 2005, p. 99)

**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 *sens* 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*  
 (Bonney, 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 nature,  
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,**<sup>9</sup>  
“Einführung,  
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  
 and its ecosphere” (Lussier, 1996, p. 407).

**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”<sup>10</sup>  
(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)<sup>11</sup>*

*Nothing more/But the sense/ Of where we are/...  
the open Miracle of Place  
(Oppen, 2003, from A Narrative, p. 78)*

**Home,**  
*oikos*<sup>12</sup> 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)?<sup>13</sup>

*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 house hold,  
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 once knew” (Ashbery, in Perloff, 1981, p. 261).

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

*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.*<sup>15</sup>  
 (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?<sup>16</sup>

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”<sup>17</sup>  
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.**

*A Fragment*    *You will lie down upon the simple earth,  
Who told you it belonged to you?*  
(Bonney, 1985, from *The Lure of the  
Threshold*, p. 52)

**Getting to know a place,  
intimately,  
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:<sup>18</sup>  
*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.

*A Fragment*    *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.**

*A Fragment*    **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.**

*A Fragment*    *What is there  
like fortitude! What sap  
went through that little thread  
to make the cherry red*

(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),<sup>19</sup>**

**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 inhabited earthplace.**

*A Fragment*      **Gift Exchange—Morning Ritual**

*The sens-scape*

*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  
 raucaus cries  
 reverberating with the morning.*

*gifts fill my pocket,  
 and tomorrow?<sup>20</sup>  
 (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” (Bonneyoy, 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.  
 (Bonneyoy, 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 Leavings<sup>21</sup>**  
  
*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<sup>22</sup>  
 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<sup>23</sup> 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)<sup>24</sup>

*Practicing the Art of Dwelling*

**Overcoming  
the forgetfulness of the art of dwelling<sup>25</sup>  
involves  
interweaving of my senses  
to a state of awakesness 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).<sup>26</sup>**

**Learning to dwell poetically,  
wherever we are,  
at whatever age,  
is *poiesis*, an art of making.<sup>27</sup>**

**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”<sup>28</sup>

*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 *sens* 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” (Bonney, 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<sup>29</sup>  
 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 relationship of humans and wild others,  
“unfolds into  
our thoughts and feelings” (Bohm & Peat, 1987, p. 185),<sup>30</sup>  
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,”<sup>31</sup>  
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” (Bonney, 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<sup>32</sup>).

But where the danger is, grows the saving  
power also  
(Heidegger, 1977, p. 28)<sup>33</sup>)

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”<sup>1</sup> (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*,<sup>2</sup>  
 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 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” (Bonnetoy, 2002, p. 598).

**Poets**

**gather tokens**  
*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),<sup>3</sup>  
**that becomes**  
**a poetic chorus**  
**of the senses,**  
**a poem**  
**to be voiced *en plein air*.**<sup>4</sup>

*A Fragment*    *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.*  
(Rimbaud, 1966, from *Sensation*, p. 17)

**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**  
***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” (Bonney, 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)<sup>5</sup>

**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)<sup>6</sup>

***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.*  
(Bonney, 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, *poesis*,  
 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?  
 (Bonney, 1989, p. 162)

**The limitations of language  
 for describing the indescribable<sup>7</sup>  
 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-transmittable,  
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 circumambient 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.  
(Bonney, 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” (Bonney, 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.  
(Bonney, from *The Beginning and the End  
of the Snow*, 1995, p. 187)*

*Yes, by words,  
A few simple words.  
(Bonney, 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”<sup>8</sup>  
 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” (Bonney, 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  
glimpsed 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 unmortality,  
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 indifferenciation, of unity ... that state that characterizes reality at the level that our language cannot reach, despite its definitions, its designations and its descriptions.  
(Bonney, 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  
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.*  
 (Piercy, 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” (Bonney, 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* .....and the black coming down  
 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 its 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.**

*A Voice*      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.**

*A Voice*      [R]hythm is the entire movement, the flow, the recurrence of stress and unstress that is related to the rhythms of the blood, the

rhythms of nature. It involves ... stress, time, pitch, the texture of words, the total meaning of the poem.

(Roethke, 1985, from *Some Remarks on Rhythm*, in Geddes, p. 642)

**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  
move together: *word-music*” (LeGuin, 1989, p. 111, italics added).

**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. (Bonney, 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.*  
(Sappho, 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<sup>9</sup>**

**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),**



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.**

*A Voice*

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)<sup>10</sup>

**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.<sup>11</sup>**

**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*

[I]t 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—<sup>12</sup>**  
 "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.<sup>13</sup>

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 Caiero,  
But a human animal that Nature produced.  
(Caiero, 1986, p. 23)<sup>1</sup>*

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” (Caiero, 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 wherever possible. As Carpenter (1991) puts it “any sensory experience is partly skill and any skill can be cultivated” (in Howes, p. 168).<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup> 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 ..." (Bonney, 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup>

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” (Bonney, 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” (Bonney, 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.
4. Onions, C.T. (Ed.) (1973). *The shorter Oxford English dictionary: On historical principles* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Oxford: Clarendon Press. Subsequent references will appear parenthetically and by volume and page numbers, e.g., OED, II, p. 1655).
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).
7. I recall that R.M. Schafer (1994) wrote a book titled *The soundscape: Our sonic environment and the tuning of the world*. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books.
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 voice 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 to 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).
15. From Serres (1995, p. 138):

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” (Caudel, 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:
- Sitting quietly, doing nothing,  
Spring comes, and the grass grows by itself* (Watts, 1956, p. 134).
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).
14. Shakespeare (2005), *Romeo and Juliet* II, i, p. 379.
15. For an excellent and thorough account of the bodily dimension of thinking—see Vallega-Neu (2005), *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 unevenness 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:  

I shall consider myself having no hands, no eyes, no flesh, no blood, nor any senses. (1973, pp. 145 & 148) I shall now close my eyes, I shall stop my ears, I shall cast away all my senses (1973, 157.) I am, I exist, that is certain (1973, p. 157. *Cogito ergo sum*—Decartes, 1973, *The Philosophical works of Descartes. Vol. 1*, 145, 148, 15. (pp. 61–76)
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)
3. Greek physician, AD 129–c200.
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).
8. Neil Evernden in *The Social Creation of Nature* addresses the “nature-as-object” and “nature-as-self” debate, pp. 99–102.
9. In 1909, the experimental psychologist E.B. Titchener translated *Einführung*, 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 *sens* 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 *sens* which incorporates these two meanings with a sense of direction, a going toward, which brings the two meanings along together, not separately.
19. Rigby (2004) is referring here to the opening lines of Wordsworth’s *Home at Grasmere* (1937, p. 39).
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.
21. A comment by Zumthor, 1990, p. 135, suggested this title to me.

22. 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.
23. 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).
24. 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)
25. 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.
26. 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.'

27. *Poiesis*, making, extended to a mode of living, becomes praxis, (Rigby, 2004, p. 4). "Making is, in Greek, *poiesis*" (Heidegger, 1971a, p. 214).
28. Latin phrase found in Blythe's (1999, p. 26) discussion of the poet John Clare and the virtues of footpath walking.
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 Yeats’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" (Bonney, 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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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.

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