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Re-researching and Re-storying the Complex and Complicated Relationship of *Biophilia* and *Bibliophilia*

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*"The main battlefield for good is not the open ground of the public arena,
but the small clearing of each heart."*
—Yann Martel

OUR STORY

We the authors of this paper are teachers, mothers, a father, a young adult daughter, and a pre-teen daughter. As well, we are poets, visual artists, and environmental activists. Since this writing is a piece of narrative inquiry with an autoethnographic component, we place here a brief introduction of ourselves: Heesoon Bai is a professor in Education, and currently coordinates a PhD program in Philosophy of Education that offers integrative studies in Ecology, Consciousness, and Community, or as she captions it, "Soil, Soul, and Society." Prior to entering graduate studies, she spent ten years homeschooling her two daughters. Serenna Romanycia, Heesoon's younger daughter, majors in Anthropology focusing on political ecology and minors in Education. She is a visual artist who has been painting since last year a 'crow series' and a 'tree series'. She grew up on a forested endowment land in the middle of a cosmopolitan city, and has a first-hand experience of place-based education. Daniela Elza, a multilingual poet with numerous prizes in poetry, is a PhD student in Philosophy of Education who poeticizes philosophy and philosophizes poetry, and brings them both to bear on school reform and cultural ferment. Her daughter Mina (age 12), whose voice also figures in this work, is already an environmental activist in her own right. Peter Kovacs, another polyglot and also a PhD student in Philosophy of Education, has an extraordinary sensibility to language. His current challenge, which has become the basis for his dissertation research, is transmitting biophilia (love

of Nature/Life) through bibliophilia (love of book/language) to his young autistic son.

All of us are serious bibliophiles and biophiles. What initially drew us together to carry a sustained conversation, which has resulted in writing this paper, is a discovery that in our respective lived experiences of parenting we tried to cultivate in our children biophilia through bibliophilia, imagining that there was a direct and straightforward connect, almost a causal connection, between the two. Our parenting experience “taught” us otherwise; and now, through this collaborative conversation and writing, we are unpacking, with theoretical aids from the literature, the complex and complicated, not to mention practically challenging, biophilia-bibliophilia connection.

This paper captures a reflective exploration and collective sharing of our own life experiment, seeking to create ripples of provocation as well as resonance in the reader. Given this intent, it is fair to declare from the outset that our narrative inquiry work here does not aim to prove, disprove, or even recommend any generalizable pedagogic thesis, if indeed such research intent is possible today in a postmodernity burdened with the understanding that “[t]here can never be a final, accurate representation of what was meant or said—only different textual representations of different experiences” (Denzin, 1997, p. 5). The kind of research, such as ours, that *re-searches* lived experience to glean insights and further illuminate and animate personal experience is best offered, we believe, as an invitation to the reader to enter into a textual field of resonance and see how the text evokes, provokes, illuminates, and animates their own subjective experience.

Another way of understanding the nature of this work is as a philosophical rumination, a well-practiced genre in traditional philosophical writing. The matter that we place before our reader to ruminate with us here is what we see as the insufficiency of *biophilia* (love of life/nature), which we reckon has resulted in environmental devastation, including accelerated rate of species extinction. To speak through Raimondo Panikkar: “holistic Philosophy [...] makes us very sensitive to the state of the world today and constantly brings our philosophical discussion to the vital problems of our contemporary human predicament” (Panikkar, 1990, p. 237). We the authors who attempted to enact the biophilia-bibliophilia relationship in our own parenting and being parented are now ruminating together to compare notes on how our love of words and worlds came to shape and colour our parenting, teaching, and learning over the years at home and at our respective learning institutions, and how we might better incline bibliophilia towards biophilia. The result—this paper—is a bricolage of our own poetry, interview fragments, and essay pieces assembled together as a portrait of ongoing struggle “to know, to

love, and to heal—all in one,” which is the “task of Philosophy” (Ibid.).

LOOKING UP, ON THE LAP

Parents are the first teachers of children. Our children learn how to be in the world—what to value or what not to value, how to treat others, how to love and care or exploit, neglect, and abuse—from the very first moment of their coming into this world. This learning does not have to be didactic or even discursive. How we touch and caress—or not touch—our babies, how we carry them about, how we look into their eyes, how we sing to them, how we sunbathe them, let the wind play on their faces and hair, how we bring them to flowers and trees to look at and touch, how we call their attention to the birds in the sky and on tree tops. How we attend with them. How we listen to what they have to say, even when they cannot say much. And how we interpret what they say within the context of our experience and theirs. What we read to them, and more importantly, *how* we read to them. All these are subtle but powerful lessons we teach them about the world and their relationship to the world, and our place in the world. Are we “organs of this world, flesh of its flesh, and [...] the world is perceiving itself *through* us?” (Abram, 1996, p. 68). Or is this world alien and something we have to fear and work against?

A major part of our own struggle as parents has been how and to what extent to protect our children from societal values and practices that we perceive as harmful prejudices and influences on the young, impressionable minds, as far as teaching biophilia goes. Not everything that goes on under the auspices of education and/or schooling is wholesome and worthy of respect. This is particularly the case in today’s world whose dominant ideology is consumercapitalism and whose dominant value is instrumentalism. Biophilia is not too well nurtured and does not grow within instrumentalist ideology and value for the simple and clear reason that what is not human only has the use value to human needs and wants (Bai & Scutt, 2009). In many instances, conventional education is none other than the transmission of the prevailing societal value of instrumentalism. This we know articulately now and have the words to describe and explain in the context of our academic studies. As young parents, we (Daniela and Heesoon) intuited the problem of instrumentalism with respect to Nature in the context of encountering the depiction of Nature as primitive, dangerous, dark, and cruel, as portrayed in many traditional fairy tales. Such depiction goes hand-in-hand with normalization of actual practices of instrumentalism such as battery farming and clearcutting logging, just to mention two of the better-known examples. We as young mothers struggled with the decision about whether or not to expose our babies to fairy tales

such as those of the Brothers Grimm, because of violent, cruel, sexist, anti-Nature notions and imageries.

***Daniela:** I never felt comfortable reading fairy tales to my kids. I did not see much value in them or much excitement and opportunities for creativity and play. It is one thing to read them as some oddity from centuries past, like watching a commercial, knowing it is trying to sell you something, but I felt like I would be committing a crime if I took the sell as an entry into the world.*

I cannot defend Jack in 'Jack and the Beanstalk'. In fact, I thought Jack acted irresponsibly when he robbed the giant, and at the end killing him. Or take the case of the Big Bad Wolf. Wolves were my daughter's favourite animals, so the Big Bad Wolf was a hard sell. Sleeping Beauty was definitely not what I wanted my daughter to emulate.

***Heesoon:** There was no way that I was going to inflict images of dark scary forests and monstrous beasts on my own babies. I did not want my children to grow up under the psychological conditioning of fear from darkness, forests, and animals. Certainly, children need to learn caution and care when it comes to their safety in the world, but the psychological hampering of children by fear-induction is morally reprehensible. I speak from my own experience. I was terrified of darkness as a child because of all the scary stories told to me in association with darkness. When I was growing up, electricity was scarce, and every night, I had to walk to the outhouse in the dark to pee, and I was petrified.*

Also I was scared of animals (except little insects that were around me aplenty), not because I was exposed to them but, again, because of the psychological condition of fear and disgust injected into me. Animals were portrayed as brutes. So, in my own parenting, I was careful about not transmitting to my children negative perceptions about darkness, animals, and forests. I am happy to know that my daughters do not suffer from such fears.

The following fragment by Heesoon's younger daughter corroborates Heesoon's decision on the choice of children's literature in terms of biophilia:

***Serenna:** My love of nature has always had a deep connection to literature. I was a voracious reader; I grew up in my imagination, in a fantasy world full of different spaces and contexts and characters. I loved *Wind in the Willows*, *Beatrix Potter*, the *Narnia* books – these books shaped my perception of the world. The forests of my childhood were sometimes real, sometimes fantasy, and they were both psychologically and literally where I grew up. They were full of safety, full of adventure, full of connectedness and peace. I would retreat into the forests of my imagination*

whenever I felt like the real world was upsetting or scary. I believe all children retreat into their imagination, but I am glad that in mine there were always woodlands and forests and creatures waiting there for me. As I grew into an adolescent, the transition from imagined forests to real forests was natural – I would seek out nature to find peace and calm, just like I sought out my fantasy nature to find peace and calm as a child. My love of nature grew within me through listening to stories, stories that sunk deeply into my perception of the world and consequently shaped the stories that I tell, and will continue to tell, my entire life. Literature is certainly not the only form of storytelling, but it is a powerful one, especially because it is most often an individual experience. I recall that some of the happiest moments of my childhood were found in reading my favourite books alone. In the stories I read, I forged a deep and intimate connection with nature.

Children do need stories to have ideas about the world, to find out how they fit in, and to discover what sorts of relationships they could have with the world. And books with such stories can play a major role in this regard. We agree with Valerio Dehò (2007) who says: “We know that children love stories, and they need them as a way of putting order into the ‘things’ of this world. And books contain secrets” (p. 121). But what is the order into which we want to put the “things” of this world? For a long time now we have been establishing certain orders that we now entitle as ‘Modernity’. But increasingly people are becoming disillusioned with the beliefs and values of modernity: anthropocentrism, unlimited human progress through domination and control of the material world (also known as Nature), instrumental values of non-human animals and other sentient beings, and the so-called inanimate ‘things’, and privileging of the rational (that humans are supposed to possess but something that animals lack) over the affective. The list is long and painful to those who have become disillusioned with beliefs and values of modernity. As teachers and parents we need to ask ourselves whether the worldview and values that children’s literature or, for that matter, *any* texts, including science books, that are assigned to children portray and support biophilia or, as David W. Orr dramatically puts it, necrophilia (love of death). When we see humanity engaging in activities that directly and massively precipitate species extinction, which is surely necrophilic, we do need to critically and carefully investigate the connections between what we put before our children to read and what actions are taking place in the world (Bowers, 1995; Bonnet, 1997). Additionally, going a step further, we need to ask: what kinds of children’s literature would develop new sensibilities and sensitivities that support and promote biophilia? We are happy to see that in the field of children’s literature, there are now many studies that provide a comprehensive guide to children’s books

that attempt to restore “endangered relationship” between the natural world and humans (Trousdale, 2008, p. 43).

Teaching love of Nature does not mean we do not need to teach safety and self-protection in nature or around non-human beings. We are not advocating naïve romanticism about Nature. Mature love includes respect, self and other care and protection, and concern for the well-being of all involved. But it is fear, suspicion, and perhaps worse, indifference, towards what is not human, which often implicitly defines what Nature is or means, that we are questioning. For instance, in the name of teaching children about the real world full of evils and misfortunes, and the need to overcome obstacles and battle evil, it has been advised that parents expose, in varying degrees, their children to stories of evil—actual or imagined—that are projected onto beings of Nature. Bruno Bettelheim was one of such thinkers. In his highly influential book, *The uses of enchantment*, Bettelheim (1977) examines some of the best-known stories told to children in the West. From his Freudian perspective, beloved tales like Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel, Little Red Riding Hood, Snow White, Jack and the Beanstalk, and The Sleeping Beauty contain invaluable moral lessons. Bettelheim argues that, far from being merely simplistic tales of magic and enchantment, these stories are laden with lessons in moral education, demonstrating the dire consequences of not obeying one’s parents and of venturing too far off the beaten track. Bettelheim believes that these fairy tales are more than cautionary tales about what happens when someone deviates from the norm; in his opinion they also help children to resolve conflicts they might be experiencing in their lives, showing them the most effective way to deal with certain unpleasant situations or offer explanations that will help children deal with a feeling of resentment or a sense of alienation, for instance. These tales get across to the child the crucial message that a struggle against considerable difficulties in life is inevitable, but if one “steadfastly meets unexpected and often unjust hardships,” one can overcome any and all difficulties (p. 8).

Bettelheim argues that fairy tales present “existential dilemma[s] briefly and pointedly” (p. 8), and this allows the children “to come to grips with the problem in its most essential form” (ibid.). We agree with Bettelheim’s reasoning, but question his defence of traditional fairy tales with their blatant anthropocentric projections of human cruelty and evil. Serenna, Heesoon’s daughter, takes a middle ground on the issue:

Serenna: Of course, I also read stories in which animals were cruel and vicious, and forests were dark and threatening – and this is not entirely untrue. Nature is full of pain and suffering – one life form eats another life form, after all. But to me, the most important thing was that literature constantly exposed me to different perceptions of nature, and I grew to be familiar with it and with

multiple perceptions of it. It is akin to knowing all sides of a parent – their loving side, their angry side, their forgiving sides, and their stubborn side. I grew to love nature because I am not unfamiliar with it. It does not feel like a stranger to me. It is woven into me through all the stories I have listened to, all the forests I have walked through, all the experiences I have had, both directly and vicariously. It has become so completely integrated into my experience that I cannot help but try to pass the experience on, to tell my own stories, to repeat what I know to others. And I can only hope my love of nature will continue.

POINTING TO THE MOON

Love of Nature, *biophilia*, is, like most all things in our culture, a language-mediated practice. Humans are conceptual beings. We experience—not only think about, but also perceive and feel—the world through our conceptual assemblages. What Nature is like to us is no exception. Teaching our children to respect, revere, and be compassionate and nurturing towards Nature will have to be, and is, a conceptually mediated practice. Words (both spoken and read) and images (both seen and imagined) are a major vehicle in sharing our own love and appreciation of nature with our children or students and fostering theirs. This is where *bibliophilia* and *biophilia* came together for us, the authors of this paper. To wit:

Serenna: Literature was definitely a strong influence in my childhood. Books created and fuelled my imagination, and I don't ever remember there being a shortage of books! Every new book I read added on to the world inside my head, and the books that I loved the most were always about animals and nature, so it would make sense to me that literature was perhaps the strongest influence of my childhood.

Here is another account, this time from Serenna's mother, on how words are the midwife who births the relationship of articulated knowing between us humans and the green kingdom:

Heesoon: My girls and I lived in a small forest in the middle a bustling city, Vancouver. This forest, an endowment land to the University of British Columbia, was a significant part of my girls' childhood and their formation of self-identity and com/passion for the natural world. Walks and other activities in the forest was our daily fare. One time we signed up for a nature walk with a local botanist who was a graduate student. As we walked through the trail, the botanist pointed to all sorts of bushes, shrubs, trees, and low-lying plants and told us their

names and their growing habits. What happened then was rather magical! Suddenly, after hearing the names of what were previously to me just various clumps of green matter, I saw them as distinct and unique individual beings. It was as though these green masses came into a different sphere of existence: unique individuals with names and faces that I could relate to personally. The power of naming and being named! I had a whole different sense of their existence, and my relationship to them changed . . . forever.

Notwithstanding the power of language in its ability to nurture biophilia, the power of discursive language also runs the danger of inhibiting biophilia, and this concern goes beyond that of the right choice of literature that we discussed in the previous section. Let us explain the basis of our claim: All relationships run the danger of one party overwhelming and colonizing the other. The relationship between *Words* and *Worlds* runs the same risk. Humans are so deeply languaged that we forget that language is only an act of pointing, like the finger that points to the moon. With this forgetting, we end up only gazing at the finger, mistaking the finger for the moon. This is particularly the case with explicative language, as in our empirical discourses that tell us what the *facts* of the world are. We forget that the Nature that lies outside the human conceptualization does not come already classified in the way our language decides. For example, the habit of dividing Nature into two fundamental categories, the animate and the inanimate, is something we learn as members of a modern western culture that speaks certain languages. Yet, the learning is so deeply internalized that we cannot help seeing the world in terms of the animate/inanimate binary. The point we are making is not that we should not see the world in terms of this binary, or that some other truths lie “out there” that we do not know about. Rather, our concern is that we forget that our language is no more than fingers pointing, and that there are more than one correct finger that can point and more than one way of pointing. And most importantly, we forget to look at the moon beyond the finger. This warning assumes an unprecedented magnitude today as the world becomes almost completely urbanized, and our children, surrounded by every imaginable media devices, are less and less exposed to direct contact with Nature. Nature as non-discursive phenomena has never been so far away from humanity as today.

Heesoon: *Today, around the world, many children grow up without having set their foot on humus-rich soil in a forest but only on concrete pavements of a city. I remember hearing from one of the students I was teaching in my graduate class, who was a high school teacher that he observed a strange phenomenon among some of his students: they kept losing their balance and falling down all the time when he took them out on a nature walk.*

He discovered that these teenagers, many of whom grew up in the dense megacities of Asia, never walked in the forest. They had one job in life, which was to study hard day and night and do well in school. Their feet were used to only the smooth and hard surface of pavements, and could not handle the uneven ground full of slippery logs, rocks, and cavities. The parents of these urbanized children themselves may have come from rural environments, but for them Nature does not have a high value. Nature is everything that is uncivilized, pre-modern, and therefore, not progressive: something they worked incredibly hard to move away from, physically and emotionally. As parents these people would teach their children, explicitly and implicitly, that Nature is dirty, dangerous, primitive, has no intrinsic worth other than use value only to humans. Worse, they also teach their children to see Nature as something that should be destroyed and replaced by civilization full of books, media, and information technology.

It makes sense to assume that all children in their embodied totality start out as potential lovers of nature, full of curiosity and wonder. As the painter and writer Robert Bateman (2000) explains, "Children are naturally enchanted by the world of trees, birds, plants, and rivers, and some take delight in drawing and painting them. Most stay interested until the age of twelve or thirteen, but some, like me, never lose their enthusiasm" (p. 31). What causes most of them to fall out of love with nature around or before the time they reach puberty? Canadian philosopher Neil Evernden (1985) observes: "our transformation from beings with an interest in a mechanical order did not come easily or quickly, and still does not. Children are prone to assume that the world is, like themselves, alive and sensate. Only age and education can 'correct their view'" (p. 14). Both Leopold (1949) and Orr (1994), separated by nearly half a century, have thought similarly about the egregious role of education focused on discursive, disembodied—the so-called 'bookish'—learning in diminishing our sensibility and *biophilia* towards nature. We may teach children *about* Nature through books, films, and online materials, but such learning is not the same as experiential learning through direct contact with Nature and through embodied participation. In the terms of Zen, we need to *become one with* Nature (Carter, 1995) in order to become deeply biophilic. But as long as we think that Nature is outside us, physically and psychologically, and that humans belong to a superior order of being, true biophilia will not be learned, even if mediated by the best and most powerful literature and scientific textbooks. We will return to this point in the final section in making the distinction between teaching as information transmission and teaching as storytelling.

When we externalize Nature, we are prone to separating Nature from Culture, and then get into an untenable position of trying to protect Nature from culture (society and humanity). In

our own parenting, we struggled with this issue, especially given that all of us were deeply bibliophilic, and book reading and studying was a very strong family culture that permeated our households. We found ourselves unwittingly walking into a conflict between 'being out in Nature and playing' and 'staying indoors and studying', and perpetuating the dominant school culture of 'indoorism' (Orr, 2004). Neither side wins from such conflict. Both lose. The most viable course of action would be seeing Nature and Culture as intertwined and working in partnership towards biophilia. However, this viewpoint necessitates, first of all, discarding the exclusionary definition of Nature as what human beings are not; and secondly, reconceptualizing Nature differently. But how? Mina, our twelve-year old environmental activist who exemplifies youth eco-leadership in school, shares the following observation that we find insightful:

Mina (Daniela's daughter): It is hard to say what actually influenced me, however I was not inhibited from being in nature (and getting 'dirty') and it seems that that connection formed naturally (no pun intended). It is not a matter of being influenced to embrace nature so much as not being influenced not to.

Mina's remark reminds us of Bateman's remark, which we quoted previously, that "Children are *naturally* enchanted by the world of trees, birds, plants, and rivers . . ." (2000, p. 31, italics ours). In other words, biophilia is inherent in us, and teaching biophilia is not so much about introducing something new to and imposing something on our children as it is about not suppressing or killing what is already in them through the process of so-called becoming educated and cultured or civilized. Let us probe a little further this notion of Nature as what is already in ourselves.

According to Jan Zwicky (2008), "Nature is the tendency in things to be what they are, and in that tendency to present themselves as both distinct and connected" (p.90). This definition of 'nature', if embraced wholeheartedly, would have a great impact on how we educate children. Nature in the sense of the 'tendency in things to be what they are' is another meaning of 'wild' or 'wilderness'. Our children are "wild" as long as we do not crush their natural tendencies. Hence teaching biophilia is not about teaching them *about* Nature, as in a science or environmental class, or even particularly or exclusively about taking them outdoors and to wilderness in experiential learning. To note, there are research and publications that deal with science education as environmental education (e.g., Littledyke, M., 2004; Vazquez, J., 2008), and we do not discount their pedagogic value. They have their place in formal learning. However, since our foremost concern in terms of teaching biophilia is disembodiment connected to discursive and informational learning, we focus our work on the more

philosophical discussions about the Word-World relationship and how that plays out in education for biophilia.

BECOMING THE MOON

Our own growing conviction as we ruminate and write this paper together is that, when it comes down to the essence, teaching biophilia has less to do with using the right literature, or interacting with nature in the outdoors and wilderness; it has more to do with not suppressing but tending to children's absorption and delight in *being* who they are, how they are, and where they are. As parents and educators, the hardest lesson we ever learned in parenting and teaching is tending whole-heartedly to our children's and students' absorption in their *being* (Fromm, 1996). Our tendency, based on the way we were educated, is to interfere and intervene whatever children and students are doing, 'stealing' their attention from where they belong—to their being, insisting that they pay their attention to always something else more important, educational, productive, that lies outside their subjectivity, rather than what they are already experiencing and paying attention to in the moment. It is in this vein that many parents schedule just about every minute of their children's day with one form of (learning) activity or another, including, probably, earth-saving ecological activities. Biophilia as love of Life/Nature has no chance to take root in a consciousness that is busily and excessively into 'doing' and 'having', however educational. Biophilia grows in *being—being senses, being bodies, being perceptions, and being feelings*. And *being* requires the experiencing subject's attending to and indwelling his or her experience *here and now* (Bai, 2001). This is why, we think, the typical pedagogic impulse to continuously siphon out students' attention and drawing them away from their selves and to external objects of learning, however worthy and useful, does not cohere with our understanding of education for biophilia. For love of Life/Nature to grow in our children and students, we need to return their attention and energy to their being—to themselves. But how do we do this in terms of school learning, especially in language arts, since our interest is the intersecting relationship between biophilia and bibliophila? We shall gesture towards two figures on the horizon of being: poetry and storytelling.

Jan Zwicky (2008) states: "Nature poetry's business is not actually words, it is the practice, the discipline, of wholeness, a coming-home to the unselfed world" (p. 88). What is this 'unselfed' place? From our own experience of living, playing, and learning with our children, we answer: when we are moved deeply, when we resonate with the coherence of the world that surrounds us, we become 'unselfed' and biophilia bursts open in our being. When we experience the Other as "a dynamic presence that confronts us and draws us into relation" (Abram, 1996, p. 56) we are unselfed. "To touch the coarse skin of a tree is thus, at the same time, to

experience one's own tactility, to feel oneself touched by the tree" (ibid., p. 68). Otherwise, we are always captives of our own ego selves, and the world "out there" (even if by that we mean 'Nature') is just the projections of our ego features. We wish to accent that this learning to enter into interbeing of mutuality (Hahn, 1999) or co-emergence with the world (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991) is the real lesson in ecology and environmental education. To the extent that we remain in the egoic consciousness that externalizes Nature/Life and World, and draws a boundary around the self and sees the world as otherness, to that extent ecology is a failed lesson, even if we are tracking in wilderness and know million bits of important ecological facts. Biophilia only emerges when we can indwell our beingness or be present to here and now, wherever we are. Not surprisingly, this is the same lesson in poetry-making and moving into a poetic consciousness.

What is most poignant about poetry is that, unlike the explicative language, it is aware that it is pointing and invoking. Explicative language tends to fool us into thinking that it describes the world "out there," unlike poetry that imagines. Again and again, we are trapped in the binary of reality and imagination. But, says Abram, "that which we call imagination is from the first an attribute of the senses themselves; imagination is not a separate mental faculty (as we so often assume) but rather the way the senses themselves have of throwing themselves beyond what is immediately given in order to make tentative contact with the other side of things that we do not sense directly, with the hidden or invisible aspect of the sensible" (p. 58). The pedagogical import of what Abram says here is immense and challenging. Learning and using learning in schooling and elsewhere is far more into the explicative than into the evocative, and this imbalance, as reflected in our education system, is problematic in terms of the openness and connection we seek with/in Nature. Note here that we are not saying that the explicative per se is problematic. The explicative has its role and use, and we need it. Rather, we are pointing to its preponderance, and the relative paucity of the evocative, that is, the poetic. The resonant space of indwelling experience, where the world moves us to exclaim, point to what moves, and call each other's attention, is rather rare in our everyday environments of home, school, and everywhere else. We are not easily moved. We rarely resonate with the world around us. But uninhibited children, especially young ones do. Poetry gushes out of them, and pierces us into the knowledge that we are also dealing with forces we do not necessarily understand, which is the true meaning of 'wilderness'. But demand for exactitude of explication, required for control and prediction favoured by science and technology, is what drives much of our learning and working.

Storytelling has much in common with poetry in terms of provoking presencing. Storytelling is not information transmission

but consciousness transformation. It sinks into our being, and alters who we are. To wit:

Serenna: I have come to realize that my love of nature would be quite different had I experienced it without the captivating magic of stories. It seems to me that many children today are "taught" to love certain things by being given pleasant and positive information about these objects of learning; children are given wonderful facts about nature, asked to engage in activities and given texts to read about those things "to be loved," and are expected that this information will instil a love of that subject within them. But the mere appreciation that information gives is not equivalent to the deep meaning and values that is derived from storytelling. The difference between storytelling and information is well described by cultural critic Walter Benjamin (1999, p.729): "the value of information does not survive the moment in which it was new"; it is disposable and is easily forgotten. Storytelling, on the other hand, is "the art of repeating stories" (ibid.), and it becomes integrated into the listener's life experience. Storytelling "does not aim to convey the pure essence of the thing, like information or report. It [instead] sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again" (ibid.). Stories, then, become engrained in our memories not because they are compilations of interesting information that we make a conscious effort to remember, but because we simply cannot forget them. Good stories effortlessly work their way into their listeners and transform them into storytellers themselves.

Stories are not merely the experience of the individual, but the shared meaning held by communities of listeners who repeat the tale amongst themselves and to others. If the community of listeners disappears, the story dies as well. In this way, storytelling is fraught with both profound meaning and deep love.

My love of nature grew within me through listening to stories, stories that sunk deeply into my perception of the world and consequently shaped the stories that I tell, and will continue to tell, my entire life. Literature is certainly not the only form of storytelling, but it is a powerful one, especially because it is most often an individual experience. Some of the happiest moments of my childhood were found in reading my favourite books alone. In the stories I read I forged a deep and intimate connection with nature, and I am sure that this has much to do with the reading choices my parents, especially my mother, gave me.

INCONCLUSION

Children are constantly striving to intuit the coherence and complexity of what is around them, be that the meadow, or the story. If we listen care-fully quite often they pierce us with their

perceptions and leave us longing after a wholeness we may have lost sight of. It may be hard to accept this Buddha-like quality, but many of us who have lived with and loved children are familiar with it, recognize it, and we secretly cherish it. Biophilia is in them, in us, is who we are. Humanity *comes home* in biophilia. Yet we forget who we are, and lost our way—not in the forest but in discursive languages that take us away from our senses and presence. Poetry-making and storytelling that return us to our bodies and senses, and to our indwelling presence are our navigational devices that lead us home—to biophilia. Ecology is an art of homecoming for the souls lost, not in wilderness, but in senseless discursivity of the mind fed on abstract information that often passes as knowledge in schools.

if bachelard were in verse II

life begins well.

it begins enclosed.

protected. all warm in the bosom (of the house.

it is body and soul.
it is the human being's

first world.

when being is being- well
in the well being originally associated
with being.

in its countless alveoli space

contains compressed time.

within the being
in the being of within
an enveloping warmth welcomes

(being
reigns in a sort of earthly paradise
of matter.
and the poet well knows that

the house holds childhood motionless
in its arms.

here space is everything

for time ceases to quicken memory.

memory and imagination remain associated.
in this remote region

and even when we are in a new house
the memories of other places travel through

our bodies. the house we are born in

is physically inscribed in us. it is

a group of organic habits.

the word habit too worn (a word)
to express

this passionate liaison of the body

forget. which does not

but always we are never real historians
near poets.

nothing and our emotion is perhaps
but (an expression

of a poetry that was lost.

Daniela Elza the poet's note: As I read the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, I was struck by how poetic his prose is at times. This is a poem where all the lines come from Bachelard (1964, pp. 5-15). All I did was find them and arrange them and of course intervene stylistically.

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