

The Significance of Myth for Environmental Education

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It is almost universally acknowledged that we are at a tipping point in our environmental history. We are the inheritors of a post-industrial world that radically changed the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems in nearly every continent of the globe. The continued negative effects of these industrial moments on our natural resources, habitats, and people — often the most indigent — are indisputable. Globally, we are aware of the need to maintain soil, water, and air purity from abuses attributed to fossil fuel use, and industrial and agrochemical practices (to name a few). Because of this, environmental education (EE) is more important now than ever. Recognizing the need for students to personally invest themselves in environmental stewardship, environmental educators have come to see the importance of offering students immersive experiences in nature in the hopes of generating desire for such personal action. Studies, such as the one done by Liefändera, Fröhlich, Bognera, and Schultz (2013), have shown that immersive EE programs that help students to experience the natural world can be a powerful bridge to join theory and practice as students form personal bonds through their lived encounter with nature's beauty and mystery. "The environment" should not remain a mere intellectual abstraction when students experience it. For EE to reach its goals of motivating students to personally care for the environment and act as stewards for its long-term flourishing, immersive experiences in nature are essential.

This goal has motivated the likes of Pulkki, Dahlin, and Varri (2017) who recently argued for "the need to *re-situate human beings* in ecological terms", which for them means re-situating "the human mind into the lived body and the human body into its surroundings" (217, emphasis added). They want to help students re-conceive their own self understanding in relationship with the natural world. Implicitly, their call to "re-situate" human beings suggests there exists diverse ways we might understand ourselves as human persons — that is to say that there are a diversity of anthropologies which, if made more explicit, would enable students to develop a new sense of how they ought to live in relationship with the natural world. Unfortunately, merely placing students in nature is often not enough to produce the personal bonds needed for environmental stewardship. The question is thus: how can we "prepare the soil", as it were, for students' intellectual, moral, and emotional experiences in nature to be something qualitatively richer? One can imagine students being placed in immersive experiences that, rather than being transformed by them, can occasion resentment for the intrusion of their time or annoyance for being removed from their everyday conveniences.

Following the work of Martha Nussbaum (1990, 1995), I want to examine the ways stories can serve to catalyze student's moral and ethical imagination in ways that help prepare them intellectually and affectively for environmentally immersive experiences. Nussbaum's argument that story plays a critical role in civic engagement is compelling and I want to apply her work particularly to the context of EE. In doing so, I hope to show that certain kinds of stories — namely, myths — have a unique power to shape the character and quality of students' immersive experiences in nature because of their power to transform their self-perception (role and responsibility) in relationship with the environment.

To defend this thesis, I will begin by examining the way several important voices in the EE literature conceive of the human-environmental relationship and the importance they place on immersive

experiences for realizing the goals of EE. I will then transition to Martha Nussbaum as a starting point for describing the power of stories in helping us perceive the world differently. I will then show the ways that myths in particular, as a subset of story, may offer a unique transformative power which engages students' moral imagination in ways that may help them re-conceive their relationship to the natural world. I will draw from a number of theorists of mythology in order to begin to construct a picture of myth's function and power to this end. In this context, I engage with the writings of the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (whom Michael Bonnett [2017] suggests demands "serious study" [345]) and argue that Hopkins, as a myth-maker, provides examples in his writing for how we and our students might begin to re-imagine the human-environmental relationship and cultivate an environmental stewardship through what Harold Oliver (1980) calls "mythical-ways-of-being-in-the-world" (76). Deep, attentive reading practices around mythic works could serve as a different kind of "contemplative pedagogy" (Pulkki, Dahlin, and Varri, 2017), to prepare students for the immersive experiences they will have in nature, as I hope to show in the final section of the paper.

Immersive Experiences in Environmental Education

In their work, "Promoting connectedness with nature through environmental education", Liefändera, Fröhlich, Bognera, and Schultz (2013) helpfully cite the Belgrade charter (UNESCO-UNEP 1976) which casts a clear vision for EE's goals:

The goal of environmental education is to develop a world population that is aware of, and concerned about, the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations and commitment to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current environmental problems and the prevention of new ones. (371)

Awareness and knowledge is necessary for EE to fulfill its goals, but so also are "skills, attitudes, motivations and commitment", which knowledge by itself cannot entirely cultivate. What is more, the Belgrade charter calls upon collectives and individuals to work for environmental flourishing. A critical question for EE is, "How can we motivate individual students to care for the environment — especially when "the environment" can remain so abstracted from our personal world?" For philosophers of education concerned with EE the answer cannot only be for students to learn *about* the environment, but to *personally experience* the environment for themselves so as to inculcate a love and concern for its intrinsic nature, not merely for its instrumental value to us — what Michael Bonnett (2017) calls a "metaphysics of mastery" (341). In light of this, environmental educators and theorists have helped us see that presenting scientific data is not always sufficient to motivate students to change and live for human-environmental flourishing. Hence, many in the field of EE have recognized that if we are to motivate students, they must have transformative experiences in nature. For example, Bryan Warnick (2007) and Bonnett (2017) suggest how our experiences in nature can not only awaken us to nature's own beauty, but may also inspire us and teach us something about ourselves. Other philosophers of education have argued that this kind of personally immersive and dynamic relationship with nature is vital for EE's goals to succeed. Kudryavtsev,

Stedman, and KrasnyMore (2012), studied theories having to do with place attachment and place meanings, and argue that students need both instruction and personal experience to create “a sense of place” to help ensure they live by pro-environmental behaviors. But to cultivate such a sense of place requires students actually have the capacity to be present in a place. Pulkki, Dahlin, and Varri (2017) have argued that for individual students to have immersive experiences at all, they must be capable of having “lived-body” experiences. For them, students should practice “lived-body” and “contemplative pedagogies” in the classroom if they are to have the capacity to even be present to themselves, to nature, and to the self-in-relationship-with-nature when they have immersive experiences.¹

It seems clear that these immersive experiences are touching on a *different way of knowing* — and, by implication, a different way of motivating — that cannot be neglected for EE’s goals to succeed. Bonnett (2017) emphasizes that when we perceive nature’s intrinsic value², we form an “intentional”³ posture toward nature, and that such an intentionality includes an implicit posture of “sustainability” toward and with nature. Bonnett (2017) calls this dynamic and way of perceiving “primordial”, which he explains: “primordially [the human consciousness] stance will need to be one of receptiveness to what engages it”, and “attentive to what its intentional objects present, it is involved in a sustaining of things—a letting them be as the things that they are. This is the basis of world-formation” (334, 335, 336). According to Bonnett, we experience the world primordially; with attentiveness; for sustainability; in particular places; which together forms the basis of world-formation. Taken together, I want to suggest that Bonnett’s vision of engaging the world of nature is suggestive of a different way of knowing and being — one that, I want to suggest, embodies a kind of “narrative” or *storied-way-of-being-in-the-world*. But not just any story. I think Bonnett hints at a mythic way of being in the world. And so I want to turn to how myth can serve to enchant students’ moral imagination (to perceive, think, and feel) in order to inform their ethical imagination (to act) toward a reciprocal human-environmental flourishing. Bonnet’s analysis is important because it shows that students must have a certain experience with nature. However, what are they to do if they do not have such an experience? Is placing them in nature enough? For some, it certainly may be enough, but for others they may need help in order to have the experience. It is here that I want to explore the way narratives or stories, particularly myths, can function as different kinds of “contemplative pedagogies” that get at ways of knowing that are not merely intellectual, but moral, and can powerfully inform students’ immersive experiences in nature and transform them in the process.

¹ Perhaps these kinds of classroom practices are never more necessary as we so easily experience our lives mediated through our phones and other devices. Because we are so attached to non-natural technologies, the authors cite David Orr who argues for the need to cultivate *biophilia* in an age of, for many, *biophobia* (or perhaps not so much a fear but an indifference or what we might more broadly call a *bioapatheia*). Perhaps Bonnett (2017) would also consider these practices a helpful “alternative form” of education that we ought to explore more?

See also Richard Louv who, in his 2006 book, *Last Child In the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder*, “diagnoses” an epidemic he coins as “Nature-Deficit Disorder”. Six years later he wrote *The Nature Principle: Reconnecting with Life in a Virtual Age*.

² “[T]hings in nature communicate something of their own integrity such that we can have a sense of what would count as their fulfillment. In this sense they are normative and possess intrinsic value” (339).

³ He describes intentionality “as ‘relationship to a content, the tendency towards an object’ that is immanent, i.e. contained within consciousness” (335).

The Power of Story

Before examining the specific role of myth, it will be helpful to start with the role of stories more generally. Martha Nussbaum (1990) touches on two very important ways that stories can be transformative: (1) they shape our perceiving powers (moral imagination), and, (2) strongly influence us to live well (ethical imagination). She writes that stories help to cut through the “obtuseness and refusal of vision [which] are our besetting vices”, which she sees as “our ethical task, as people who are trying to live well” (148). Nussbaum says that “moral knowledge...is not simply intellectual grasp of propositions; it is not even simply intellectual grasp of particular facts; it is *perception*”, which she further elaborates as “seeing a complex, concrete reality in a highly lucid and richly responsive way; it is taking in what is there, with imagination and feeling” (152, emphasis added). Moral education is concerned to find ways of helping students respond to the knowledge they possess. At root, Nussbaum is speaking to how stories educate us into different kind of knowing that is neither purely intellectual/rational, nor is it anti-rational.

In her work, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (1995) Nussbaum explores how the imaginative resources of story call us to live well, or at least better than we have. Referring to the tension Charles Dicken’s sets up in *Hard Times* between a hyper-rationality (“facts! facts! facts!”) and what the fact-mongering Mr. Gradgrind says is “fancy” (sentimental literature like novels), Nussbaum shows how story’s “fancy” can transform how we engage the world (and by implication public policy). It is because of story’s ability to enchant the reader in such a way that transforms the way they perceive and act in relationship to the world:

[T]he child who takes delight in stories and nursery rhymes is getting the idea that not everything in human life has a use. It is learning a *mode of engagement with the world* that does not focus exclusively on the idea of use, but is capable, too, of *cherishing things for their own sake*. And this the child takes into its relationship with other human beings....It is...the ability to endow a form with life that makes the metaphorical imagination morally valuable; it is the ability to view what one has constructed in fancy as serving no end beyond itself, as good and delightful for itself alone. (42, emphasis added)

Later, Nussbaum goes so far as to suggest that stories help us to perceive the *intrinsic truth* of the nature of the world which informs human rationality:

[T]here is no disparagement of reason or of the scientific search for truth....The novel speaks not of dismissing reason, but of coming upon it in a way illuminated by fancy, which is here seen as a faculty at once creative and veridical. (44)

Nussbaum is concerned that we cherish all things, and that we can do so when we see their intrinsic value, which story helps us perceive through illuminating creative vision. For Nussbaum, when we encounter a

compelling story, we have distinct and potentially transformative experiences that help us engage the world differently.

Nussbaum offers us a compelling description of story's power to transform our perceptions of our selves and our relationship with the world. Now I want to apply her ideas to EE, and argue that specific kinds of stories — namely, myths — could create conditions for the particular kind of transformative immersive experiences we hope students to have to sustain a personal care for human-environmental flourishing.

Awakening the Environmental Imagination through Myth

Myth is a subset of story that we might be tempted to think of as “fancy” and wonder what relevance it has to life in the “real world”, let alone EE. Joseph Campbell (1968), one of the great modern mythologists, summarized his vision of myth's function akin to how Nussbaum sees story's operations on the human imagination:

Throughout the inhabited world, in all times and under every circumstance, the myths of man have flourished; and they have been the living inspiration of whatever else may have appeared out of the activities of the human body and mind. It would not be too much to say that myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation. Religions, philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive and historic man, prime discoveries in science and technology, the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth. (3)

Campbell and other mythologists are not merely concerned to study myth in the abstract, nor do they conceive them as mere fables. Myths — ancient or new — function to help us (not unlike story's function according to Nussbaum) to perceive the world differently. In a 1959 interview, William Golding was asked if he agreed with critics who called *The Lord of the Flies* a work of fable. Golding replied that he would rather be recognized for making myth because of how it is “much profounder and more significant than fable” because it, “comes out from *the roots of things* in the ancient sense of being the key to existence, the whole *meaning* of life, and *experience* as a whole” (1988: 197, emphasis added). Although myths are often set in story form, they need not be, and may still function to reveal the nature of many of the elements we've explored thus far: the nature or essence of things (“roots of things”); existence and meaning (perception, moral and ethical imagination); and human experience.

Although fully-storied myth exists, it may nevertheless remain nascent, elemental, or — to use Bonnett's language — “primordial”, and does not lose its imaginative and transforming power. Jacques Waardenburg (1980) helpfully distinguishes between what he calls “explicit” and “implicit” myths. Explicit myths are told in the form of a full story, whereas implicit myths are more suggestive, elemental, and foundational upon which explicit myths are developed. On implicit myths Waardenburg writes,

Myths also exist as the meaningful but not fully developed elements of a potential story. Such elements are emotionally loaded and experienced rather than explicitly formulated; the emotions

and experiences are often linked with feelings of solidarity between members of a group or between individuals. Mythic elements derive their force precisely from the fact that they suggest rather than explain, and that they constitute cores of meaning without having been put together in a definite pattern. They function as foundation stones for certain basic assumptions in the life of a community or a person. (55)

Waardenburg's insight is that implicit myths undergird how humans perceive the most basic and essential elements of life. Myths link "feelings of solidarity" with the other. Harold Oliver (1980) speaks to this solidarity as revealing the *inherent relationship between things*. He also says that over-rationalizing myth (due to misinterpreting it) has damaged its primary function. On Oliver's reading, myths were never merely "about the gods". Thus, what notably became Rudolff Bultmann's criticism and subsequent demythologizing project, Oliver infers, was misguided insofar as he and others circumscribed myths to function only in this narrow way. For Oliver, interpreting myth's function as fundamentally relational restore it to its proper role. Although myths certainly can and do include the divine, his relational interpretation frees them from narrowing them to only the divine. Oliver (1980) writes that "myths imagine reality as relatedness...the characters cannot be lifted out of their relationships, for in a fundamental sense they *are* the relationships" (78). This over-rationalizing of myth had tremendous implications for how we understand myth and its significance for our own lives:

It was precisely the authoritative role of reason in Western culture that generated the kind of critique of myth which — on a relational reading — falls short of understanding. The need for a [relational] hermeneutic already signals the loss of *mythical-ways-of-being-in-the-world*. (75-76, emphasis added)

Notice that Oliver is not only suggesting we've lost how to better interpret myths. He says we've also experienced the loss of how to embody a mythic mode of being in the world.

I want to argue that both Oliver's relational function of myth and Waardenburg's concept of implicit myth are helpful to get at Bonnett's (2017) concept of "primordial" ways of perceiving and being in the world: "primordially knowledge arises from receptivity to the non-human⁴ rather than by a process of anthropocentric construction", and "the apprehension of intrinsic values is implicit in the occurring of truth" (344). Bonnett, I think, is suggesting through his phenomenology that we return to a kind of mythical way of being in the world. Might this conception of myth touch on Bonnett's (2017) questioning how knowledge may "be stored and accessed through narratives that root it in lived experience" (346)? I think so; and myths — whether "explicit" or "implicit" — can help us learn how to embody this kind of primordial or mythic way of being in relationship with nature. Perhaps myths, in this sense, can work to enchant students' perceptions of themselves in relationship to nature in such a way that engages the moral imagination to attend, perceive, and receive; and the ethical imagination to act intentionally to live well

⁴ Oliver (1980) sees myths functioning to communicate archetypes that "commend themselves...for their aesthetic and paradigmatic *imaging of reality as relatedness*...myths are archetypal images of what is fundamental, namely, *pure experience, immediacy, relating*" (78).

for sustainability of a flourishing human-environmental relationship. In so doing, myths may have the transformative function that creates ideal conditions for students' immersive experiences to be all the richer and meaningful.

Since Bonnet (2017) is interested in exploring how narratives serve as possible “alternative forms of agency”, and “different modes of thought such as...the poetic” that could be “woven into accounts of education”, could we find a place where myth (a kind of narrative) and poetry come together? I think so, and I would like to pick up where Bonnett began in his 2009 article. There, he briefly engages Gerard Manley Hopkins' poetry for ways of knowing and perceiving the world in what he later (2017) calls a “primordial” way. Although I do not have room to develop the “serious study” (345) that Bonnet (2017) calls for (and Hopkins deserves), I want to make a beginning with Hopkins and take Bonnett a little further.

The Mythic Perception and Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins

It might be asked how myth is related to poetry.⁵ In *The Republic*, Plato outlines an educational theory that begins with music and poetry under which he situates stories or myths (*muthoi*). Plato was concerned to tell true myths that served as a “pattern” that would shape students' perception (Book II: 377a-e). Later in Book X, Plato encourages poetry's use (so long as it tells a true myth) in society:

[I]f the poetry that aims at pleasure and imitation has any argument to bring forward that proves it ought to have a place in a well-governed city, few at least would be glad to admit it, for we are well aware of the charm it exercises...that it not only gives pleasure but is beneficial both to constitutions and to human life. (607b-e)

Read in context, Plato sees poetry's transformative power to shape the city's constitution *and* for the human being's inner constitution made up of the the intellectual-moral, ethical, and affective faculties. Like Plato's concern to communicate “true myth”, Herbert Mason (1980) writes that the poet's “business from first encounter to last is the *knowledge of reality*” (17, emphasis added). He reflects on how myth gets at the “ambush of reality” hidden “within the undergrowth of ordinary fact” that the poet perceives and captures in his art (16). For both Plato and Mason, the poet, I think, can be said to embody what Oliver calls the “mythical-way-of-being-in-the-world”, and that his poetry serves to capture that way of perceiving and being in the world for the inspiration of others.

The poet becomes myth-maker when, experiencing nature, he or she *perceives* its reality with all its meaning and significance, then *makes* (*poiesis*) that perception and its meaning known through language. This myth can be communicated either in Waardenburg's “explicit” or “implicit” sense. If implicitly, the reader can then receive the “mythopoeic” communication of the quiddity of the world (moral

⁵ Joseph Campbell (1968) writes: “Wherever the poetry of myth is interpreted as biography, history, or science, it is killed” (249).

imagination) that suggests — rather than explains — a way of thinking, feeling, and acting in relationship with it (ethical imagination). For Plato, of course, this kind of action would be just.

When we understand poetry as a communication of myth, we can see Gerard Manley Hopkins' poetic "charm" as evidenced in his ability to perceive the world and communicate what he saw in a way that defied poetic convention of his day. Reading his poetry, one can see Hopkins' deeply attentive presence to nature and to his self in relationship with nature. One indelible component that any reader of Hopkins should not miss is his concept of "inscape". Hopkins coined the term, and although it had different shades of meaning, one that he seems to regularly suggest in his poetry is that every thing in the world — people, brooks, trout, kingfishers, dragonflies, stones, trees — had its own peculiar inscape, which he thought was its "crucial features that form or communicate the inner character, essence, or 'personality' of something" (2009: xx). We might call some thing's inscape its *inner landscape of being or its soul*. In his journal entry dated December 12, 1872, Hopkins describes, with acute and intimate attentiveness, his perception of the environment's *inscape*:

Hard frost, bright sun, a sky of blue 'water'. On the fells with Mr. Lucas. Parlick Pike and that ridge ruddy with fern and evening light. Ground sheeted with taut tattered streaks of crisp gritty snow. Green-white tufts of long bleached grass like heads of hair or the crowns of heads of hair, each a whorl of slender curves, one tuft taking up another — however these I might have noticed any day. I saw the inscape though freshly, as if my eye were still growing, though with a companion the eye and the ear are for the most part shut and instress⁶ cannot come.⁷ (2009: 214)

Hopkins suggests that his perceiving abilities — his "eye" — had the capacity to develop or, we might say, to be educated to *better* see and experience the bleached grass for itself. It seems that Hopkins' ability to perceive the "inscape" of the grass was inhibited by his company, and that solitude can create the condition for him to be more truly present to himself and nature with open eyes and ears. If it were possible for Hopkins, might we also cultivate a perception akin to his — and that allows us to form richer and stronger bonds with nature?⁸

In the above journal entry, we can begin to capture glimpses of Hopkins' own mythical way of perceiving and being in the world. Hopkins describes his perception (instress) of the grass' intrinsic givenness in that moment (its inscape), but I think Hopkins provides more clarity that may offer insight

⁶ Regarding the term "instress", Hopkins scholar, Catherine Phillips, notes that "instress" is something more nebulous than inscape (2009: xx). Perhaps we might draw an analogy of inscape's relation to instress with inference's relation to implication: if inference is the perception of an implication, then perhaps, we might say that instress is the perception of an object's inscape. Inference and instress function as a verbal action; implication and inscape function as a noun's subjective givenness. Thus, an object's inscape is instressed as an implication is inferred.

⁷ Although this is but a journal entry, one can hear elements of Hopkins' "sprung rhythm" and alliteration that so characterizes his poetry.

⁸ Though, perhaps one could never see the world in just the same way another can. Our perceiving abilities ought not do violence to the object of our gaze, but should simultaneously be receptive to another's perception as well.

into how he perceived the world and its inscape in his poem, “As kingfishers catch fire”. Here I want to focus on the first stanza and have preserved the lines as they appear in my edition:

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim and roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves—goes its self; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.* (2009: 129)

Notice how Hopkins perceives and experiences the nature of stones: as if hidden within the stone's self is its very own “name” that, should it have a string, we could draw from it its essential being (its “being indoors each one dwells”). It is as if, hung like a bell, the stone *offers itself* by “fling[ing] out broad its name”, which Hopkins says every thing does simply by being its self. It offers its own intrinsic being that dwells within and “*Selves*” its self to the world. Hopkins ingeniously makes a noun into a verb and so captures the implication that a kind of self-action (we might say a “being” verb) flows from a thing's essence (its indicative).⁹ But what about ethics (the imperative)? How ought we respond to the nature we perceive? For this we turn to Hopkins' “Binsey Poplars felled 1879”¹⁰, which I quote in full:

My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled,
Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun,
All felled, felled, are all felled;
Of a fresh and following folded rank
Not spared, not one
That dandled a sandalled
Shadow that swam or sank
On meadow & river & wind-wandering weed-winding bank.

O if we but knew what we do

⁹ I hope we can begin to see how poet and myth-maker come together more clearly in Hopkins. Notice how his sprung rhythm seems to capture the essence of what stones do. Reflecting on a poet's immersive experience in nature, Mason (1980) likens the poet to “studying structure and measure like an architect in service to his myth: through the natural forms and tempi of the life around and within him”, especially the natural world: “For instance, he learns meters from the slow movement of the tree's growth” (17). As Bonnett and Warnick have spoken to nature's ability to teach us as we maintain a posture of receptiveness, so Mason highlights how the natural world gives inspiration to his poetry: “He in turn teaches in the natural ordered and spontaneous language of life the knowledge of the living, timed and timeless, spaced and spaceless, immanent and transcendent; he becomes in turn a transmitter of myth” (17).

¹⁰ The small village of Binsey is located in Oxfordshire, just 2.5 miles (4 km) from Oxford's city center. To walk there from Oxford would require one to walk along and eventually over the River Thames, which will lead one to Godstow. “Hopkins wrote to Canon Dixon, ‘I have been up to Godstow this afternoon. I am sorry to say that the aspens that lined the river are everyone felled’” (2009: 359). Bonnett (2009) partially engages “Binsey Poplars”.

When we delve or hew —
Hack and rack the growing green!
 Since country is so tender
To touch, her being só slender,
That, like this sleek and seeing ball
But a prick will make no eye at all,
Where we, even where we mean
 To mend her we end her,
 When we hew or delve:
After-comers cannot guess the beauty been.
Ten or twelve, only ten or twelve
 Strokes of havoc unselfe
 The sweet especial scene,
Rural scene, a rural scene,
Sweet especial rural scene.

Hopkins describes the scene beautifully — almost as a story — recollecting the poplars that once lined the banks of the River Thames, and paints a picture for us in which we are invited to share in his mythical perception of what the poplars were in themselves and in relationship to him within the whole place. Hopkins, in mythopoeic fashion, teaches us how to respond with feeling to the tragedy. What is more, Hopkins invites the reader to deep reflection of what we do to nature’s beauty when we “unselfe” it, and even suggests that we do something to ourselves as well.¹¹ He seems to parallel the fragility of the “growing green” and “tender country” to the fragile “sleek and seeing ball” which is the human eye, the very organ of our perception. Hopkins seems to suggest that human blindness caused the felling of the poplars, which, when unselfed, further blind our selves to nature’s self-giving beauty (“we end her”) and to our relationship with it. What is more, we leave those who come after us more blind because there is less beauty to be perceived in the environment.¹²

I hope it is already becoming clear how mythopoeic writing like Hopkins’ speaks to EE’s fundamental concern for students to have immersive experiences that produce long-term feelings of care for the sustainability of environmental flourishing that is guided by nature’s intrinsic value and not merely anthropocentric aims. Undoubtedly, when we immerse ourselves in nature we encounter ourselves in relationship with the world. But, if we can help our students do so in “primordial” (Bonnett, 2017) or mythic fashion — as Hopkins did — we may help them “inhere in the world” (Bonnett, 2017: 337) in precisely the way we would hope. It is this kind of inherence we want our students to sense and cultivate in the environment. Following Kudryavtsev, Stedman, and KrasnyMore (2012), we want them to form place attachments to the “meadow & river & wind-wandering weed-winding bank” or whatever “growing green” they find themselves. When used as “contemplative pedagogies” (Pulkki, Dahlin, and Varri, 2017)

¹¹ Nussbaum’s (1995) words are fitting here: “what sort of feeling and imagining is enacted in the telling of the story itself, in the shape and texture of the sentences, the pattern of the narrative, the sense of life that animates the text as a whole...what sort of feeling and imagining is called into being by the shape of the text as it addresses its imagined reader, what sort of readerly activity is built into the form (4).

¹² Bonnett (2017) writes, “Things in nature are quintessentially other in the sense of having their own histories and futures, profiles and countenances, many of which we will never see and that can never be fully anticipated” (339).

in the classroom, such mythic writings like Hopkins' (and others') can serve to inspire or "charm" our students' environmental imagination for richer immersive experiences that promote the long-term human-environmental flourishing necessary for EE's goals to succeed.

Conclusion

For Nussbaum, moral knowledge is not a mere intellectual grasp of facts or propositions, but rather a *perception of reality* that is both imaginative and feeling. It is the moral imagination that myth enchants, and it is this very aspect of the human being that must be enchanted to motivate a personal commitment to live for the promotion of human-environmental flourishing. If this is so, Bonnett (2017) foresees that something like this pedagogical approach offers something different than a "pre-specified programme of knowledge and skills acquisition, and the teacher-pupil relationship as orientated around the idea of transmission of this prescribed content from teacher to pupil" (344). More to the point, he argues that,

Detailed pre-specification (on the back of which often follows managerialism and modularisation) is the bane of genuine engagement with one's environment, which...fundamentally is apprehended through the fluid sensing of an affective embodied self. This self is sensuous, physically as well as intellectually active and engaging. It requires freedom to respond to the spontaneous prompts and invitations experienced in unfettered participation. (344)

For EE to achieve its goals, it must continue to inform with all the best scientific data. But it must also strive to transform students' abilities to perceive, form bonds, and act for a human-environmental flourishing. Such a holistic approach can help us develop a systemic wisdom that Bonnett calls for. I hope, in bringing together Nussbaum, Bonnett, and myth, that there *are* texts, traditions, and practices that undergird such holistic wisdom. Myth is one source, and I hope to have shown that we can turn to certain sources of myth to help educators and students cultivate the kind of life that perceives, feels, and acts in the world like Hopkins did — and so I close with words he penned six years before writing "Binsey Poplars":

The ashtree growing in the corner of the garden was felled. It was lopped first: I heard the sound and looking out and seeing it maimed there came at that moment a great pang and I wished to die and not to see the inscape of the world destroyed any more. (2009: 359)

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