Write in Place

I once believed in the triangular relationship Richard Bauckham describes as God, human, and creation, but I like Cynthia Moe-Lobeda's response to Bauckham that the triangle image "sets us qualitatively apart, as far from the other creatures as we are from God."[1] A new image emerges with the removal of two sides of the triangle using the remaining line to connect God to the collective human and creation that Bauckham calls "the community of creation,"[2] which Moe-Lobeda recognized as the contradiction to the triangle image in Bauckham's writing.[3] As I observed nature from my Write in Place this semester, I began to feel myself more easily absorbed into this image of oneness with creation. I recognize this embracing of all the God-made into a "community of creation" with God still a hierarchy above may be contrary to the absence of hierarchy in indigenous beliefs, I just do not know that I am able to completely remove hierarchical language as it is hard enough to de-Christianize my language for a religion-neutral spiritual resource which is what I am proposing.[4]

I have spent the last 4.5 months studying Biomimicry. "Biomimicry is learning from and then emulating nature's forms, processes, and ecosystems to create more sustainable designs."[5] When I was introduced to Biomimicry a decade ago the definition was much simpler: " the imitation of life's genius." I immediately changed the definition to the imitation of God's genius. I did not know how to use Biomimicry in a theological context, but I knew it gave me a different lens to see every aspect of God's creation as geniusly designed which allowed for a more meaningful reconnection to God. This semester I have been studying to see how the two can be

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[1] Richard Bauckham, "Being Human in the Community of Creation," in *Ecotheology: A Christian Conversation*, ed. by Kiara Jorgenson (Eerdmans, 2020).
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Dr. Tink Tinker, "Individual Salvation vs. Cosmic Balance: An American Indian Perspective," April 17, 2018, Yale Divinity School, YouTube, 1:07:02, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PtUcb4ImvQ.
[5] "What is Biomimicry," *Biomimicry 3.8,* accessed May 5, 2023, https://biomimicry.net/what-is-biomimicry/.

connected authentically. It is still a work in progress, but one of the first issues I needed to tackle was Biomimicry's Biological Lenses. This tool is used to help people look to nature through the lenses of function, biological, naturalist, operating conditions, and local.[6] Each of these lenses have three to five prompts for using for specific challenges and they are designed to help learn from nature in order to solve a human problem.

Examples of two Biological Lenses and uses:

Function Lens:

- Use to search for a particular need that you are trying to solve for in your design.

Naturalist Lens:

- Use when looking to source ideas for bio-inspired design.

The Biological Lenses are wonderful tools, but after an experience in Muir Woods during the California Biomimicry Thinking immersion I felt like there was one missing: a spiritual lens, one that affects the spirit. There is a lot of love and thankfulness for nature embedded in Biomimicry, but even that can become rote after gaining familiarity with the process, much like the recitation of the Lord's Prayer in churches. The Spiritual Lens is a preventative tool so that Biomimicry does not become so familiar that it loses the feelings of awe and thankfulness for nature it once evoked. It can be integrated when using the Biological Lenses or it can also be used when the delving into biology begins to feel like a consumeristic act.

From the experience in Muir Woods and using *iSites: Nature Journaling for Biomimicry* by Erin Rovalo for my bi-weekly observations for this class, I decided to create a Spiritual Lens and DivineSites as an addendum to Rovalo's journal to mute "learning from" nature to allow the awe of nature remind us that we are interconnected with nature. This is a subversive attempt to affect people's relationship with nature in order to change their behavior from consumer (to learn

[6] "Biological Lenses," in the author's possession.

from nature in order to create a solution to human problems and one who buys lots of products) to conscious consumer and advocate for nature.

What I love about the community of Biomimicry is that it is multinational, multidisciplinary, and multilingual. Though I am a Christian (and American) and I believe God is the Creator, there are Biomimics of other nationalities, other religions, non-religious, and religious-averse. Being exposed to Tonglen, Pema Chödrön, and the myriad theologies introduced to me through this class and others, I feel less insistent that addressing every issue should come from a Christian perspective, especially recognizing that Christianity is embedded in coloniality and domination which has contributed to our current climate crisis and other crises. I do believe that a spiritual transformation is needed and perhaps DivineSites as a religious-neutral spiritual tool to connect people to nature can be helpful for everyone, not just Biomimics.

Our language regarding nature needs to transform as well. Robin Wall Kimmerer says the English language "allows no form of respect for the more-than-human beings with whom we share the Earth. In English, a being is either a human or an 'it.'"[7] Our self-importance is even evident in the English language! Kimmerer shares an indigenous way of knowing, "other species are recognized not only as persons, but also as teachers who can inspire how we might live."[8] She proposes "ki" (singular) and "kin" (plural) shortened from the Anishinaabe word Bemaadiziiaaki meaning "beings of the living Earth."[9] Kimmerer says, "We can keep 'it' to speak of bulldozers and paperclips, but every time we say 'ki,' let our words reaffirm our respect and kinship with the more-than-human world. Let us speak of the beings of Earth as the 'kin'

[7] Robin Wall Kimmerer, "Nature Needs a New Pronoun," *Yes! Solutions Journalism,* March 30, 2015, https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/together-earth/2015/03/30/alternative-grammar-a-new-language-of-kinship.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.

they are."[10] The following DivineSites will reflect this adoption of "ki" and "kin" from the Anishinaabe word meaning "beings of the living Earth."

Spiritual Lens

- Use to reconnect to nature and the feelings evoked by paying attention to kin.
- Explore the interrelatedness between nature and yourself as a "community of creation."
- Reflect on your purpose within the local, regional, and global ecosystems.
- Employ all the senses for a deeper relationship with nature.
- Let awe and wonder guide your observation of one ki.
- Use to ground yourself and imagine the life you can not see.

The following mimics the format of Biological Lens sections in *iSites: Nature Journaling for Biomimicry* by Erin Rovalo.

Spiritual Lens Introduction

As people who to look to nature as teachers, it seems fitting to adopt Robin Wall Kimmerer's words to show respect and gratitude to nature, not as an "it," but "ki" (singular) and "kin" (plural) shortened from the Anishinaabe word Bemaadiziiaaki meaning "beings of the living Earth." Together, as "beings of the living Earth" the Spiritual Lens moves us away from "learning from" nature to an invitation "to be with" nature. There is no asking nature to share its forms, processes, or systems, but to embrace ourselves as kin.

[10] Ibid.

As people look to nature's genius to inspire and emulate for more sustainable designs, the Spiritual Lens is designed to quiet human cleverness and to connect to nature as kin.

Use to (re)connect to the beauty of nature and the feelings evoked.

Beauty in Nature

Study nature, love nature, stay close to nature. It [Kin] will never fail you. Frank Lloyd Wright

Take a moment to gaze upon your surroundings. What catches your eye? Is it shapes, colors, patterns? Plants, trees, birds, or the combination of kin as one? What emotions does nature evoke? Embrace this time surrounded by kin.

- How can you allow yourself more time to be surrounded by kin?

Explore the interrelatedness between yourself and nature.

Interrelatedness

It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one destiny, affects all indirectly. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The exhalation of oxygen by trees is now being inhaled by your lungs. On your exhale the trees will inhale the carbon. What other relationships do you have with nature? What other relationships can you observe in nature? How does this interrelatedness affect you emotionally?

- How would you describe your interrelatedness with all of nature? Through metaphor, song, poetry, dance? Create this description.

Reflect on your purpose within the local, regional, and global ecosystem.

Relationship

To be whole. To be complete. Wildness reminds us what it means to be human, what we are connected to rather than what we are separate from. Terry Tempest Williams, naturalist and "citizen writer"

Find a comfortable position. Breathe in your surroundings. What is your purpose right now in this position? Expand your view to include the earth that surrounds you. What is your purpose? Is it different? Again, expand your view to include more of earth. Keep expanding your view and asking these questions until you are looking at Earth from space. How do you feel? Big, small?

- How can you be a better citizen of the earth?

Employ all the senses for a deeper relationship with nature.

Senses

Knowing that you love the earth changes you, activates you to defend and protect and celebrate.

But when you feel that the earth loves you in return, that feeling transforms the relationship from a one-way street into a sacred bond. Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants

Some of your senses are probably overwhelmed and other senses may be going unused. Re(connect) by isolating your senses. (Taste at your own risk.) Spend some time focussed on what you are experiencing.

- What was your favorite experience? Is this something you could take with you to employ in other areas of your life?

Let awe and wonder guide your observation of one organism.

Awe and Wonder

Not just beautiful, though—the stars are like the trees in the forest, alive and breathing. And they're watching me. Haruki Murakami

Allow an organism to invite you into a deeper examination. What drew you to the organism? What amazes you about the organism? Let this awe penetrate your body.

- Does awe and wonder appear in other aspects of your life? Why or why not?

Use to ground yourself and imagine the life you can not see.

Grounding

And forget not that the earth delights to feel your bare feet and the winds long to play with your hair. Kahlil Gibran

Find a safe, comfortable position either standing, sitting, or lying down. Wherever your body meets the earth, focus your attention there. Give yourself permission to be present. Take a deep breath. Exhale. Repeat throughout the contemplation. Name the physical barriers that disconnect you from the earth: pavement, car tires, sidewalks, foundation, wood, concrete, shoes, socks. When was the last time you were connected to the earth without barriers? Now, clear your mind with your breath. If thoughts enter, give them a nod of recognition then let them pass through the ears. Repeat until you feel your breaths deepen. Relax and feel connection and gratitude for the earth, for what is living in the soil and for what it provides. Stay as long as you need. When you feel ready, gently begin to move your body.