

## BEING: 101 WAYS "INTO THE WOODS"

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Just before my lecture for the European Institute conference in Finland 2011 we seemed to have a technical fault with the computerised systems. In fact I was happy at that. I had a good excuse to avoid screens and pictures and keynotes and I had the possibility to try and say something face to face at the heat of the moment. As I started my face to face presentation I felt a strong smile within and a naughty kind of childlike satisfaction. Those computers had lost the day this time and I was free again. I had escaped Nokia Land and I could then, just, be 101 ways "Into The Woods" in an active sense. <sup>1</sup>

Being in the woods has often been an act of revolt and planned revolt at that as the woods were places to get lost and away from officials and

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<sup>1</sup> The very appreciation of an Orwellian "Big Brother" or any system of covert surveillance smacks of contemporary times. It also smacks hard as it avoids and hides away authentic communication(s). Is it ironic that Finland has a history of liberty through the forest yet still boasts about Nokia land? But anyway I tried my best, in that lecture, to play a small part in a kind theatre where the audience might imagine themselves and thereby imagine again and again as human being might unfold. I had no place to hide away. Such was the adventure. In this a kind of theatre performance was "on-the-way" and such was no bad thing.

government controls. In Finland the woods were often seen as a place to avoid taxes.

In fact the woods were so dangerous to governments that Finland made laws to ban group meetings in the woods. The woods here were subversive and secret places that were beyond surveillance and officialdom. You can, as the reader of this text, now sense my childlike smiles at avoiding computerised systems for my lecture during that conference. Surveillance denied just a bit.

What is more is that Finns loved dancing and drinking "in the woods". That was soon to be banned too although such bans were less than effective. The Finnish woods and Dionysus and dances were usually much stronger than governmental attempted controls of the radical libidinal social bodies at play.

In the UK we can find many similar themes at work. Outdoor places were often places for early trade unionists to meet in secret because the spying for government and business were always attending the meetings in the pubs.

In the senses that I write here the woods are places for human being away from this or that system of controls. Away from surveillance. In this the woods was a radical place to be from the perspective a social-political orderings.

In a very real sense this radical "into the woods" experience would also be a living conflict with the various systems of control which includes the Outdoor Adventure Education and Experiential Learning officialdoms that officiate.

However this radical place to be "into the woods" vis-a-vis the city and the industrial capitalist political economy was just one face of this elemental and enduring experience. In a way of saying : there is so very much more than this to Being 101 ways "Into the Woods". More than we may merely think.

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Into the woods has also a wonderful sexual history that is both serious and humorous. This is as any good Boy Scout or Girl Guide will easily recall. The going "camping" into the woods for Scouts was always as much about the sex and freedom as it was about obeying the laws that insisted upon being "clean in thought, word and deed". Evangelical programmes have tried so hard to avoid these sex in the woods activities. They make their money from social work and plasticised therapy instead. Bless us all. The Soul Trades on the massage table again and again.

We all wait for more well funded research to be made in this naughty area.

We must remember too those "wandering scholars" who have written and learnt so well within the outdoor adventure worlds of forests and woods. Both love and lust found freedom in the woods. Books from the wandering scholar, Patrick Leigh Fermor ? Oh yes, and books from many others too. <sup>2</sup>

The forest and the woods spring out and blossom with sexual activity a'plenty but we still await well funded research on this matter of elemental urgency.

The hidden Evangelical Outdoor Education and Adventure Learning things have yet to handle the deep roots of that Being into the woods. In fact most existing research and writing from the high towers of conformity refuse such sexual and sensual essences that are, peradventure, quite wonderful. I ask just which "into the woods" experience is for you. This one?

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The woods are also places for murder. Where better to kill somebody?  
Indeed the history of the forest and the woods is full of nasty and evil death.

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<sup>2</sup> Sex in the woods is sometimes a kind of lust and sometimes a kind of love or a mix of both. What brings this lust and love together is this place that is often called "woods". Orgasms under the safety of the trees and under the sensed stars at night? God forbid. Whatever next, we ask. Jesus wept soon we will need to talk of sex, politics and nature. German folk tales were recorded by Patrick Leigh Fermor and it was clear that love and lust was quite natural under the trees and in the wilds. German folk would even sing songs about this in the pub. It can be that we no longer live in such times of innocence.

The forest is also full of rape. Where better to rape somebody? Brutal places.

This is well said through traditional stories that range from contemporary newspapers to the warnings from so called childrens stories from 19th Century Germany or typical countryside folk-ways as simple poetics and easy-to-learn kinds of rhymes. Young children are warned about evils in the forest. This for very good reason no matter the ideological contents within that warning.<sup>3</sup>

But of course if you go down to the woods today you may see Teddy Bears having a picnic. Now that is real therapy and quite cynical therapy too. You may meet a big bad wolf. You might get eaten alive. Or you might starve to death or just rot away as Nature parades an inconspicuous consumption.

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<sup>3</sup> Let us make no mistake here. The "woods" can be nasty places and full of nastiness. There is nothing, that I can see, that brings me to that feeling of "the woods" being a place that is fancy-spiritual per se. Being into the woods might well critique city-capitalism for good reason but a being into the woods can also be hell-on-earth. I remember the novels of Maxim Gorky. He would never allow us to ignore the nasty ways and the pathetic ways of the woods and people in poverty. But we must we must remember too that Maxim Gorky was one of those wandering and scholarly types that would adventure outdoors and learn a few things here and there. Is it possible that we miss such voices today? I am not so sure. All I do know is that for Maxim Gorky the forests and the woods were never a playground for "foresty-woody" consumers.

But let us make now that eternal return to the Romantic traditions in another way. Let us consider William Wordsworth, the sly and sensible critical poet of a life lost and yet to be authentically gained, again, sometimes.

Wordsworth wanted to be with the woods and the outdoors. He wanted to be with. He sensed that to try and go "into the woods" was somehow false. He sensed that which was already lost and that which was still possible.

He also acted in strong ways against those big landowners that would stop everyday folk from just walking and taking a recreation on privatised land. There is much more to a William Wordsworth than just a mere Romantic "outdoors". Wordsworth acted as he fought against big landowners and their puppet politicians. Wordsworth could break down walls and open windows.

But this was, maybe, due to his basic philosophy that drove his feelings. That urged on his words and actions – words and deeds mixed up as it were. We read William Wordsworth through his words as a basic philosophy thus :-

" ... My object is to give pictures of Nature, Man and Society...." <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> That generalised picture from Wordsworth whereby Humankind and Society and Nature would be alive and dynamic seems to me still to be a kind of beautiful picture which must have within some truth. Even a radical artist or theoretical research scientist might agree there. I have tried, in my past writings, to keep true to this kind of

Wordsworth well knew that 101 ways were reasonable and necessary to consider constantly through any engagement or entanglement as a journey with the woods or outdoors. This Wordsworth was no mere Romantic of self.

Pictures of Nature, Being and Society are so much more than any mere me or self or commodity. Wordsworth sensed ways with a real peopled-woods.

But Wordsworth wrote in the early 1800s in England. Is that a long time ago? Is Wordsworth banned from "our" forests" and "woods" today as we make our "learning centres" as a monotheism whereby critical adventure is forbidden?

Has the poetic imagination and even literature itself become a long lost and ignored soul of any official Outdoor Adventure Education today?

To reply to my own questions I might say, as hyperbole, that contemporary outdoor adventure based and experiential learning systems have followed the Dark Side of the Force and through an idle following of various neo-positivist and neo-behaviourist banners have stamped, Ork-like-hard, upon both a poetry and prose of the imaginative kind. But still alive on the edges and borders there are many elves and hobbits and even angry trees that

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beautiful truth as I have always known, somehow, that the Individual, the Social and the Elemental are like a holy trinity. Forget one and the beauty is lost and the truth flies away too.

remain alive. Being "into the forest" and Being "with the forest" is political conflict.

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At that conference in Finland I was happy in that my poem was appreciated by many folk. I was happy at that not because of any special merit of my poem but happy because it was accepted as reasonable and valuable way with words and worlds as deeded as a maybe-communication inacted.<sup>5</sup>

Like most poetry it is almost impossible to measure its critical merit and like most writers of poetry I can hardly remember now some of the images that flowed during the writing itself. But such is one aspect of the poetics of a consciousness that dwells within a Maybe outdoor "into the woods" world.

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<sup>5</sup> The poetic communication(s) may not satisfy management training regimes or reach ideological targets and goals but such is good. The poetic communication(s) are maybe alternative ways, otherness ways and critical ways to sense the "soul" of life and humanity. Such is a deep ingredient of both science and philosophy and such a poetic act simply and beautifully joins into the big game of understanding acts. I would claim that a bit of poetics helps us keep our rational feet firmly on the real ground. I would claim too a presence here that is a presence that is of that kind which only helps reveal sometimes that which is big.



It remains for others to interpret, if necessary or desired, such poetic images. It is healthy and good for any poem to become a peopled-event thick and full of variable interpretations so that poetry itself can move on with Being, alive. I suspect that a poem is rather much like a so called "Fairy Tale" or a Grimm Tale where the imagination and the connections made are always so very much more than any science or a psychology can handle well. These poems and "Fairy Tales" are so much closer to the adventure and the Being "Into the Woods" than I can tell in any fashion of this or that orthodoxy of well seated congregations under the pulpits of well programmed facilitation techniques.

The extra-ordinary and the enchanting tales whereby "Into the Woods" comes alive is thick and alive with those elemental, social and individual weeds that will usually get plucked from the geometrical gardens by well ordered souls.

Fear not. For the adventure will remain. Well, before and beyond, the reach of the official weed killers and the purifiers of the woods.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The woods, just like the stars at night or the new born baby will do well and continue peradventure. That much we know already. But it is not so easy to really know what we know. The adventure here is often the big "why" question. That which is beautiful calls us to understand it all.

Yet the necessity for banal and irritating rationalities remains so powerful. So it ought to be said today that the adventure is always before and beyond as the meaning is never quite grabbed or grasped in the here and now. The difficulty of the poetic imagination "Into the Woods" is always with meaning that is never, yet, quite there. Such is the bane of official well ordered woods.

The adventure "Into the Woods" is always a happening whereby an absence is coming alive and an idle routine necessarily denied. This adventure has the power to reveal that which is well hidden. But such is not all of Being-With the woods. So many ways, so many ways. So many alternatives, sometimes.

Anyways. So my poem, as my angelic wings, fly me to the sun. But first I must write away my devilish horns before that poem may show itself as a rather nice and (in)appropriate maybe-world. Poesy is best at the end.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> I only say this because I feel that poetics is best when it is moving both before and beyond that which is already said. The poetical praises that which is not yet said but maybe said soon. But I remain slow here as the poetic act seems to be much more evident from the mountains or the coastal areas or the cities. It is time for me to think more deeply about this poetics that might be evident from with a forest where few big horizons can be seen. Yet at the beginning or end of a "day" it maybe that poetics captures that moment in time. Such maybe when science and poetics hold hands together before and beyond.

During that Finland conference I also talked about many other aspects of this Being "Into The Woods". In every wood there is at least a small pond or a lake somewhere around and about. That is something to throw stones or things into. That is where this throwing of things into water makes waves.

Usually these water-waves move in concentric circles. These waves just move on and get bigger and wider in a very geometrical kind of way. If we throw out stones or things into the water where there are rocks or other things around then these concentric circles get blasted to pieces and return as a kayaking person will well understand in a wild rapid or a sea. The good term clapotis is used for these rebounding waves that clap their hands upon us. Anyway one young lad from a social-worker kind of forest camp found me throwing things into the water. I was just having a break from all the work. He sat down beside me and began to throw his own things into the water. His waves hit the rocks and bounced back to him. My waves were without rocks.

This is the difference between your life and mine. That he said to me. Just a simple trip to the woods and waters allowed that young troubled lad and I to talk a little about concentric and eccentric movements. But the talk was less than the event itself. We were open to an elemental conversation together but it was that elemental moment that remained significant and meaningful. I just threw stones into the water and this troubled "youth at risk" worked his

magic upon me. This was a hermeneutic event that was "on-the-way" to possibilities.

That young troubled lad led me into a world of study which I have still to continue. He helped me learn about concentric and eccentric differences. Yet I was being paid to help him. This was a splendid serendipity of the most elemental kind. For both of us this was a movement. That I cannot forget. A happening. Such is one aspect of Being together "In The Woods" perchance and peradventure. Who and what was that "educator"? Elemental quicksilver?

I was lucky that that troubled youth came down to the water with me and then threw stones and chatted. I think of him often and just wonder how he is doing. That after 20 odd years. I sense he is ok. We were together for those wonderful moments. Memory remains as togetherness now today as I write. Significant memories may be forged in such simple ways as Being "Into The Woods" where mysterious peopled-things become hermeneutically alive.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> I am only saying here that sometimes, many times, a conversation can release many once hidden meanings and such conversations are often quite unplanned or prepared beforehand. Such a "happening" is more like a meeting "perchance" and peradventure as it is through any well programmed process. Simple? Hope so. A meeting of differences in the scheme of life itself. That is significant. Something that awakes the sleep or a dream or a nightmare. Just a something not yet understood. Maybe just something from the postman Hermes mixing it all up again and at play

That young troubled youth began a conversation that enchanted me and from there we just carried on chatting in a friendly hermeneutical way until such time as we both were called to get back into the official programme. For the next few days we had many a smile together. We knew something together.

As I was being paid for that work my stone throwing friend was without choice or power. He was forced to "be there". A troubled youth channeled into a kind of programme. Yet, I believe, the forest waters and the waves helped us find a kind of togethness. He felt good in our conversation that made sense to him and I went away to stuggle with postmodern theory and all to my absurdity.

That troubled youth and I met as strangers in a strange world. Yet, somehow, our strangeness became alive and we communicated a little. I guess we both knew that there was much more to this strange world than the programme we were both under. Even today I feel a kind of deep attachment to him.

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with messages that might mediate between-worlds or even move towards a kind of transformation of thinking itself into-the woods. As the concentric meets the eccentric circles it seems, as if, our simple throwing stones into the water becomes a kind of insight into science itself as a "third-other" emerges and is revealed. No matter ( no pun) this insight this kind of illumination with human-folk, nature and society seems to me to be just one part of the essence within our work. It may well be that often a dyad and triad feeds of each other as life itself. That third-other seems to be always around betwixt and between and with just that which is always somehow becoming.

We were both lost in a lost world. Me doubting my part in this programme and him forced into this programme. When he left we found time and place just to smile together again and say good luck and all that. A significant moment. It was significant in the sense that deep meaning was made, as if some strange and elemental message was received, as if a Hermes had delivered the post. As if we both had that kind of adventurous courage to open the post in times of trouble. We both had entered into hermeneutic circles peradventure as the future possibilities somehow enchanted us without ready-made words or concepts. Maybe we both felt that marginality which might just, sometimes, reveal a kind of openness to that which was once hidden away.

During my lecture one part of my head was saying to me to talk more about this concentric circles theme but like a cat I avoided that talking and I just continued with my lecture that tried to explore our worlds safely and homely. Like a cat I sensed that far too much is said when there is, in fact, so little that can be said. I was fearful of the "Gods". Perhaps. But, let it be said, that our sense of concentric circles became embedded within our lives. For me that was an education. For him that was an education too. But we were different.

The hermeneutics here involved many answers adrift and floating on the waves of ups and downs as we all swim in stormy waters. Yet there was a small message getting delivered. I think we both felt that and maybe he will

return. Maybe he will be open to my story. Maybe we meet again with the elemental and accept magical moments. Maybe we meet again find together more with more borders to cross or become heavy again in a world of ultra lite-ness. We related to something that was "other" but was still understood.

The education for me was immense. The education for him? All I know is that the fancy-full something was alive and well this time. But what more? I guess such a question is all about any education itself. But that is just a guess.

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I also talked about a wonderful Finnish writer and his book "The Year of the Hare". Arto Paasilinna ( English translation 1995) wrote his story in a very Finnish way where to go "into the woods" was often a kind of escape from the city life and a kind of return to basics and Finnish Romantic culture. To have a simple summer-house in the "wilds" was a Finnish tradition so very strong for many years of the late 20th Century. City folk could finally enjoy the woods and be free from the past, from the woods, as poverty and toil. The summer house in the woods became a kind of new escape as it became a kind of glorification of the city life.

Arto Paasilinna wrote his story from a perspective of an alienated soul, a journalist with no reason-to-be and a city-worker who was choking without a meaningful existence. He also wrote with humour which was so important but alienation just as important too. It was a kind of "return" into the wilds that allowed his humour to find such a display that has turned into a popular and well translated book.<sup>9</sup>

Later I was to learn that some of the conference members had ordered that book. Many had enjoyed it. That made me happy. Such a book encourages an Outdoor Adventure Educator to keep on thinking and working full time and encourages that wonderful link between alienation and humour. It was as if there were now 102 ways "into the woods". But which one is for you or me?

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<sup>9</sup> The "Year of the Hare" book was a wonderful education and read. But we must also, I think, enjoy those other stories that help inform it. In Finland the famous writer Aleksis Kivi and his book "Seven Brothers" also told much of this story in the mid-nineteenth-century. It was a book that any American might enjoy after a Mark Twain tradition. The story here involves a flight into the forest and away from parts of society and then somehow returns, in a liminal sense, to a society anew. It is also interesting that Aleksis Kivi wrote his "Seven Brothers" from a position where even the "A B C" of education (in those 19th Century years made through the Church) was denied. In fact to go into the woods was a very firm revolt against such an education itself. I suspect many different countries have quite similar stories that were before but remain today. Yet somehow society itself emerged as Nature and the Human-kinds explored and discovered that triad of conflict, change and Being.



I say this here only because such is rarely said, or even given the chance to be said, in so much official writings from this Outdoor Education world that is so well programmed that an Arto Paasilinna would rather visit the local pub.

What is more is that this adventure of "into the woods" was also political. This book combined alienation, humour and the political with the elemental. Arto Paasilinna was far too simple for contemporary Outdoor Programmers. Yet his book has been translated into nine different languages. His story seems to have connected and continued. His "Into The Woods" story seems to have reached out and been as a concentric circle even for all his eccentricities.

Which way and why do we select this "into the woods" theme as a theme that seems to make sense? I ask this only because this "into the woods" theme is much more than we maybe "think it is" - unless that is we "think again" as the woods and the forests just smile heavily upon our fancy ways. But even then we are lost in the woods. Lost always lost. An adventure as a beginning?

But getting lost in the woods might be good sometimes. Just getting strange sometimes ok. Making sense from strange worlds peradventure maybe.

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I also moved onto memories of an outdoor trip with European students and into the woods and forests of Swedish Lapland. These were all university level students and coming from many different European countries.

I tried to tell the story about just how shocked and even angry some of these students were during their first real camping trip "into the woods". If ever there was an example of the feeling that – the heaviest weight we all carry around in our rucksacks is that cultural baggage on our backs – then this was it.

To cut a long story short. Many European students expected and wanted a wilderness experience and expected "their wilderness" to be "provided for consumption". As if advertised in a tourist brochure. Unfortunately reality kicked in. The wilderness areas are still peopled and still alive with human communications. In Swedish Lapland the forests are big but people inhabit those "wilderness" areas. City-Wild nature is always "peopled" in some ways.

At our overnight camping site the students were confronted by three snow mobiles carrying three strong local males with beers. Time for a celebration?

These three snow mobiles and three males had quickly known that strangers were around and in their local "Street Corner Society". So it was clearly the right thing to do to meet up and offer a welcoming beer – especially to the

females in the student group. The noise of the snowmobiles was loud but the welcoming words from these three local men was quite soft and friendly.

Students were not impressed at all. This was not "their wilderness" at all. In fact the students showed a rather unfriendly and even aggressive attitude to those local men who really belonged there, lived there and worked there.

It is not my intention here to judge or proclaim this or that. Rather I try to say that this "Into The Woods" experience was a clash of cultures for all. Such a clash maybe educational and somewhat, sometimes, illuminating. Such a clash and a clapotis event might be a bit magical as we wake from sleep.

Maybe "my" students in the days after this event learnt something. They certainly discussed things and tried to see the story from a local viewpoint.

My point here would not be worth making if more of the Outdoor Adventure Education "programmes" would include such a basic experiential reality into the official work. Only a few academics write about such basic things, or so it seems. Professional Adventure Educational Programmers and Facilitators for Learning seem to ignore and escape away from such basics. That I think.

As a short comment by-the-way I might say that there may be a world of variable meanings attached to any "Into The Woods" event but such worlds of meaning will be knocked back by any official programming regime which lives and exists through best funded managerial risk-managements.

It is also the case, I think, that, to be fair, it takes a long time to really be into the woods and any quick "holiday" ( even a Boot Camp holiday) will not be able to "get into" the woods as woods. "Being Into" is no easy aspect of Being itself as Being as Being. To find a kind of homeliness with the woods? That takes time, a longer-time, than is allowed or financed by thin-skinned and weak therapeutic systems.

Sometimes I sense quite strongly that Outdoor Learning ways of officialdom exhibit a kind of shallow and absurd perspective of both "Being Into" and a being into the woods. As I write this today ( 3rd November 2013) I see that in Europe we have Hungary changing its constitution and laws in the midst of a European Union and global demise. One of the things that Hungary rules as against the law and order is "homeless people" living in the woods. People in Hungary will no longer be able to set up a home in the woods without official permission and thereby a human "Being Into The Woods", as homely, is to be against the law. Being-into the woods has often been a safe-place-against

this or that law and order system ( Robin Hood theme as "Social Bandit"?).  
Thereby such is usually banned and criminalised.<sup>10</sup>

I would suggest here rather strongly that to understand this Hungarian issue today is also to understand the privatisation of land and the capitalisation of public places. In fact to understand much of this "into the woods" outdoor learning officialdom and so called "Adventure-based Learning" is best when that which is avoided and hidden away is revealed. Then, maybe, we can know ourselves. That might be a first step to any therapy. To understand our part in consuming the experience of "the woods" might enlighten sometimes.

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<sup>10</sup> Even "up here" in Lapland I have witnessed a local story where an old man was found in the forest. He had been "missing" from the official offices. When the social welfare department found him they insisted on his joining the system. They also insisted to pay him backdated social welfare monies. To cut a long story short this old "wilderness man" was taken to the big city and given money to spend. He then bought 10 televisions. He had the idea that these TV things added to the walls and the home. He just liked the art-work as it were. No electricity? No problem. He did not use electricity. This was from the late 1970s in Lapland. As I lived only a few hours walk from this "missing man" I began to learn something about this "Being With The Woods" as home rather than "experience". Do I romanticize? Not all all. I simply tell a story that is real and that happened and thereby ask myself a few deep questions about just what is and what is not. Such is one small beginning for any Outdoor and Adventure Education. Such is one appreciation, perhaps, of life itself. Into the woods? For whom?

Then, as I recall, I tried to talk about a North American tale. It was really north and the book was a beautiful story about just how a local "outdoors man" can meet an "city academic woman" and find a life together no matter what. This book was sent to me some years ago by the Canadian outdoor educator Bob Henderson who was involved in The Ontario Journal of Outdoor Education. It was such a blessing. Bob Henderson saw in that book a kind of story which might give thoughts to others and sometimes illuminate. Thanks Bob. I hope that your gift to me may be a travelling gift to others.

The story was a human story of relationships but, at the same time, this story was about both city and local "outdoor" values. Capitalism was central too as an ideology quite much in conflict with any spirit of the woods or "outdoors".

The story was also about a northern "into to the woods" guy who fell in love with an academic gal who taught in the city university. Culture clashes oh yes and love oh yes. The story continues in this kind of way. It was a personal and lived-experience story. In some way the spirit of the cultural outdoors is expressed through this story. How does it end?

Well, if you do not read the book you will never know. Damnit, I should have been working in advertising I would have made lots and lots of money. I jest

with reason here. Why? Because I cannot spoil that wonderful book and I refuse to write a guidebook to any "Into The Woods" experience. So I jest as a good jester might and will. Safer that way when Kings and Queens can chop off your head. I jest as others write guidebooks. Better just to jest.

This good book talks about the best ways to avoid any kind of Management Programming techniques disguised as an Adventure Education. This good book also talks about love, sex, adventure and business politics through a looking glass of a "Reality Land" that helps us join a conversation that is all too often denied. Liked it I did. Educational it was. Most inappropriate?

It was all something like a letter to Karl Marx. When Marx called rural and outdoor folk "idiots" a new conversation begins. Somehow this book is so very simple that it demands deep thoughts. But here I play mischief games do I not? Here I play and hope. Oh yes. Being "into the woods" is full of mischief.

This book is best read and discussed from a simple campfire. That is free, in some ways, from the curricula that rules the rural idiots and youth-at-risk. But two people forged a loving relationship in this true story of the conflicts that are inherent as "Outdoor" folk mix with "City" folk for real. But this was no exotic weekend retreat and no escape. This relationship needed slow time to flourish. Yet it had many fast-time movements too. A dynamic relationship?

One big question here is about "time" and "speed". Are rural folk really so slow? Are city folk really so fast? What may happen when they meet?

The lovely book was " Halfway Man" (1989) by the writer Wayland Drew.

This book was also full of northern humour vis-a-vis city business ethics and polite manipulations. Outdoor folk usually have a wicked and wonderful sense of humour that city folk have yet to appreciate when they merely visit for some holiday or therapeutic experience.

Wayland Drew wrote this in the context of a discussion with a city lawyer who wanted to own the land :-

" If I want to hear  
from an ASSHOLE  
I'll fart."

( Halfway Man page 81)

Rural idiots can hit back at fast-time city lawyers with a deep smile.

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One of the big points that I tried to make in my small lecture was just this. The so called outdoor folk, or those people really "into the woods", made a sense of humour about those that just visited as tourists or travelling opportunists. The city folk however would usually just label local folk as fools and idiots rooted in a slow thinking way that did not satisfy the reality of city-ways that were the best and only ways. The northern outdoor humour I feel deeply as I can laugh and smile about such conflicts. I can even fart as I write this and fart with a smile. But my lecture was also made with a perfumed smell of city decency. I lectured within a well perfumed city perhaps.

Perhaps I ought to have talked about a "troubled youth" on a social work programme. I remember it so well from the early 1970s in the UK. The simple memory for me is this. One such "troubled youth" came up to me and said a very simple comment that hit me deeply. He asked :-

"Why do you take us away for good weekends like this and then return us back into this city shit hole?"

Maybe there is much to be learnt from an "asshole" and "shit hole" as we venture "into the woods" and the great outdoors. Elemental, maybe. However the point here is that of a conflict rather than any "one way to be".

I suspect that the "Halfway Man" book by Wayland Drew might help open up pathways that are all too often avoided because they are not appropriate as they do not get funding and financial short-termed glory.

I also suspect that such books, that deeply sense the "into the woods" and the outdoor life experiences, are avoided by the Adventure Programmers and the Salvation Army and the vast array of Evangelical careerists. Maybe I write from the nether regions. But better to read "Halfway Man". Your own self?

Sometimes it is much better to read and discuss and think about that which is just not said in public. Sometimes we are better to involve ourselves in that which is inappropriate. Even Hermes delivered messages from "above" and yet still enabled critical thoughts. Civilisation is full of "other-worlds" that may be felt firmly through openness peradventure. Mediation? With otherness?

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After that lecture I also received questions from a few people that wanted to say something or add more. I enjoyed that.

One question that I was asked quite shocked me. I was asked if I followed a way of Zen. I replied that I was not sure about that but I always enjoyed the writings of a Hermann Hesse. I could not think of any other way of reply. Yet this seemed to be good enough for one person to continue and seek out the many ways within nature and things and folk. My reply was just good enough for him to feel ok and free to carry on seeking for meaning and significance. Yes, my reply was "just good enough". A kind of openness was possible.

In fact Hermann Hesse was involved in our work with the outdoors. He was one member of a group that tried so hard to combat Hitler and then try so hard to encourage an Outdoor Education back in the 1940s in a war-mad Europe. Perhaps this is a history that remains to be written. Political you see.

But more than this Hesse delivered letters and post to us all in those times and then just went away to deliver more messages to others. It was always with an otherness that Hesse worked with. The vast differences within any humanity itself were, said Hesse, wonderful and beautiful. Such a critique of 20th Century Modernity and Capitalism was quickly hidden away again and again and Hesse became labelled as a Romantic follower of Zen things. Oh how our hidden churches refuse that otherness and translucent awareness which might, might often, illuminate through a hermeneutical "fogue" as a most

musical adventure experience. A conversation as betwixt and between differences as real lived-experiences enacted.

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Another question that came to me was wonderfully direct. I was asked why I seemed to be in such a hurry when I had talked about slow-time and the outdoors. I replied quickly : " The bar is closing in five minutes". This was made all the better by the laughs. This small happening helped us smile. As one "Friluftsliv" philosophy says : "How far can we go with a smile". Nice that.

Then I was asked about this talk of hermeneutics. The question came from an active outdoor adventure therapist who was clearly working with those kinds of young people that cried out for something quite different in their lives. We then discussed around a small table just what life-experiences might mean to us all in a social and political-economic context. We discussed just what a significant experience might be for different people. We then discussed about the possibilities of troubled youth actually living one or more years alongside real "into the woods" folk communities. I enjoyed this opening up of a debate.I also felt that such a debate was to continue in worlds that were not mine alone. Such continues in ways that are both before and beyond, eternally.

With another conference group I chatted about even more than 101 ways of this "Into The Woods" theme. We chatted about young people learning to light a fire outdoors safely. This, in Finland, used to be a common education.

We also talked then about photography and theatre and the "arts" as made in the woods and "with" the outdoors. This was not just for "young offenders" as this was for all – old and young alike – as a liberal arts movement good for more than 101 different kinds of people. Painting? Poetry? Just planting a few seeds in some earth? I guess it all comes down to that Classical question of education itself. What is this education and learning that we espouse ? Can we handle the beast within this civilization of discontents?

We talked also about just discussing books, reading them and writing them, from within these many kinds of ambient radical "woods" situations.

Would a book written from the forests be different from a book written from a coastal shore or mountain? Was a forest viewpoint different from a sea shore or a mountain top as a writer or a thinker thinks and writes within-place?

These kinds of conversations encouraged me to continue conversation that may not always be correct conversations when an "Into The Woods" theme is on the menu. A theme or a concept is always on-the-move is it not?

Maybe these conversations help, just a little, to open up possibilities and the realities that can sometimes get ignored or forgotten through any "one way" system as a be all and end all programme with both inputs and outputs that somehow deny different ways of Being-Into the woods and "with life".

I guess I shared that kind of hope with others whereby a wide-wild world of humanity would not be hijacked by any one big "One-Way" orthodoxy.<sup>11</sup>

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A question that almost infuriated me at the time was this : " Why do you always talk against our work?"

I think I was less than polite in my answer which was : " Because I am with and for an Outdoor Adventure Education that might really matter". It was not a good reply and I sometimes, now, regret that. Conference chats are like that sometimes. Yet if I could have found a better response then who knows what might have happened. But at least I blasted out my basic assumptions.

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<sup>11</sup> A one way orthodoxy is sometimes and often hidden. Even the most important words like " with", "and", "into" and "for" gets somehow put into a forgotten place whereby fancy fasionable terms rule the day. Big projects and programmes are often that devil within. The refusal of small words that might sink the big ship?

I will live to regret that but I was deeply travelling pathways into the woods that were less well travelled. The poetry of Robert Frost had grabbed me but such poetry admits the mistakes and the conflicts both within and without. Betwixt and between. In my reply I had become anti-education and rather arrogant. I regret that today but I cannot promise that the very same will not happen again someday. Those in education have a dutiful right to confuse me whenever I show signs of joining them in the acceptable-worlds of Being Well. Such a conflict is essential as we must often travel pathways that are rarely travelled. ( the interested reader might just ask just why I do not talk of risk).

Maybe I could have said something "Into The Woods" being a folk-like thing and a peopled-thing. I might have asked about any learning experience or education. I might have allowed that infuriating question to move. But I did not do that then. Maybe next time I will learn as I get infuriated. Maybe.

I might ask just why we sometimes see the "Into The Woods" experiences as that which is attached to a "Waste Land". Or, for that matter, something that is attached to the "Pure Land". I must today centre myself upon such modern issues as I try to release myself from torment and conflict. I must DO and act myself too in the public sphere wherby both subjective and objective things

might, might just sometimes, be understood by both myself and others in a kind of togetherly way. That, when "things" are much more than mere things.

Words and words and fancy concepts? Yes and No, both, at times when any so called "Being Into The Woods" is just that. Why? Such a why question does seem to be a quite natural human condition of civilisation itself. But these kinds of questions seem to be opened up through a kind of Liberal Arts atmosphere and closed down through a managerial puppeteering programme built upon war-like targets and abstracted instrumental goals somehow amiss.

Being Into The Woods, just like trying to make a face-to-face presentation to a large audience, is always a deeply moving experience as movement itself takes on "itself" a kind of forceful presence as a wide range of differences try to remain somehow unified. There is a kind of elemental reality within.

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But before I end in my eternal and habitual inconclusive way let me open up to that which was not said and that which was just waiting behind. Let me try to say something about my own backstage preparations which-yet remained



backstage although they deeply informed my presentation. Perhaps that which I did not say in public was just as significant as that which I did say.

Maybe that is just the way it is with our worlds of communication sometimes. I totally missed out the links to military, church and political organisations that have been within Outdoor Education ways over the last centuries. This was not a deliberate act on my behalf. This was a perchance fact then with idle hindsight now. But such huge matters informed my face-to-face presentation as a hidden-other informs.<sup>12</sup>

I was almost ready to make a few points about "Being Into The Woods" as a kind of elemental conversation with Modern Times where lost worlds become as significant as so called risky-futures. Something stopped me saying this. I

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<sup>12</sup> To try and say what can be said is quite impossible in terms of communication. We are always saying things that cannot really be said in the big picture of things and words. But in that lecture I felt quite strongly that something "else" was making this conversation. I just did not get around to talking about everything that I had planned to talk. I was, in one way, living the moment peradventure as I sensed the spirit of the place and the non-rational parts of me in an official performance. I guess this was more theatre than science. I guess also that this was a reasonable way to try and communicate. This arena of debate has long been spoken and written whereby the Arts and the Sciences have been sometimes polarised or sometimes been linked together. This has been going on for some time, 300 and more years. This debate that may be experienced and made "Into The Woods" is a possible world that might just find a place to breathe-in and breathe-out as difference itself. I do not say this lightly. In fact I say this from the dark underworlds of the deep forest itself. For whom does the forest bell ring? Now that is a question that Outdoor Adventure Education might ask of itself. Yes?

was ready to make a critical point and then talk about the elementary forms of an Outdoor Adventure Education Life. But something stopped me.

But here and now, through this text, I sense a different possibility that is still face-to-face with any reader but yet still at a kind of distance whereby the social might emerge. The social aspects of "Being Into The Forest" have, for a very long time now, been totally refused by so many and most. Indeed the deep and often "hidden-other", that is the social, has been ignored by those that provide us all with fancy programmes that "add-value" to the "outdoors".

Modernity, which is one aspect of our consciousness today, was always a kind of play between lost worlds and future worlds whereby the elemental senses of Being compared and contrasted with new orders and freedoms. It seemed to me that Modernity itself was one part in this "into the woods" act that was often to be called "experience". Therefore the social forces acted with and against our Modern heads of both feeling and thinking things. Such social forces, which were and are firmly connected with any political economy were one face of of that Modern question : Who am I? Who am I when this world is so different? Who am I when this world insists that I have an identity?

What am I as a "self" who cannot escape the social? What am I when I seek the elemental truth of the forest and the wilds and then find only the freedom to die? How can I measure this in a way that satisfies Modern Ways and "Me" and "I" in doubt all the time? How can I measure myself?

Through the "Woods" and the "Wilds" may I find myself? Through this outdoor life might I find a learning experience? Surely I must "Dare To Know" myself. I might measure my Modern self when I dare to know Modern times wild-side.

This kind of appreciation of any Being Into The Woods might be enjoyed and might be acted upon. A slow reading of Charles Lemert (1995) from the social theory side(s) of "things" might open up a few doors and windows. He tried to make sense of one American guy who travelled into the woods to explore and to die. This was the well documented story of Chris McCandless ( also called, by his own words, Alexander Supertramp and "Aesthetic Voyager") where the story is rather common and simple. Chris McCandless cut up his bank cards and just went "into the woods" to somehow sort out this "self" in "civilization" as it all seemed so heavy and somehow wrong. He wanted to "know himself" and he dared to know.

This all became a very big story in global proportions. A book was written by Jon Krakauer (1996) taking meaningful perspectives from this same Chris

McCandless and "Alexander Supertramp" episode. Both books inform and illuminate. But the social theorist, Charles Lemert, helps us all to consider this identity crisis that is a crisis much more than we might merely "think it is". If we read Lemert, however, we will need a kind a daring to know which is, in some way, always before and beyond. Such is elemental. Such is social too.

As "Alex Supertramp" adventured "into the wilds" he openly questioned his very reason for being. He questioned our civilisation itself through his action. But Modernity "itself" questioned "itself". So why did I not mention this in my lecture? Did I just deliver as a postman might merely deliver a message?

It may well be that to lecture face-to-face with an audience, without any kind of protective system, is somehow to be with a practical social world whereby any social "thing" is lived rather than critiqued during that moment of lecture. The practical social worlds that we all live-by are not easy but at least they are in some senses easy to get by with. We cannot live within a social world if we critique all the time those structures that communicate and continue even when we must do that to somehow change "things".

Modernity throws us all into such contradictions as capitalism too smiles and progress smiles at us.

But maybe I just did not have that courage to really confront and then maybe I was just a part of "it all" ( out there). Such is that contradiction through which our Modernity exists. Who am I, I ask, when I even doubt myself? Modernity.

Might I find myself through going into the woods or the forests or the wilds? If I can do just so then, then, we ask – will big bankers of Modernity be happy?

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Time now for my poem? ( a poem I may regret ). Better now than never. To do is always to regret in some way or another but not to do is a different kind of sorrow that begets the deepest of guilts within our already fragile humanity as we all labour in love and..... doubt..... and..... our lost worlds that remain.

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My Forest That Remains, Dead and Alive

My forest is not your forest  
Your forest is different.  
Much different, and more,

And different to mine.

My forest is what is left behind  
That demands attention,  
Interpretation,  
Living, and yet still left behind.  
And your forest is much, much, more  
Different to mine.

Your forest is just a game  
With a voice.  
A voice that is just a game  
A game  
Reproduced,  
By nothing much at all.

My forest is speaking to me with no voice  
My forest is my echo  
Not yours.  
My forest speaks to me.  
And,  
To me alone, silently alone.

My forest divides you and me.  
You are dead.  
I am alive,  
In my forest.

My forest is a silent echo that bounces  
Back,  
Bounces back, back, back  
But not to you.

With my forest I know myself.  
I know  
Know  
Myself.  
Alone.  
Alone, I am, in my forest  
The Modern way.

But I know myself,  
Alone, in repeats and repeats with that silent echo.  
I know myself the Modern way  
Alone, alone, shallow

In my forest.

Alone.

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That's it now. I am off to drink a good beer with Aristotle in a good bar. He has promised to chat about those "things that might be". If I am lucky he will say a few things about the adventure and the elemental poetics. That if I am lucky. That if I can remain open enough to really "Being Into the Woods" today.

You see I am but a duplex and even a triplex human being living in a world that constantly tries to tell me that the elemental and the social is just not what we do. Therefore I seek out lost worlds that are evident and yet hidden.

If mystery flies away as science is capitalised then god bless those research scientists that carry on peradventure where mystery remains alive and well. It is just this kind of contradiction and space for freedom and authentic truth that enlivens the best of any "wild" outdoor and adventure education and this, as Charles Lemert says, is really a very big conversation with Modernity itself.



If the forests and the woods have somehow bred a culture of fate then god bless those that carry on working each and every day in forest-cultures. It seems to me that we might learn with this fate as risk analysis is so shallow.

Maybe we are beginning to talk here about identity and the political economy as it rationalises a duplex and even triplex human being. Or at least might try.

Maybe I justly fail to live with my "self" alone without doubt. Then maybe too I need Charlie Chaplin to laugh at this. Who am I when this Outdoor Adventure Education is so different? Who am I when I hope yet remain in doubt?

Perhaps we, in this outdoor adventure work, might consider the existential and the confrontational questions that allow a humanity to really "progress" as the "Big Stories" really matter. Such is Modernity in inevitable conflicts.

This kind of appreciation demands ever-new-looks at the duplex-human and the triplex-human as a being that moves with an "otherness" that informs.

But this thought of mine must also appreciate that any Postmodern-Turn is much more than we might merely think it is. Thank you Charles Lemert for that phrase.

Yet still I remain a little confused and alert. Was it not already in the 1600s and the 1700s Europe that these questions became opened up to scrutiny?

Such were the birth pains of Modernity – have we really changed? Have we ever been Modern?

Modernity itself gives birth to the authentic truth-seeker as well as the most hopeless dreamer. This Being into to the woods theme does seem to bring this kind of theme where alienation and redemption become alive together.

I guess I have tried to say that this "Into The Woods" theme is interesting and deserves attention from more than any one prespective. Yes, yes that is what I say. Now I got it right.

I have also tried to respect the social theorist, Charles Lemert, as he helps me ask that eternal question : " Who am I when natural and social things are different"? Then I go and spoil it all again by merely "thinking" the Post Modern turn. Less thinking for me, I guess. Good for me that is.

Ah dunno.

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But the fashionable "need" for evidence remains soul destroying. This most impossible dream seems to be taken so very seriously and so over-seriously that the very beauties and truths within our worlds of Being are forgotten or even ignored. Such are the skills and programming outcomes that hijack a most wonderful world of the wild-sides. But there is also real evidence too.

Clarence. J. Glacken ( 1976, my updated edition) searched hard and well for his "Traces on the Rhodian Shore" wherby a somehow old fashioned and hard worked history of Nature with Natural people involved a huge "break", in many ways, during the Modern Times between the 1600-1800s periods. He recorded this divide. Evidence he well presented. Good solid evidence.

Kate Soper (1995) did try to make more of this "divide" as she related it to the social and political faces of Nature itself. She identified a kind of "for" position and an "against" position concerning Modern Times as it asked the question "What is Nature". She indentified a conflict and an identification in a way that Glacken avoided. Soper asked the question "What Is Nature"? Soper felt she might know but, as yet, still needed to ask the question.

Glacken asked the question differently but in harmony with Soper. Both tried to find their limits in a changing world where "things" elemental were very much more than we may ever merely think they are.

I begin my ending remarks like this because I sense that Modern Times are central to our Being into the Woods today. This has been one of the few common themes that I have been able to trace in this wilderness of Alice.

When Glacken identified a divide between Nature and human beings, where that divide was clearly evident by the 1800s, he also sensed a lost world and a kind of Classical world. Here Charles Lemert came into the scene and here Kate Soper came into the scene. Modernity itself became rather significant for any Outdoor Adventure Education that works and/or plays in the woods.

The very contradictions of Modernity may become alive ( and even well) if we take all this just seriously enough and do it just well enough. If we can try and do this then an education might just be significant peradventure and also through one or more aspects of our very being-into-the-woods.

But where to start? Maybe we start with the Metaphysical poet Jonne Donne. Why not? We might begin an MA degree with only and just this poem as the curriculum. Let us turn back to "All Coherence Gone" from the year 1611 :-

And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,  
The Element of fire is quite put out ;  
The Sun and the earth..... where to looke for it.

.....

For every man alone thinkes he hath got  
To be a Phoenix, and that then can bee  
None of that kinde, of which he is, but hee.

....."

For me I am still searching peradventure with hope and a smile. I maybe an old fashioned guy that still reads books about that existential issue as I live as I have good and bad memories of the forest and woods. Simple? I seek? It is that seeking that Modernity has thrust into my very own self. Yet I doubt.

We might ask ourselves a kind of what if question here.

What if doubt and hope and seeking were to become reasonable again and even replace the rule of risk, rewards and ..... add to your list as you will if you will. What if?

For me I must slow down a little. The winter-time is upon us. I must use the wood from the trees to keep the home-fire burning. Who am I when it is all so simple?

Who am I if my writing of "me" texts is different?

Steve Bowles ( December 2013 )

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ENDING BEGINNING. That's It Folks.