

BIOPHILIA ASSIGNMENT

SUSTAIN 1S03

Professor: Dr John Maclachlan

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If I could have this picture showcased in an art gallery, I would've titled it, *'Flower of Life.'* It's a simple name, but it captures exactly what I feel when I am in nature; the description, as follows: *'The photo above is a depiction of a person in his most defenceless state, in touch with nature and engaging in the ordinary pleasure of smelling a flower, provoking the understanding of how life imitates art.'* The photo was taken on the 16th of November in Brampton, Ontario, near my brother's home, during midday afternoon.

I chose this subject because it reflects biophilia — the love of life. My brother's home in Brampton means a lot to me, as it signifies the possibility of a new beginning in this new country to which I only recently moved. With limitless possibilities in the flickering spark of my eyes, I look at this home and hope that I can one day create a life as beautiful as his here. When I first moved to Canada, I could only think of how much I missed my home back in India, my family and my friends; but one thing I have always appreciated about this new place is the outdoors. I harbour a deep respect for the maintenance that goes towards the scenic greenery in Canada and, little by little, I have learned to appreciate the privileges I have earned by moving here. It was a big step. An emotional one, too. Nonetheless, each blooming bud, tall tree and clear, starry night brings me closer to calling this land my home. I am not someone who could often be described as sentimental, but this picture captures me in a soft, mouldable area; where I am just one person, living life like I was just born anew, smelling a flower which I had never seen before.

The focus of nature in this photo is a flower. These austere miracles of earth mean many things to many people, and to me, they mean the existence of the cycle of life. We come from the earth, we return to the earth, and in between we garden (Alfred Austin). We experience life once, and it definitely isn't long enough to regret things or to contemplate the ephemeral quality of anything we do. Smelling this flower hasn't changed anything significantly in my life — I don't even know its name, but it grounds me. It makes me happy. Its sweet scent is fresh; I wish many things smelled like that: dishes that I haven't gotten around to doing in days, laundry piles that seem to keep growing no matter how many times I pour detergent into the washing machine, my shoes that I slip on every morning before class. But it also reminds me of how lucky I am to be subject to such kind problems. I have food in my belly. Clothes on my body. Shoes that cast footsteps of a person who has lived. This flower, its delightful smell and its beautiful azure colour makes me grateful.

In essence, according to Edward O. Wilson, biophilia is the innate human connection to living things and nature. For me, this photo is less about biophilia and more about life loving me. The kindness of the world around me no matter how difficult I've been. As I mentioned previously, I didn't want to move away from India; no more tenuous yet enjoyable family vacations, no more home-cooked meals by my mum's wondrous hands, no more useless, redundant, daily arguments with my sister. Moving away from my family was the hardest thing I have ever done. Even now, every now and then, I think about what my life would be like if I had never bothered to try expanding my life past the borders of my homeland. Everything I hated about India seems so lovable now that I don't have it anymore. There are times where I'm wondering what I'm really doing; spending so much money on university, for what? To make money at a job I hate for the next thirty to forty years?

Plants are such interesting creatures. They grow and grow until one day, they just die. I hope I am one of the creatures on this planet that gets to experience being the best version of themselves before becoming part of the earth once again. I want to be happy. I want to make as many people as I can happy. That is the best version of myself, as I have decided. One of the things I get to decide, because of how privileged I am. So, much like how this flower used to be a bud, I wonder if that little bud ever inspired anybody the way I was inspired by the fully-bloomed flower.

These flowers help keep my environment clean. Not only are they beautiful, they actively sustain me; by providing oxygen for me to breathe (Jane Marsh); so is the circle of life. This photo tells a story, one that is not only about me but the world. Wherein a man takes an inhale of a flower's scent and discovers the tender ecstasies of the planet he lives on. It says, I love you, a quiet one whispered to no one specific thing but the entirety of nature. It says nature loves me too. We plant trees, they create oxygen, and the oxygen helps us plant more trees. The back and forth of helping each other stay alive reminds me of how much I am a part of nature. That I rely on them as much as they rely on me. I am grateful they chose me.

Flowers have existed long before us, and that's how I know life imitates art. The fact that the stories of our lives closely resemble the things around us evokes emotions of serendipity, that each moment in our lives is scarcely related to the next, and that everything happens by chance. Yet, our lives are woven of a tapestry of beautiful stills after the next. Life does not only imitate art, but it is art. My life is as ordinary as any other, and despite this, it is entirely my own. The flower I am smelling in the photo above encapsulates all these unique feelings I experience. Biophilia, in fundamental concept, is the root of so many philosophies I employ in my day to day life; living each day one moment at a time whilst taking the time to also love everything around me to the fullest.

The natural world is a mystery to me. Even so, I am deeply in love with it, as it amazes me, sustains me, and inspires me. A flower is a thing people see everyday. They're everywhere. So why would something as unextraordinary as a flower provoke such intense emotions within me? Because it serves as a reminder: the world is beautiful. I am beautiful. The sun feels nice. I am alive. If anything, the frequency of the sight of these flowers makes me feel that life is all the more epic.

Works Cited

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