

Book Review:

“I Just Went Out For a Walk” by Doyle Hollister

By Monika Wikman

Dipping into the river of life, wilderness, and memory, Doyle Hollister’s memoir “I Just Went Out For a Walk” brings perspectives from the naturalist’s point of view, the deep ecologist, the poet, and from the depth psychologist as well. These perspectives guide the way of discovery, plunging into the innate wholeness at the foundation of life, nature, and the Tao.

Doyle teaches us with each page to open ourselves to communion with the natural world: the elementals and the paranormal background of the primordial psyche at the heartbeat of it all.

A depth psychologist, professor at Pacifica Graduate Institute for years, and a highly regarded marriage and family therapist practicing in Santa Barbara, CA, for more than 35 years now, Doyle is also the nephew of well renown Jungian Analyst, Jane Hollister Wheelright, and he is a great-grandson of rancher, philanthropist William Welles Hollister. Doyle grew up on the California coastal ranch that carries his family name. Doyle was part of the last generation to grow up there before the ranch was divided and most of it sold. And it is to an exquisite part of this wild ranch land that he has returned, with his wife Joanne to live out their wisdom years deep in the solace of nature.

Curiosity and discovery pervade his memoir of a life immersed in bio-filia, a soul-deep love of the natural world. With Doyle, it’s delicious to wander into a family ranch life

that offers daily communion with nature: to awaken to the spirit of wind, to enter into shape-shifting capacities with a tree, to be taken into the energy of windswept waves or the ecosystem in a tidal pool, experience the wild comfort of the searing night sky, and to be held at the dire mercy of a thunderstorm.

Doyle's natural voice and unassuming way allows the reader to easily join him in the experiences. He vividly describes the intimate landscape of his childhood immersed in nature, then his later separation from the soul place, which leads to dissociation and fragmentation. When he returns to the *geni loci*, literally coming full circle to live in the wild-lands from his childhood, he achieves inner healing and profound insight into the deeper patterns of nature and consciousness.

As we wander through this pattern in Doyle's work, we may simultaneously recognize the pattern mirrored at the heart of alchemical transformation. For example, from the *unio naturalis*, the first state of original consciousness, - where one is innocent and at one with the natural world yet undifferentiated; to the *unio mentalis*- where the old self is dismembered and we suffer these changes while the extraction of meaning from experience, insight and change become possible; to the *unus mundus*, where wholeness and oneness with all being returns and yet is a creation of the new way where opposites unite and healing states of consciousness reign.

Doyle takes us into this cycle in present moment via the freshness of child soul. It is this inner imperative childlike life force that stimulates the dialog of self and nature, as he describes intimate experiences with the

other—and with him in beginner’s mind we discover the elementals of the world beckoning. We are in no time and all time, where our experience of the primordial awakens. And we recognize the divine in nature in all things.

As Jung states, “Natural life is the nourishing soil of the soul.”¹ And Doyle’s work brings alive what is at play with nature in a co-creating living field between consciousness and the natural world. This is not “idealized” nature, but real nature in its fullness.

Doyle’s explorations question where life springs from in the psyche, and how we can find anew our place in the Tao of all relations. With the intimate whisper of a poet, and a psychologist keeping his own best council, we discover in Doyle Hollister’s work, the aching questions of our age that underlie our love of the natural world and our grief over the current deepening collective dissociation. And his book, ‘I Only Went Out for a Walk,’ also points the transformative way as he honors and integrates the extraction processes that pulled him away, returning to discover anew the soul of nature, the *geni loci*, and unfolding new wisdom and connection with primordial wholeness.

In closing, ‘I Only Went Out for a Walk’ is a remarkable journey into the refuge of peace that can be discovered in the company of wild things. And, if you read Doyle Hollister’s offering, I imagine it might change you, for it carries a healing antidote and dropped into the pond of the world, it is rippling...

¹ in CW 8, parag 800

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