

ON FORESTS, WITNESS TREES, AND BEARS:  
AN EXPLORATION OF SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL AND MULTISPECIES WITNESSING AND  
GRIEF

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## ABSTRACT

### ON FORESTS, WITNESS TREES, AND BEARS: AN EXPLORATION OF SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL AND MULTISPECIES WITNESSING AND GRIEF

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This dissertation is about Forests, their loss and the grieving that arises from their loss. The loss of ancient and old-growth forests by way of clearcutting and or anthropogenically driven disturbances, including climate change, presents the quandary of loss of both biological and cultural diversity. Following Umeek's/E. Richard Atleo's term, I suggest that "dis-ease" in the dominant relationship to forests in parts of the Western world significantly rests within inherited cultural and political pasts at play in the present, carried in much of the language and lifeways of modern Anglophone societies today. I do so by a critical topographical exploration of thematic patterns that go back to the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the oldest written account of deforestation in the history of Western civilization. I offer at the center of my inquiry a collection of witness trees as North American case studies. Each tree is a witness object, a station from which I confront and explore social-ecological grief as it has accumulated over time from English colonization, with one focusing on Indigenous cultural reclamation and place-based ecological co-management. Lastly, I turn to a multispecies exploration of social-ecological grief, using bears in North America as a face for reflection and consider who and what more is lost when old forests are degraded and gone. By asking the place question—"what place is this?"—of forests, or the Forest Question, my dissertation is thus an exploration of the connection and responsibilities to other place-based human and other-than-human communities in a rapidly changing climate.

*Keywords: Forest Question, critical topography, old-growth forests, woodlands, wildwood, culture, deforestation, reforestation, social-ecological grief and loss, mourning, environmental-based grief, eco-anxiety, bears, multispecies, memory, environmental witnessing, witness trees, culturally-modified trees, language, narrative, storytelling, mythopoeia, environmental generational amnesia, shifting baseline syndrome, dis(re)membering, Anthropocene, place-attachment, dis-ease, healing, landscape, place, site, environmental photography, spectral geography, Group of Seven, Tom Thomson, Jonathan Bordo, Ashlee Cunsolo, Robert Frost, Robert Pogue Harrison, Umeek/E. Richard Atleo, Epic of Gilgamesh, clearances, reconciliation, biocultural diversity, Indigenous-led conservation, Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole, Big Lonely Doug, wilderness, Canada, United States, North America, forestry, colonization, settler-colonial community, environmental imagination, staying with the trouble, the golden spruce, Peter Trower, logging*

Dedicated to  
Harjee and Rosheen

and

*In memoriam*

Vivian (née Kristek) Moir

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Much of this dissertation was written on lands in the treaty and traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the Credit Valley First Nation, the Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee, as well as the lands of the First Peoples of the Williams Treaties First Nations, namely the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation. It was also written on the treaty and traditional territory of the Mississauga (Michi Saagiig) Anishnaabe, as well as land that is also home to many other First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Peoples. I am deeply grateful for these lands and waters—also known as Peterborough, Jackson’s Point and Lake Simcoe, and Mississauga—and to the Indigenous peoples and communities who care for them.

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## INTRODUCTION

When Peter Trower was not working as a logger in the ancient lands of British Columbia's temperate old-growth forests, he was writing poetry about his and the experiences of other loggers there. Old-growth logging was extremely hard and dangerous work, often resulting in injuries and death. In "Like A War," Trower writes repeatedly that logging was "like a war," citing a foreman's comparison to his experience in Italy, and that, "they paid us to engage in war," referring to the fact that economics were always at play. Indeed, the economics of both war and westcoast old-growth logging involved the exploitation and disregard for the safety and well-being of both loggers and the land itself.<sup>1</sup> So many other poems such as "Waterbomber," "The Dead" (here the names of fallen loggers are remembered), "The Ridge Trees" (reference to helicopters and trenches), "Ghostcamp," "Dynamite," and "Elephants' Graveyard" speak to the overlapping nature of what it was and is to be in and at war with and in a place.

I first encountered the work of Peter Trower in Jaime Yard's 2013 article, "Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough," where she interviewed old-time loggers and explored logger poetry of Trower and Robert Swanson. She found the testimonies of interviewees and the poets to be "evidence of an incomplete, melancholic process of mourning for personal and environmental losses sustained in logging labour."<sup>2</sup> I purchased a copy of Trower's collected works in *Chainsaws in the Cathedral* and appreciated how his portrayal of logging ancient temperate rainforests is unique. His work is unique because it is fundamentally different from some popular cultural depictions; reality shows which glorify and valorize the extreme labour old-growth

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<sup>1</sup>. Peter Trower, "The Doing" (pp. 38–39), *Chainsaws In the Cathedral: Collected Woods Poems* (Victoria: Ekstasis Editions Canada Ltd., 1999).

<sup>2</sup>. Jaime Yard, "Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough: Accessing the Affective Topography of Logging Poetry and Labour," *Emotion, Space and Society* 6 (2013): 54–62, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2012.02.001>.

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logging, involving men using big tools and technologies, as man battling nature on nature's turf, and as a "way of life."<sup>3</sup>

This collection of poems offers "a realistic and well-grounded picture of what it was like to be a westcoast logger" between 1940 and 1980.<sup>4</sup> The title alone suggests how Trower perceived those forests, thus highlighting the theme of psychological conflict at play in the logging work he did. What Trower's work hints at is a very old cultural legacy that raises existential, moral, and affective questions and reflections on a particular kind of environmental relationship that many countries in the Western world, like Canada, inherited, modernized, and continues to express: deforestation and the taking of the biggest and healthiest trees while transforming wild lands into landscapes according to the dominant political and economic interests. It was once kings and emperors who sought big trees and conquests in deep woods; in modern times, it is the interests of primarily industries and corporations working within political and economic systems.

In "Goliath Country," Trower wrote,<sup>5</sup>

[...] an apocalypse of wood  
and a new void in the universe  
where Goliaths once stood

They will come to remove the bodies  
while the echoes still linger  
in driven chariots driven  
by the hard ancient hunger [...]

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<sup>3</sup>. History Television's *Axe Men* (2008–2019), Discovery Channel's *Heli Loggers* (2009), and Netflix's *Big Timber* (2020–present). Discovery Channel's United Kingdom website describes the show as a visual transportation of viewers to the forests of Northern British Columbia where "a rowdy group of loggers risk their lives to provide the world with lumber [...]. Performing one of the most dangerous jobs, the loggers use an enormous Boeing Chinook helicopter—the only one of its kind in Canada—as they work against the clock, battling perilous terrain and extreme weather." It also claims and frames heli-logging of ancient forests as "an eco-friendly, environmentally sustainable mission." Discovery Channel (2021), "Heli-Loggers," accessed 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021: <https://press.discovery.com/uk/dsc/programs/heli-loggers/>

<sup>4</sup>. *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>5</sup>. Peter Trower, "Goliath Country" (pp. 45), *Chainsaws In the Cathedral*

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The theme in such human–land relations was so frequently experienced as humans versus trees or humans versus mountain forest and its resistance to logging. Stories of epic proportions, one might say. As I discuss in Part One, the theme of strong men venturing into the deep, ancient woods to confront and conquer a force greater than themselves is nothing new; it is part of a legacy as old as Western civilization itself.

While the people doing the hard labour of felling giant, ancient trees was something once seen as great achievements of the strongest and bravest men, the people with the most power are, today, profiting from seated positions in business and government buildings. The ones who are on or near the frontlines—loggers, First Nation peoples, and other locals—have a very different experience of what it is to see ancient wildwoods fall. Whether the trees and forests are loved and or logged proves a highly complicated topography intersecting the land and something of the soul or psyche.

### **Kiid K'iyaaas, the Golden Spruce**

The beginnings of this dissertation on social–ecological grief goes back to before the start of my Master's thesis on witness trees and ecological degradation and loss. In 2013 I visited Vancouver Island for the first time. While en route, I was reading John Vaillant's work of non-fiction, *The Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness, and Greed*. In telling how an ex-timber surveyor and logger named Grant Hadwin came to kill a most rare tree known as the Golden Spruce (to the settler-colonial community) and Kiid K'iyaaas (to the Haida Nation), Vaillant provides a detailed exploration of old-growth logging in British Columbia.

After walking and reflecting on the historical layers of certain places such as Victoria, Cathedral Grove (bearing signs of logging and arson), and Meares Island (still nearly one hundred per cent intact primary forest) with Vaillant's book as a guide, I saw the overall place—Vancouver Island and by implication other places in



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Canada—in a radically different and conflicted light. *The Golden Spruce* has since been placed on my shelf, but the story of this tree, its people, the land, and the person who killed it remained restlessly open in my mind.

The Golden Spruce was a Sitka spruce tree with a rare genetic anomaly preventing it from producing chlorophyll, giving it a yellow or golden appearance. The original story or myth belongs to people of the Haida Nation. To my knowledge, Pansy Collison is the only one who has formally published a written account of this traditionally oral story. The Haida myth about the golden spruce is about respect for the more-than-human world and all beings.<sup>6</sup>

As Collison tells it, the story is about how an entire Haida community was lost to a terrible snowstorm. Only a young Haida boy and his grandfather survived. With no one and nothing remaining, the boy and his grandfather left the village. Grief-stricken, the boy—against the warning of his grandfather—looks back toward his home. At that point, the boy begins to transform, becoming rooted to the ground he turned into the golden tree, Kiid K'iyaaas or “Old Tree.”

I encourage a direct read of Pansy Collison’s chapter on the Golden Spruce as I cannot include the whole text here. Collison begins by telling the story of the Haida boy-turned-tree, and then she speaks of the person who killed him, Grant Hadwin, and what he wrote to the press about his actions. She then includes what the media said about the golden spruce, Hadwin, and the crime. Lastly, Collison pays tribute to Kiid K'iyaaas, the Haida boy, by reflecting on how he silently witnessed all that happened to the land and the Haida Nation over the centuries. Kiid K'iyaaas bore witness to how the Haida thrived by respecting the more-than-human world, the

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<sup>6</sup> Pansy Collison, “Golden Spruce,” *Haida Eagle Treasures: Traditional Stories and Memories from a Teacher of the Tsath Lanas Clan* (Brush Education Inc., 2010/2017): 139-151. I highly encourage anyone reading this to refer to Collison’s version of the story first and read it in full. In this chapter, Collison also writes about Grant Hadwin killing this tree, what he and the media said about the tree, the myth, the story.

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atrocities and injustices committed by colonizers before and after the birth of Canada, and how the Haida people and culture continue to stand proud and unbroken upon their ancestral lands.

The Haida boy's grief transformed him. Indeed, grief is a "threshold emotion" in that it marks the shift from one state or experience of reality to another.<sup>7</sup> It has the power to change individuals and groups.

The story of Kiid K'iyaas grew when Grant Hadwin made the felling cuts in the tree. To the Haida, the killing of the Golden Spruce was experienced the same as a child being murdered.<sup>8</sup> The tree was a sacred member of their community as well as an important memory keeper and witness to them, their belonging to the land, and to the place itself. To Hadwin, though he was grieving the loss of the ancient forests, cutting down this tree was an act of removing what he saw as a distraction from the larger environmental crisis: the loss of ancient forests.

Hadwin was a member of the settler-colonial community. He was known amongst locals for his ability to be completely at home in the wild woods regardless of the season. Navigating the forests as a timber surveyor suited his physical abilities well, but the work of drawing the cutting lines upon the land for the loggers meant that he was both witnessing and participating in the destruction of these ancient and culturally significant wildwoods. This work took a toll on Hadwin's conscience, and in time he changed how he made a living, running his own small, sustainable sawmill while pressing politicians and the industry for major changes to logging practices in British Columbia. His pleas for radical change in the way forests were treated went unheard, however.

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<sup>7</sup> Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Pansy Collison, "Golden Spruce," *Haida Eagle Treasures: Traditional Stories and Memories from a Teacher of the Tsath Lanas Clan* (Brush Education Inc., 2010/2017): 139-151.

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During this time, the golden spruce stood on land that the provincial government leased out to one of Canada's largest logging companies. The company left the tree and an area of forest surrounding it as a tourist attraction. While visitors were dazzled by the marvellous tree, business continued as usual in the rest of the woods. For Hadwin, all the ancient forests were just as special and important as this rare tree.

Ecologically grief-stricken and conscience-tormented, Hadwin was further frustrated by society not seeing the greater losses happening every day. In January of 1997, he ventured out into the forest with a chainsaw and made deep cuts into the tree. Soon after, strong winds brought the tree down along the banks of the Yakoun River where it remains to this day under the care of the Haida Nation. Hadwin claimed responsibility in a letter to the local media. Many were bereft and outraged, and while there was no open support for him, some sympathized with his hatred for big timber companies and apathetic politicians. Instead of appearing in court, Hadwin vanished into the waters or the forests to the north and was never seen or heard from again. In a sense, Hadwin's story echoes something of Peter Trower's other poem, "A Man Gone Mad With Logging,"<sup>9</sup> in that the reality of old-growth logging can have severe effects on the wellbeing of the psyche. The word "madness" in Vaillant's book title refers to this inner torment.

Similarly, in a documentary film, titled *Hadwin's Judgement* by Sasha Snow, a Haida elder narrates the opening scene showing a man, representing Hadwin, emerging from the sea. The narrator tells a story of the *Gaagixiid*, a mythical Wildman who, having been lost at sea, returns not as a human, but more as a

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<sup>9</sup>. "A man gone mad with logging, / has cut his roommate's throat for no cause / stolen a boat this cold camp Sunday / rows the bay in eccentric circles / Making no further move to escape. / he lets out a / howl every so often / like a maimed animal in a trap / The world is his waking nightmare now [...]." In the rest of the poem, Peter Trower mentions another similar case and contrasts these to "the normal madness of loggers." *Chainsaws in the Cathedral*, 79–80.

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revenant-being with a warning.<sup>10</sup> In overlapping the Haida myth of the *Gaagixiid* with the story of Hadwin and the golden spruce, Snow captures how the harm inflicted upon the land created deep psychological wounds or scars upon the one partly responsible for the tree's death. Such grief was profoundly transformative and destructive. Hadwin's grief presents the audience with a question of *how* one should be changed by loss, especially loss as a result of one's complicity. It brings up further questions of relationship, belonging, and responsibility. As with the Haida myth of the *Gaagixiid*,<sup>11</sup> after feeling lost and performing his misguidedly destructive and harmful actions, Hadwin chose exile (and possibly death as he was never seen or heard from again) when he took to the forests beyond Haida Gwaii.

I do not intend to sympathize or memorialize Hadwin and his part of the story in any way. Rather, the point of including this Canadian addition to the story of the golden spruce is to explain why it is one that should not be shelved or forgotten, especially when ancient temperate rainforests of British Columbia and elsewhere remain endangered.

Trees like the golden spruce, in life and in death, bear witness to both their own biological and ecological as well as human or cultural legacies. As a whole, Collison's account, Vaillant's account, Snow's account, one academic<sup>12</sup> and a few media publications along with a clone of the tree itself at the University of British

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<sup>10</sup>. Sasha Snow, *Hadwin's Judgement* (Canada: Sitka Spruce Films, Passion Planet, The NFB and Sasha Snow Film Production, 2015), <http://www.sashasnow.com/hadwins-judgement-dvd>.

Similarly, Gwaai Edenshaw and Helen Haig-Brown's 2018 Haida film, *SGaarwaay K'uuna* or *Edge of the Knife* depicts the story of a grief-stricken Haida man who, after accidentally causing the death of the son of his best friend, retreats deep into the forest where he gradually turns into a kind of *Gaagixiid* or mythical wild man. It was the first film by members of the Haida Nation and spoken completely in Haida.

<sup>11</sup>. Gwaii Edenshaw and Helen Haig-Brown (2018), *SGaarwaay K'uuna / Edge of the Knife* (100 minutes).

<sup>12</sup>. Jaime Yard, "Softwood Lumber and the Golden Spruce: Two Perspectives on the Material and Discursive Construction of British Columbian Forests," *Topia* 21, no. Spring (2009): 85–103, <http://topia.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/topia/article/view/23256>.

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Columbia's botanical gardens<sup>13</sup> gather together a story representing the larger issues still at play today in the remaining pockets of ancient temperate rainforest of the Pacific Northwest, many of which continue to be logged.

To destroy these forests is to clear away the cultural-ecological legacies of the many First Nations who still depend on them. The intensive logging of ancient forests is a destructive colonial act that also threatens the biological and ecological legacies of the species therein and the ecosystems themselves. Preserving samples of these forests in parks for citizens and visitors is simply not enough. It is this mainstream modern approach to land—kept for pockets of recreation and conservation while the rest is left open for industrial extraction and development—that is of concern.

When I speak of “Western” societal relations and approaches to forests, I am referring in particular to the typical ways woodlands are managed by forestry (science), logging (industry, economics), and political (management) agencies. Such Western institutional views of forests are those that originate from and are historically rooted in Northern European—namely British, German, and French influences (all places with Roman and Holy Roman colonial histories) such as empire forestry<sup>14</sup>—and their colonial extensions, Canada and the United States. Canada (and British Columbia specifically) is unique, however, in that it has control over some of the remaining great ancient wildwoods: namely the temperate rainforests of the Pacific coastal regions and the vast boreal forest. Here, I focus more on the eastern and western forest regions of Canada and the United States, and since both have

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<sup>13</sup>. Daniel Mosquin, “Botany Photo of the Day: *Picea Sitchensis* ‘Bentham’s Sunlight,’” UBC Botanical Garden, 2012, <https://botanyphoto.botanicalgarden.ubc.ca/2005/05/picea-sitchensis-benthams-sunlight/>. Zoe Mcknight, “Whatever Happened to Haida Gwaii’s Revered Golden Spruce?,” *Vancouver Sun*, 2012, <http://www.vancouver.sun.com/technology/Whatever+happened+Haida+Gwaii+revered+Golden+Spruce/7318123/story.html>.

<sup>14</sup>. For more on this topic, see Gregory A. Barton, *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

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British colonial histories (at least insofar as the English language is concerned in the United States). I also include some reference to forests in Northern Europe to contextualize certain aspects of cultural heritages, namely where and how attitudes of forestry developed and remain a concern in its expression in places like British Columbia.

Each nation mentioned above has its own idea of nationally and regionally iconic “forests” (English Greenwood—e.g., Royal Forest of Dean and Sherwood; the *Deutscher Wald*—e.g., Bavarian and Black forests; the Canadian Wilderness—e.g., Algonquin Provincial Park, the Great Bear Rainforest and British Columbia’s coastal Douglas-fir forests more generally; the American Garden of Eden—e.g., Sequoia and Yosemite National Parks<sup>15</sup>). These are examples of places of the Western environmental imagination—places imbued with narratives, identities, politics, economics, and cultural memory over generations. Hence, there are forests that general populaces imagine, perceive in certain ways, or remembers; and then there are the forest ecosystems, spaces that host other realities for other peoples and other beings.

This is particularly the case in Canada where there remain great regions of public or Crown land, most of which is located beyond most of the major settlement areas. Many citizens and visitors are more likely to imagine “Canada’s” forests based on what they experience in parks; not the mix of intact and industrially disturbed forest landscapes beyond park limits. Thus, the focus is on the distinction between forests that are managed primarily for timber extraction and forests managed for conservation and public use (though, some are used for both, like Ontario’s

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<sup>15</sup>. For more on this place as a topic in American environmentalism, see Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage Books Edition, 1996).

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Algonquin Provincial Park<sup>16</sup>). I am more concerned with the issue of the “forest” dichotomy that is much like the German linguistic distinction of *Forst* and *Wald* (discussed in Part One) more than notions of conservation free from any tree cutting that echoes the myth of Canadian wilderness, which is partly premised on an absence of humans in woodlands.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, my use of the term “Western” also refers to the way woodlands are more often places visited (places outside towns, cities, and other developed areas) and valued according to how they are used and appreciated—from economic and use-values to the aesthetic.

As Jaime Yard put it, forests are “hybrid nature–cultural things,” shaped by generations of use. In Canada, forests are framed as “external objects for trade and conservation,” a common occurrence in public discourse, she argues, that “limits public debate.”<sup>18</sup> Despite this, however, there remains a diversity of views and values of forests within countries like Canada, such as Indigenous approaches to forest management (e.g., Haida Gwaii) and municipalities that take a community forestry approach to managing the local woodlands.<sup>19</sup> Traditionally, however, it is the way forests are an outside-and-beyond-the-city/town that is a defining feature in common relationships with woodlands and the larger multispecies communities therein. Many citizens appreciate forests for their beauty, ecosystem services, and more; but, nationally, ancient and old-growth forests continue to be logged. So, what do I mean when I speak of “forests” and forests that are “ancient,” “old-growth,” or “new?”

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<sup>16</sup>. Mike Crawley, “Algonquin Park Commercial Logging Plan up for Renewal in 2021,” *CBC News*, December 22, 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/algonquin-park-logging-2021-1.5849770>.

<sup>17</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, “Jack Pine — Wilderness Sublime or the Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 27, no. 4 (1993): 98–128, <https://doi.org/10.3138/jcs.27.4.98>.

<sup>18</sup>. Yard, “Softwood Lumber and the Golden Spruce: Two Perspectives on the Material and Discursive Construction of British Columbian Forests.”

<sup>19</sup>. Naomi Krogman and Tom Beckley, “Corporate ‘Bail-Outs’ and Local ‘Buyouts’: Pathways to Community Forestry?,” *Society & Natural Resources* 15, no. 2 (2002): 109–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/089419202753403300>.

## Forest and Related Terms

At a basic understanding, forests are habitats influenced by culture(s) and the residing multispecies community; they are not *just* a collection of trees in other words. They are multispecies assemblages, including the presence of humans.<sup>20</sup> According to H. Gyde Lund, author of a 2014 report on forest definitions for the Third Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, there are more than sixteen-hundred definitions of “forest” owing to a wide range of characteristics, including ecology, human use, tree cover, and administration.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, as a keyword, *forest* frequently imports things concerned with “before” (antiquity, the past) and “outside” (from the Latin word *foris*). While I go further into the etymological and historical meanings behind the word “forest” in Part One, I set out here to clarify what is meant by terms used throughout this dissertation. Throughout this work, I am concerned with three broad categories of “forests:” ancient, old-growth, and what has been referred to as “new forests” (a term that often includes tree plantations, or “working forests” discussed in chapter two).

Ancient forests (also called primary forests<sup>22</sup>) are forests millennia in the making, containing myriad diverse biological and cultural legacies and presences

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<sup>20</sup> Take, for example, oak savannas of the east coast maintained by indigenous communities for the purpose of hunting. M. D. Abrams and G. J. Nowacki, “Native Americans as Active and Passive Promoters of Mast and Fruit Trees in the Eastern USA,” *The Holocene* 18, no. 7 (2008): 1123–37, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959683608095581>.

<sup>21</sup> H. Gyde Lund, “Definitions of Forest, Deforestation, Afforestation and Reforestation,” *Forest Information Services* (Gainesville, VA, 2014), <http://home.comcast.net/~gyde/DEFpaper.htm>, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> C. F. Kormos, B. Mackey, D. A. DellaSala, N. Krumpel, T. Jaeger, R. A. Mittermeier, C. Filardi (2018), “Primary Forests: Definition, Status and Future Prospects for Global Conservation,” *Encyclopedia of the Anthropocene*, Vol 2. (2018), 31–41. Kormos and colleagues define *primary forest* as, “(1) largely undisturbed by industrial-scale land uses and infrastructure such as logging, mining, and dams and roads; (2) the result of ecological and evolutionary processes including the full range of successional stages over time and with natural disturbance processes operating within historic bounds; (3) more likely to possess the full complement of their evolved, characteristic plant and animal species with few if any exotics; (4) dominated by a largely continuous tree canopy cover, and (5) have unpolluted soil and water. These forests are major strongholds for biodiversity and include the planet’s most biodiverse terrestrial ecosystems. They provide essential climate change mitigation and adaptation, freshwater, and other



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other than those of settler-colonial societies. They pre-date intensive or modern industrial human disturbances. Here, Indigenous societies and the countless species came to be coevolved over and after millions of years of evolution. Thus, these unique sylvan assemblages of biological legacies and relational networks cannot be regrown within any foreseeable lifetime or by one single will or agency.

The second broad category is that of old-growth: woodlands that hold the histories of many species and peoples, including presence of settler-colonials and their national legacies. Old-growth forests are characterized by a mature multispecies community. These forests and their ages are defined according to ecosystem type and how the province or nation time-stamps them. For instance, on the western coast of Canada, forests are considered “old-growth” when they reach an age of two-hundred and fifty years or more (despite the fact that the original forests are many millennia old).<sup>23</sup> In the eastern woodland region in Canada, a forest is considered “old-growth” when it is approximately one-hundred and forty years old or more.<sup>24</sup> In Ontario, however, less than two per cent of the pre-settlement eastern white and red pine forests remain that house trees up to five-hundred years old. Similarly, in Algonquin Provincial Park, “one of the last refuges of original hemlock, yellow birch, and sugar maple forests in Ontario,” trees can reach up to six-hundred years old.<sup>25</sup> “Old-growth” is a term, therefore, that occupies periods after colonization and European settlement and, in particular, logging of forests for the biggest and best trees (increasing significantly in the 1700s in the eastern regions

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ecosystem service benefits. They are also critically important for livelihoods and for cultural and spiritual reasons and are home for many Indigenous Peoples and local communities.”

<sup>23</sup>. Jim Pojar, “Old-Growth Forests in British Columbia” (Smithers, 2020), [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/forestry/stewardship/old-growth-forests/written-submissions/150\\_jim-pojar.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/forestry/stewardship/old-growth-forests/written-submissions/150_jim-pojar.pdf).

<sup>24</sup>. Peter Quinby et al., “Forest Landscape Baselines: Definitions of Old-Growth Eastern White Pine and Red Pine Forests for the Temagami Region of Ontario,” *Ancient Forest Exploration & Research* (Powassan, 1995).

<sup>25</sup>. M. Henry and Peter Quinby, “A Preliminary Survey of Old-Growth Forest Landscapes on the West Side of Algonquin Provincial Park, Ontario,” *Ancient Forest Exploration & Research*, 2006, 1–28., p 2.

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and the 1800s in the western regions),<sup>26</sup> whereas “ancient” forest often refers to woodlands that pre-date these times. Indeed, “only about 0.4% of North America’s original presettlement old-growth eastern white pine forests” remained by the early 1990s.<sup>27</sup> Most of the ancient forests of North America are found in the western and northern regions, such as the highly endangered coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem in British Columbia where “60% of its total range [has been] converted to human use.”<sup>28</sup>

The third category is that of highly disturbed forest landscapes in which traces and memories of the biological legacies of trees and other species as well as the cultural legacies of people who came before the current dominant society are lost to clearcutting or over-selective logging (as was the case with the eastern white pine<sup>29</sup>). For instance, in Scotland, stands of trees have been labelled “New Forest,” but are scarcely more than planted stands of one or two species of evergreen, often fast-growing Douglas-fir and Sitka spruce, trees indigenous to North America.<sup>30</sup> These are forests with industrial beginnings and are often not intended to replace the old-growth or ancient forests felled for timber. These are industrial forest landscapes intended for intensive mass human consumption and undergo rotational changes within a century.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>. Ian D Thompson, Julie H Simard, and Rodger D Titman, “Historical Changes in White Pine (*Pinus Strobus* L.) Density in Algonquin Park, Ontario, During the 19 Th Century,” *BioOne* 26, no. 1 (2006): 61–71, [https://doi.org/10.3375/0885-8608\(2006\)26\[61:hciwpp\]2.0.co;2](https://doi.org/10.3375/0885-8608(2006)26[61:hciwpp]2.0.co;2).

<sup>27</sup>. Quinby et al., “Forest Landscape Baselines: Definitions of Old-Growth Eastern White Pine and Red Pine Forests for the Temagami Region of Ontario.”

<sup>28</sup>. Richard Schuster, “Systematic Conservation Area Design in the Coastal Douglas Fir Zone,” Peter Arcese Lab, Department of Forest and Conservation Sciences, Faculty of Forestry, UBC Vancouver Campus, 2015, <http://arcese.forestry.ubc.ca/research/>.

<sup>29</sup>. See the section on “Eastern White Pines” in Amalia C. Moir, “Mythopoeia Sylvatica: A Critical Topographical Exploration of the Once and Future Forests of North America through Six Witness Trees” (Trent University, 2016), <http://digitalcollections.trentu.ca/objects/etd-468>.

<sup>30</sup>. Wynet Smith, “Energy Infrastructure Pipeline Geospatial Datasets in Canada : Hard to Find , Inconsistent , Incomplete,” no. October 2015 (2017): 1–8.

<sup>31</sup>. Juan A. Blanco, “Forests May Need Centuries to Recover Their Original Productivity after Continuous Intensive Management: An Example from Douglas-Fir Stands,” *Science of the Total Environment* 437 (2012): 91–103, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2012.07.082>.

I also periodically use the term *wildwood*. While reference to the oldest kind of forest, “wildwood,” comes from British historical ecologist, Oliver Rackham who uses it to refer to “vegetation before it was affected by [any] settled human activities.”<sup>32</sup> I use the term according to the etymological association between “wild” and “wood” that leads to the meaning “will” (from the German *Wilde*).<sup>33</sup> They are “wild” woods because of the many *wills* that shape(d) them. In other words, I use “wildwood” to speak of the way that woodlands are co-created assemblages and communities—expressions of different forms and ways of life.

The specific forest regions that this dissertation is most concerned with are the temperate forests of North America: the eastern woodland regions and the coastal temperate rainforests of the Pacific northwest in Canada and the United States. Recent research from the Douglas-fir ecosystems has been revealing how much is still unknown about trees and ancient forests. For instance, pioneering research by Dr Suzanne Simard of the University of British Columbia has revealed how parent Douglas-fir trees care for or support their seedlings through mycelial networks in the soil.<sup>34</sup> Other findings have been discussed by German forester Peter Wohlleben about how trees communicate with each other, sharing nutrients, water, and warnings of threats such as insect infestations, thanks to the interconnecting fungal network in the soil. Scientists are also only just beginning to tap into the medicinal potential of the fungal kingdom, most of which depends on ancient and

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<sup>32</sup>. Oliver Rackham, *Woodlands* (London: William Collins, 2015), 20–21.

<sup>33</sup>. Robert Macfarlane, *The Wild Places* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 92.

<sup>34</sup>. Suzanne W Simard and Daniel M Durall, “Mycorrhizal Networks: A Review of Their Extent, Function, and Importance,” *Canadian Journal of Botany* 82, no. 8 (2004): 1140–65, <https://doi.org/10.1139/b04-116>. Suzanne W. Simard, “The Foundational Role of Mycorrhizal Networks in Self-Organization of Interior Douglas-Fir Forests,” *Forest Ecology and Management* 258, no. SUPPL. (2009): 95–107, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foreco.2009.05.001>. For more, see Suzanne Simard, *Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest* (New York: Allen Lane, 2021).

old-growth forests.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, much Indigenous traditional knowledge of medicinal plants has been diminishing since colonization and cultural change.<sup>36</sup>

There is so much that has been lost and much that remains at risk, and scholars and other authors are still only in the beginning stages of expanding discussions about what it is to grieve the degradation and loss of old forests.<sup>37</sup> The very conversation about grief and mourning the dead is still not a commonplace topic in many modern, Westernized societies like Great Britain, Canada, and the United States (though there is much diversity within these multicultural nations). While some conversations have been developing, such as American mortician and author, Caitlin Doughty's web series and book on human death,<sup>38</sup> as well as a YouTube series by The Guardian on talking about death,<sup>39</sup> deeper discussions on the topic of death beyond the human and how it pertains to humans remain on the fringe despite social-environmental traumas being experienced and witness around the world.

### **Environmental-based Grief and Social-Ecological Mourning**

The First World War was the first mass collective traumatic event of its kind. During this time, Sigmund Freud wrote "Mourning and Melancholia," the first

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<sup>35</sup>. Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds, and Shape our Futures* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2020).

<sup>36</sup>. Yadav Uprety et al., "Traditional Use of Medicinal Plants in the Boreal Forest of Canada: Review and Perspectives," *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine* 8, no. 1 (2012): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1186/1746-4269-8-7>.

<sup>37</sup>. Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman (Eds), *Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017).

<sup>38</sup>. Caitlin Doughty, *Ask A Mortician*, YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/AskAMortician>. ; Caitlin Doughty, *From Here to Eternity: Traveling the World to Find the Good Death* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2017).

Doughty uploaded a video to her channel exploring the budding practice of composing human remains instead of casket burial or cremation. Interestingly, Doughty and a friend developing this alternative and eco-friendly method of processing human remains have been trying to legalize this practice in California, but the state continues to refuse any attention to this. In places like Colorado where people can have their remains composted, some efforts are being made to have the human composed soil used to restore degraded woodlands. For more, see Caitlin Doughty, "Let's Visit the Human Composting Facility!" YouTube (22<sup>nd</sup> October 2021): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_LJSEZ\\_pl3Y&t=1405s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_LJSEZ_pl3Y&t=1405s).

<sup>39</sup>. The Guardian, "Death: talk to us!", YouTube (24<sup>th</sup> September 2019): accessed 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIK7WtBpLME>

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discussion of mourning that also anticipated what is known today as major depressive disorder or clinical depression. Its relevance here is that this publication was one of the first formal works to recognize that people can mourn for things and beings other than loved ones—that *mourning is not limited to people we love*. Things such as house and home or homeland, or tragic changes to something dear if not completely lost (e.g., a loved one who is no longer him or herself as a result of physical and or psychological illness or trauma). Today’s discussions about ecological grief show that mourning can be a response to, for example, the complete loss of or changes to a being, species, or place/assemblage; a woodland behind your childhood home in which you played is cleared for a suburb; or that woodland is disturbed to the point that the soundscape changes (i.e., birdsong is diminished/lost or drowned out by noise pollution);<sup>40</sup> or the night sky of childhood has disappeared behind light pollution.<sup>41</sup> Freud, however, did not discuss attachments to multispecies community or ecosystems.

Freud focused on how mourning was a healthy response to loss, a natural process that allows people to *work through* their grief. In contrast, melancholia is mourning that has become pathological in that it is disruptive to the individual’s mourning process; it does not reach an end, and instead turns inward towards the individual. Emotions such as grief block a person’s ability to find a new “love object” to replace what or who was lost. Namely, from Freud’s perspective, melancholia involves chronic and debilitating issues of shame, guilt, and betrayal. It also involves an *unconscious* loss, which is of one’s *sense of self*. This is a key aspect of melancholia that differs from mourning: there is self-depreciation, loathing, or devaluation that

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<sup>40</sup>. Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman (Eds), *Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017).

<sup>41</sup>. Paul Bogard, *The End of Night: Searching for Natural Darkness in an Age of Artificial Light* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2013).

takes place that prolongs an intense attachment to grief. It as though one is punishing oneself.

Ultimately, Freud's modern formulation of mourning is that grief is "a problem-solving, task-oriented, goal-seeking process."<sup>42</sup> Mourning is healthy because it allows us to work through grief rather than let grief take over into depression (or melancholia as Freud called it). When mourning becomes pathological, it is difficult if not impossible to form healthy new relationships. (In an environmental context, this might be found in the case of novel ecosystems and debates about whether they should be embraced or the old ecosystem maintained by ritually destroying invasive species). Then there is a question of *how long* one can mourn before it becomes "pathological" or a disorder, such as "Prolonged Grief Disorder"<sup>43</sup> or "major depression" with a two-month "bereavement exclusion" period for patients' grieving the recent loss of a loved one.<sup>44</sup> Essentially, everyone and each culture has their own relationships with loss and ways of defining, understanding, and processing grief, including mourning rituals.

Mourning rituals in the modern Western world have taken something of a backseat and death and the dying are not discussed so comfortably or readily.<sup>45</sup> Curiously, one of the first mainstream processes in the case of a human death—dealing with the deceased's remains—is governed more by the funeral industry and legal steps. Death is seen as something that happens, but until then so much effort is invested into fear or avoidance of death (and ageing<sup>46</sup>) even though death and killing

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<sup>42</sup>. David A. Garrick, "The Work of the Witness in Psychotherapeutic Rituals of Grief," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 8, no. 2 (1994): 85–113.

<sup>43</sup>. "Prolonged Grief: Official Diagnostic Criteria," *The Center for Prolonged Grief*, Columbia School of Social Work. Accessed 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021: <https://complicatedgrief.columbia.edu/professionals/complicated-grief-professionals/diagnosis/>

<sup>44</sup>. American Psychiatric Association, "Major Depressive Disorder and the 'Bereavement Exclusion,'" *American Psychiatric Publishing*, 2013, [www.psychiatry.org](http://www.psychiatry.org).

<sup>45</sup>. Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2015).

<sup>46</sup>. Regarding a "youth-obsessed society." Robert Pogue Harrison, *Juvenescence: A Cultural History of Our Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), xi.

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are so often fetishized by Hollywood. Western, especially North American culture, is particularly ambivalent and fearful of death—specifically their own mortality.<sup>47</sup>

Death and loss, however, have become center stage at the global level once more; except this time, unlike the Great Wars, it is the mass death of other species and whole ecosystems in addition to the lives of vulnerable people in places suffering from war, droughts, famine, and the degradation of ancestral lands. The coronavirus of 2019 that continues to play out also contributes to the fear, loss, and strife of the Anthropocene or “Human Age.” Grief can no longer be limited to our loved ones, homes, or animal companions. It is forcing entire populations to reconsider the boundaries of who and what is vulnerable and mournable, and how they might fit into a rapidly changing world. This is prompting scholars to explore what it means to grief for self, other people, other species, and places in a rapidly changing world.

Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman, who are at the forefront of exploring mourning in an environmental context, noted that other theories about mourning come from Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler. Derrida argued that mourning does not attempt to achieve a “pre-loss state.”<sup>48</sup> Here, mourning is concerned with how the lost are remembered and grieved, how the mourners decide to be changed by loss, and how they respond to it in light of how grief transforms them. Then there is Butler’s theory of mourning, which is “primed on shared vulnerability, transformation, and the question of what bodies count as mournable.”<sup>49</sup> Mourning is thus extended into the political as a form of resistance to the status quo. What is interesting about Butler’s notion of grieving is that who and what are mourned are reflections that speak about the mourners, their belief systems, and values. She also

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<sup>47</sup>. Phillippe Ariès, Patricia M. Ranum (trans.), “Forbidden Death” (pp. 85–107), *Western Attitudes towards Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1975). Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2015).

<sup>48</sup>. Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman (eds), *Mourning Nature*, 9–10.

<sup>49</sup>. *Ibid*, 11.

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argues that whether people mourn for the loss of wild trees and woodlands or not does not matter; ecological losses still have an effect and influence to some degree. Ecological grief will not simply go away; it must be confronted.

In one of her books, Donna Haraway argues what she states in the title, “staying with the trouble” is the vital work of ecological mourning.<sup>50</sup> The mass loss of and harm to species and ecosystems is something that cannot be mourned quietly or passively, and it certainly cannot be ignored anymore. For Haraway, ecological mourning is about taking responsibility—response-*ability*—that those of us who are able to respond have greater responsibility to act. Thus, it is about reconciliation and working together with other peoples as well as other species.

“Working with” for Haraway is a kind of *sympoiesis* (“making with”), as she calls it.<sup>51</sup> The beings in particular of whom she speaks are other-than-human and are more of the soil than the sky.<sup>52</sup> What better being to consider than fungi, as one example; a form of life that is the mediator of the life-death-life process. They, or more specifically mycelium, interconnect the world below, digesting and delivering the dead back to the humus for new growth, new beginnings. Then there is the matsutake mushroom discussed by Anna Tsing: a highly coveted species that resists cultivation, growing only in disturbed or degraded grounds, such as clearcuts, where it inspires fringe economies.<sup>53</sup> Mycelium and mushrooms are but one example that inspire new ways of seeing and thinking about how places are made and what is possible moving forward in the face of ecological loss.

Haraway’s approach expands the boundaries of what and who is mournable. Moving beyond Freud’s conception of mourning, Derrida, Butler, and Haraway

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<sup>50</sup>. Donna Haraway, *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (London: Duke University Press, 2016), 11.

<sup>51</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>. Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life After Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Oxford University Press, 2015).



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provide arguments for the importance of ecological grieving as not only a healthy process for working through loss as Freud put it, but also as strong political acts that perpetuate discontent, distress, and disruption to the status quo to bring about positive changes. Grief does not always have to arrive at an end. Indeed, grief is always contextualized in specific cases with many variables; it is not abstract. In the situation of losing a loved one or a house, grief might lessen over time or become less frequently experienced (weekly from daily, monthly from weekly, and so on). In the case of mass social and ecological injustices, however, grief and expressions of mourning play important roles. Take, for instance, the recent protests at Fairy Creek on Vancouver Island.<sup>54</sup> The constant return to the site to express grief over the loss of ancient woodlands and wildlife has and can make a positive (but not always a perfect) difference. The Clayoquot Sound protests of the 1990s were successful in protecting old-growth forests, but the new land-use planning map that was made excluded Indigenous representation.<sup>55</sup> This is one reason why it is critical that environmental mourning is approached from a social-ecological or biocultural understanding, and that a diversity of voices is included. This is especially important for new environmental thinking as some traditional environmental imaginations (e.g., wilderness) of the Western world have been characterized by the exclusion of people and beings deemed “outside” the European or settler-colonial community.

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<sup>54</sup>. Jen Osborne and Leyland Cecco, “Anti-Logging Protest Becomes Canada’s Biggest Ever Act of Civil Disobedience,” *The Guardian*, September 8, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/sep/08/canada-logging-protest-vancouver-island>.

<sup>55</sup>. Bruce Braun, *The Intemperate Rainforest*,

### Background: The Environmental Imagination

One of my contentions is that the meanings that accrue to trees, woods, and forests—as to any natural species or habitat—are opaque to us unless understood in cultural context.

– Jane T. Costlow<sup>56</sup>

The environmental imagination is about perceptions of the environment. It is also about the power of language and narrative to shape the imagination and perceptions of reality. In *The Environmental Imagination*, Lawrence Buell states that, “How we imagine a thing, true or false, affects our conduct toward it, the conduct of nations as well as persons.”<sup>57</sup> During the nineteenth century, there were many people who were in awe of the titan sequoia trees, but took on the challenge of bringing them down using dynamite, axes and saws, and even fire to prove it could be done and to gain profit by putting pieces of the trees on display.<sup>58</sup> It was not until a priest from New England visited these giant trees and saw in those groves a cathedral, a natural wonder of his Lord’s creation. After he began preaching this, people began to perceive the place differently, as something sacred and important to protect.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Schama noted that “It was an act of Congress in 1864 that established Yosemite Valley as a place of sacred significance,” especially “during the war which marked the moment of the Fall in the American Garden.” The wilderness “needed hallowing visitations from New England preachers like Thomas Starr King,” photographers, authors, poets, and painters, “to represent it as the holy park of the West [...]; an American re-creation.”<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>. Jane T. Costlow, *Heart-Pine Russia: Walking and Writing the Nineteenth-Century Forest* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 5.

<sup>57</sup>. Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), 3.

<sup>58</sup>. Donald Culross Peattie, “Giant Sequoia” (pp. 1–11) and “Coastal Redwoods” (pp. 12–25) in *A Natural History of North American Trees* (San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 2013); Karen Wonders, “Big Trees as Trophies” in “Big Trees: Pictures and Politics,” Cathedral Grove (n.d.): Accessed 18<sup>th</sup> November 2021: <http://www.cathedralgrove.eu/text/05-Pictures-Politics-4.htm>

<sup>59</sup>. Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1995).

<sup>60</sup>. Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 7.

Elsewhere, in Europe, the German Forest was cultivated in by nineteenth century Romantic period in which poets, writers, and even politicians as an idyllic place full of folklore and fairy tales (e.g., stories collected and published by the Grimm Brothers). It also became a highly politically charged *topos* or place by Nazi enthusiasts trying to promote a purely “German” homeland.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, for many people living in close proximity and dependence on the forests in Russia, the woods were not just a sylvan space, but a woodland full of meaning and attachments, reflected in art, poetry, and literature and witness to Russian culture and history.<sup>62</sup> Even if a person has never physically visited a place, story—as presented through language, art, and photographs—transports a person there and makes it real in our imaginations and how we think we remember that place. This is the “extraordinary power of art to create in us a *sense of place*.”<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, sense of place is most powerful for a people when the given place is intact. Just as some species help uphold ecosystems—that is, keystone species—Cuerrier and colleagues argued that “cultural keystone places,” or places of high cultural significance, are equally important for the well-being a given people intact.<sup>64</sup> When the well-being of a people is bound to the well-being or integrity of a biologically diverse landscape or ecosystem, sense of place is more than just an aspect of a *topos*; it is at once physical, emotional, psychological, and social (here, I consider other species to be part of the social life of a people residing in a cultural keystone place, such as an ancient, ancestral forest). In this sense, a kind of “spiritual of ecology”<sup>65</sup> emerges from such a sense of place (I explore this further in chapter

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<sup>61</sup>. Jeffrey K. Wilson, *The German Forest: Nature, Identity, and the Contestation of a National Symbol, 1871–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021).

<sup>62</sup>. Jane T. Costlow, *Heart-Pine Russia: Walking and Writing the Nineteenth-Century Forest* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 12.

<sup>63</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>. Alain Cuerrier et al., “Cultural Keystone Places: Conservation and Restoration in Cultural Landscapes,” *Journal of Ethnobiology* 35, no. 3 (2015): 427–48, <https://doi.org/10.2993/0278-0771-35.3.427>.

<sup>65</sup>. Sid Marty, *The Black Grizzly of Whiskey Creek* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2008), 1.

three). Such cultural landscapes or places, like certain species (e.g., plains bison, aka the buffalo<sup>66</sup>), are strongholds of culture, identity, and memory. For this reason, they—both places and species—have been targets of colonial agendas.

Imperial and colonial landscapes, shaped by governing narratives, are about power. Controlling how a place is perceived and valued means that a given status quo agenda can be exercised and maintained over others. In the context of colonial landscapes such as Canada and the United States, it is helpful to think of *landscape* as a verb, as W. J. T. Mitchell argues. In *Landscape and Power*, Mitchell asks “that we think of landscape, not as an object to be seen or a text to be read, but as a process by which social and subjective identities are formed.” The point is to inquire what landscape does as well as what it means, “how it works as a cultural practice.”<sup>67</sup>

Not everyone within a given society will have the same perception or understanding of a place, but there remain popular narratives that describe a place, such as a particular forested region. Ancient forests come to mind more readily to the average tourist to British Columbia, not a landscape riddled with new clearcuts and old clearcuts that have been filled in with uniformly planted trees, for instance. As Simon Schama put it, “Even the landscapes that are supposed to be most free of our culture may turn out, on closer inspection, to be its product.”<sup>68</sup>

Within a given place, layers of culture might be found. National parks are a good example of places that have come into being by means of political and cultural wills, yet the forests therein are often attributed to being purely “by nature” and are perceived and valued for being “untouched” by or “free” of human influence. Many in North America have forgotten that the landscapes of Canada and the United States

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<sup>66</sup>. Sanjay Rawal (director), Jason Mamoa, Tanya Mellier and Sterlin Harjo (producers), *Gather* (74 minutes). First Nations Development Institute (2020). Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021: <https://gather.film>.

<sup>67</sup>. W. J. T. Mitchell, “Introduction” (pp. 1–4) in W. J. T. Mitchell (ed) *Landscape and Power, Second Edition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>68</sup>. Simon Schama, , *Landscape and Memory* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1995), 9.

were shaped by indigenous populations first, then only later by settler-colonial populations and their modern industries. When recognizing how “cultural schemes condition our perceptions,”<sup>69</sup> it is important to be clear about what stories a nation has inherited in order to obtain a deeper understanding of collective environmental imaginations still at play in shaping the landscapes of Anglo-North America.

### **Anglo-North America: Canada and the United States**

After their births, two different attitudes towards the forests (and wild lands more generally) emerged between Canada and the United States. While America pursued its narrative of progress through which they cleared, flattened, and straitened the land and all beings therein according to agrarian and industrial ideals, Canada was not so quickly cleared for such mass settlement. By the mid nineteenth-century, the United States had lost much of its ancient woods, but Canada still retained most of its forests as Crown lands.

While American colonists separated from the Crown, Canada remained a valuable source of furs and timber for the British Empire. Great Britain had become a mercantile empire and global imperial force with the help of the Seven Years War, and as such it required a continuous supply of resources.<sup>70</sup> This was largely because, back home, Britain was using most of its land for farming and pastureland rather than managed forests for timber.<sup>71</sup> In North America, Fred Anderson pointed out how “the single most striking, and potentially disruptive, trend” was “the rapid movement of colonists and European emigrants into the backwoods and newly

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<sup>69</sup>. Pascale Guibert, “Introduction” (pp. 17–31) in Pascale Guibert (ed) *Reflective Landscapes of the Anglophone Countries* (New York: Rodopi, 2011), 17.

<sup>70</sup>. Harold Adams Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000).

<sup>71</sup>. Gregory A. Barton, *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

conquered regions.”<sup>72</sup> So, while the British Empire sanctioned and even encouraged some of this settlement during the final years of the Seven Years War was, most of it transpired uncontrolled. Anderson continues, “All of [this settlement] would tend to destabilize localities, muddle politics and business enterprise, and at least indirectly, render the periphery of the empire less management than ever.”<sup>73</sup> Thus, Canada demonstrated more interest in the control of people and place by designating who and what are allowed to be where (e.g., Crown land versus national parks and protected areas).

Meanwhile, the United States was quick to march westward, clearing and developing lands. Already by the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries, the eastern landscape had been significantly altered to the point that Henry Thoreau was able to compile a list of plants and animals that were no longer present or whose presence had been seriously reduced.<sup>74</sup> The changes were obvious and known to the colonists, and this pattern continued. Carolyn Merchant pointed out how the 1872 painting, *American Progress* by John Gast is a very clear visual narrative about this progression from east to west and much more (Figure 1). One feature of the painting is the feeling of just how quickly this process of taking over the land occurred. Merchant describes this image well:<sup>75</sup>

On the left, toward to west, is Nature active, alive, wild, dark, and savage—filled, as William Bradford would have put it, with ‘wild beasts and wild men.’ Buffalo, wolves, and elk flee in dark disorder, accompanied by Indians with horses and travois. On the right, to the east, is Nature ordered, civilized, and tamed. No longer to be feared or sexually assaulted, she floats angelically through the air in flowing white robes, emblazoned with the star of empire. She carries telegraph wires in her left hand, symbols of the highest level of communication—language borne through the air, the word or logos from above. The

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<sup>72</sup>. Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years’ War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754–1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), p. 522.

<sup>73</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>. William Cronon, “The View from Walden” (pp. 3–15) in *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), pp. 3–4.

<sup>75</sup>. Carolyn Merchant, *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture, Second Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 109–110.

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image of the domination of logic or pure form is repeated in the book grasped in her right hand, touching the coiled telegraph wires. She represents the city, the civil, the civic order of government—the highest order of nature. She is pure Platonic form impressed on female matter, transforming and ordering all beneath her. Most important, however, it is American men who have paved the way. They have dispelled the darkness, fought the Indian, killed the bear and buffalo. [...] The painting itself is a lived progressive narrative. Its east to west movement is a story of ascent and conquest.

Making America and making it “great”—“America” itself intended to be synonymous with “Eden”—meant to return to the idyllic Garden. The subject behind Gast’s painting, that of “Manifest Destiny” or the belief that it was American’s destiny and divine right to their new, American “Eden.” Of course, this special place was not intended for everyone; it was intended first and foremost for white men.

The feminine seems to be portrayed as having only a symbolic role in the painting, like Lady Liberty in New York City. Led by an ideal of liberty tied to private property, which included owning slaves and maintaining the status quo, the United States was more concerned with dominating and transforming the land through settlement according to its narrative of “progress,” though it too—indeed it was the first—to have national parks. In both the United States (Yellowstone National Park in 1872) and Canada (Banff National Park in 1885, modelled after Yellowstone), these special places were used to protect and perpetuate national landscape myths. (In both cases, the biggest national parks are located in northern regions, away from where most citizens live. See maps in the Appendix).



Fig 1. John Gast, *American Progress*, 1872, oil on canvas, 11.5 x 15.76 in., Autry Museum of the American West, Los Angeles, California.<sup>76</sup>

These different colonial processes led to the emergence of two different national myths: there was America as the new “Garden of Eden”<sup>77</sup> defined by a state of harmonious order upon the land, and the Canadian “Wilderness”<sup>78</sup> characterized by a land rich in natural resources. For the United States, its myth of an American Eden began in the eighteenth-century with its War of Independence against the British. Donald Worster points out how this myth remains with them today:<sup>79</sup>

We have scattered Edenic images all across the country’s map, from Garden City, Long Island, and the Garden State of New Jersey, Kansas, and the Garden of the Gods, Colorado. In our national gazetteer you can find an Eden, Michigan, an Eden, Mississippi, and Eden, New York, and Eden, Wyoming, as well as an Eden Valley and Eden Prairie in Minnesota. Many of them may be marred these days by a K-Mart, a

<sup>76</sup>. Image accessed 4<sup>th</sup> June 2021:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_Progress#/media/File:American\\_Progress\\_\(John\\_Gast\\_painting\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_Progress#/media/File:American_Progress_(John_Gast_painting).jpg) ; Also see image from the Library of Congress: <http://loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsca.09855/>

<sup>77</sup>. Donald Worster, “The Nature We Have Lost” (pp. 3 – 15) in *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>78</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, “Canada in the Environmental Poetics of Henry David Thoreau: A Contribution to the Genealogy of the Wilderness in North America,” in *Perspectives Environnementales Au Canada: L’écologie Dans Tous Ses États/ Environmental Issues in Canada: The Ins and Outs of Ecology*, ed. Stéphane Héritier et al. (Toulouse: Université de Toulouse, 2009), 155–72. ; Bordo, “Jack Pine — Wilderness Sublime or the Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 27 (4), 1993: 98-128.

<sup>79</sup>. Donald Worster, *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 12.



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Wendy's, an overflowing landfill, or by air pollution from a nearby smelter; never mind, the names on the map often sounded more glamorous than the reality looked.

American Eden, though fantasized as a place already there waiting for Americans, had to be fabricated and forged. Like the idea being “American” itself, American Eden was celebrated as a self-made ideal. Though, so much of America was built by slaves and immigrant minorities, like people from China, who received little benefit, respect, or recognition for their hard labour on the railroad, for instance.<sup>80</sup>

Carolyn Merchant pointed out how “the celebrations at the joining of the two railroads lauded the achievement of conquering the country’s vast terrain, lowering its hills, and straightening its curves.”<sup>81</sup> At the time, this achievement was framed by Reverend Dr. Dwinell as being work in the name of the Christian God: “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway before our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain.”<sup>82</sup> William Cronon noted that “the transformation of wilderness betokened the planting of a garden,” and thus any anthropogenic changes to the landscape was lauded as “divinely ordained.”<sup>83</sup> In young Canada, the wilderness was something to preserve as it was perceived and valued: “archaically pristine” or “untouched” and “unpopulated” by humans; however, much of the lands kept “pristine” were used by (more often wealthy Canadians) for sport fishing (often in competition with Indigenous peoples), hunting, and other forms of recreation.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup>. Terry E. Boswell, “A Split Labor Market Analysis of Discrimination Against Chinese Immigrants, 1850–1882,” *American Sociological Review* 51 (no. 3), 1986: 352–371.

<sup>81</sup>. Carolyn Merchant, *The Anthropocene and the Humanities: From Climate Change to a New Age of Sustainability* (Yale University Press, 2020), 55.

<sup>82</sup>. Ibis, 55–56.

<sup>83</sup>. William Cronon, “The View from Walden” (pp. 3–15) in *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), p. 5.

<sup>84</sup>. Bill Parenteau, “‘Care, Control and Supervision’: Native People in the Canadian Atlantic Salmon Fishery, 1867–1900,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 79, no. 1 (1998): 1–35, <https://doi.org/10.3138/CHR.79.1.1>.

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The development of these myths of Eden and Wilderness both involved mass land clearances, much like the Highland Clearances in Scotland,<sup>85</sup> whereby Indigenous peoples and anything perceived as “dark” and “wild” nature were forcibly removed from the land to achieve an illusion of purity and pristineness. In British Canada, forest land was intended to be kept free of settlement so the fur trade and timber extraction could continue. Then, the erasure of Indigenous presence from the land followed. In popular American representations of land, human presence—Native Americans and settlers for instance—can be seen, while in iconic Canadian representations of land, there is no human presence (discussed in chapter two). In other words, as Jonathan Bordo put it, “the American landscape is always witnessed.” In contrast, wilderness, as an idea, was a condition in the Canadian context.<sup>86</sup>

Depictions of Yosemite National Park by Thomas Hill and Algonquin Park by Tom Thomson (Figures 2a and 2b) are examples of witnessed and unwitnessable ideals. Both landscapes are represented in an Edenic or sacred way—pure, pristine, unadulterated nature—yet, both landscapes were and are home to Indigenous people dating back thousands of years, but in both cases the land is presented as a place belonging to the new colonial nation states. Though both are characterized by human control and management of place, they differed in the illusions they advertised. Both cases were about control of the best natural resources as well as expressing and inscribing their respective national environmental imaginations, that is, who they are and their place in the world. In time, however, the way these

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<sup>85</sup>. Margaret Connell-Szasz, “A’ Ghàidhealtachd and the North American West,” *Western History Association* 46, no. 1 (2015): 5–29, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/westhistquar.46.1.0005>. For more on this, see Margaret Connell-Szasz, *Scottish Highlanders and Native Americans: Indigenous Education in Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007).

<sup>86</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, “The Wilderness as Symbolic Form – Thoreau, Grünewald and the Group of Seven” (pp. 149–171) in Pascale Guibert (ed) *Reflective Landscapes of the Anglophone Countries* (New York: Rodopi, 2011), 151.

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political entities managed the forests for resources would come to look all too similar.



Fig 2. (Left) Thomas Hill, *Indian by a Lake In a Majestic Californias Landscape*, 1870, oil on canvas, 24 x 36 in., private collection, Northern California;<sup>87</sup> and (right) Tom Thomson, *View From A Height, Algonquin Park*, 1916, oil on composite wood-pulp board, 8.5 x 10.5 in., private collection.<sup>88</sup>

While forestry, as a cameral science and managerial practice, began in eighteenth-century Germany,<sup>89</sup> it took root in the British colonies with the start of “colonial conservation” in 1855, eventually becoming known as *empire forestry* in 1920 at a conference in London, prompted by the forest services of Canada and India. The purpose of the conference was “to exchange ideas, coordinate policies, and collectively take stock of low timber supplies after the First World War.”<sup>90</sup> Every four years thereafter, the same meeting was held from “grew the Empire Forestry Association, the Imperial Forestry Institute, and the *Empire Forestry Journal*.”<sup>91</sup> Forestry knowledge was exchanged between nations, and German foresters were often employed by Great Britain to oversee forestry projects in some of their colonies such as India. India was a model example to which both the United States and Canada looked. However, as Gregory Barton noted: “The introduction of empire

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<sup>87</sup>. Thomas Hill, *Indian by a Lake In a Majestic California Landscape* (1870). Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thomas\\_Hill\\_-\\_Indian\\_by\\_a\\_lake\\_in\\_a\\_majestic\\_California\\_landscape.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Thomas_Hill_-_Indian_by_a_lake_in_a_majestic_California_landscape.jpg)

<sup>88</sup>. Algonquin Provincial Park, “Celebrating Tom Thomson,” accessed 4<sup>th</sup> June 2021: [https://www.algonquinpark.on.ca/news/2017/celebrating\\_tom\\_thomson.php](https://www.algonquinpark.on.ca/news/2017/celebrating_tom_thomson.php)

<sup>89</sup>. Gregory A. Barton, *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 13.

<sup>90</sup>. Ibid, pp. 3–4.

<sup>91</sup>. Ibid.

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forestry method to Canada occurred over many decades and did not mature until after the United States initiated its own forest service, itself modelling on the Indian exemplar.”<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, he pointed out that empire forestry “worked in Canada for the same reason the model worked for its southern neighbor” in that “it provided a revenue-producing multiuse forestry that appealed to economics as well as ‘the sentimental aspect.’”<sup>93</sup> Thus, despite the difference between Canada and the United States, eventually, both nations, like European nations, needed to manage forests—and plantations (“the new forest”)—for timber as well as parks to serve as parts of respective national identities and environmental imaginations.

Canada was further behind the United States of America in its land development. Already by the nineteenth century, the forested lands of New England had been radically altered after generations of settlement and development. So much was New England changed by the settler-colonial community that Henry David Thoreau journeyed north into the woodlands of Canada to see for himself how much of the original forests remained.<sup>94</sup> Even during his trips into the woods of Maine, he was frequently noting the presence and absence of tree species.<sup>95</sup> The Eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*), in particular, was the most commonly logged before Thoreau’s time. During the eighteenth century in particular, the British Crown logged the biggest and best white pines first along the waterways, and then deeper in the forests, leaving giant stumps as memory traces across the land. Many such trees no

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<sup>92</sup>. Ibid, p. 125.

<sup>93</sup>. Ibid, p. 123.

<sup>94</sup>. Bordo, “Canada in the Environmental Poetics of Henry David Thoreau: A Contribution to the Genealogy of the Wilderness in North America.” ; William Cronon, “The View from Walden,” in *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 3–15, [http://www.uvm.edu/rsenr/wfb175/Cronin Chapter 1.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/rsenr/wfb175/Cronin%20Chapter%201.pdf). ; Henry David Thoreau, “A Yankee In Canada” (pp. 782-849) in Robert F. Sayer and Elizabeth Hall Witherell (eds) *Henry David Thoreau: Walden, The Maine Woods, and Collected Essays and Poems* (New York: The Library of America, 2007), pp. 821–822. Interestingly, Thoreau also recorded Puritanism in Canada, specifically the Laurentian region, as a reoccurring theme or reference in this text.

<sup>95</sup>. Henry David Thoreau, “Ktaadn,” (pp. 269–528), in Sayer, R. F. and Witherell, E. H. (eds.), *Henry David Thoreau: Walden, The Main Woods, and Collected Essays and Poems* (United States: Library of America. 2007).

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longer remained in New England. They were something Thoreau had to go see, driven by his question of how much or what was left and a question of rights. These were trees, stumps, and assemblages of other tree species that had to be witnessed to be believed.<sup>96</sup>

Almost a century later, during the first quarter of the twentieth century, the beginnings of Canada's first landscape art movement began to bud during the years of the First World War. Like Thoreau, Tom Thomson ventured into the woods himself to witness the forests and waters. Thomson's and his followers' (the Group of Seven) paintings of places like Algonquin Park as being pristinely untouched by any humans would shape the Canadian environmental imagination. Indeed, national and provincial parks are curated. As Tim Ingold put it, "Even regions of so-called untouched wilderness are deliberately set up to be untouched, and their subsequent monitoring is more akin to conducting a scientific experiment than abandoning the world to look after itself." He adds, however, that "this does not mean [...] that the non-human world is counterfeit, a simulacrum of the 'real thing' constructed after an ideal that exists only in the human imagination."<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, the concept of wilderness remains "freighted with race, gender, class, and colonial histories."<sup>98</sup> Being able to enjoy the pleasures of woodlands and waters on one's own terms, including having the power to determine the dominant narrative of such places, has long been the prerogative of the privileged.<sup>99</sup>

As human-driven climate and biodiversity crises continue, what kind of forests will occupy the environmental imaginations of people living in Western

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<sup>96</sup>. Moir, "Mythopoeia Sylvatica: A Critical Topographical Exploration of the Once and Future Forests of North America through Six Witness Trees."

<sup>97</sup>. Tim Ingold, "Towards a Politics of Dwelling," *Conservation and Society* 3, no. 2 (2005): 501–8., 504.

<sup>98</sup>. Stephanie Rutherford, "The Biopolitical Animal in Canadian and Environmental Studies," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 47, no. 3 (2014): 123–44, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jcs.2013.0010>.

<sup>99</sup>. Renisa Mawani, "Legalities of Nature: Law, Empire, and Wilderness Landscapes in Canada," *Social Identities* 13, no. 6 (2007): 715–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630701696351>.

nations of the Global North? In places like Canada and the United States, *which* forests are its citizens attached to: the imagined, the physical ecosystems, both? What is being lost when a biologically and culturally diverse, ancient or old-growth forest is clearcut or is significantly altered or dies from anthropogenically driven climate change stressors such as drought or insect infestations? These are questions the following three chapters address.

### **Purpose**

This dissertation is a continuation of my Master's thesis on myths about the eastern and western forests of Canada and the United States.<sup>100</sup> The meanings a society imbues in forests shapes the outcome of those very woodlands, be it for timber harvesting, national parks, conservation, or other industries. This dissertation picks up the forest question,<sup>101</sup> which is a question of place, and expands it into to a question of social-ecological grief, belonging, and responsibility. That is, in asking “what place is this”—the Forest—this iteration makes an inquiry into the human place in the forest. What is the forest? What place is this and what is our relation to these multispecies assemblages also rich with cultural legacies? What cultural legacy does a given country or community want to create and how can that be done in socially and ecologically ethical ways? What is being lost as more biologically and socially important ancient woodlands are diminished or cleared? In an era called the Anthropocene, a world where human influence is felt and seen

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<sup>100</sup>. Moir, “Mythopoeia Sylvatica: A Critical Topographical Exploration of the Once and Future Forests of North America through Six Witness Trees.”

<sup>101</sup>. The forest question emerges when forests become a topic of concern. It happened in England and continental Europe, but it was during the nineteenth century that many places, especially in Anglo-North America and Russia, that woodlands became a highly charged subject. As Jane Costlow pointed out, for example, in the Russian case, “The Forest Question would come to occupy a major place on the pages of Russia’s major journals; in state commissions and bureaucracies; in the pages and on the canvases of her literary and visual artists. [...] Over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the wooded landscapes of European Russia changed radically; in their imagination of that change and their response to its impact, a broad range of Russians—both scientists and artists—created a geography of loss that is both documentary and visionary.” Jane T. Costlow, *Heart-Pine Russia: Walking and Writing the Nineteenth-Century Forest* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 82–83.

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everywhere—specifically modern, industrial, capitalist world—what is lost as the biosphere and ethnosphere are further degraded and altered? In short, the purpose is to explore and contribute to the growing conversation on environmental-based grief. It is about trying to achieve a greater self-reflection at the collective level and encourage greater self-reflexivity therein, to reconsider the dominant lifeways laid down by those before us and how new ways might be co-created with different understandings for current and future generations.

### **Rationale**

It is important to note that this study is not about illustrating which culture is better or worse, but to explore how individuals and communities within Western society might learn and grow from social-ecological grief upon critical reflections on the relationship between culture and land and to re-see our place therein. Concerned with the diminishment and loss of forests and their diversity and the loss of cultural diversity connected to them, this exploration considers Canadian anthropologist, Wade Davis's question of place and culture-land relations: "how [a] belief system mediates the interaction between the human culture and [an] environment with profoundly different consequences in terms of the ecological footprint."<sup>102</sup> In this interaction, I examine the *affective* aspect in this belief system, namely the experience of love, loss, grief, and mourning in the context of ancient and old-growth forests. What is it to lose a wildwood? What is lost when land- or place-based languages—that is, different ways of representing and knowing and relating to forests—are no longer used or forgotten?

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<sup>102</sup>. Wade Davis at the Milton K. Wong Lecture in the Frederick Wood Theatre at University of British Columbia. Wade Davis in "Catalogues of Culture," produced by *Ideas from CBC Radio* (September 23, 2015), accessed from: [URL] on October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015: 31:57.

### **Personal Disclosure**

I had been studying the loss of woodlands for two years when, in 2015, I had a very sudden encounter with personal grief with the loss my mother and uncle in a car accident. I was nearing the completion of my Master's thesis at the time, and completing it became a different kind of work. How to explain it? The labour of mourning seeps into all aspects of one's life; it becomes a kind of omnipresence. These personal losses brought me closer to my work on environmental-based grief, when I was confronted with returning to and essentially rewriting my Master's thesis in my doctoral studies. The thesis and this dissertation are thus an expression of griefwork. The harm and loss of one's "mother" is a theme that naturally emerges with the degradation and loss of forests and other parts of the earth and life support systems.

Furthermore, now that I am expecting my first child, I am confronted with the question of moving forward in a changed and rapidly changing world. What kind of world will my and others' children face? By what right do I get to make my home in this place? By what right do I bring a member of the next generation into this world? What and how am I to ethically educate my child and prepare her for the future? How do I ensure my child has a meaningful connection between with her grandmother even though she is no longer here?

Mourning for a loved one became a teaching experience for what it is to grieve for the loss and degradation of other species and ecosystems. Letting my mother's garden become semi-wild was one way that I mourned her death, like taking comfort in seeing an abandoned town blanketed by new plant and animal life. Seeing parts of the property become a little wilder while working to keep the basic shape she gave it felt like healing. Also, having released her ashes in the lake she loved so much, means to me, that I can connect with her wherever I find water, air,



soil, plants, and animals. I recognize that I am very fortunate to have access to such things while so many people around the world and even close to home do not. This grief has also sensitized me to the grief of other peoples, be it their own personal losses including their ways of life, their homes.

Grief is deeply about relationships, for it is the other side of love in many ways. As a member of the settler-colonial community, I was already interested in questions of belonging and responsibility, questions of place. Previous studies in psychology, interests in environmental psychology and ecotherapy, and my undergraduate thesis on youth homelessness led to questions of what it is to lose places of habitation, *homes* (and what makes a place “home”). I wondered, how does a person or a people have a sense of place, belong to a place, and heal from within a place? What is it to lose a home? How does one belong to a place?

Grief sensitizes the griever to the precarity and shared vulnerability of others in addition to oneself. Mourning is done in many ways, and what one can learn through grief is that it is never done in isolation from others or from place—it is always tied to particular places, peoples, and things. It has the power to connect and expand awareness and care through emotional intelligence (i.e., empathy) rather than through mental abstraction (i.e., quantifications, statistics, and concepts of losses). For a start, it opens up wider explorations, discussions, and reflections.

### **Approach**

The idea of social-ecological grief as a form of cultural “dis-ease” is the focus of this study.<sup>103</sup> Think of it as ranging from constructive unpleasant emotions to experiences of the horrors of mass loss such as wildfires, deforestations, extinctions, cultural genocides. I am most concerned with this dis-ease in the context of troubled relationships at play between the dominant Anglo-North American societies and

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<sup>103</sup> A term I borrow from Dr E. Richard Atleo or *Umeek* and discuss further in chapter three. From, *Umeek* E. Richard Atleo, *Principles of Tsaxwalk: An Indigenous Approach to Global Crisis*, 1.

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ancient and old-growth forests. My work is site specific, and the larger picture emerges from case studies as I move from one site to the next: the ancient cedar forest of Mesopotamia, the keyword forest, the clearing; a tree poem, a tree and landscape painting, a living tree, a tree-turned-monument; and bears of the eastern and western woods in North America.

What allows me to work between these sites is the approach called *critical topography*, which is a simple and sophisticated method for arguing that place matters.<sup>104</sup> It allows me to enter into a monad—a singularity that comes about or unfolds because of the many things that comprise it. Here that monad is the question of temperate forests of Anglo-North America. Critical topography allows me to map out how a *topos* is at once a place and a topic. It is about the intersection in the mind between self/society/culture and the forests in question.

Inspired by Robert Pogue Harrison's approach to the study of forests as a cultural topic,<sup>105</sup> I take a literary-aesthetic approach to my exploration of these subjects, which allows me to explore and discuss how a given society represents and expresses what forests are at certain times. For instance, although the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (Part One) was written over four thousand years ago, it reveals how the ancient forests were represented by and to people, particularly the educated populace, at the time. Thousands of years later, researchers and writers concerned about the state of the world's forests quote or refer the *Epic of Gilgamesh* to point out how modern societies are still relating to forests in similar ways.

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<sup>104</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, "The Homer of Potsdamerplatz - Walter Benjamin in Wim Wenders's Sky over Berlin/Wings of Desire, a Critical Topography," *Images* 2, no. 1 (2008): 86–109, <https://doi.org/10.1163/187180008X408618>. ; Jonathan Bordo and Blake Fitzpatrick, "Place Matters: Critical Topographies in Word and Image," 2020. ; Jonathan Bordo and Blake Fitzpatrick, "Critical Topography Epilogue," 2021.

<sup>105</sup>. Specifically, see Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: Shadow of Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

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In Part One I present Anglo-North America (Canada and the United States) as cultural-environmental territories. As discussed previously, the main cultural-historical distinction between Canada and the United States in the context of forests is that the former remained more submissive to the Crown and the latter broke away from it. Canada was kept longer under a mercantile system by Great Britain whereas the USA pursued colonial land grabs and rapid westward expansion of settlement and development. I argue that social-ecological grief is a symptom of a “dis-ease” at play within the dominant cultures and each nation’s relationship with the more-than-human worlds within and beyond their political borders. This grief is then examined through the theme of clearance—sociopolitical and environmental clearances, the removal of peoples from the land and the clearing of forests according to the dominant values and notions of land-use. To do this, I examine the ancient record of deforestation in the legacy of Western civilization, “forest” as a keyword that shapes perceptions of a particular kind of land or place, and the colonial clearances of indigenous peoples and old and ancient trees.

With four witness trees as case studies, Part Two echoes the topics of Part One. Each tree is examined anew as a critical topographical study of forests in the Western world, focusing on the particular ways the Anglo-North American forest stories have been shaped and transformed and how they overlap. The first forests I look at are the old forests of New England, the place of Robert Frost and his poem, “Beech” and the eastern woodland regions (including eastern Canada) where this beech tree species, *Fagus grandifolia* is home. The eastern forest region also includes the second case study: Tom Thomson’s *The Jack Pine* and the species it represents, *Pinus banksiana*. The other major forest region is that of the Pacific northwest, specifically the temperate woods of Vancouver Island and Haida Gwaii. For each of

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these places, the witness trees are Big Lonely Doug and Jaalen Edenshaw's Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole respectively.

Part Three is concerned with what I refer to as the *wild-déor* or “Wild Other” aspect of old-growth and ancient forests or wildwoods, in particular, in reference to the loss of forest-related species. As Robert Macfarlane noted, “The wood and the wild are” also linked for the reason that “as the forest has declined, so too has the world’s wildness.”<sup>106</sup> The clearing of forest ecosystems results in a loss of biological diversity. In this chapter I ask, when a forest habitat is lost, who and what more are being lost along the way? What does that mean for the members of the human community? As forests are far more than just a collection of trees, this part focuses on multispecies relations as a vital aspect that weave and bind together larger connections at play within and between places of sylvan and modern human habitation.

Following from the Grizzly Bear on the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole, who sits at the base along with Sculpin (a fish), I look to bears as a forest-related animal case study of social and ecological grief in Canada and the United States. I discuss the inter-being trauma that occurs, but often goes unexamined, when humans become entangled with bears. For this I look to the anecdotes of a former park warden, Sid Marty, in his books *The Black Grizzly of Whiskey Creek*.<sup>107</sup> The others come from a man who lived closely amongst bears in both Canada and Russia, Charlie Russell, as documented by G. A. Bradshaw in *Talking with Bears*.<sup>108</sup>

I chose bears as an example of the *wild-déor* because they are a large omnivorous and predatory land animal capable for challenging humans' sense of place and power. When we encounter them, they can easily make us feel vulnerable,

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<sup>106</sup>. Robert Macfarlane, *The Wild Places* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 92.

<sup>107</sup>. Sid Marty, *The Black Grizzly of Whiskey Creek* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2008).

<sup>108</sup>. G. A. Bradshaw, *Talking with Bears: Conversations with Charlie Russell* (Rocky Mountain Books, 2020).

## INTRODUCTION

even though they are more vulnerable to the dominant forms of human presence (i.e., hunting rifles and traps, trains, industrial developments). As James Hatley asked in his essay, “The Uncanny Goodness of Being Edible to Bears,” “How are we to respond in a praiseworthy manner to such discomforts, difficulties, or dangers?”<sup>109</sup> Bears, like other large predatory land animals, also reflect back human anxieties; in a way, they are like Humbaba, the forest guardian in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* in that their removal meant certain humans could gain greater dominion over the forests. And yet, when violent attacks do occur between humans and bears, it is often the case that the injured human sympathizes with the bear; that is, there is somehow understanding and compassionate sentiment that comes easily. Why? What is it in the relationship “victims” of human-bear conflict feel that leads to such a view despite injury and threat of death?

The topic of bears and humans is also used to explore the idea of an “ecology of spirituality,” as Marty called what he understood of Stoney Nakoda Nation elder, John Steven’s statement: “the earth is the bear’s ear.”<sup>110</sup> What is our *sense of connectedness* to *wild-déor*, especially concerning the threat of losing their presence? I discuss how radically reexamining one’s personal and cultural<sup>111</sup> relationships with the *wild-déor*—be it in the form of a tree, a bear (of some other species), or a forest—is a way of working through the bioecological and social harms and a way to consider what one might be able to change. “Staying with the trouble,” as Donna Haraway put it, while tending to “we-making” is an important path towards cultural and relational change.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>. James Hatley, “The Uncanny Goodness of Being Edible to Bears” (pp. 13–31) in Bruce V. Foltz and Robert Frodeman (eds.) *Rethinking Nature: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 14.

<sup>110</sup>. Sid Marty, p. 1.

<sup>111</sup>. I.e., language, education, shared narratives and memory, and ways of seeing and interacting with the world.

<sup>112</sup>. Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

PART ONE: RECOGNIZING THE DIS-EASE

When I'm critical of modern approaches to ecology, I'm really trying to remind my reader of the long relationship that Western civilization has had to these forests that define the fringe of its place of habitation, and that this relationship is one that has a rich history of symbolism and imagination and myth and literature. So much of the Western imagination has projected itself into this space that when you lose a forest, you're losing more than just the natural phenomenon or biodiversity; you're also losing the great strongholds of cultural memory.

– Robert Pogue Harrison<sup>113</sup>

The point is not to ask or suggest which perspective is right or wrong. Is the forest mere cellulose and board feet? Was it truly the domain of the spirits? Is a mountain a sacred place? [...] Who is to say? Ultimately these are not the important questions. What matters is the potency of belief, the manner in which a conviction plays out in the day-to-day lives of a people, for in a very real sense this determines the ecological footprint of a culture, the impact that any society has on its environment.

– Wade Davis<sup>114</sup>

When a forest dies, it takes with it “a flash of the human spirit,” a language, a vocabulary, a way of relating to, knowing, and remembering that given place.<sup>115</sup> As such places fade from the world, their representative languages become impoverished. This also occurs even if a place remains, but the carriers of the local language cease to dwell there. Thus, when an old wood passes from the land, not just biological legacies of certain species are lost, but so too are cultural ways of knowing, experiencing, and relating to them and their multispecies inhabitants. As we lament the loss of biological diversity, “we pay too little heed to a parallel process of loss, the demise of cultural diversity.”<sup>116</sup> The loss of forests and forest-based cultures that have coexisted for hundreds and thousands of years has become a global phenomenon. As the world around us changes, so too does our language, and vice

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<sup>113</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison in “Ross Andersen Interviews Robert Pogue Harrison: Deforestation in a Civilized World,” Los Angeles Review of Books, July 2012, <http://lareviewofbooks.org/interview/deforestation-in-a-civilized-world>.

<sup>114</sup> Wade Davis, *The Wayfinders* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2009), pp. 122–123.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>116</sup> Wade Davis, *Light at the Edge of the World: A Journey through the Realm of Vanishing Cultures* (Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre, 2007), p. 5.

versa. In Canada, as elsewhere in the predominantly Westernized world, the problem is no different.

In industrialized nations, most people live in urban or suburban developed centres, away from most forests, the peripheries, abstracted by the boundaries of cities and property lines. Many of us only know forests based on specially designated wooded areas, such as parks and conservation areas (forms of development themselves) that we visit on occasion. Much of our lives are mediated through an indirect relationship with land and resources (e.g., food, wood, water) extracted from peripheries and distant lands that we neither see nor fully understand; this urban condition leads to what one scholar called the “urbanization of consciousness.”<sup>117</sup> Even the tools of our English language—vocabulary and storytelling—have become impoverished and taken for granted; words and phrases that represent the land in its diversity and ways of experiencing it first-hand have fallen out of use and forgotten over generations.<sup>118</sup>

This phenomenon has already taken place within the commonplace environmental imagination in the West.<sup>119</sup> On one notable event, in the United Kingdom, Robert Macfarlane and other authors made an outcry when the Oxford University Press (OUP) decided to omit words representing the more-than-human world in favour of words indexing what they saw as “modern-day childhood.”<sup>120</sup> Indeed, modern-day childhood has changed drastically along with changes to the

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<sup>117</sup> David Harvey in Michael Landzelius, “Spatial Reification, or, Collectively Embodied Amnesia, Aphasia, and Apraxia,” *Semiotica* 175, no. 1–4 (2009): 48.

<sup>118</sup> Robert Macfarlane, “The Word-Hoard: Robert Macfarlane on Rewilding Our Language of Landscape,” *The Guardian*, February 27, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/feb/27/robert-macfarlane-word-hoard-rewilding-landscape>.

<sup>119</sup> For more, see Kelly S Bricker and Keri A Schwab, “People and Nature: Toward an Ecological Model of Health Promotion,” *Leisure Sciences* 32, no. 2010 (2010): 3–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400903430772>.; Landzelius, “Spatial Reification, or, Collectively Embodied Amnesia, Aphasia, and Apraxia.”

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

United Kingdom's landscapes,<sup>121</sup> much like in Canada and the United States. In all three nations, just over eighty per cent of the total population lives in urban settings.<sup>122</sup> The OUP was not wrong when they said that, "When you look back at older versions of dictionaries, there were lots of examples of flowers for instance. That was because many children lived in semi-rural environments and saw the seasons. Nowadays, the environment has changed."<sup>123</sup> This, however, is even more reason to preserve languages of the land, for words are not only "vital means of connection and understanding,"<sup>124</sup> but a way to keep the land that has become distant closer. Advocates made a strong case, citing research that found how, since children have on average significantly less contact with the natural world ("a generation ago, 40% of children regularly played in natural areas, compared to 10% today, with a further 40% never playing outdoors"), there has been a decline in youth well-being. They were right.<sup>125</sup> Specifically, "obesity, anti-social behaviour, friendlessness and fear" were top concerns. Macfarlane's response went further: he has since published books directly tackling this issue of vocabulary loss aimed at young and mature audiences alike.<sup>126</sup>

English was only a portion of the words representing the lands of England, Scotland, and Ireland that Macfarlane has collected; he also collected words from

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<sup>121</sup>. Fukamachi K., Oku H., Rackham O. (2003) A Comparative Study on Trees and Hedgerows in Japan and England. In: Palang H., Fry G. (eds) *Landscape Interfaces*. Landscape series, vol 1. Springer, Dordrecht. [https://doi-org.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/10.1007/978-94-017-0189-1\\_4](https://doi-org.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/10.1007/978-94-017-0189-1_4)

<sup>122</sup>. Statista (October 2020), "Canada: Degree of urbanization from 2009 to 2019," accessed 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/271208/urbanization-in-canada/> ; Statista (October 2020), "Degree of urbanization in the United States from 1970 to 2019," accessed 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/269967/urbanization-in-the-united-states/> ; Statista (October 2020), "United Kingdom: Degree of urbanization from 2009 to 2019," accessed 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/270369/urbanization-in-the-united-kingdom/>

<sup>123</sup>. Alison Flood, "Oxford Junior Dictionary's Replacement of 'natural' Words with 21st-Century Terms Sparks Outcry," *The Guardian*, January 13, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jan/13/oxford-junior-dictionary-replacement-natural-words>.

<sup>124</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>125</sup>. Bricker and Schwab, "People and Nature: Toward an Ecological Model of Health Promotion."

<sup>126</sup>. Robert Macfarlane, *Landmarks* (Penguin Books, 2016). Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris, *The Lost Words* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2017). Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris, *The Lost Spells* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2020).



## PART ONE

Scottish Gaelic and Irish, Welsh, and various regional dialects including ones from England. Take, for example, the Gaelic term *èit* from the Isle of Lewis, which refers to “the practice of placing quartz stones in streams so that they sparkle in moonlight and thereby attract salmon to them in the late summer and autumn.”<sup>127</sup> Or the Exmoor word *ammil*, meaning “The icy casings of leaves and grasses and blades and sprigs” that glow “and [hide] in a mist of sun-fire.”<sup>128</sup> Then there is the Herefordshire word, *pank*, which is “to knock or shake down apples from the tree,”<sup>129</sup> and the Lincolnshire *fox-fire* for the “phosphorescent light emitted by decaying timber” in the woods.<sup>130</sup> And the magical Devon word *glossamer*, which refers to “shining filaments spun across huge areas of landscape by small spiders in autumn, usually perceptible only near dawn or dusk when the light is slant.”<sup>131</sup> And the Irish *díobhóg*, a “mountain stream that dries up in summer.”<sup>132</sup> The examples seem endless, some referring to signs of where animals walked and lay down upon the land among others. Through such words one is able to see far more than meets the eye. Like *glossamer*, the silk threads reaching across a landscape, words such as these can help show a user otherwise unseen connections in a place. They also help the user become more aware of his or her own connection(s) to the place as a sensing, perceiving, feeling, interconnected being.

These are not just predominantly forgotten words, but words indexing predominantly forgotten or marginalized place-based experiences, relations, and things or beings in the highly developed world. Many of these words came from

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<sup>127</sup>. Macfarlane, “The Word-Hoard: Robert Macfarlane on Rewilding Our Language of Landscape.”

<sup>128</sup>. Robert Macfarlane, *Landmarks*, 40.

<sup>129</sup>. *Ibid*, 130.

<sup>130</sup>. *Ibid*, 311. In “The Allegash and the East Branch,” in *The Maine Woods* Henry David Thoreau describes fox-fire in detail, but does not use this word to refer to the “phosphorescent wood” that he saw. Instead, he wrote down Joe Polis’s Penobscot word for it: *Artoosoqu’* (pp. 410–411). For more, see Robert F. Sayre and Elizabeth Hall Witherell (Eds.) *Thoreau: Walden, The Maine Woods, Collected Essays and Poems* (New York: The Library of America College Editions, 2007).

<sup>131</sup>. *Ibid*, 362.

<sup>132</sup>. *Ibid*, 357.

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ways of life that took place on the land or at sea, but with increased urbanization, few are using them and likely none in Canada and United States. Many of these old languages, such as Scottish Gaelic, have dwindled over the centuries with fewer and fewer speakers remaining as a result of English colonization and land-use changes over the past centuries. Before this decline, in the Scottish Highlands for instance, the land had changed drastically since antiquity, taking with it ancient ways of directly knowing the forested lands.

## Chapter One: Clearances

In ancient times, much of the Scottish Highlands was covered in a vast forest, like in Ireland. The ancient Romans called it Caledonia, “the wood on heights,”<sup>133</sup> but to its first inhabitants it was a *Ghàidhealtachd*, the Gaelic cultural region<sup>134</sup>—a biogeographical area and a cultural landscape. The Gaelic people were linguistically rooted in the land. For these Gaelic linguistic groups, a diversity of trees and woods were represented in their very language, and through this connection the woodlands were the cradle of their cultures. Witness to the forests that were once “so common in ancient Ireland” and Scotland were these letters, named exclusively after the trees originally in Old Irish;<sup>135</sup> for example, *ailm/ aball* (A, “elm” or “fir” or “pine”/“apple”<sup>136</sup>); *beith* (B, “birch”), *coll* (C, “hazel”), and *dur* or *dair* (D, “oak”).<sup>137</sup> Unlike the Greek and Roman words, these Gaelic symbols acted as mnemonic triggers, evoking the living reality of forest trees for which they were named, and contributed to a very diverse place-responsive vocabulary that, in turn, shaped the speakers’ sense of place.<sup>138</sup> Indeed, the very alphabet was a forest of words representative the land’s tree species. Standing for an experience of an immaterial essence of life, they witnessed Gaelic spiritual realities with each use, and “stitched together song and story, medicine and faith, people and the forest.”<sup>139</sup> Forest ecology and cultural geography shared a common place within this sympathetic relationship

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<sup>133</sup>. Guy Hand, “The Forest of Forgetting,” *Northern Lights* 11 (Fall 1997), p. 10.

<sup>134</sup>. Connell-Szasz, “A’ Ghàidhealtachd and the North American West.”

<sup>135</sup>. Diana Beresford-Kroeger, *The Global Forest: Forty Ways Trees Can Save Us* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011).

<sup>136</sup>. As some translation varied, so too did the tree-name for particular letters, such as the Ogham equivalent to the English letter “A” (*ailm*). See Glanville and Cox (1949) and Haigh (1858) for more information.

<sup>137</sup>. Guy Hand, “The Forest of Forgetting:” 11.

<sup>138</sup>. Robert Macfarlane, *The Wild Places* (Kindle Edition: Penguin Books Ltd., 2015): vii.

<sup>139</sup>. Diana Beresford-Kroeger, “The Celtic Alphabet of Trees” (pp. 189–283) in *To Speak for the Trees: My Life’s Journey from Ancient Celtic Wisdom to a Healing Vision of the Forest* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2019): 190. Similarly, words in the Welsh language (a member of the Celtic language group) concerning knowledge and awareness “are related to the word for wood, *wydd*. They include *cywydd*, ‘revelation’; *gwyddom*, ‘a wise [person]’; and *derwydd*, ‘druid’.” For more, see Nigel Pennick, *Celtic Sacred Landscapes* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1996): 30.

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the ancient Gaelic-speaking culture had with the physical environment. With the Ogham, the Gaels “wrote of the reverence they felt for these living non-human beings that connected them to the land: ‘Birch, smooth, blessed, / proud, melodious, / lovely is each entangled branch / at the top of your crest’.”<sup>140</sup>

Similar to many other indigenous cultures around the world, such as many of the traditional ways of the First Peoples of North America,<sup>141</sup> the Gaelic Celts cultivated ways to coexist with their environment “through a long and close connection to land.”<sup>142</sup> Traditions of stories that connected people in meaningful ways to wild woodlands contributed to “a balanced, reciprocal relationship with the forest, and took from it knowing their own health depended on its preservation.”<sup>143</sup> Traditions of collecting, preserving, and telling stories of past and present lived experiences of place with languages intimately woven into the landscape enabled the Gaels to maintain a sustainable relationship between themselves and the woodlands they depended on.<sup>144</sup>

This relationship changed as did the landscape after centuries of Anglo-Saxon/English cultural and political influences upon the Gaelic Highlands of Scotland beginning in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. By the sixteenth century, after many years of empire building, England had already begun depleting its native forests. Hungry for ever more timber, they moved north in search of more sources of wood. More dangerous than the axe in history, the English brought with them the quill and “a profoundly different philosophy of nature—a view aggressively and

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<sup>140</sup>. Guy Hand, “The Forest of Forgetting:” 11.

<sup>141</sup>. Alfred K. Siewers, “Pre-Modern Ecosemiotics: The Green World as Literary Ecology,” in *Approaches to Culture Theory*, ed. Tiina Peil, Kalevi Kull, and Valter Lang, Volume 1 (Tartu University Press, 2011), 39–68.; Alfred K. Siewers (Ed.) (2013), *Re-Imagining Nature: Environmental Humanities and Ecosemiotics* (p. 2), Bucknell University Press, Kindle Edition.

<sup>142</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>143</sup>. Alfred K. Siewers, “Pre-Modern Ecosemiotics: The Green World as Literary Ecology,” in *Approaches to Culture Theory*, ed. Tiina Peil, Kalevi Kull, and Valter Lang, Volume 1 (Tartu University Press, 2011), 39–68.

<sup>144</sup>. Margaret Connell-Szasz, *Scottish Highlanders and Native Americans: Indigenous Education in Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007): 3, 33, 41.

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breathtakingly anthropomorphic, a view that pictured everything on earth as intended for ‘the benefit and pleasure of man,’ and an untamed woodland as something to be feared, exploited, and, if necessary, erased.”<sup>145</sup> Compared to the Gaelic loving ode, Guy Hand pointed out how different the old English views of forests were with this sample from popular sixteenth century English literature: “...haughty trees, that sour / The shaded grass, that weaken thron-set mounds / And harbour villain crows...”<sup>146</sup> The former venerated while the latter vilified the forests, each situated a people as being in harmony with or opposition to the sylvan landscapes according to two very different cultural environmental imaginations.

What the English saw was a wild landscape full of chaotic potential, which they described in their literature as wasted land or *wasteland*, “degenerated nature.”<sup>147</sup> Here we can see the budding beginnings of the legendary story of Robin Hood<sup>148</sup> and the wildwood as a conceptual place symbolic of resistance to political oppressions, as well as a place of freedom from ideological constraints and temptations of civilization as seen in the archetype of the Hermit for example.

English imperials were threatened by this and saw more than one purpose to felling trees for more than just the physical building materials of their empire; the destruction of the Forest of Caledonia meant, for them, greater control of the Highlands, its resources, and its people. The English began referring to the native Highlanders as “savages” (a word whose meaning comes from the Latin word *silva/sylva*, “outside;” a meaning that became tied to “woods” outside city or state

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<sup>145</sup>. Guy Hand, “The Forest of Forgetting:” 11.

<sup>146</sup>. Hand, 11-12.

<sup>147</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>148</sup>. While the origin of the story of Robin Hood is a mystery, the earliest knowledge of the myth’s origins comes from a poem in a mid-fifteenth century manuscript; however, medieval historian J. C. Holt did not rule out an earlier origin from a possible instigator of the myth, ‘Robert Hod’ of the Yorkshire Pipe Roll of 1225, a fugitive for whom the nickname ‘Robinhood’ was later given to or taken as an alias by people who lived in the forests, outside the law. For more information, see the Introduction to Adam Thorpe’s book, *Hodd* (London, UK: Vintage, 2010): 1–4.

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boundaries).<sup>149</sup> As for the wild trees, the English saw them as “an excrescence of the earth, provided by God for payment of debts.”<sup>150</sup> And so it was: the colonizers used the punitive and purgative powers of the axe, followed by English linguistic and scriptural representations to ‘cleanse’ the Highland people “of chaos and [show them] the path to culture.”<sup>151</sup> Like the wild trees of the Highland wildwood, the people of the Highlands were seen as yet another resource, one which was to be cultivated through ‘civilized’ culture as a human source for the labour force. There is no surprise in the fact that “[t]o cultivate” and “to culture” share the same root (*cult* from Latin *cultus* “to care, labour, educate” or to *transform* or “improve,” “tilled”) and the same basic meaning: “improve by training or education.”<sup>152</sup> To colonize and create a new and improved (agrarian) idyllic place, the original land (the forest) and the original people (indigenous cultures) that coexisted and maintained each other were seen as having to be first removed or relocated so they and the land could be ‘tilled,’ ‘cultivated,’ ‘educated,’ ‘improved.’ In other words, the allegiance between the indigenous people’s cultural geography and the woods had to be severed and made to be forgotten or dis(re)membered for the colonizers’ goals to be achieved and a new geo-sociopolitical map be drawn.

What followed during the eighteenth century was a process known as the Highland Clearances in which the Gaelic Scottish were forced to leave their homes in the northwestern regions and gather in larger city locations in the east and south of Scotland. Many of those who refused were pushed to the edges of northern coastal regions, while others were forced to leave the isles entirely with many settling in

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<sup>149</sup>. Guy Hand, “The Forest of Forgetting:” 11.

<sup>150</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>151</sup>. Ibid, 11-12.

<sup>152</sup>. “Culture” and “Cultivate,” Etymology Online, accessed 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021: <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=cultivate>. “Cultivation” from *cultura*—see Raymond Williams, “Culture” (pp. 87–93) in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society, Revised Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 87.

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Cape Breton, *Nova Scotia* (“New Scotland”). Almost immediately thereafter, during the latter half of the nineteenth century and throughout most of the twentieth century, residential schools in Canada sought to do to the First Nations peoples what the English did to the Gaels.<sup>153</sup> The pattern of British colonization that unfolded across North America was a striking repetition of what occurred in Scotland and Ireland;<sup>154</sup> in other words, imperial Britain was well practiced in the ‘art’ of colonization and deforestation by the time they reached the shores of North America.

As it was in the Scottish Highlands and the wild forests of North America, the British Empire passed on not only the technology born of the Industrial Revolution years later,<sup>155</sup> but also the story of its social-ecological belief system to its Canadian and American descendants.<sup>156</sup> What these clearances of native Highlanders and erasures of indigenous North Americans meant was not only the claiming of more territory for King and Empire, but also the mass consumption of wood (and other natural resources) as the primary fuel and building material for imperial expansion (discussed in chapters one and two). Consequently, as Margaret Connell-Szasz put it, “economic colonialism altered these regions beyond recognition.”<sup>157</sup> She added that “[t]he cumulative effect of this frenzy, which also included large-scale commercial farming and competition for water resources, laid the groundwork for the environmental concerns of the early twenty-first century.”<sup>158</sup>

In the case of the forest of *a’ Ghàidhealtachd*, as time passed and the Gaelic-speaking natives were pushed to the periphery and beyond while others were forced to assimilate into English society, the forests seemed to vanish and with them “the

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<sup>153</sup>. Margaret Connell-Szasz, “*A’ Ghàidhealtachd* and the North American West.” 25

<sup>154</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>155</sup>. David S. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>156</sup>. Guy Hand, “The Forest of Forgetting.”

<sup>157</sup>. Margaret Connell-Szasz, “*A’ Ghàidhealtachd* and the North American West.” 25.

<sup>158</sup>. Ibid.

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very words used to describe them.”<sup>159</sup> Then, “as the land became impoverished, so did the human population” as there were few ways people could make or maintain a life in the forest-less land that became pastureland for livestock farming and land rental.<sup>160</sup> With the loss of the trees and the diversity of the forest so too did much of the original culture that depended on it.<sup>161</sup> What remained was a combination of profoundly anthropocentric language and ethnocentric discourse, and the vast open Scottish Highland landscape as it is known today (figure 3).



Fig 3. (*Left*) On the West Highland Way near Lairigmòr, the ruins of an old farmhouse of the settlement called Tigh-na-sleubhaich “along the steep-sided Allt na Lairige Moire and Allt Nathrach valleys, between Lundavra and Kinlochleven.”<sup>162</sup> (*Right*) Part of the West Highland Way trail leading towards a grove of plantation trees along a roadway. Photographs by Oliver Moir and Nigel Moir (August 2013).

As for many of the trees that were there at the end of the twentieth century, Guy Hand discovered that they are not what they appeared to be from afar. While Guy Hand was spending time with his wife in her northern Scottish homeland, he was drawn to a patch of ‘forest’ that he recounted his experience in his article:

I eventually found what I assumed were scraps of native woodland, clusters of trees growing in odd places, in odd, geometric shapes... I soon found they weren’t natural woodland at all, but “afforestation” projects administered by a governmental organization, The Forestry Commission. Most were inaccessible, surrounded by fence of flung deep into private land, but on the Isle of Skye, near the town of Portree, I found a patch open to the public. A small sign pointed to a “Forest Walk”... Yet as I walked I began to pick out a symmetry that had

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<sup>159</sup>. Guy Hand, “The Forest of Forgetting:” 12.

<sup>160</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>161</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>162</sup>. A. J. Dunwell, “Tigh-na-sleubhaich,” *Canmore*, (1998), accessed March 24, 2016: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/142239/tigh-na-sleubhaich>



eluded me from the road: The trunks of those first trees stood exactly five feet apart, and as I passed they aligned themselves with the rest of the forest in straight rows, like Iowa corn. When I crossed the threshold into the woods themselves, through that first façade of green, all hope of spending time in familiar terrain vanished. This forest was a mirage. The green was gone, replaced with a deadened monochrome of brown, the earth as bare and lifeless as a cellar floor. Identical tree trunks rose with the regularity of concrete pillars, bristling with dead branches. Not a speck of life shown to the height of thirty feet, and only there, as the trees met sunlight, did they sprout green needles. The effect was chilling. A dead heart cloaked in green. An illusion. The great Caledonian Forest in reverse.<sup>163</sup>

Indeed, by the turn of the twentieth century, there was approximately 1.5 million hectares of “high forest” in Great Britain “comprised of almost entirely even-aged plantation of non-native [conifer] species established in 1900.”<sup>164</sup> Guy Hand’s account of witnessing first-hand the ghost of the Caledonian Forest and the illusion of tree plantations that many take for granted as real forests reminds us that “the Highlands are still a mistaken wilderness disguised by forgetting,” and that many devastated lands are often “made beautiful by myth and melancholy light.”<sup>165</sup> In the words of Peter H. Kahn Jr. who named this phenomenon,<sup>166</sup>

People may take the natural environment they encounter during childhoods as the norm against which to measure environmental degradation later in their life. The crux here is that with each ensuing generation, the amount of environmental degradation increases, but each generation takes that amount as the norm, as the nondegraded condition. The upside is that each generation starts afresh, unencumbered mentally by the environmental mistakes and misdeeds of previous generations. The downside is that each of us can have difficulty understanding in a direct, experiential way that nature as experienced in our childhood is not the norm, but already environmentally degraded. Thus, if *environmental generational amnesia* exists, it helps provide a psychological account of how our world has moved toward its environmentally precarious state.

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<sup>163</sup> Guy Hand, “The Forest of Forgetting:” 12

<sup>164</sup> D. C. Malcolm, W. L. Mason, and G. C. Clarke, “The transformation of conifer forests in Britain—Regeneration, gap size and silvicultural systems,” *Forest Ecology and Management* 151 (2001): 7.

<sup>165</sup> Guy Hand, “The Forest of Forgetting:” 13.

<sup>166</sup> Peter H. Kahn Jr. in Eunsook Hyun, “How Is Young Children’s Intellectual Culture of Perceiving Nature Different from Adults?,” *Environmental Education Research* 11, no. 2 (2005): 201. [Italics my emphasis] ; Ronald L Trosper and John A Parrotta, “Introduction: The Growing Importance of Traditional Forest-Related Knowledge,” in *Traditional Forest-Related Knowledge: Sustaining Communities, Ecosystems and Biocultural Diversity*, ed. Ronald L Trosper and John A Parrotta (Springer Science, 2012).

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Today, the Forest of Caledonia remains a place that was lost after generations of forgetting and the Scottish Highlands remains one of the most deforested and fragmented places in the world.<sup>167</sup> It stands as the precautionary story that North America has inherited yet neither heeds nor reminds itself of with any ritual significance.

Only once it has been heard does the Forest of Forgetting become a piercing story about the consequences of collective generational environmental amnesia.<sup>168</sup> Until it has a collective audience, like so many endangered and vanishing spaces of the past, it cries out only ever in silence. Thus, the wildwood of *a' Ghàidhealtachd* whispers both a call and a warning to the storytellers in all of us: be mindful of the myths that we live by as much as the ones not being told, for the presence of one in the absence of others so often carries a crisis in which there is a socio-political rewriting, censoring, and or displacement of place, memory, and knowledge.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup>. Guy Hand, "The Forest of Forgetting" (1997); Philip Mason, "One Tree at a Time: Restoring the Forest of Caledon," *The Ecologist*, February 2014.

<sup>168</sup>. Peter H. Kahn Jr. in Eunsook Hyun, "How Is Young Children's Intellectual Culture of Perceiving Nature Different from Adults'?" 201.

<sup>169</sup>. Crisis of "memory-knowledge-politics." Landzelius, "Spatial Reification, or, Collectively Embodied Amnesia, Aphasia, and Apraxia." *Semiotica* 175 (1-4), 2009. Michael Landzelius, "Commemorative Dis(Re)Membering: Erasing Heritage, Spatializing Disinheritance," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 21, no. 2 (2003): 195–221, <https://doi.org/10.1068/d286t>.

## Chapter Two:

### Politics of Myth and Social-Ecological Amnesia

The colonial legacy of deforestation eventually found a hiding place in the new Anglo-North American nations as they began constructing their own identities independent of the old imperial ones—national identities that were constructed in lieu of revised landscape myths that were dependent upon the very same language and planted in the same ideological-enriched ‘soil’ comprised of anthropomorphism, ethnocentrism, imperialism/nationalism, and eventually industrial capitalism.<sup>170</sup> Both Canada and the United States had their own myths of wilderness, yet both became concealed within a myth of progress.<sup>171</sup> This myth is told and enacted with its own degree of ritual mimesis instigated largely by its political, social, and commercial beneficiaries to ensure that the status quo of endlessly increasing consumption of material products continues. They do not seek a critical response from citizens; instead, they expect them to echo this myth as consumers. Radical ecopsychologist, Andy Fisher, summarized the myth of progress best:<sup>172</sup>

For ‘progress’ is a narrative that tells us—even if few people probably ‘buy’ it in these its baldest economic terms—who we are (commodious individuals); what our ethical duties are (production and consumption); what our relationship to the cosmos is (technological); and what life is all about (progress). The social good it serves, says the myth, when the Gross Domestic Product goes up, and this is accomplished when individuals maximize the satisfaction of their limitless wants. Hence, self-interest constitutes our main social bond.

The forest story that Anglo-North America inherited through the very language it speaks, along with the methods of modern forestry introduced from France and Germany, eventually merged with the myth of industrial capitalist progress.

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<sup>170</sup>. Andy Fisher, *Radical Ecopsychology: Psychology in the Service of Life*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013): 176.

<sup>171</sup>. Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1996).

<sup>172</sup>. Andy Fisher, *Radical Ecopsychology*, 176.

Michael Landzelius pointed out, “[w]hen the world is constantly dis(re)membered in ever new ways remembrance as a both individual and trans-generational complex of experience, memory, and knowledge loses significance in everyday life.”<sup>173</sup> The inability to remember is enforced by making memory irrelevant, and consequently knowledge previously held by memory erodes over time. Another outcome is the inability to piece things together to form a comprehensive story or see the larger picture, such as the memory and knowledge of a cultural geography and or a historic landscape.<sup>174</sup> In addition, the problem of not being able to practice or exercise agency results from not knowing how to independently make decisions, or knowing “how to undertake action.”<sup>175</sup> When traces of fragmented memory and knowledge are dislocated and a single discourse dominates, a sole story (usually that of the dominant political or social powers) of a particular place, becomes reified and accepted as historical truth, thus cementing itself as false memory or knowledge in the minds of a nation, or what Landzelius refers to as “*spatial reification*,”<sup>176</sup> something of which imperial monuments that act as stand-in tellers of false or fictional stories are specially adapted.<sup>177</sup>

In previously forested places such as the Scottish Highlands and the forests of North America, the meaning imbued in trees has a significant effect in determining the fate of the forests and forest-dependent cultures. With global capitalism and the dominant myth of technological Western progress, landscapes and individual places have undergone fast and frequent changes. Without the ability to bear witness to these changes and pass on local ecological knowledge, along with the inability to piece together memories and knowledge of those changes and the situation

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<sup>173</sup> Andy Fisher, *Radical Ecopsychology*: 39.

<sup>174</sup> Renisa Mawani, “Legalities of Nature: Law, Empire, and Wilderness Landscapes in Canada,” *Social Identities* 13, no. 6 (2007): 715–734.

<sup>175</sup> Landzelius, “Spatial Reification, Or, Collectively Embodied Amnesia, Aphasia, and Apraxia.”

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Renisa Mawani, “Legalities of Nature: Law, Empire, and Wilderness Landscapes in Canada.”

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encompassing them, whole landscapes can be altered and go unwitnessed and unremembered.<sup>178</sup> Critical awareness of the ecological and social ethical implications of such memory-knowledge-politics crisis is also lost and the status quo continues. As time passes and industrial actions alter forest landscapes into managed ‘forests,’ as frequently is the case in places on the periphery away from the public eye, forests vanish unwitnessed only to be replaced by timber crops for commercial forestry. While tree plantations (if done proactively) can in numerous cases provide a more sustainable source of wood instead of natural healthy forests,<sup>179</sup> much of the logging is still occurring in the largest remaining intact forest landscapes in North America<sup>180</sup> as it is elsewhere in the world.<sup>181</sup>

As history has shown, and as this dissertation examines, in light of a fundamentally unsustainable cultural way of viewing and valuing sylvan environments, whole forests die not with a loud or sudden signal, but with a ‘whisper’—the cumulative sound of the gradual instant in which a wild wood becomes a clearing, city, pasture, or plantation. As forests decline in the minds of a country’s people through forgetting or disremembering in light of increased adherence to the modern myth of Western progress, built on the stumps of forest trees, the actual forests become degraded, weakened, and remain vulnerable to further industrial exploitation and transformation. Forgetting wildwoods and

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<sup>178</sup>. Alvaro Fernandez-Llamazares et al., “Rapid Ecosystem Change Challenges the Adaptive Capacity of Local Environmental Knowledge,” *Global Environmental Change* 31, no. 2015 (2015): 272–84, doi:10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2015.02.001.

<sup>179</sup>. This has been referred to as the *plantation conservation benefit* hypothesis: “that natural forest degradation can be reduced by substituting wood extraction from natural forests with wood cultivated in timber plantations.” For more on this, see Romain Pirard, Lise Dal, and Russell Warman, “Do Timber Plantations Contribute to Forest Conservation?” *Environmental Science and Policy* 57, no. 2016 (2016): 122–130.

<sup>180</sup>. Peter Lee et al., “Atlas of Canada’s Intact Forest Landscapes,” *Global Forest Watch Canada 10th Anniversary Publication #1* (Edmonton: Global Forest Watch Canada, 2010).

<sup>181</sup>. Romain Pirard, Lise Dal, and Russell Warman, “Do Timber Plantations Contribute to Forest Conservation?,” *Environmental Science and Policy* 57, no. 2016 (2016): 122–30, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2015.12.010>.

cultural practices of human coexistence with these spaces was historically one of the colonial agrarian cultivations of both land and people.

When the physical forests are not able to provide mnemonic triggers that help maintain memory of them when people are not in or within sight of them, they begin to vanish from people's minds. When the memory of wild woodland is lost, the fate of the forest becomes one in which it dies a second death along with the memory of it; and with it, a whole cultural geography—a host of cultural heritage, language, meaning, and ways of living or being with that sylvan environment vanishes. With the passing of time and thus distance from the lost place, present day landscapes are experienced as 'normal,' or 'what has always been.' This is referred to as *shifting baseline syndrome*.<sup>182</sup> With no tradition of story to pass on memories of the way the landscape used to be, particularly when there are no new experiences of the forests taking place, each new alteration of the landscape goes unnoticed.

Each generation that witnesses the landscape change from forests to farmland, farmland to suburbia and shopping malls, and towns to cities, has its own normative schema of the state of the place. Shifting baseline syndrome and the forgetting of the way the landscape used to be is the phenomenon known as

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<sup>182</sup>. *Shifting baseline syndrome* (SBS) is a characteristic of environmental generational amnesia "where a discrepancy between social perceptions and ecological realities contributes to ineffective management as human communities fail to recognize change, considering recent ecological conditions to be normal and thus perceiving them as baseline." Tong Wu, Michael Anthony Petriello, and Yeon-Su Kim, "Shifting Baseline Syndrome as a Barrier to Ecological Restoration in the American Southwest," *Ecological Restoration* 29, no. 3 (2011): 213–15. ; Peter H. Kahn, Rachel L. Severson, and Jolina H. Ruckert, "The Human Relation with Nature and Technological Nature," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 18, no. 1 (2009): 37–42, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2009.01602.x>. ; Ronald L Trosper and John A Parrotta, "Introduction: The Growing Importance of Traditional Forest-Related Knowledge," in *Traditional Forest-Related Knowledge: Sustaining Communities, Ecosystems and Biocultural Diversity*, ed. Ronald L Trosper and John A Parrotta (Springer Science, 2012), 1–36, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2144-9>. For more on this social phenomenon and how it is found in other contexts, such as wildlife, see Daniel Pauly, "Anecdotes and the Shifting Baseline Syndrome of Fisheries," *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* 10, no. 10 (1995): 430, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0169-5347\(00\)89171-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0169-5347(00)89171-5). ; Julio A. Baisre, "Shifting Baselines and the Extinction of the Caribbean Monk Seal," *Conservation Biology* 27, no. 5 (2013): 927–35, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.12107>. ; S.K. Papworth et al., "Evidence for Shifting Baseline Syndrome in Conservation," *Conservation Letters* 2 (2009): 93–100, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1755-263X.2009.00049.x>.

*environmental generational amnesia* and is what researcher Peter Kahn heralded as “one of the central psychological problems of our lifetime.”<sup>183</sup> What this heralds is the possibility that, as time presses on, more natural landscapes will go unwitnessed and unremembered; the result being progressive generational acceptance of degraded landscapes as “normal,” leaving no questions or concerns, no constructively unpleasant emotions such as fear of *Waldsterben* (“forest death”) to motivate collective and intergenerational efforts to foster a new culture of sustainable ethics and behaviours, or new ways of living with the old wildwood.

In the eastern Maritime Provinces, the Acadian forest has been subject to the country’s longest history of logging, going back to the beginning of the seventeenth century.<sup>184</sup> In Nova Scotia, for instance, only “0.1–0.3% of the total forested lands” is old-growth forest.<sup>185</sup> Much of this has to do with the fact that sixty-eight per cent of Nova Scotia’s land is privately owned (fifty per cent held by private landowners and eighteen per cent by logging companies).<sup>186</sup> This place was once described by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow as “the forest primeval,”<sup>187</sup> but even when he wrote that in his poem “Evangeline” the land had already witnessed centuries of clear cutting and burning.<sup>188</sup> Before the arrival of Europeans a majority of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and New England were “covered with old-growth

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<sup>183</sup>. Kahn, Severson, and Ruckert, “The Human Relation with Nature and Technological Nature.” 41.

<sup>184</sup>. Peter G. Lee and Ryan Cheng, “Recent (1990–2007) Anthropogenic Change Within the Forest Landscapes of Nova Scotia,” *Global Forest Watch Canada* (Edmonton, AB, 2009), [http://www.globalforestwatch.ca/files/publications/20090625A\\_GFWC\\_NS-change-2009\\_HR\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.globalforestwatch.ca/files/publications/20090625A_GFWC_NS-change-2009_HR_WEB.pdf), p. 28.

<sup>185</sup>. Rochelle J Owen, Peter N Duinker, and Thomas M Beckley, “Capturing Old-Growth Values for Use in Forest Decision-Making,” *Environmental Management* 43 (2009): 237–48, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-008-9133-3>, p. 238.

<sup>186</sup>. Peter G. Lee and Ryan Cheng, *Recent (1990–2007) Anthropogenic Change Within the Forest Landscapes of Nova Scotia*: 11.

<sup>187</sup>. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie,” Poetry, in *English Poetry III: From Tennyson to Whitman*, ed. W. Eliot, Charles, The Harvar, vol. 42 (New York: P. F. Collier & Son; Bartleby.com, 1914), <http://www.bartleby.com/42/791.html>.

<sup>188</sup>. Ronald L Trosper et al., “North America,” in *Traditional Forest-Related Knowledge: Sustaining Communities, Ecosystems and Biocultural Diversity*, ed. J. A. Parrotta and R. L. Trosper (Springer Science, 2012), 157–201, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2144-9\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-2144-9_5). ; Dick Miller, “The Witness Trees,” Ideas with Paul Kennedy (Canada: Ideas from CBC Radio, 2014), <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/the-witness-trees-1.2913881>.

pine, hemlock, spruce, yellow birch, oak, sugar maple, and American beech,” characteristic of the eastern temperate broadleaf/mixed wildwood.<sup>189</sup>

Increasingly so, in the United States the purchasing of “private forested land for management on behalf of large forest companies” is becoming mainstream practice, the result of which “due to changing market conditions, the eventual use of the land may convert from forestry operation to forms of residential development.”<sup>190</sup> For instance, the Forest Service in the US found that between the years 1982 and 1995, “4.1 million hectares of mostly private forested lands [...] were converted to urban development, and by 2030, 17.9 million hectares of forests” will likely follow suit.<sup>191</sup> In New Brunswick, there have been more cases in which some politicians have favoured the interests of private logging corporations over those of the public and the forest ecosystems,<sup>192</sup> and it is not the only place where this is happening.<sup>193</sup>

In British Columbia, the provincial government has recently demonstrated renewed inclination towards logging companies’ interests.<sup>194</sup> For instance, of one-hundred and fifty units of old-growth forests remain on Vancouver Island, only five currently sustain high productivity forests desired by logging companies. These forests are comprised of giant trees such ancient Douglas Firs and Red Cedars that

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<sup>189</sup>. Owen, Duinker, and Beckley, “Capturing Old-Growth Values for Use in Forest Decision-Making.”

<sup>190</sup>. Lee and Cheng, *Recent (1990-2007) Anthropogenic Change Within the Forest Landscapes of Nova Scotia*: 11.

<sup>191</sup>. Ibid: 12.

<sup>192</sup>. CBC News, “New Crown Forestry Plan Greeted with Shock, Dismay,” *CBC News*, March 13, 2014, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/new-crown-forestry-plan-greeted-with-shock-dismay-1.2570803>.

<sup>193</sup>. Louise Takeda and Inge Røpke, “Power and Contestation in Collaborative Ecosystem-Based Management: The Case of Haida Gwaii,” *Ecological Economics* 70, no. 2 (December 2010): 178–88, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2010.02.007>.

<sup>194</sup>. Mark Hume, “Documents Indicate B.C. Wolf Cull Linked to Forest Industry Concerns,” *The Globe and Mail*, October 25, 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/documents-indicate-bc-wolf-cull-linked-to-forest-industry-concerns/article26968437/>. ; Sierra Club, “A Chance to Protect the Walbran,” Sierra Club, 2015, [http://sierraclub.bc.ca/protect-walbran-old-growth/](http://sierraclub.bc.ca/protect-walbran-old-growth/http://sierraclub.bc.ca/protect-walbran-old-growth/). ; Ancient Forest Alliance, “Canada’s Two Grandest Old-Growth Forests Under Logging Threat by the Teal-Jones Group!,” *Ancient Forest Alliance*, July 9, 2015, <http://www.ancientforestalliance.org/news-item.php?ID=903>.



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the southwestern coastal rainforests for which British Columbia is known.<sup>195</sup>

Statistics on the remaining old-growth forests in British Columbia presented by the provincial government to the public has been largely misleading in that it shows a large quantity of ancient forests; however, most of this consists of sub-alpine and low productivity forests. These ecosystems are inaccessible and considered unloggable as they are characterized by a high elevation, bogs, and old albeit “bonsaied” trees.<sup>196</sup>

Although “[t]he view that the North American continent was pristine and untouched prior to settlement by Europeans has been [allegedly] discarded,”<sup>197</sup> there remains issues involving collective and even specialized understandings of what is meant by the word “forest” and its related terms (e.g., forestry, sustainable management, deforestation, reforestation, etc.). In particular, the issue remains that in English-speaking North America there is a system that disregards the integrity of natural healthy or wild (naturally occurring) forest ecosystems—spaces characterized by biological diversity, old age (anywhere between two-hundred to over a thousand years), and the capacity to self-manage. Cultural and systemic disrespect for wild woods has been a definitive theme in the history of British colonialism and Western forestry. For this reason and the fact that Canada and the United States are founded upon English legal systems and modes of representing forest landscapes,<sup>198</sup> the focus on and reference to North America includes these two nations.

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<sup>195</sup>. Sierra Club, “A Chance to Protect the Walbran.”

<sup>196</sup>. Darryl Augustine, *Ancient Forest Alliance* (Canada: Ancient Forest Alliance, 2014), <http://www.ancientforestalliance.org/news-item.php?ID=857>.

<sup>197</sup>. Trospen et al., “North America,” 162.

<sup>198</sup>. *Ibid.*

### Chapter Three: Keyword “Forest”

In recent years, along with other initiatives,<sup>199</sup> environmental witnessing work done by Global Forest Watch Canada—a non-profit organization that keeps a watchful eye on the forests using satellite and other modes of data collection and analysis—has shown rapid changes to forest cover within a period of ten to twelve years.<sup>200</sup> Specifically, many of these changes (forest cover loss and gain) suggest a rapidly changing sylvan environment whereby previously intact woodlands are cut and planted with new trees, or previously planted areas were harvested and planted again.<sup>201</sup> In 2013, research found “an overall steady decline in Canada’s intact forest landscapes, with some areas dramatically declining” said Peter Lee.<sup>202</sup> This raises the question why, in Canada as with the United States and elsewhere in the Westernized world, there is little collective effort to distinguish between the growing and cultivation of trees (silviculture) from agriculture in general.

Global Forest Watch Canada defines an intact forest as “a contiguous mosaic of natural ecosystems in a forest ecozone, essentially undisturbed by human influence,” but not untouched by human presence.<sup>203</sup> Intact forests are also spaces that “should be large enough to contain and support natural biodiversity and ecological processes,

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<sup>199</sup>. The Global Forest Change map was a collaboration between researchers at the University of Maryland and Google. Christina Comisso, “Interactive Map Shows Alarming Forest Loss in Canada , Worldwide,” *CTV News*, November 24, 2013, <http://www.ctvnews.ca/sci-tech/interactive-map-shows-alarming-forest-loss-in-canada-worldwide-1.1558128>. ; M C Hansen et al., “High-Resolution Global Maps of 21st-Century Forest Cover Change,” *Science (New York, N.Y.)* 342 (2013): 850–53, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1244693>.

<sup>200</sup>. Christina Comisso, “Interactive Map Shows Alarming Forest Loss in Canada , Worldwide,” *CTV News* (November 24, 2013), accessed: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/sci-tech/interactive-map-shows-alarming-forest-loss-in-canada-worldwide-1.1558128> ; Comisso, “Interactive Map Shows Alarming Forest Loss in Canada , Worldwide.” ; Peter Lee et al., “Atlas of Canada’s Intact Forest Landscapes,” in *Global Forest Watch Canada 10th Anniversary Publication #1* (Edmonton: Global Forest Watch Canada, 2010).

<sup>201</sup>. Herb Hammond, “Forest Practices: Putting Wholistic Forest Use into Practice,” in *Touch Wood: BC Forests at the Crossroads*, ed. by Ken Drushka, et al. (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 1993): 94.

<sup>202</sup>. Global Forest Watch Canada, “Canada’s Intact Forests Suffer Dramatic Declines in Canada’s Woodland Caribou Ranges and Especially in Alberta,” *Global Forest Watch Canada*, December 5, 2013.

<sup>203</sup>. Peter Lee et al., *Atlas of Key Ecological Areas Within Canada’s Intact Forest Landscapes*, *Global Forest Watch Canada*, 10th Anniv (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Global Forest Watch Canada, 2010), [http://www.globalforestwatch.ca/files/publications/20101217A\\_Ecol\\_Values\\_HR.pdf](http://www.globalforestwatch.ca/files/publications/20101217A_Ecol_Values_HR.pdf), p. 5.

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and to provide a buffer against human disturbance from surrounding areas.”<sup>204</sup>

Whereas most of the old-growth and primary intact forest regions are scattered in the northern parts of Canada and generally located at higher levels of elevation, the majority of high productivity old-growth intact forests capable of sustaining greater biodiversity are situated in more southern regions and have already been extensively logged.<sup>205</sup>

In a radio documentary with the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC), executive director of Global Forest Watch Canada, Peter Lee posed a critical reflection:<sup>206</sup>

About ninety per cent of all the cutting in Canada today is within pristine ecologically intact primeval forests. When do we see the end of that like Europe saw the end of it and most of the United States saw the end of it? Why do we have to keep cutting in ecologically globally significant intact forest landscapes?

Like Europe, the United States only saw an end to this kind of logging because there was very little old-growth forest left after centuries of intensive cutting and burning.<sup>207</sup> Should Canada continue to manage its forests the way it currently is, much more will be lost in a relatively brief period of time, and simply ‘reforesting’ the land does not balance the scales because a plantation is not the same thing as a forest in terms of ecosystem composition and functions and biological diversity.<sup>208</sup>

Where public or ‘Crown’ lands are concerned, which accounts for the majority of intact forests in Canada, logging companies are left to manage the lands

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<sup>204</sup>. Ibid, 12.

<sup>205</sup>. Anthony Pesklevits, Peter N. Duinker, and Peter G. Bush, “Old-Growth Forests: Anatomy of A Wicked Problem,” *Forests* 2, no. 1 (2011): 343–56, <https://doi.org/10.3390/f2010343>. ; Christian Wirth et al., “Old-Growth Forest Definitions: A Pragmatic View,” in *Old-Growth Forests*, ed. C. Wirth, Ecological (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2009), 11–23, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978>.

<sup>206</sup>. Dick Miller, “The Witness Trees,” *Ideas with Paul Kennedy* (Canada: Ideas from CBC Radio, 2014), <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/the-witness-trees-1.2913881>.

<sup>207</sup>. John Perlin (2005), *A Forest Journey: The Story of Wood and Civilization* (Kindle Location 340). Countryman Press. Kindle Edition.

<sup>208</sup>. Blanco, “Forests May Need Centuries to Recover Their Original Productivity after Continuous Intensive Management: An Example from Douglas-Fir Stands,” *Science of the Total Environment* 437 (2012): 91-103.

tenured to them, including tree harvesting, clean-up, and ‘reforesting’ their cutblocks by planting saplings.<sup>209</sup> According to forest ecologist Herb Hammond, this is referred to as “forestry practices”<sup>210</sup> and even more misleading, “sustainable forestry.”<sup>211</sup> The problem is that through this process, wild forests seldom return to the healthy ecosystems they once were as they are most often harvested again anywhere between thirty or more years *if* managed according to government standards<sup>212</sup> and even these are insufficient compared to the legacies of original or old forests.<sup>213</sup> This is evident, in part, by the fact that the rate of ‘compensation’ is not keeping par with the rate of cutting.<sup>214</sup> Furthermore, there remain a significant number of unknown variables involved when transforming an original forest into industrial developments and other forms of anthropological disturbance.<sup>215</sup> There are also present environmental pressures such as climate change which trigger water strains, increased occurrences of infestation and wildfires, and disease,<sup>216</sup> as well as

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<sup>209</sup>. Naturally:wood, *Forest Practices in Canada*, 2015,

<http://www.naturallywood.com/sites/default/files/Building-Green-With-Wood-Toolkit-Forest-Practices-Canada.pdf>.

<sup>210</sup>. Herb Hammond, “Forest Practices: Putting Wholistic Forest Use into Practice,” in *Touch Wood: BC Forests at the Crossroads*, ed. by Ken Drushka, et al. (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing, 1993), 94.

<sup>211</sup>. Herb Hammond in Sasha Snow (2015), *Hadwin’s Judgement* (88:00), National Film Board of Canada.

<sup>212</sup>. Charlotte Gill, *Eating Dirt: Deep Forests, Big Timber, and Life with the Tree Planting Tribe* (Toronto: Greystone Books, 2012), p. 229. ; Corey R. Halpin and Craig G. Lorimer, “Trajectories and Resilience of Stand Structure in Response to Variable Disturbance Severities in Northern Hardwoods,” *Forest Ecology and Management* 365, no. 2016 (2016): 69–82. ; Juan A. Blanco, “Forests May Need Centuries to Recover Their Original Productivity after Continuous Intensive Management: An Example from Douglas-Fir Stands.” ; Erika L. Rowland and Alan S. White, “Topographic and Compositional Influences on Disturbance Patterns in a Northern Maine Old-Growth Landscape,” *Forest Ecology and Management* 259, no. 12 (2010): 2399–2409, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foreco.2010.03.016>.

<sup>213</sup>. Yan Boucher, Martin-Hugues St-Laurent, and Pierre Grondin, “Logging-Induced Edge and Configuration of Old-Growth Forest Remnants in the Eastern North American Boreal Forests,” *Natural Areas Journal* 31, no. 3 (2011): 300–306.

<sup>214</sup>. William Marsden, “Canada Leads World in Forest Decline, Report Says,” *Canada.com*, September 4, 2014, <http://o.canada.com/news/canada-leads-world-in-forest-decline-report-says>.

<sup>215</sup>. A. Diochon, L. Kellman, and H. Beltrami, “Looking Deeper: An Investigation of Soil Carbon Losses Following Harvesting from a Managed Northeastern Red Spruce (*Picea Rubens* Sarg.) Forest Chronosequence,” *Forest Ecology and Management* 257, no. 2 (2009): 413–20. ; Dick Miller, “The Witness Trees.” ; Brian R. Sturtevant et al., “Forest Recovery Patterns in Response to Divergent Disturbance Regimes in the Border Lakes Region of Minnesota (USA) and Ontario (Canada),” *Forest Ecology and Management* 313, no. 2014 (2014): 199–211.

<sup>216</sup>. Pieter van Lierop et al., “Global Forest Area Disturbance from Fire, Insect Pests, Diseases and Severe Weather Events,” *Forest Ecology and Management* 352 (2015): 78–88.

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small yet cumulative “enigmatic ecological impacts” that are forecasted to worsen in future.<sup>217</sup> Witness to such disturbances are surviving old-growth forests and trees in the last intact forest landscapes and woodlots which stand in contrast to the growing presence of second-growth and new or reforested areas which are primarily maintained for secondary or tertiary timber harvests.<sup>218</sup> Furthermore, in managed forests where herbicides and pesticides are used to exclude or suppress competition from other flora and fauna for the cultivation of one to three tree species, the result is a monoculture (in the case of one species) or a biologically simplified stand of trees.<sup>219</sup>

What “forest” means varies depending on who is using it, and whether one is talking about an actual forest or an idea or idealized representation of a forest. The meaning of this word, then, will mediate significantly different outcomes in terms of the ecological footprint left by those with sustainable or unsustainable values behind the language they use. In addition, the meanings given to a ‘forest’ determine what is meant by related terms, such as ‘re-forestation,’ ‘afforestation,’ ‘clearcutting,’ and so forth. Despite the many wide and longstanding changes to the North American landscape, both the United States and Canada have their respective landscape myths or typical pictures that are evoked in the minds of their respective populaces (e.g., the American West, the Canadian North).<sup>220</sup> For instance, while most of Canada’s ‘forests’ are “officially managed and undergo direct land use, mostly for wood

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<sup>217</sup>. Keren G. Raiter et al., “Under the Radar: Mitigating Enigmatic Ecological Impacts,” *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* 29, no. 11 (2014): 635–44, doi:10.1016/j.tree.2014.09.003.

<sup>218</sup>. Rowland and White, “Topographic and Compositional Influences on Disturbance Patterns in a Northern Maine Old-Growth Landscape.”

<sup>219</sup>. William Marsden, “Canada Leads World in Forest Decline, Report Says.”

<sup>220</sup>. Ronald L Trosper et al., “North America,” in *Traditional Forest-Related Knowledge: Sustaining Communities, Ecosystems and Biocultural Diversity*, ed. J. A. Parrotta and R. L. Trosper (Springer Science, 2012), 157–201.

harvest,” they continue to be “perceived as pristine” wildwoods “and among the last remaining wilderness.”<sup>221</sup>

Where humans and woods coincide in the same time and space there has been one landscape myth or another. At play in the relationship between humans and woodlands, there has always been an environmental imaginary, a particular sylvan *zeitgeist* or spirit of a people’s epoch that acts as our *mental map* of the forest topography involving or mixing both a represented or imagined place and physical space.<sup>222</sup> The word *forest* is often taken for granted. When the forest is spoken of, even in the context of ecological crises, the forest as it is represented or framed is not the same as the physical forest in the environment. The two are always overlapping when we, and our languages, are concerned. This intersection between ourselves, our environmental imaginaries of the woods, and the forests themselves depends on the time period and space (i.e., political, ecological, socio-economical, ideological) through which forests, as places, are constituted. Through the use of a particular system of representation, such as the language and modes of communication used to convey meaning such as oral, pictorial, or written narrative forms, a symbolic forest emerges from our sylvan *mythopoeic*<sup>223</sup>—narratives (i.e., memory, representation), representations of our making—formed out of direct experiences and perceptions of and attitudes towards real forests. As we experience woodlands through either direct or indirect (i.e., represented) experiences, a *mythopoeia sylvatica*<sup>224</sup> takes place, filling

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<sup>221</sup>. Jean-Sébastien Landry and Navin Ramankutty, “Carbon Cycling, Climate Regulation, and Disturbances in Canadian Forests: Scientific Principles for Management,” *Land* 4 (2015): 83–118, <https://doi.org/10.3390/land4010083>.

<sup>222</sup>. Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1995).

<sup>223</sup>. Greek *mythos*- “story” or “myth” and *poiesis* “making of” or “formation;” hence, narratives formed of the imagination or mind, including lived and dis-remembered or recreated memories, creative fictions, and passive perceptions.

<sup>224</sup>. *Mythopoeia*, n., Latin from Greek *mythos*- (“myth, story”) and *poiesis* (“to make, formation”) and *sylvatica* (“wild, of or from the forests,” “amidst the trees,” “things pertaining to forests”); used here as ‘the formation of myth(s) about wild woods or forests’ or ‘stories pertaining to forests’. See J. R. R. Tolkien’s poem “Mythopoeia,” in *Tree and Leaf: Including the Poem Mythopoeia* (London, UK: Unwin Hyman, 1964/1988).

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our individual and collective minds with a narrative version of woodlands, wild or otherwise. This is what this thesis focuses on: the particular way the Anglo-North American forest story has been shaped and transformed—a critical topographical study of the North American forests.

With each era, the common understanding of what a forest is or means has changed according to particular sign systems or languages, the meaning its speakers invest in it, and how their belief systems and modes of communication mediate between their societies and the woodland communities. With the passage of time since the term “forest” came into common use in Middle English, it is important to examine its official and common or basic definition. Each environmental imaginary or sylvan story holds testimony that is revealing of its storyteller’s relationship with the real forests, so by going to the original meanings of the word, we can enter the Anglo-forest story from below the surface, from its roots in the English language.

Etymologically, in the late thirteenth century, a “forest” meant an “extensive tree-covered district” especially reserved as the King’s property for the Crown’s uses (as opposed to a commons of the people)—a view that persisted into the nineteenth century.<sup>225</sup> Today, this meaning has largely changed yet we still refer to most of the forests as being ‘Crown’ or public lands (in Canada) and state lands (in the USA). The English word *forest* came from Old French and remained related to Modern French *forêt*, which came from Late or Medieval Latin *forestem silvam* meaning “outside woods”—allegedly “a term from the Capitularies of Charlemagne denoting ‘the royal forest’.”<sup>226</sup> Similarly, this term came to Medieval Latin from ‘a Germanic source akin to Old High German *forst*, from Latin *foris* “outside.”<sup>227</sup> According to Robert Pogue Harrison, if this line of origin is true, “the sense is ‘beyond the park’”

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<sup>225</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: Shadow of Civilization* (London: Chicago University Press, 1993).

<sup>226</sup> Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

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with the park (Latin *parcus*) understood as “the main or central fenced woodland” or property.<sup>228</sup>

Today, most people in North America would find a basic definition for “forest” in common dictionaries, such as the Canadian Oxford Dictionary which defines a forest as “a large area covered chiefly with trees and undergrowth,” and “the trees growing in such an area”;<sup>229</sup> however, there are currently greater than eight hundred official definitions of the word “forest” for land measurable by satellites, all of which recognize land “either by vegetation cover or by human use.”<sup>230</sup>

Historically in England, a forest referred to “an area usually owned by the sovereign and kept for hunting;” or, more simply, “a large number or dense mass of vertical objects.”<sup>231</sup> The same dictionary defines a *tree* as “a perennial plant with a woody self-supporting main stem or trunk when mature the usual unbranched for some distance above the ground,”<sup>232</sup> *forest tree* as “a large tree suitable for a forest,”<sup>233</sup> and a *tree farm* as “an area of land where trees are grown for commercial purposes.”<sup>234</sup> What we see, then, is that there is little difference between a “forest” and a “tree farm” according to the contemporary and historic meanings of these terms. The past and present English meanings of the word “forest” reduces a complex ecosystem to a stand of wood-bearing or timber-producing plants that, when there are many standing together, make a “forest.” Still, we need another view for comparison to get a better perspective of this topic.

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<sup>228</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>229</sup>. Katherine Barber (ed.), *Canadian Oxford Dictionary, Second Edition* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2004): 583.

<sup>230</sup>. Joseph O. Sexton et al., “Conservation Policy and the Measurement of Forests,” *Nature Climate Change* 6, no. February (2016): 192–97, <https://doi.org/10.1038/nclimate2816>, p. 192.

<sup>231</sup>. Katherine Barber (ed.), *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*: 583

<sup>232</sup>. Ibid: 1658.

<sup>233</sup>. Ibid, 583.

<sup>234</sup>. Ibid, 1658.



Reduced to their simplest most basic units of biological being, “[t]rees are simply plants which have learned how to grow very tall, using a self-supporting perennial woody stem.”<sup>235</sup> Still, whether we recognize it or not, a woodland is so much more to us as earthlings than just a lump sum of its biological matter as it exists not in isolation but always already in relationship with its environment and other beings and things therein. A forest (in the wildwood sense) is a prerequisite for itself, as Charlotte Gill put it.<sup>236</sup> Renowned Finnish tree researcher Olavi Huikari elaborated that while it is true that a group of trees form a forest, this is *only the beginning of a forest*; in time, “a forest offers food and protection to sustain life’s great diversity,” and so it is more than just a collection of trees.<sup>237</sup> The whole is somehow greater than the sum of its parts, in other words. Through this kind of environmental imaginary lens, a forest is an *ecosystem*—a term whose root word “eco” comes from the Greek *oikos*, “house, dwelling, habitation.”<sup>238</sup> Hence, a forest is a bioecological woodland *community*. Furthermore, research over the past decade on the “wood-wide web”—the interconnecting fungal network that unifies a forest and other ecosystems—reveals that there is so much more to forests than we currently understand.<sup>239</sup>

Going back to the English forest and trees we find that their meanings have ties reaching back to the ancient Greco-Roman past. The Greek word for “forest” is *hyle* (or *hulæ*); however, in using this word in a philosophical context, Aristotle

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<sup>235</sup>. Olavi Huikari, *The Miracle of Trees* (New York, NY: Walker Publishing Company, 2012), p. 1.

<sup>236</sup>. Charlotte Gill, *Eating Dirt: Deep Forests, Big Timber, and Life with the Tree-Planting Tribe* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2011): 228.

<sup>237</sup>. Olavi Huikari, *The Miracles of Trees*.

<sup>238</sup>. Online Etymology Dictionary: <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=ecology>

<sup>239</sup>. Kevin J. Beiler et al., “Architecture of the Wood-Wide Web: Rhizopogon Spp. Genets Link Multiple Douglas-Fir Cohorts,” *New Phytologist* 185, no. 2 (2010): 543–53, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8137.2009.03069.x>; Merlin Sheldrake, “Wood Wide Webs” (pp. 149–174) in *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change Our Minds, and Shape Our Futures* (New York: Random House, 2020); Peter Wollenben, *The Hidden Lives of Trees: What They Feel, How they Communicate—Discoveries from a Secret World* (Greystone Books, 2016).

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assigned to it another meaning: “matter.”<sup>240</sup> When the Romans translated Greek words and their meanings, it was curious that they did not use the original Greek meaning of *hyle* for which they had their Latin equivalent, *sylva* (“forest”). Instead, the Romans opted for Aristotle’s *hyle* like a linguistic loophole through which they were able to make “matter” out of “forest”<sup>241</sup> in their environmental imaginary. The official Roman word for “forest” thus became *materia*, used to refer to “wood.”<sup>242</sup> As it turned out for both the Greeks and the Romans, the words for wood, *hyle/hulæ* and *materia*, became synonyms for “primary matter.”<sup>243</sup> John Perlin pointed out that “[t]his suggests that people living in Classical times regarded wood as the basic material from which they made almost everything.”<sup>244</sup>

Curious is the fact that the root of *materia*—*mater*—means “mother.”<sup>245</sup> The story of Rome’s origin tells of how its founders, Romulus and Remus were mothered by a wolf and later emerged from the forest outside of which they built their civilization. As it was built on the stumps of trees and excluded the woodland community from its very ideological conception, the Empire’s continued success was, from the beginning, bound to the destruction of the forests from which its founders originated.<sup>246</sup> This helps explain how inherently antagonistic views of the forest and purely anthropocentric utilitarian values of trees and forests came about in a kind of social-ecological ‘matricide’ despite the fact that they were the very spaces and organisms from which entire cultural geographies and cosmologies emerge and were supported. Taken together, this gives fresh understanding behind the meaning of the word *psyche* meaning “soul” and “breath.” What we ‘breathe’ (think, speak, and write)

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<sup>240</sup>. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests*: 28.

<sup>241</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>242</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>243</sup>. John Perlin, *A Forest Journey: The Story of Wood and Civilization*: (Kindle Location) 340.

<sup>244</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>245</sup>. Fritjof Capra, *The Science of Leonardo: Inside the Mind of the Great Genius of the Renaissance* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2007): 12.

<sup>246</sup>. Ibid.

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from within (the imagination) assigns to things meanings, which, in turn, have the power to mediate how we perceive, value, and interact with the physical world beyond ourselves.

Despite the fact that early civilizations depended so heavily on trees for wood (among other uses such as food, medicine, and pitch), its meaning—its value—was repeatedly reduced and abstracted from its origins, displaced as solely “matter” in common linguistic representations. There was nothing, semantically-speaking, that automatically preserved the value or connected the material to a larger story of place (*woods*) from where it originates and is sustained. In other words, the meaning of wood for such empires as ancient Greece, Macedonia, and Rome did not act as a link that connected them in a more meaningful way to the forests other than as a place to extract a primary material for uses in daily necessities to the indulgences of imperial conquests. From forests come trees, which were symbolically reduced to a primary building material for human and state *teloi* (ends). Centuries later during the Renaissance, it is no wonder that Leonardo da Vinci, a great systems thinker who advocated for a deeper ecological understanding of the natural world, so fiercely criticized the reductionists or so-called “abbreviators” of his time when he wrote:<sup>247</sup>

The abbreviators of works do injury to knowledge and to love... Of what value is he who, in order to abbreviate the parts of those things of which he professes to give complete knowledge, leaves out the greater part of the things of which the whole is composed? ...Oh human stupidity! ... You don't see that you are falling into the same error as one who strips a tree of its adornment of branches full of leaves, intermingled with fragrant flowers or fruit, in order to demonstrate that the tree is good for making planks.

An example of this reduction of the life of trees to a basic unit of matter is found in the Italian word *legno*, “wood”—a word that became synonymous with the word “ship” for its use as the primary material in shipbuilding.<sup>248</sup> The endurance of these

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<sup>247</sup>. Capra, *The Science of Leonardo*, 12.

<sup>248</sup>. John Perlin, *A Forest Journey: The Story of Wood and Civilization*.

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words and their meanings persisted and the attitudes they generated have had their cumulative effect in shaping the human–environment relationship observed both in foresight and in hindsight centuries later. Over centuries, such meanings have determined the fate of wildwoods wherever these views and values were carried by and thrived in these ancient imperial civilizations. As the Greco-Roman civilizations grew, the wildwoods degraded, eroded, and in many places disappeared.<sup>249</sup>

What was culturally consistent across Europe’s dominant civilizations was how trees and forests were perceived and understood for their use-value first and foremost. What was lacking is evidence of a larger cultural or commonplace understanding of trees and forests according to their social and bio-ecological *relations* or based on their multispecies *relationality*. From a very early point in the history of Western civilization there has been a kind of dis-ease characterized by a perceived separation between human dwelling and the rest of the world. It has since been imported around the world where it has left its marks.

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<sup>249</sup>. Harrison, *Forests*.

## Chapter Four: Cultural Dis-Ease and Grief Upon the Land

Haw'ilume, Wealthy Earth Mother, the home of biodiversity, is currently under abnormal duress. Her immediate problem is a global warming that has produced a '*dis-ease*' evident in her convulsions in the form of violent storms and earthquakes.

– Umeek / E. Richard Atleo<sup>250</sup>

The legacy of Western relations to woodlands is fraught with topographical traumas, including physical and cultural genocides of Indigenous communities across North America. From battles over the woods themselves, to the degradation and annihilation of ancient forests and forest peoples, to the ways the woods are used or misused, scars are left through Western styles of occupation and cultural self-inscription upon the land. One might say that Western cultural geographies reflect a kind of cultural or societal *dis-ease*<sup>251</sup> at play. The concern here is, as Macfarlane put it, “how we landmark, and how we are landmarked in turn.”<sup>252</sup> That is, traumas committed upon the land and its peoples reflect something of the cultural psyche. This raises the question of what happens when even our own language, English, loses words, mnemonic triggers, that represent and help us remember the more-than-human world in addition to diminishment to and losses of indigenous languages?

Our language binds us to place in different ways through our technologies, our built environments and all that they contain. Our daily lives are not lived on and with the land, and this is reflected in our vocabularies and stories. In Canada as elsewhere in the Western world, we have no living sustainable culture of the forest familiar to average citizens; rather, we relate to forested lands through personal and or regional/national identities and various modes of representation mediated by

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<sup>250</sup>. Umeek / E. Richard Atleo, *The Principles of Tsawalk: An Indigenous Approach to Global Crisis* (Toronto: UBC Press, 2011), p. 1. Italics my emphasis.

<sup>251</sup>. Here I borrow Umeek or Dr. Richard Atleo's word to refer to the unstable relation at play between the dominant way nation states relate to the more-than-human world.

<sup>252</sup>. Macfarlane, “The Word-Hoard: Robert Macfarlane on Rewilding Our Language of Landscape.”

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belief systems that have been long distanced or even detached from the living land. Much knowledge concerning forests seems to be gathered from afar and presented in quantitative data figures and reports. We perceive forests through digital technologies (photograph and film), large machinery (in the case of wood extraction), and satellites (monitoring and measuring). Even when citizens go to a forest, however, it is a politically pre-designated, managed place (e.g., Yosemite National Park, Banff National Park, Algonquin Park) that perpetuates a particular set of values and beliefs about that place (e.g., that a place is somehow quintessentially “American” or “Canadian”). This does not mean that all people feel or experience it this way, however, but its consequences are seen in the way the nation, like others, has shaped sylvan landscapes. Those places, in turn, give shape to the kinds of landscape ideals we possess and propagate, namely settler-colonial notions of what a forest or park should look like.<sup>253</sup>

Western societies have cultivated cultural geographies that exclude or erase cultural and biological diversity at home and abroad where industrial capitalism has become the new imperialism.<sup>254</sup> This is perhaps most evident in the loss of words and ways of representing, knowing, and remembering the more-than-human world as exemplified with the case of the Caledonian forest and Macfarlane’s landscapes.<sup>255</sup> When we grieve for the degradation and loss of land or an old forest, we must also recognize and mourn the loss of part of the human spirit, even if it also means grieving our own, and find a way to work through the dis-ease created between land and civilizations, and strive in various ways to take responsibility.

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<sup>253</sup>. Joan Iverson Nassauer, “Cultural Sustainability: Aligning Aesthetics and Ecology,” in *Placing Nature: Culture and Landscape Ecology*, ed. Joan Iverson Nassauer (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1997), <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/49350>.

<sup>254</sup>. Guy Hand, “The Forest of Forgetting,” *Northern Lights*, 1997, [http://guyhand.com/writing\\_pdfs/10Forest of Forgetting 1.pdf](http://guyhand.com/writing_pdfs/10Forest of Forgetting 1.pdf).

<sup>255</sup>. Macfarlane, “The Word-Hoard: Robert Macfarlane on Rewilding Our Language of Landscape.”

## Chapter Five: Social-Ecological Grief

As we begin to bear witness to “the wider expanse of loss that is happening in our culture and our ecosystem,” social-ecological grief becomes a force that can no longer be ignored.<sup>256</sup> Francis Weller expressed it well when he wrote,<sup>257</sup>

Grieving is [...] intimately connected with memory and the witnessing of those memories and emotions. Freeman House, in his elegant book, *Totem Salmon*, says, “In one ancient language, the word *memory* derives from a word meaning mindful, in another from a word to describe a witness, in yet another it means, at root, to grieve. To witness mindfully is to grieve for what has been lost.” That is the intent and purpose of grief.

Memory, witnessing, emotions, mindfulness, grief: these are the core themes this work takes up in its exploration of the degradation and loss of ancient forests in the Pacific northwestern and northeastern woodland regions of Canada and the United States, modern inheritors of Western traditions from old Europe and the ancient cradle of Western civilization. To those themes I would also add trauma in the war-like struggles of Western nations concerning the forest.

Ecological grief has become a growing topic of discussion that coincides with the larger discourse about the “Anthropocene” or Human Age, the geological epoch many say we now live in. As Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman put it,<sup>258</sup>

Ecological losses differ in important ways from human deaths. In particular, we are often complicit in these losses, if only by virtue of living in the Anthropocene. [...] This ecological work of mourning will, necessarily, look different. It will feel different. And it will require from us different forms of commitment, different attention, and different ways of thinking.

The word Anthropocene implies that all humans are complicit, and it leaves little room for the notion of *social*-ecological grieving; grief that recognizes the injustices

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<sup>256</sup>. Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2015), p. xvii.

<sup>257</sup>. Ibid: 17–18.

<sup>258</sup>. Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman, *Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017): 16.

done to both to the biosphere and to what Wade Davis calls the *ethnosphere*—the sphere of cultural diversity grown out of the biosphere over millennia.<sup>259</sup>

Geologically-speaking, human activities have left undeniable and irreparable marks upon Earth’s history. Yet, to call this time period the “Anthropocene” is misleading when it is a fact that many people least responsible for the environmental damages are often the most vulnerable to the consequences. There have always been and are people who call the forests home—not “wilderness”—who had and have to defend it from other cultural and political forces; one man’s wilderness is another man’s home and daily reality. While there remain communities today who remember how the land once was and ways to know and live respectfully and sustainably with it, the onrush of globalized industrial capitalism (neo-colonialism) carries out the legacies of colonizing empires of the past and present.<sup>260</sup>

One dominant cultural characteristic of the modern day is how communally acceptable it is to feel and express grief for losses to the environment, be it for species, ecosystems, or other people. Eco-anxiety, eco phobia and eco horror,<sup>261</sup> ecological grief/mourning are growing topics of conversation because more people

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<sup>259</sup>. Wade Davis, *The Way Finders: Why Ancient Wisdom Matters in the Modern World* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2009), 1–2.

<sup>260</sup>. Sheila Jasanoff, “Biotechnology and Empire: The Global Power of Seeds and Science,” *OSIRIS* 21 (2006): 273–92. ; Mawani, “Legalities of Nature: Law, Empire, and Wilderness Landscapes in Canada.” ; Landzelius, “Spatial Reification, or, Collectively Embodied Amnesia, Aphasia, and Apraxia.” ;

<sup>261</sup>. Hillard noted how the ecocritic Simon Estok pointed out the need to discuss “how contempt for the natural world is a definable and recognizable discourse,” which he calls *ecophobia*: “an irrational and groundless hatred of the natural world, as present and subtle in our daily lives and literature as homophobia and racism and sexism.” Hillard clarified that “fear” is “a more accurate word that ‘hatred’ (for doesn’t most hatred arise from some deep-seated fear?).” T. J. Hillard, “Deep Into That Darkness Peering’: An Essay on Gothic Nature,” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 16, no. 4 (2009): 686. ; Crosby also points out that, according to Estok, *ecophobia* is what “enables ‘the looting and plundering of animal and nonanimal resources’ [...]” Furthermore, she points out that *ecophobia*’s opposite, *ecophilia*, can also be “dangerous” as “recent scholarship has begun to question whether the dominant discourses of *ecophobia* and *ecophilia* in American culture are in fact two sides of the same pernicious construct.” The alternative presented is Timothy Morton’s notion of a “dark ecology” “that embraces the grief and horror of a failing environment.” Sara L. Crosby, “Beyond *Ecophilia*: Edgar Allan Poe and the American Tradition of Ecohorror,” *ISLE Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 21, no. 3 (2014): 513–25, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isle/isu080>.



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are experiencing these emotional phenomena.<sup>262</sup> This raises questions about what happens to emotionally and mentally when one experiences remorse or grief in awareness of one's witnessing and participation (directly, indirectly) in the degradation and death of parts of the world. What happens to the heart when we leave destructive marks upon the Earth? What happens to the mind when a person or people are faced by their accountability?

While I have already discussed part of antiquity, it is helpful to consider the earliest known source of this dis-ease in the cultural relation to land: *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. There is much that resonates with ecological degradation and loss of woodlands over past centuries, especially the past two when colonization, globalization, industrial capitalism, and technological advancements led to more deforestation than in the last millennia. Specifically, a report from Oxford University estimates that half of the deforestation on Earth in the past ten thousand years “occurred in the last century.”<sup>263</sup> The trend of degrading ancient forests has an older history, however. Considering *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is not just about how politics, economics, technology, and psychological troubles or existential angst factor into the division between “civilization” and “forest.” It is about understanding how forests are, as Jaime Yard put it, hybrid “natural-cultural ‘things’”<sup>264</sup> and the ecological footprints that emerge from certain environmental imaginaries. From a cultural narrative perspective, the Forest Journey is where the Forest Question begins in the Western cultural context: What place is this? What is a forest (to a person or people in question)? “What are we speaking of when we speak of the forest?”<sup>265</sup> What are

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<sup>262</sup>. Omayra Issa, “How Climate Change Is Causing Grief, Anxiety and Depression,” *CBC News*, November 12, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/climate-change-causing-grief-1.6241112>.

<sup>263</sup>. Hannah Ritchie, “The World Has Lost One-Third of Its Forest, but an End of Deforestation Is Possible,” 2021, <https://ourworldindata.org/world-lost-one-third-forests>.

<sup>264</sup>. Jaime Yard, “Softwood Lumber and the Golden Spruce: Two Perspectives on the Material and Discursive Construction of British Columbian Forests.”

<sup>265</sup>. *Ibid.*

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we destroying, grieving, loving, hating, fearing when we confront the forest as a *topos*, a topic of the Western environmental imagination and as land, a physical place that is home to many other beings, peoples and realities? From where, what place, are we coming from as a society when we degrade ancient and other old-growth forests?

## Chapter Six: Spectral Geography of the Cedar Forest

“There’s  
a sorrow that’s so old and silver it’s no longer  
sorry. There’s a place  
between desire and memory, some back porch  
we can neither wish for nor recall.”

– Don McKay<sup>266</sup>

“The myths, therefore, were the pattern...”

– Carobeth Laird<sup>267</sup>

Over four thousand years ago, the first recorded act of deforestation took place on the Cedar Mountain in ancient Mesopotamia.<sup>268</sup> It began with the killing of the forest guardian, after the first great walls of civilization were built, and with a semi-divine king’s desire for limitless life, legacy, and to demonstrate what his culture saw as heroism. This king, “the apex of society,” was also regarded as omniscient, who was said to have seen “the foundations of the land” and “knew the world’s ways.”<sup>269</sup> Against the disapproval and warning of his elders, however, Gilgamesh and his friend Enkidu set out on their quest with their specially made giant axes and blades to kill the forest guardian and fell the cedar trees.

Once they reached the ancient Cedar Forest on the mountain slope, they found it diversely dense, beautiful, and full of wildlife and the chirping of birds: “They stood there, marvelling at the forest, / They gazed at the height of the cedars,” and beheld this “dwelling of the gods,” a place “sacred to the goddess Irnina.”<sup>270</sup> The forest was abundant with cedar, whose shade was agreeable and “full

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<sup>266</sup>. Don McKay, “Song for the Song of the Wood Thrush,” *Camber* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2004), 125.

<sup>267</sup>. Carobeth Laird, quoted in Umeek/E. Richard Atleo, *Principles of Tsarwalk: An Indigenous Approach to Global Crisis* (Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), p. 39.

<sup>268</sup>. Aaron Shaffer, “Gilgamesh, the Cedar Forest and Mesopotamian History,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103, no. 1 (1983): 307–13., p. 307.

<sup>269</sup>. Benjamin R. Foster (Ed., Trans.), *The Epic of Gilgamesh. Second Norton Critical Edition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019): p. xvii.

<sup>270</sup>. Irnina is “another name or a local for of the goddess Ishtar,” and Ishtar is the “goddess of sex, love, and warfare; the planet Venus; and the principal female deity in the Mesopotamian

of pleasures.” Yet, “As the cedar [cast] its shadow, Gilgamesh was beset by fear.”  
 Ironic, because Gilgamesh accused the strong men of Uruk who did not want to support this quest of being “weaklings” whose weakness made him “ill.”<sup>271</sup>

When they entered the forest, Gilgamesh and Enkidu’s movements “perturbed” the birds. Deeper inside, Humbaba, the forest guardian, noticed the shift in the birds’ baseline behaviour.<sup>272</sup> This was his only warning before the king and his tamed wild man engaged Humbaba in battle. In the end, Humbaba was brought to his knees where he begged Gilgamesh to spare his life, but to no avail: “Gilgamesh smote him in the neck, / Enkidu [...] drew out his lungs. / Springing the length of his body, / He plucked teeth from his head as a trophy.” Gilgamesh took the head of the forest guardian, and “For two leagues the cedars were spattered with his blood.” As “Gilgamesh was cutting the trees, / While Enkidu kept looking for the tallest ones.”<sup>273</sup>

They floated the logs down river on a giant raft back to the city of Uruk with Humbaba’s head as prize. Enkidu was worried and spoke to Gilgamesh: “we have made a wasteland of the forest, / How shall we answer for it to Enil in Nippur (when he says): / ‘You slew the guardian as a deed of valour, / ‘But what was this, your

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pantheon” (Foster, 2019, p. 242). What does not make sense, unless seen from some place of self-absorbed masculinity is that “Gilgamesh strips to put on fresh garments after the expedition. Ishtar, goddess of love and sex, is attracted to him and proposes marriage, offering him power and riches” (p. 49). Before he is killed, Humbaba is described as appealing to Gilgamesh’s kingly prowess or greatness in his request for mercy. Again, here is another divine being noticing Gilgamesh’s “greatness,” specifically promoting his “manliness”—that he is such a ‘catch’ for killing Humbaba and the forest that the very goddess of love and sex desires him! The point is that, in this, Gilgamesh’s character is *rewarded* for his deeds while his kind of masculinity and leadership is promoted.

<sup>271</sup>. Theme of patriarchal masculinity.

<sup>272</sup>. Gilgamesh and Enkidu would have triggered a *bird plow*: “The bird plow is created when a person (or other perceived and immediate danger) appears suddenly and with a brisk trajectory—somewhat ignoring the impact he is having on his surroundings. The bird plow is marked by a rush of birds flying up and away in a straight-line trajectory from an approaching threat on the ground.” Jon Young, *What the Robin Knows: How Birds Reveal the Secrets of the Natural World* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), 120.

<sup>273</sup>. Benjamin R. Foster (Ed., Trans.), *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, 47.

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fury, that you decimated the forest?”<sup>274</sup> *What was this, their fury, that they decimated the forest?*

Punishment for the killing of the great forest spirit came from the god Anu,<sup>275</sup> but it was Enkidu who was cursed with an illness that led to his death. Gilgamesh, left bereft following his friend’s demise, roamed the steppe where Enkidu once lived as a wild man protecting wildlife from hunters. Unlike Enkidu, however, Gilgamesh’s mental state deteriorated and he,<sup>276</sup>

He kills lions, wild bulls, bison of the uplands...,  
He has put on their skins, he eats their flesh.  
Gilgamesh dug many wells where they never were before,  
He drank the water and went on, chasing the winds.  
[...]  
I killed bear, hyena, lion, panther, tiger,  
Deer, ibex, wild beasts of the steppe,  
I ate their meat, I made a butchery of their skins.  
Let them close the gates of sorrow,  
Let them seal its portal tight with pitch and tar!

Gilgamesh then declared that, “Thanks to his sacrifices,” it “will be that the human race will never thereafter have to know” the anguish of such deep grief.<sup>277</sup> After roaming the land fearing death and grieving the loss of Enkidu, Gilgamesh embarks upon a quest to find a man granted immortality by the gods. This further search for immortality is “characterized by increasing violence”<sup>278</sup>

He finds Utanapishtim, the immortal, but Gilgamesh fails his test of immortality. After what is ultimately a miserable quest that ends in failure for the king, Gilgamesh is sent home with Utanapishtim’s servant, Ur-Shanabi, the “ferryman who crosses the ocean and waters of death.”<sup>279</sup> When they reach the city, Gilgamesh proudly encourages the boatman to “pace out the walls of Uruk,” ending the epic the

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<sup>274</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>275</sup>. A sky god, one of the oldest, and the supreme god of the Mesopotamian pantheon.

<sup>276</sup>. Foster (2019): pp. 69, 85.

<sup>277</sup>. Ibid: p. 84.

<sup>278</sup>. Ibid: p. 87.

<sup>279</sup>. Ibid: 244.

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same way it opened: describing the great size of the walled city: “Three and a half square miles is the measure of Uruk!”<sup>280</sup> Today, remnants of these walls can still be seen in a treeless landscape.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>280</sup>. Benjamin R. Foster (Ed., Trans.), *The Epic of Gilgamesh. Second Norton Critical Edition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019): p. 100.

<sup>281</sup>. Benjamin R. Foster (Ed., Trans.), *The Epic of Gilgamesh. Second Norton Critical Edition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019).

## Chapter Seven: Topographical Struggles

### PURPLE

There was a man who killed a buffalo bull to no purpose, only he wanted its blood on his hands. It was a great, old, noble beast, and it was a long time blowing its life away. On the edge of the night the people gathered themselves up in their grief and shame. Away in the west they could see the hump and spine of the huge beast which lay dying along the edge of the world. They could see its bright blood run into the sky, where it dried, darkening, and was at last flecked with flakes of light.

— N. Scott Momaday<sup>282</sup>

*The Epic of Gilgamesh* is full of themes still present today, themes that now blanket the Earth, but concentrated in Western societies where industrial capitalist modernity reigns. Most significantly is the theme of anthropocentrism. In the context of deforestation in North America, themes from *Gilgamesh* include: knowledge as power (source of ‘authority’); imperialism/colonialism (conquest, -centrism), including trophy hunting (domination); fear of death and the inability to confront loss (Western attitudes towards death and grieving), including “adolescent strategies of avoidance and heroic striving technologies” as a result of failing to confront finitude;<sup>283</sup> toxic notions of progress, improvement, and strength characterized by ascension (with the heavenly divine as something to strive for is located above, not the earth or upon it). Most interestingly, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* offers inquiry into the human condition and questions of belonging to Western civilization and the wider world. This topic is bracketed by the very city walls of Uruk that led to the etymological definition of *forest* to mean “outside,” separate from the place of human habitation (the city, civilization).

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<sup>282</sup>. Scott Momaday, from “The Colors of Night,” in *In the Presence of the Sun: Stories and Poems, 1961-1991* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2009) (digital/Kindle Edition): location 768 of 1963.

<sup>283</sup>. Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*, p. 9.

Explorations of the struggles between Western civilization and ancient forests often trace back to *The Epic of Gilgamesh*,<sup>284</sup> what Foster and others referred to as “a canon of Western culture.”<sup>285</sup> While there are pieces and fragments missing, there was enough for translators and editors to compile the narrative from its linguistic origins (Sumerian and Babylonian). Despite the great age of the text, what is interesting about it is how it is still pertinent today, where central features are easily found in other times and places in the history of Western civilization, like the scene captured in N. Scott Momaday’s poem included above.<sup>286</sup>

The practice of going out on the land to slay something giant and bring it back to as proof of some great feat was not limited to Gilgamesh.<sup>287</sup> In his book, *A Forest Journey*, John Perlin noted that “During the latter part of the third millennium B.C. many rulers of southern Mesopotamian city-states made tree-felling expeditions to the cedar forest.”<sup>288</sup> Further, Robert Pogue Harrison wrote that for the people of ancient Mesopotamia, obtaining wood meant “[undertaking] dangerous expeditions to the mountains,” where they would have to “cut down the cedars and pines, and ferry the logs back to the cities down the river.” These “exploits were fraught with peril, especially since the forests were often defended by fierce forest tribes.”<sup>289</sup> However, because timber was already a scarce resource, “individuals actually

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<sup>284</sup>. Benjamin R. Foster (Ed., Trans.), *The Epic of Gilgamesh. Second Norton Critical Edition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019) ; Ashley Dawson, *Extinction: A Radical History* (OR Books, 2016), p. 18 ; John Perlin, *A Forest Journey: The Story of Wood and Civilization* (Vermont: The Countryman Press, 2005) ; Derrick Jensen & George Draffan, *Strangely Like War: The Global Assault on Forests*, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2003, p. 8) ; Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 82 ; Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests*, 14–18.

<sup>285</sup>. Benjamin R. Foster (Ed., Trans.), *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, xxi.

<sup>286</sup>. Sport hunting buffalo was promoted in the United States as a colonial practice to starve out the First Peoples of the plains such as the Lakota, Sioux, and Plains Cree, and Cheyenne. Buffalo would be killed and skinned; their hides taken as trophies, and a mountain of skulls photographed as photography trophies reifying a colonial narrative of superiority. For more, see Danielle Taschereau Mamers, “Historical photo of mountain of bison skulls documents animals on the brink of extinction,” December 2, 2020. Accessed 17<sup>th</sup> March 2021: <https://theconversation.com/historical-photo-of-mountain-of-bison-skulls-documents-animals-on-the-brink-of-extinction-148780>

<sup>287</sup>. Ashley Dawson, *Extinction: A Radical History* (New York: OR Books, 2016), 26–27.

<sup>288</sup>. John Perlin, *A Forest Journey*, 39.

<sup>289</sup>. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forest*, 16–17.



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achieved considerable fame by undertaking” such “expeditions to the cedar forests and seizing huge quantities of timber.”<sup>290</sup> Thus valour was recognized and respect given to those who could not only achieve a very difficult task, but also for what it gained for their communities’ needs and wants, regardless of the moral implications.

Archaeological evidence notes that the epic was treated as a formal piece of literature taught in classrooms and would have been a common text of the educated elite—people who had significant social, economic, ideological, and political influences. Of note, Foster points out that “comparisons to material culture are generally positive [...], whereas comparisons to nature are mostly negative [...], suggesting that poets were inclined to glorify civilization over natural phenomenon.”<sup>291</sup> Indeed, the epic begins and ends with the walls of Uruk. Furthermore, Foster adds that, “Of all ancient Mesopotamian literary works, *The Epic of Gilgamesh* makes the most frequent use of fantastic numbers for quantity, size, weight, time, and distance. (What great awe Gilgamesh would experience if he were alive today). Sometimes the unit counted is not expressed but left to the reader’s imagination.”<sup>292</sup> The epic is about being fantastical, awe-inspiring; and yet, it was no fantasy to bring down giant trees as a show of great strength and prowess in addition to wood harvesting.

What is significant about Humbaba’s slaying is that an anchor of fear—the very mechanism used by higher powers to keep human’s with destructive agendas out of the woods—was removed, gaining “civilized” humans access to the trees. Such societies gained strength by depleting the strength of the forest. This loss of fear or fear-stimulated respect (as opposed to a love-and-gratitude-motivated respect) for a place and its inhabitants was a vital problem. It got the job done, but it along with

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<sup>290</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>291</sup>. Foster (2019), xvii.

<sup>292</sup>. Ibid, xviii.

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unsustainable patterns of resource extraction paved a road to further scarcity. As Harrison pointed out, “the first antagonist of Gilgamesh is the forest”<sup>293</sup> and the thing that kept it safe: respect, albeit a respect born of fear.

Again, that the destroyer of the ancient forests is considered a “hero” and a forest guardian a “monster” says something of the cultural stance of the society writing and reading this epic, unless it was read as a teachable tale.<sup>294</sup> Thus, while the “Mesopotamians expected their serious literature to stress the importance of knowledge,” that “the significance of Gilgamesh’s story lies [more] in the lessons of his experiences,” and how “the epic highlights progressive acquisition of knowledge as a fundamental attribute of a civilized human being,”<sup>295</sup> there is nothing to speak of the social-political and ecological consequences of deforestation. In other words, there is no knowledge to be gleaned of what a caring respectful (ecohorror-free) relation might be between humans and forest ecosystems. It was a tradition of story that taught about how one goes about acquiring knowledge—but this knowledge was of a Self (not just any common self), one’s mortality, and grapple with grief following loss of a loved one.

What is clearly apparent is that the kingdom of Uruk had forgotten about—or perhaps never took into account—their dependence on the land beyond what they farmed and developed. It was always something *out there*, beyond the walls of civilization, guarded by monsters and demons. Fast forward to more recent history, the word *forest* emerged from the Latin *foris*, meaning “outside.” The Forest has long since been a place seen as something separate from humans in the Western world. Much of the epic echoes, especially during the major periods of European expansion

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<sup>293</sup>. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests*, 14.

<sup>294</sup>. According to Foster (p. xiv, xiii), “the Mesopotamians had no word corresponding to ‘epic’ or ‘myth’ in their languages,” so one wonders how the people of that time received/perceived the epic. Other non-Mesopotamian languages into which the epic was translated include Hittite and Hurrian.

<sup>295</sup>. Foster (2019), xx-xxi.

and global colonization. Since the time of Gilgamesh's Uruk, as Harrison summarized it,<sup>296</sup>

It is a sorry fact of history that human beings have never ceased reenacting the gesture of Gilgamesh. The destructive impulse with respect to nature all too often has psychological causes that go beyond the greed for material resource or the need to domesticate an environment. There is too often a deliberate rage and vengefulness at work in the assault on nature and its species, as if one would project onto the natural world the intolerable anxieties of finitude which hold humanity hostage to death. There is a kind of childish furor that needs to create victims without in order to exorcise the pathos of victimage within. The epic of Gilgamesh tells the story of such furor; but while Gilgamesh ends up as the ultimate victim of his own despair, the logs meanwhile float down the river like bodies of the dead.

Like Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* takes a journey into the wilderness—first the Cedar Forest (also referred to as the Cedar Mountain, likely the Levantine area of Mount Lebanon<sup>297</sup>) and then another quest into the ancient Mesopotamian wilderness. Wilderness here is more ambiguous than a “heart of darkness”; it both attracted and repelled the people of Uruk, chiefly Gilgamesh just as it has for many other societies over the last four thousand years.<sup>298</sup> While the king's psychological growth was in the wandering and hindsight that followed; the change occurred in the character because of his journey that was ultimately about loss.<sup>299</sup> What was not learned nor mourned, however, was the relationship the protagonist held with the land, the forest and its symbolic guardian. Only the death of a loved one was the catalyst for change. A deeper level of the king's psyche, one shared with his civilization, went unattended: his literal and symbolically violent

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<sup>296</sup>. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests*, 18.

<sup>297</sup>. Marvin W. Mikesell, “The Deforestation of Mount Lebanon,” *Geographical Review* 59, no. January (1969): 1–28.

<sup>298</sup>. Laura Feldt, “Religion, Nature, and Ambiguous Space in Ancient Mesopotamia: The Mountain Wilderness in Old Babylonian Religious Narratives,” *Numen* 63, no. 4 (2016): 347–82.

<sup>299</sup>. Tzvi Abusch, “The Development and Meaning of the Epic of Gilgamesh: An Interpretive Essay,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121, no. 4 (2001): 614–22, <https://doi.org/10.2307/606502>.

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relationship with lands and forces outside of his power that led to gross environmental harms.

So what place is this—this heart of darkness that haunts Western civilization so? Modernity has brought with it many things, good and bad. What remained constant, it seems, is a mental and cultural-emotional detachment from the more-than-human world, a kind of distance. This cultural detachment persists whether we like it or not even when we think we feel connected to “Nature” because it is a collective, relational issue. It is a dangerous thing to forget that our daily lives are tied to the wider world beyond the boundaries of our places of habitation. Walls abstract, creating illusions of separation in the way we perceive our place in the world while keeping us sensorily and emotionally unaware (or shallowly so) from fully internalizing how the land is changing, becoming more homogenous according to the status quo. In other words, physical walls or boundaries seem to create psychological ones as well.

One place this can be seen is in how what is commonly accepted as a “forest” has changed over time. Forgetting and misremembering forests has happened as ancient forest ecosystems are depleted from the earth while increasingly, since the Industrial Revolution, more people moved to urban centralities. For Francis Weller,<sup>300</sup>

the two primary sins of Western civilization: *amnesia* and *anesthesia*—we forget and we go numb. [...] When we are lost in what author Daniel Quinn calls *The Great Forgetting*, we slip into a mode of being that neglects the wider bonds of our belonging. We forget that we are all tangled together in this nest of life, that the air we breathe is shared, as is our water and soil, and that everything is bound together in a seamless web of life. When we forget, we are able to do untold damage to our watersheds, to one another, and to the entire earth.

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<sup>300</sup>. Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*, xx.

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Of the issues that face our Western(ized) societies today, forgetting and “dis(re)membering”<sup>301</sup> place seem foundational. They are foundational because it is when we forget how our lives and actions never occur in isolation from the rest of the world.

What is more, it is often forgotten how forgetting itself is used as a political tool. It was common practice during the height of colonialism around the world to try to erase original inhabitants of a place and remake it in colonizer’s own ideals and environmental imaginations. Colonial conquests deliberately endeavour to claim a place as their own by attempting to remake it according to what they want to see socio-politically and ecologically (i.e., ecological imperialism). For instance, “military and police, and, more broadly, the government—any government—often promote deforestation, and spend far more time and energy working toward the theft of indigenous land than its protection. This was true in the days of Gilgamesh’s Mesopotamian city-state of Uruk, and in the days of the Israelites, and true in the days of the Greeks and Romans. It’s been true throughout American history, and it’s true today.”<sup>302</sup> So much trauma and grief has been made over the past four hundred years.

Despite the fact that representations of violence and death are proliferated and glorified by Hollywood, more than ever before we live in a “grief-phobic and death denying society” in the West.<sup>303</sup> Western attitudes towards death have become warped as we have distanced ourselves from the phenomenon. It has become institutionalized, treated as an illness where doctors are expected to prevent and or delay it, as though to try to “cure” it. Death has even become commercialized with the development of the funeral industry: death is to be made beautiful, but at a

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<sup>301</sup>. Landzelius, “Commemorative Dis(Re)Membering: Erasing Heritage, Spatializing Disinheritance.”

<sup>302</sup>. Jensen and Draffan, 21

<sup>303</sup>. Francis Weller, xvii.

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cost.<sup>304</sup> Then there is the issue of shame/guilt, for when we fail to be productive members of our society, we feel like we are failing somehow.

In his psychotherapy practice, Weller routinely found people apologizing for crying, feeling ashamed for expressing grief. Weller pointed out how grief and death are topics so frequently denied and hidden away from the public eye, much like real death (not the death portrayed by Hollywood). They have been,<sup>305</sup>

relegated to what psychologist Carl Jung called the *shadow*. The shadow is the repository of all the repressed and denied aspects of our lives. We send into the shadow the parts of ourselves that we deem unacceptable to ourselves or to others, hoping to disown them. [...] Cultures also send aspects of psychic life into the shadow. Our refusal to acknowledge grief and death has twisted us into a culture riddled with death.

In the last few centuries, however, the Western world has reached a point where issues of social and ecological degradation and loss are so overwhelming and irreparable that it can no longer be denied or avoided. What is unsettling is how much of these issues go unwitnessed and poorly understood by so many in developed countries. As cultural inheritors of the spirit of Gilgamesh, expressed through imperial colonialism and global industrial capitalism, we walk now in the valleys of our own shadow. This walk, however, has not and does not go unwitnessed.

The next chapter looks at three witness tree case studies. As I discuss next, these trees are silent witnesses to biological, ecological, and cultural legacies concerning them. Each tree is situated in North America and speaks to both Indigenous and settler-colonial pasts and present.

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<sup>304</sup>. Philippe Ariès, translated by Patricia M. Ranum, *Western Attitudes Towards Death: from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).

<sup>305</sup>. Francis Weller, xvii.

## PART TWO: WITNESS TREES

Forests have been a mirror of sorts, reflecting back whatever humans wished to see.

– David W. Orr<sup>306</sup>

Wherever there have been people who relied upon forests, trees have always been a medium that testify to the relationship between a given people and the woodlands, making trees the witness for the relationship and the dependency. What I wish to call *witness trees* perform the role as bearers of memory, myth, and meaning that humans ascribe to trees and inscribe in them. They are also the keepers of biological and ecological memory where physical forest trees or species (as opposed to cultivated garden varieties) are concerned. As Lars Östlund, Olle Zackrisson, and Greger Hörnberg put it, “Throughout history, people around the world have scarred, shaped, and used living trees for cultural purposes.”<sup>307</sup> They are “a biological archive that can tell us much about the historic relationship between people and forests. Indeed, [culturally modified trees] constitute a unique and important source of information about the way different groups conceived of their place in nature.”<sup>308</sup> Human use of trees is not limited to physical trees when representing their sense of place and belonging.

Witness trees may be materially real or representations of trees, which testify to the way we relate to the more-than-human world. Even when a tree is a picture, it still presupposes that there have to be real trees where they are being represented. Testimony divides through these two aspects. Both have power to testify to something like a condition or event. Whether they are a particular species, a

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<sup>306</sup>. David W. Orr, “Trees and Forests,” *Conservation Biology* 7, no. 3 (1993): 454–56., p. 455.

<sup>307</sup>. Lars Östlund, Olle Zackrisson, and Greger Hörnberg, “Trees on the Border between Nature and Culture: Culturally Modified Trees in Boreal Sweden,” *Environmental History* 7, no. 1 (2002): 48–68, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3985452>.

<sup>308</sup>. Ibid.

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photograph of a specific tree with a story, a painting of a tree in a national gallery, reproduced images of an iconic tree, a tree poem or a record of a once living, marked tree, or physically altered trees on the land, or mythic trees like Yggdrasil (the World Tree), witness trees can be both materially real and imaginary.

Regarding non-human or other-than-human witnesses, although he was discussing the iconic red poppy, William James Booth illustrates well how witnessing is not necessarily an exclusively human phenomenon,<sup>309</sup>

That the wearing of a small red flower, or its paper imitation, expresses memory and calls on others to do the same is also a useful reminder that bearing witness, the carrying forward of the past, can be the work of places and things, of the world around us, on which are inscribed the traces of the past: a signifier, pointing to a past event, and sometimes also a call to remember, a latent and awaiting a witness's voice to cast light on it. To bear witness, then, is to remember, to be a living memory, to guard the past, to ask others to do likewise, and to illuminate the traces of the past and their meaning.

A witness need not be a human being. It can be something else that has traces, features, or situational details that testify. Every landscape is a palimpsest, a kind of material comprised of layers of signs organized by the passage of time. People, things, and places bear traces, fragments of testimony to the past and present. As Bordo put it, "The world is readable."<sup>310</sup> First, let us consider the basic meanings of witnessing and trees.

### **Defining Witnessing**

According to the Oxford English Dictionary,<sup>311</sup> the word *witness* (noun) is something or somebody whose actions attest to facts by providing testimony or evidence. To bear witness is to be marked with the capacity to testify to something

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<sup>309</sup>. William James Booth, *Communities of Memory: On Witness, Identity, and Justice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 73.

<sup>310</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, "Witness in the Errings of Contemporary Art," in *The Rhetoric and the Frame: Essays on the Boundaries of the Artwork*, ed. Paul Duro (Cambridge, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 179–202., p. 193.

<sup>311</sup>. "witness, n." OED Online. March 2021. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/view/Entry/229713?result=1&rskey=dhZqcF&> (accessed April 12, 2021).



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by having been “an observer of an event.” For instance, an eye-witness can say: *I was there; I saw it with my own eyes.* A further sense of witness arises when someone is called upon to testify or to report what she saw or heard: “one who gives evidence in relation to matters of fact under inquiry,” or “one who is called on, selected, or appointed to be present at a transaction, so as to be able to testify to its having taken place.” Thus, a witness is someone who or something that “furnishes evidence or proof of the thing of fact mentioned; an evidential mark or sign, a token.” A photograph is treated as having such evidential value as a witness.

Trees on the land, for instance, were once selected to act as agreement sites beneath which treaties or other official documents were signed, like Treaty Oaks in parts of North America that pre-date European contact or the Buttonwood Tree where the Buttonwood Agreement, the founding document of the New York Stock Exchange, was signed. In Western property construction, mature trees are selected and marked to testify to where an official surveyor designated property or boundary lines. *Tree(s)*, however, does not always refer to physical, biological trees growing upon the earth; they can also be representations of these and much more.

Building from the Oxford English Dictionary, *trees* might refer to the original trees, the ones that grow in the ground—likely what most of think of when we register the word—while also referring to wood or a branch (i.e., parts of a tree), “something resembling a tree with its branches,” a “pole, post, stake, beam, wooden bar, etc.,” a diagram of a family tree, and even “the cross on which Christ was crucified, the holy rood,” and by similarity, any other symbolic trees such as Yggdrasil or Axis Mundi (World Tree). It is even defined, figuratively, as a reference to a person.<sup>312</sup> Hence, trees that *witness* (verb) provide evidence—manifestation,

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<sup>312</sup>. “tree, n.” OED Online. March 2021. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/view/Entry/205416?rskey=hgMTzA&result=1> (accessed April 12, 2021).

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display—in the form of a document, something that holds information that serves as an official record. They “furnish evidence or proof of” something and act as “a sign or mark of” something. They betoken. Also, they can be “formally present” as a witness of a transaction or event like the Treat Oaks. The meaning of *witness*, in this sense, is also a reference to or a being “of a place, time, etc.,” it means to be associated with an event or circumstance, and or “to be the scene or setting of.” It means “to ‘see’.”<sup>313</sup>

We can either be seeing—witnessing—directly ourselves, or *through* the testimony of first-hand witnesses or witness objects.

### **Witness Objects**

Jonathan Bordo helpfully conceptualizes trees as witness objects, beginning with Tom Thomson’s painting, *The Jack Pine* (1916–1917)<sup>314</sup> and representations of hollow-log bone coffins in *The Aboriginal Memorial*.<sup>315</sup> In the first, Bordo develops a solid argument demonstrating that the ancient western trope of a solitary tree is revived to stand in place of a human witness—concealing the human presence—and symbolizes the idea of the wilderness, a place without humans. What *The Jack Pine* painting does (along with the Group of Seven works like it) is it testifies to viewers that what the artist witnessed when he created the painting out on the land is that the Canadian wilderness is a place without human or animal presence. It is “pristine,” free of any visual traces of people or other beings living there, except for trees, plants, rocks, and water. It acts as an environmental imaginary window to the material land which it is supposed to signify and in doing so it filters out Indigenous presence. It creates a visual narrative suitable for the identity of a settler-colonial nation. Unlike *The Jack Pine*, *The Aboriginal Memorial* testifies to Indigenous

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<sup>313</sup>. “witness, v.”. OED Online. March 2021. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/view/Entry/229714?rskey=dhZqcF&result=2> (accessed April 12, 2021).

<sup>314</sup>. Bordo, “Jack Pine — Wilderness Sublime or the Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape.”

<sup>315</sup>. Bordo, “Witness in the Errings of Contemporary Art.”

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presence on the land. The *Memorial* is a work of art in which hollow logs replicas stand in for hollow log bone coffins: trees that have been naturally hollowed out by termites, then decorated and used by Indigenous peoples' burial practices in Australia. *The Aboriginal Memorial* points to these memorial tree coffins as connecting the land's First Peoples to the place most of the world knows as Australia.

Fundamentally, witness objects have a phenomenological property to them that makes them reflexive in that they become deictic or indexical, charged with symbolic value. According to Bordo, "With the emergence of modernity, the witness function becomes inseparable from the reflexivities of the subject, and the subject as witness comes to organize the space and contents of visual art in the very way that the word came to organize sight."<sup>316</sup> When a person sees and reads a witness object—a symbol or token—there is an awareness of the relation of the self to it and what it signifies. One becomes a witness to the witness object's testimony. It orientates the viewer to that which it is indexing or pointing to. In the case of *Aboriginal Memorial*, the representation of hollow log coffins betokens hollow log bone coffins (real ones with bones encased) situated beyond the exhibit, and thus witness Indigenous presence on the land. A tree is just another tree to the viewer until that person sees and reads, but perhaps not always understands necessarily, what it expresses, what it symbolizes.

### **My Work on Trees as Witness Objects**

My work expands on Jonathan Bordo's conceptualization of witness objects by focusing on any trees that bear witness to human–place relations. In other words, I have adapted this language of trees as witnesses whereby I use the term *witness* specifically for its reflexive, phenomenological quality—its *relational* significance—in

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<sup>316</sup>. Ibid, 193.

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that they (witness trees) testify to something within or about a given person or people in a given inquiry.

Witness trees reflect something about our relationship with them or what they represent, be it a place, another people, or ourselves. They are quiet witnesses and it is worth considering what traces about oneself if left with or upon them, especially where relations concerning other people, species, and or the environment are at issue. (Similarly, I discuss in chapter three animal witnesses in chapter three.) As Eduardo Kohn said, “How other kinds of beings see us matters.”<sup>317</sup>

Trees carry the marks of humans and other animals too. Marks as common as couples’ engravings as declarations of their love (i.e., initials encased in a heart),<sup>318</sup> an individual’s desire to make his or her mark (e.g., “Martin was here, 1988”) are similar habits to those of birds and bears insofar as they are expressing their having been there at some point in time. Just as songbirds ritually sing in the spring to vocally demarcate their place, and bears will claw, bite, and rub trees and poles,<sup>319</sup> we are all in some way saying, “See me,” “I am/was here!” or “This is mine.” They are all declarations of presence in and relations to the world. In this way, witnessing is a multispecies phenomenon.

Where such marked physical trees are concerned—when they are seen, read, witnessed—each is a *deixis* as Bordo discusses,<sup>320</sup> an “indication,” a “pointing out”<sup>321</sup> that involves time, place, and being. Or more accurately, they become what Bordo refers to as a “deictic moment.”<sup>322</sup> *Deixis* is, as Mary Galbraith put it, “a

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<sup>317</sup> Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think: Towards an Anthropology Beyond the Human* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), p. 1.

<sup>318</sup> Michael Wojtech points out this is “an old custom: *Crescent illae, crescetis amores* or ‘As these letters grow, so may our love.’” *Bark: A Field Guide to Trees of the Northeast* (Hanover & London: University Press of England), 130.

<sup>319</sup> “Marking Trees and Poles,” North American Bear Center, Northwoods Ecology Hall (accessed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2021): <https://bear.org/marking-trees-and-poles/>

<sup>320</sup> Jonathan Bordo, “Witness in the Errings of Contemporary Art,” 194.

<sup>321</sup> “*deixis*, n.” OED Online. March 2021. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.proxy1.lib.trentu.ca/view/Entry/49214?redirectedFrom=deixis&> (accessed April 12, 2021).

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid*, 194.

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psycholinguistic term for those aspects of meaning associated with *self-world orientation*. Deixis is a language universal [...] that orients the use of language with respect to a particular time, place, and person.”<sup>323</sup>

Take, for instance, the tree sacred to the people of the Haida Nation: *Kiid K’iyaas* (“Old Tree”). Besides the fact that the tree was biologically unique owing to its inability to produce chlorophyll, which meant the Sitka spruce tree had yellow or golden needles, what really made it socially and ecologically important was what it stood for. According to Pansy Collison, this tree was once a Haida boy who witnessed the legacy of his people as well as the crimes committed upon them by European colonizers.<sup>324</sup> This witness tree stood for the intersection between the Haida people and land as well as their myth and memory. When a member of the settler-colonial community felled *Kiid K’iyaas*, not only was it equivalent to killing the child, the tree became witness to the troubled colonial relation to the forest.

Other examples of witness trees include the Christian Cross (made of two beams of wood of course, the Holy Rood, witness to the Crucifixion), author Lynda V. Mapes old oak tree located at the Harvard Forest where it bears witness to environmental change,<sup>325</sup> memorial trees planted in the memory of certain individuals, and the various *hibaku jumoku* (“survivor or A-bombed tree”) in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan photographed (see photography by Katy McCormick).<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>323</sup>. Mary Galbraith, “Deictic Shift Theory and the Poetics of Involvement in Narrative (pp. 19–60) in Judith F. Duchan, Gail A. Bruder, and Lynne E. Hewitt (Eds.) *Deixis in Narrative: A Cognitive Science Perspective* (Buffalo: State University of New York, 1995), pp. 21–22. Italics my emphasis.

<sup>324</sup>. Pansy Collison, “Golden Spruce” (pp. 139–151), *Haida Eagle Treasures: Traditional Stories and Memories from a Teacher of the Tsath Lanas Clan* (Brush Education Inc., 2010/2017).

<sup>325</sup>. Lynda V. Mapes, *Witness Tree: Seasons of Change with a Century-Old Oak* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017).

<sup>326</sup>. Katy McCormick, “Hibaku Jumoku: The A-Bombed Trees, 2013,” accessed 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021: <https://www.katymccormick.com/main-gallery/hibaku-jumoku/>

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An excellent illustration of what a personal or familial witness tree can be like is the story in the chapter titled “Nicholas Hoel,” in Richard Powers’ novel, *The Overstory*.<sup>327</sup> The story covers three quarters of a century, spanning multiple generations, and, for the character at the end, is captured in a thousand photographs of the family’s chestnut tree, which was planted by the first relative to settle the property. The tree witnessed so much of what the family went through over time that it became a central site that anchored the family’s memory of that place.

You might have a witness tree of your own, but might not have thought of it in this way. Think of a tree that anchors memory and meaning or even a way of life in your or your family’s case, one that you have a special relationship with. For me, it was the great, old American beech tree that stood in the middle of my family’s property. It had a huge, high, sprawling canopy, and the characteristic eye-shaped bark formations. It was there, under and around that tree, that so much of my childhood and many of my relations with that little nook of the world took place. It is only a memory and a photograph now, but that was enough to help me begin working through personal loss and environmental grief some years ago.

It is important to note why I use the word *witness* instead of something else. For one, I use it for its relation to the word *grief*. Again, as I quoted Francis Weller in part one,<sup>328</sup>

Grieving is [...] intimately connected with memory and the witnessing of those memories and emotions. Freeman House, in his elegant book, *Totem Salmon*, says, “In one ancient language, the word *memory* derives from a word meaning mindful, in another from a word to describe a witness, in yet another it means, at root, to grieve. To witness mindfully is to grieve for what has been lost.” That is the intent and purpose of grief.

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<sup>327</sup>. Richard Powers, “Nicholas Hoel” (pp. 5–23), *The Overstory: A Novel* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018).

<sup>328</sup>. *Ibid*: 17–18.

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In the context of ecological degradation and loss, to bear witness can be a form of grieving, to mindfully reflect on one's relationship with the more-than-human world. It is to take a critical stance towards one's own and one's culture or society's orientation to a place. It is also about being mindful of the workings of memory.

William James Booth conceptualized memory<sup>329</sup> as being of two kinds: "habit memory" or "thick memory," which refers to "the manners and ways of life of individuals and their communities and in the landscapes and dwellings that are a part of their identities." The second kind is the "work of memory and this refers to conscious acts of remembrance concerned with ethical aspects of testimony and as such it is "bound up with absence, trace, and struggle. It is the realm of justice, history writing, memorials, and so on." Whereas in habit memory we are passive, doing what we do because we have always done so (e.g., how we speak, how we manage the land), in thick memory we are actively carrying out work or remembrance and as such this is often the work of witnesses and storytellers.

I use the term *witness* for its reflexive quality (as discussed further up) and because it encapsulates both senses of Booth's articulation of *memory*. In seeing or bearing witness to witness trees, I become aware or reflexive of my habit memory—what or where I might be complicit in a troubled social-ecological relationship with the place called Canada, the country of my birth. I am also partaking in a growing body of work to, in the words of Booth, "keep the past present in memory, not to allow crimes, victims, and so on to be lost to forgetting."<sup>330</sup> It is a way of monitoring aspects of one's culture and call it into question. Namely, it is to bear witness to the ways that the meanings given to trees and forests—the way they are represented,

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<sup>329</sup>. William James Booth, *Communities of Memory: On Witness, Identity, and Justice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 33–34.

<sup>330</sup>. William James Booth, *Communities of Memory: On Witness, Identity, and Justice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 33–34.

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valued, and remembered—have very real and more often serious social and ecological outcomes.

To further demonstrate how the meanings placed in forest trees determines the fate of the forests, [...] extensive preliminary research was carried out over the course of two years to identify a collection of witness trees that pieced together the North American forest story as it has been since the arrival of the Europeans. Five cases of witness trees will be studied. First, a closer look at what witness trees are and how they vary.

### Symbolic Witness Objects

In his work on Tom Thomson's painting, *The Jack Pine* (1916–1917), Jonathan Bordo illustrated how such an iconic painting of a tree helped shape much of the Euro-Canadian environmental imagination with respect to human dwelling and the land in the twentieth century.<sup>331</sup> In all accounts, witness trees are *signifiers* that point to something. Conceptually speaking, symbolic witness trees are often representations of trees that refer to particular narratives with either certain morals, attitudes, ideas, or beliefs,<sup>332</sup> such as we will see in the cases of *The Jack Pine*. In that example, Jonathan Bordo illustrated how this image of a lone northern tree became a symbolic deposit for a Canadian idea of the wilderness. It is a symbol that suggests what the painter and his society believed the wilderness to be and how to relate to it. Here, “*the wilderness*” is understood according to Bordo's problematization of it as a paradoxically unwitnessable site, for its very conceptualization is that of a place without a figural witness, one devoid of human presence.<sup>333</sup> Consequently, the Jack

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<sup>331</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, “Jack Pine — Wilderness sublime or the erasure of the aboriginal presence from the landscape,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 27 (4), 1993: 98–128.

<sup>332</sup>. John M. McMahon, “Trees: Living Links to the Classical Past,” *Newsletter of the Classical Association of the Empire State* 30, no. 2 (1995), <https://web.lemoyne.edu/mcmahon/TREES.HTML>.

<sup>333</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, “Picture and Witness at the Site of the Wilderness,” *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (2000): 224–47.



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pine tree in the painting became a stand-in for the human Subject.<sup>334</sup> Witness trees of this kind are often more complex in that they carry within them intricacies of a people's landscape myth. Here, myth is understood in the way Roland Barthes articulated myth: myth which lends itself to the creation of ideology, and diverges from the reality it portrays and in so doing reifies an idea or belief.<sup>335</sup> However, it is not only trees of the environmental imagination (of memory and or creative picturing) that are symbolic; physical trees that have been given meaning via markings also become emblems and are often deliberately intended to index traditional cultural myths, signs to guide and communicate on the land, or simply themselves evidence of a people's presence in a place.

### **Culturally Modified Trees**

*Culturally modified trees* (CMTs) is a broader term described as “a phenomenon of forest-dwelling peoples worldwide,”<sup>336</sup> or “trees that show evidence of being used by Indigenous people.”<sup>337</sup> More specifically, CMTs refer to trees that bear testimonial evidence of Indigenous cultural land-use practices and hence presence, past and or present.<sup>338</sup> Markings or alterations can include deliberate shaping of a tree over the course of its growth to achieve a signifying shape, areas where bark was stripped or harvested, holes cut to peer into the heart of the tree to test its soundness

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<sup>334</sup>. Bordo, “Jack Pine — Wilderness Sublime or the Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape.”

<sup>335</sup>. Roland Barthes, translated by Richard Howard and Annette Lavers, “Myth Today” (pp. 215–288) in *Mythologies* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2012).

<sup>336</sup>. Nancy J. Turner et al., “Cultural Management of Living Trees: An International Perspective,” *Journal of Ethnobiology* 29, no. 2 (2009): 237–70, <https://doi.org/10.2993/0278-0771-29.2.237>. ; Charles M. Mobley and Morley Eldridge, “Culturally Modified Trees in the Pacific Northwest,” *Arctic Anthropology* 29, no. 2 (1992): 91–110, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40316316>.

<sup>337</sup>. Michael D. Blackstock, *Faces In the Forest: First Nations Art Created on Living Trees* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

<sup>338</sup>. Lars Östlund et al., “Traces of Past Sami Forest Use: An Ecological Study of Culturally Modified Trees and Earlier Land Use Within a Boreal Forest Reserve,” *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research* 18, no. 1 (2003): 78–89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0891060310002363>. ; Tysk Staffan Ericsson, Lars Östlund, and Rikard Andersson, “Destroying A Path to the Past - The Loss of Culturally Scarred Trees and Change in Forest Structure Along Allmunvägen, in Mid-West Boreal Sweden,” *Silva Fennica* 37, no. 2 (2003): 283–98, <http://www.metla.fi/silvafennica/full/sf37/sf372283.pdf>.

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for a particular purpose, or a variety of other carvings and scarring use to signify or communicate certain meanings. Ultimately, CMTs testify to different forms of land use, cultural traditions and belief systems, social or political practices, and histories concerning the forest or the land generally.<sup>339</sup> For instance, in the interior of British Columbia, there are many culturally modified witness trees that have Indigenous art carved upon them, many of which date back across generations and speak to certain familial or ancestral territories, including old hunting grounds and trading routes.<sup>340</sup> Such witness trees hold memories of cultural and familial identity, or traditional ecological knowledge. They tell stories and testify to Indigenous presence on and cultural ways of life concerning the land. In this chapter, an example of this sort of witness tree will be the monumental Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole (2013), carved by Jaalen Edenshaw and his assistant carvers. A last note on the topic of CMTs, Michael Blackstock offered an important alternative term: “Trees of Aboriginal Interest or TAI’s, because,” as he noted, “a tree does not have to be modified to be of interest.”<sup>341</sup>

While settler-colonial society is not a forest-dwelling culture, it still relies heavily on the forest for various purposes, namely ecosystem services, resources, and recreation. Nevertheless, the way trees become witness trees in Euro-North America still speaks to the cultural relationship with woodlands. In Canada and the United States, the term *witness tree* more often comes from the practice of land surveying, yet these trees are still marked to the same purpose of designating private property, or simply to distinguish one place from another as many culturally-modified trees are (e.g., to identify one peoples’ hunting grounds from another). Typically, they are

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<sup>339</sup>. Ericsson, Östlund, and Andersson, “Destroying A Path to the Past - The Loss of Culturally Scarred Trees and Change in Forest Structure Along Allmunvägen, in Mid-West Boreal Sweden,” *Silva Fennica* 37 (2) 2003: 283-298.

<sup>340</sup>. Michael D. Blackstock, *Faces In the Forest*, 51.

<sup>341</sup>. *Ibid.*

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used for just that purpose, marking territory and designating land-use and are not given any clearly recognized spiritual significance. In this kind of case, particular trees are made to testify to the corners or boundaries of a property once a person has marked them accordingly.<sup>342</sup> They acquire added significance because these kinds of witness trees North America are “often the only source” of information about pre-settlement forest composition where the original forest was lost.<sup>343</sup> Even where original forests persists, post-European settlement land-uses may have altered them from their original character,<sup>344</sup> thus witness trees in land surveys testify to the particular ways their corresponding society’s belief systems mediated the way the people interacted with the land in terms of land-uses and values.<sup>345</sup> They hold more than human memory. Here, one such case will be the American beech tree (*Fagus grandifolia*) in Robert Frost’s poem, “Beech,” including corresponding examples of beech witness trees from the research of historical ecologist, Donna Crossland in New Brunswick. Furthermore, physical witness trees can also acquire additional layers of meaning over time in unique contexts.

### **Multispecies Witness Trees**

There are witness trees like Canada’s second largest Douglas-fir tree, standing in a clearcut near Port Renfrew, that are themselves unaltered, but are of cross-cultural and multispecies interest. This particular case is known as Big Lonely Doug. It is a witness tree that itself has not been physically modified; rather, it is the forest around it that has changed. Before Big Lonely Doug was given an identity and

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<sup>342</sup>. Stephen L. Rathbun and Bryan Black, “Modeling and Spatial Prediction of Pre-Settlement Patterns of Forest Distribution Using Witness Tree Data,” *Environmental and Ecological Statistics* 13 (2006): 427–48, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10651-006-0021-9>.

<sup>343</sup>. *Ibid.*, 428.

<sup>344</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>345</sup>. Charles M. Mobley and Morley Eldridge, “Culturally Modified Trees in the Pacific Northwest,” *Arctic Anthropology* 29 (2) 1992: 91–110. ; Tysk Staffan Ericsson, Lars Östlund, and Rikard Andersson, “Destroying A Path to the Past - The Loss of Culturally Scarred Trees and Change in Forest Structure Along Allmunvägen, in Mid-West Boreal Sweden,” *Silva Fennica* 37, no. 2 (2003): 283–98, <http://www.metla.fi/silvafennica/full/sf37/sf372283.pdf>. ; Turner et al., “Cultural Management of Living Trees: An International Perspective.”

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promulgated as a symbol of environmentalism, this tree acted as a witness tree on its own in that its mere presence in a field of absence spoke to what was once there; its very survivorship testifies to the power that a tree species can achieve in the coastal old-growth forests of Vancouver Island and the multispecies community that is its prerequisite. Since then, however, this tree has been photographed from various angles, images of it disseminated to raise awareness of the issue of clearcut old-growth logging, turned into vector images used at tourist destinations amidst Covid-19 caution signs (e.g., spacer floor stickers that read, “Be like Big Lonely Doug and stand apart” with an icon of the tree). As I will discuss, this tree has gone from being a giant tree in the forest to a lone tree in a clearcut, to a symbol via an image in a photograph, to an art gallery exhibit display, to a book, a tourist icon, and a book. It is unique in that it is a *living witness* tree and a *symbolic* tree.

Representations of trees that become symbolic, imbued with meaning and indexical value or power, testify to how real trees and the forest environment were experienced and perceived by those who painted and wrote about them during a particular time and spatial context. Like the Jack pine tree in Tom Thomson’s painting, they testify to the subjective experience of or encounter with a place upon contact; that is, the land or place filtered through the psycho-social and historical lens of the human witness. Owing to their presence during historical events and periods, the witness trees’ survival brings their testimony or the testimony of the human(s) who deposit its value of the past into the present.<sup>346</sup> In other words, through the stories they tell, witness trees hold memories and meanings by bearing the signs or testimony of people and events. In this way, witness trees (real and imaged/imagined) and culturally modified trees act as arboreal storytellers that tell

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<sup>346</sup> Fuyuki Kurasawa, “A Message in a Bottle: Bearing Witness as a Mode of Transnational Practice,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 1 (2009): 92–111, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276408099017>. ; Anne Cubilie and Carl Good, “Introduction: The Future of Testimony,” *Discourse* 25, no. 1 (2003): 4–18, <https://doi.org/10.1353/dis.2004.0003>.

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us about the way a person or culture perceived the tree and its environment and or how they saw themselves in relation to it and the place (the *phenomenological standpoint*). Through this aspect of testimony, witness trees reveal how they factored into a person's or culture's larger social-ecological story (*narrative or literary aspect of testimony*). Lastly, through their marks and modes or representation, they reflect how they and their environments are valued by those to whom the trees testify (*ethical aspect*). Together, these three aspects of testimony talk about how a belief system mediates the way a certain culture perceives and values a particular place which determines how a social collective and an ecological space interact in terms of the social and ecological outcomes. In other words, aspects of testimony carried by witness trees tell us about how the meanings a culture place in arboreal sites and sylvan places determines the fate of the forests.

What all witness trees have in common is that they provide “important source[s] of information about the way different groups conceived of their place in nature.”<sup>347</sup> Whether looking at trees in popular works of art, wild and cultivated trees in our backyards, in our cities and neighbourhoods, remnants of old forests in the hedgerows between fields and lots, or those in our parks and protected areas, what do they say about our common beliefs and ideas about our place in the more-than-human world? What kind of belief system and relationship do they testify to? What can they teach a people about themselves and how they might live within the wider multispecies community?

### **The Witness Trees**

**Beech.** Robert Frost's poem titled, “Beech” delves into the theme of the environmental imagination and the topic of self-inscription. As the poem's title

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<sup>347</sup>. Lars Östlund, Olle Zackrisson, and Greger Hörnberg, “Trees on the Border between Nature and Culture: Culturally Modified Trees in Boreal Sweden,” *Environmental History* 7, no. 1 (2002): 48.

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states, “Beech” indexes the American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), a species currently afflicted by beech bark disease and one that was once prominent throughout much of the lands in Eastern Canada and the United States. Studying the poem and the species is to the purpose of self-reflection in the relationship between the settler-colonial society and the forests.

**The Jack Pine.** As aforementioned, *The Jack Pine* case was first explored by Jonathan Bordo as part of a larger study of the topic of wilderness as a keyword. His work concerned the colonial project wherein the depiction of absence and erasure of Indigenous presence was significant in the construction of what was perceived and valued as pristine nature or wilderness.<sup>348</sup> My work builds on this and is concerned with the degradation, loss, and management of old woodland ecosystems and their bio-ecological and cultural significances. As such, I use the painting to index the depicted tree’s species, *Pinus banksiana*. This and the other witness tree cases are markers of sylvan losses in the north-eastern and north-western forest regions of Canada and the United States.

**Big Lonely Doug.** A contemporary witness tree that continues to develop significance is Big Lonely Doug, a Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) that was left standing in a clearcut. This witness tree testifies to the fact that old-growth logging of endangered ecosystems still persist in Canada, that the landscape looks like the one shown in Emily Carr’s painting, *Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky* (1935).<sup>349</sup> This tree indexes ecological grief, as well as what once was, what remains.

**Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole.** This final case follows the journey of a Western red cedar as it was transformed from a tree in the ancient forests of Haida Gwaii into

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<sup>348</sup>. Bordo, “Jack Pine — Wilderness Sublime or the Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape.”

<sup>349</sup>. Emily Carr (1935), *Scorned as Timber, Beloved as Sky*, oil on canvas (Vancouver Art Gallery): [http://www.museevirtuel.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/emily\\_carr/en/popups/pop\\_large\\_en\\_VAG-42.3.15-b.html](http://www.museevirtuel.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/emily_carr/en/popups/pop_large_en_VAG-42.3.15-b.html)

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the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole, carved by Jaalen Edenshaw and his assistant carvers. This Legacy Tree, as I refer to it here, indexes numerous things about the place and the cultural tensions over the land still at play. Located in its intended viewing context, it tells the story of that place from mountain top to sea floor. This witness tree testifies to the ways that the belief systems from the Haida Nation's traditional teachings mediates a very different social-ecological reality than that of Canada's and the United States.

Dominant definitions of the word forest and the way they are used and understood needs to change to more accurately represent them as cultural-natural hybrid entities to preserve memory of old-growth forests and cultural legacies where woodlands are found. To borrow Anne Michaels' words, "[t]here's no absence if there remains even the memory of absence. Memory dies unless it's given a use. [...]" If one no longer has land but has the memory of land, then one can make a map.<sup>350</sup> With memory of how the land once was, and critical awareness of the power and ethical use of story (representation, imagination, narrative), a map of the present time and space can be made and used as an ethical environmental guide for ways forests are treated, represented, and remembered.

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<sup>350</sup>. Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 193.

Chapter One: “Beech” and *Fagus Grandifolia*

## BEECH

*Where my imaginary line  
Bends square in woods, an iron spine  
And pile of real rocks have been founded.  
And off this corner in the wild,  
Where these are driven in and piled,  
One tree, by being deeply wounded,  
Has been impressed as Witness Tree  
And made commit to memory  
My proof of being not unbounded.  
Thus truth's established and borne out,  
Though circumstanced with dark and doubt—  
Though by a world of doubt surrounded.*

THE MOODIE FORESTER<sup>351</sup>

– Robert Frost, “Beech,” *A Witness Tree* (1942)<sup>352</sup>

Here, I examine the tree in Robert Frost’s “Beech” poem (above) and what the story of this “Witness Tree”<sup>353</sup> reveals about the author’s testimony as an environmental witness in the context of the history of the Western environmental imagination. I begin by addressing the question of place, asking what place the speaker and the tree are situated in, both in terms of temporal (time period) and spatial (between the physical woods and a people’s mythopoeic<sup>354</sup> landscape) contexts, to piece together the ecophenomenological or descriptive components of the narrative. What time and space do this tree and the speaker occupy? What value does the speaker give to the tree to bear witness to; that is, what meaning(s) does it reflect back to the speaker? What does its story reveal about the author’s testimony

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<sup>351</sup>. The place in the poem was in actuality the Homer Nobel Farm (now the Robert Frost Farm) near Ripton, Vermont. Furthermore, “[t]he cited source of the poem, *The Moodie Forester*, is a fictitious device by which the poet refers to his mother, whose maiden name was Moodie.” Douglas Watson, “Beech,” in *The Robert Frost Encyclopedia* by Nancy L. Tuten and John Zubizarreta (eds.) (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001): 24.

<sup>352</sup>. Robert Frost, “Beech,” *A Witness Tree* (New York, NY: Henry Holt & Company, 1942): 9.

<sup>353</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>354</sup>. Frank Faulk, “Imagination, Part 2” (Canada: CBC Radio, 2013), accessed March 31, 2016: <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/imagination-part-1-2-1.2913306>.



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as an environmental witness? The descriptive exploration of the poem's contents then merges into a critical analysis of its meanings, exposing the ethic behind its act of storytelling.

### An Ecophenomenological Map of "Beech"

The poem begins in the "woods," in a "corner in the wild," seen from the speaker's perspective. The words and phrases "imaginary line," "square," and "corner," "iron spine," and "pile of real rocks" which were "driven in and piled" all indicate that the practice of land surveying is taking place (figure 4a). The author or speaker, as surveyor, has envisioned lines or boundaries which he "bends" through the woods and across the land. The word "line," on the surface level, refers to a plumb line: a tool used in land surveying to orientate the surveyor's observation and mapping out a site from the land (figure 4b). As Edward Casey wrote, "once we make it our primary 'plumb line'" we are "able to make *sense* of" the literary representation of the person's position in the poem ("sense," from French *sens* meaning "direction").<sup>355</sup> In other words, this "line" is what directs our stance—it orientates our perspective, and in this case the perspective is orientated between the inside of the property and the outside that is the forest.

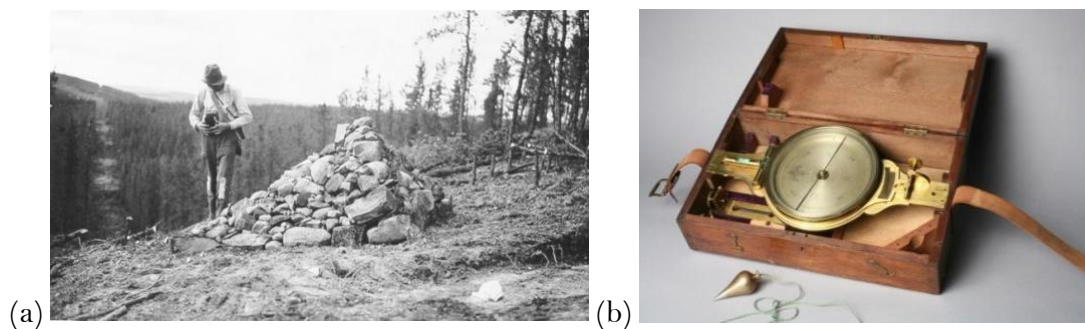


Fig 4. (a) "A surveyor marks boundaries with a monument on the Alberta/Saskatchewan border, 1938" (Alberta Land Surveyors Association). A pile of rocks has been 'founded' as a landmark, a boundary monument. A real line (path) has been 'drawn' (cleared) through the wildwood, seen here in the background, and an "imaginary line" that has been made into reality is commemorated by "a pile of real rocks." (b) A nineteenth century surveyor brass compass with alidades and a plumb bob (the pendulum in front of the box) from Troy, New York, c. 1850. The etymology of the term "plumb"

<sup>355</sup> Edward Casey, *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002): 179.

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from plumb bob comes from its use as a piece of lead that would be dropped downward to create a vertical line. As a noun, *plumb* means a piece of “lead hung on a string to show the vertical line”. From the effect of dropping an original plumb bob (first made of lead) in water, the meaning of *plumb* as a verb was “to sink”. And as an adjective, *plumb* meant “perpendicular” or “vertical” and its notion of “exact measurement” extended in reference to having a sense of “completely” or “downright.”<sup>356</sup>

The specific place in question is a lot that was carved out of the forest through the act of land surveying attested to by the mark-bearing witness tree. The beech tree is the sole figure in the narrative that constitutes the story’s place as a site in the landscape, a place in the making by an environmental imaginary line where particular values are strewn and that set the lot apart from the rest. It became a site by receiving special coordinates and a label as the particular witness tree that holds memory of a specific location and its value as an officially surveyed property.

In land surveying, individual trees will be selected to bear the surveyor’s mark (the signifier) that symbolically determines the tree as a reference point representing the ‘true corner(s)’ of a determined plot of land.<sup>357</sup> The mark specifies the tree’s geographical location, its coordinates (e.g., “AB S 35-W .518,”<sup>358</sup> figure 5). When Frost writes “*One tree, by being deeply wounded, / Has been impressed as Witness Tree,*” he is declaring that a tree has been selected, blazed, and thus signified as a witness tree. The phrase, “*And made commit to memory,*” means that the witness tree is noted in the surveyor’s field notes for later documentation in a formal record. By this

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<sup>356</sup>. Kevin Rushworth, “Exhibit reveals contributions of nation building surveyors,” *High River Times* (October 23, 2014), accessed August 25, 2016:

<http://www.highrivertimes.com/2014/10/23/exhibit-reveals-contributions-of-nation-building-surveyors-2> ; “Survey compass, with alidades and plumb bob, in original case (Troy, N.Y., ca. 1850),” *Osher Map Library*, accessed August 25, 2016:

<http://www.oshermaps.org/exhibitions/american-treasures/iv-nineteenth-century-surveying> ; Online Etymology Dictionary, accessed August 18, 2015:

[http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=plumb&allowed\\_in\\_frame=0](http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=plumb&allowed_in_frame=0)

<sup>357</sup>. Today, the marking involves cutting a portion of the tree’s bark away to the inner layer (i.e., “*deeply wounded*”) where the surveyor inscribes specific information, such as geographical coordinates and or township and range number. For more, see School of the Environment, Portland State University, “Use of GLO Survey Data in Ecology and History,” *Vegetation Mapping*, accessed March 31, 2016: <http://www.pdx.edu/pnwlamp/use-of-glo-survey-data-in-ecology-and-history>.

<sup>358</sup>. Osher Map Library, “III: Thoreau and Maps,” *University of Southern Maine*, accessed March 31, 2016: from: <http://www.oshermaps.org/exhibitions/american-treasures/iii-thoreau-and-maps>

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mark, the place has become the figure or site of the witness tree, a beech, which stands on and signifies one of the property corners, a site where the lot meets at the boundary between forestscape and real-estate. It becomes a servant of the surveyor's work and is perceived and treated according to a utilitarian value. This mark, however, is shared by the society in which the surveyor lives and works, evident in the fact that surveys are commissioned by not only individuals, but also by companies, municipalities, ministries and regional governments.

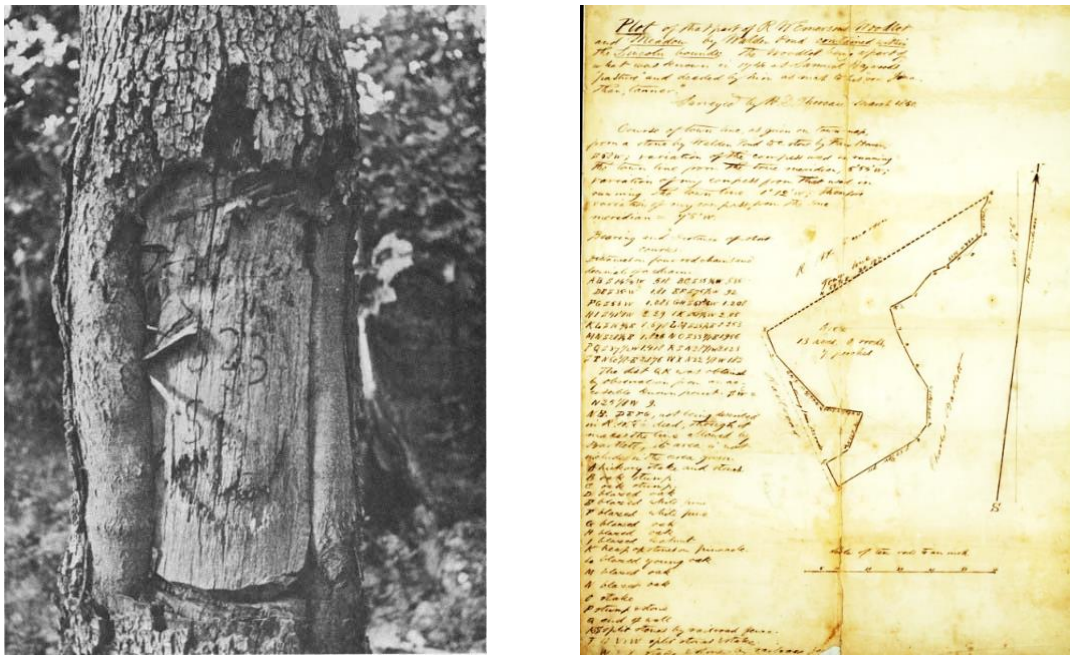


Fig 5. (Left) An example of an original witness tree from 1843 with a blaze or 'deep wound' bearing survey information.<sup>359</sup> (Right) Henry David Thoreau's survey of Ralph Waldo Emerson's woodlot, with a list of witness trees on the left of the page identified by a capital letter (e.g., "F blazed white pine" to "G blazed oak") that were marked and recorded along the property lines drawn on the right.<sup>360</sup>

The species of this witness tree, American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) (figure 6), provides insight into the kind of habitat and land that Frost's beech is or was part of in the poem. Beeches are late successional species, which means that their mature presence indicates the approximate seniority of their forest, or that a mature forest

<sup>359</sup> US Forest Service Department of Agriculture, "The Young Republic 1783-1875," *Highlights in the History of Forest Conservation* (March 19, 2008), accessed March 31, 2016: <http://www.foresthistory.org/ASPNET/Publications/highlights/sec2.htm>

<sup>360</sup> Osher Map Library, "III: Thoreau and Maps," *University of Southern Maine*, accessed March 31, 2016: from <http://www.oshermaps.org/exhibitions/american-treasures/iii-thoreau-and-maps>

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once occupied the area where the beech witness tree stands or stood.<sup>361</sup> Hence, the beech in Frost's poem—having been prominent enough of a landscape feature for a surveyor leave his mark upon it—suggests not only that the tree was old enough to signify the age of those “woods,” but also that “*this corner in the wild*” may have been part of the original forest.



Fig 6. (Left) A North American beech tree (*Fagus grandifolia*) in Hueston Woods, Oxford, Ohio. (Right) An old American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) in an old-growth beech-maple wood of Jackson-Gunn forest, Ontario.<sup>362</sup>

Immediately following the first two sentences is an ethical statement questioning the world in which the narrative took place. The rhythm of the poem through the words “*founded*,” “*wounded*,” “*unbounded*,” and “*surrounded*” along with the words “*dark and doubt*” emphasize the drama unfolding in the narrative.<sup>363</sup> This tone

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<sup>361</sup>. Donna Crossland, “The Witness Trees,” *A Beautiful Forest Inc.* (2015), accessed March 31, 2016: <https://vimeo.com/53369235>

<sup>362</sup>. (Left) Marqqq (October 2007), “Beech in Autumn, Hueston Woods, Oxford, Ohio,” *Wikipedia Commons*, accessed March 31, 2016: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fagus\\_grandifolia#/media/File:Beech\\_with\\_Branches.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fagus_grandifolia#/media/File:Beech_with_Branches.jpg). (Right) Ancient Forest Exploration and Research, “Old-growth Beech-Maple Forest,” accessed March 31, 2016: [http://www.ancientforest.org/ontarios-old-growth-forests-a-guidebook/crw\\_3155/](http://www.ancientforest.org/ontarios-old-growth-forests-a-guidebook/crw_3155/)

<sup>363</sup>. Douglas Watson, “Beech:” 24.

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suggests that the material mark on the tree has manifested as a psychological mark in the poet's mind, an ethical question mark concerning the marking of the tree.

What the tree is committing to memory, what it is testifying to, is his "*being not unbounded.*" The surveyor's mark on the beech witness tree testifies to his being limited in the way he relates to the natural world by the "*imaginary line[s]*" that he draws between human civilization and the "*wild*" "*woods.*"

### Further Exploration of the Surveyor's Testimony

And never have I felt so strongly both my detachment from myself and my presence in the world. [...] What does it mean here, the word 'future'? What can the 'progress' of the heart mean?

– Albert Camus<sup>364</sup>

The "line," if thought of as representing a line road (e.g., 9<sup>th</sup> Line, Durham Line 9<sup>365</sup>), brings us to the significance that paths have as prominent features of cultural places and pivotal for formation and maintenance of civilizations. That is, paths, lines, boundaries, in myriad manifestations both tangible (e.g., mountain line, shoreline, or fence) and imaginary forms are characteristics of colonial Western human dwellings and meanings; they help give shape to our experiences and help us navigate our worlds, or—as is the case here—manipulate and cultivate the world to our or someone's advantage.

In the context of dividing up the land, the use of lines and geometric measurements constitutes the surveyor's *method*. The very word "method" comes from the Greek *meta-odos*, "along the way," and literally means the "path."<sup>366</sup> In *Forests: Shadow of Civilization*, Robert Pogue Harrison specifies how the "ways of method promise neither salvation nor wisdom but rather power."<sup>367</sup> This power is one that is borne out of the *manipulation* by bending a square lot out of the woods,

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<sup>364</sup>. Albert Camus, "The Wind at Djemila," *Encounter*, no. October (1953): 46–48, <https://www.unz.org/Pub/Encounter-1953oct-00046>.

<sup>365</sup>. I thank Jonathan Bordo for pointing this out to me.

<sup>366</sup>. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests*: 113.

<sup>367</sup>. *Ibid.*

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*prediction* obtained from measuring or quantifying nature (i.e., statistics, physical sciences, and economics), and *control* by impressing parts of nature in ways that promotes a sense of mastery over it and give rise to geopolitics and landscape myths. This practice and sense of supremacy suggests a shift or appropriation of a perceived divine power, an authority once traditionally assigned to God prior to the Enlightenment.<sup>368</sup> The method of land surveying is one that seeks to create straight lines and sharp corners through forests and across the land, to create properties and socially or politically designated boundaries within which legalities are instilled, spatially reified through dominant discourses, and used to advance individual or collective agenda. Truth of the geo-political legalities of nature<sup>369</sup> are “*established and borne out*” in a “*world of dark and doubt.*”<sup>370</sup>

In order to fulfil his duty, the surveyor must be affectively detached from the woodland community. He conducts his work using a stance that situates his view of the land from above and looking down upon it according to his representation or map of it. This stance and perspective taken comes from ‘the place from *nowhere*,’ or the objective stance—of having no relation or subjective involvement in the way he depicts the wild woodland or the tree. It allows the surveyor to divide the land using the industrial efficiency of geometrically straight lines,<sup>371</sup> permitting the survey to be constructed free of any obstructions or the “messy protuberances of the earth,”<sup>372</sup> such as the reality of a forest as an ecosystem and not merely a cluster of standing timber. His imagination and representation seem bounded by the constraints of surveying and its mythopoetic narrative in which humans and the natural environment are seen as fundamentally ‘separate.’ This detachment allows the

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<sup>368</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>369</sup>. Renisa Mawani, “Legalities of Nature: Law, Empire, and Wilderness Landscapes in Canada,” *Social Identities* 13, no. 6 (2007): 715–734.

<sup>370</sup>. Robert Frost, “Beech.”

<sup>371</sup>. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests*: 107–132.

<sup>372</sup>. Edward Casey, *Representing Place*: 222.

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'objective' observer to represent the forest as flat space without the subjective bias of his phenomenological experience of the land. He does not witness the land from the literal standpoint from *within* it, but rather from *above* it. Limited by this method and mode of representation he *reduces* or *abbreviates* the surveyed land.

Once a piece of the woodland has been converted into real-estate it is purchased by someone who then fells the trees to develop or "improve"<sup>373</sup> the land by building a farm, cultivated fields, erected fences to keep domestic animals inside the property and wild animals outside. Such acts of domesticating the land are the hallmark of agrarian existence, the marks of "a producer economy."<sup>374</sup> This particular agrarian story was written by agriculturalists and found its (earliest known expression) in Genesis, which suggests the domestication of various animals to human women.<sup>375</sup> What it did was effectively censor or erase the stories of hunter-gatherer cultures which taught morals about sustainable coexistence with the world and instilled fear of breaking taboos such as transgressing the balance between self, community, and the environment or ecosystem. With landscapes altered from forests into farmers' fields such that humans who inhabited these landscapes could live their lives scarcely needing to go or dwell in the forests, paired with the reliance on cultivated crops for material resources, it became easier to forget the bioecological ties to the larger network of the woodlands that lay beyond the bounds of the fields and, in the case of modern industrial agricultural fields, beyond the horizon (figure 7).

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<sup>373</sup>. During periods of industrial as well as democratic revolutions of the nineteenth century made the notion of "progress" synonymous with the term "improvement". This occurred first through "political liberalization and then with technological development" according to Lawrence Buell. This example in particular demonstrates the "power of language." Buell: "How we imagine a thing, true or false, affects our conduct toward it, the conduct of nations as well as persons". Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 1995): 3.

<sup>374</sup>. Sean Kane, *Wisdom of the Mythtellers* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1994): 18.

<sup>375</sup>. Ibid.

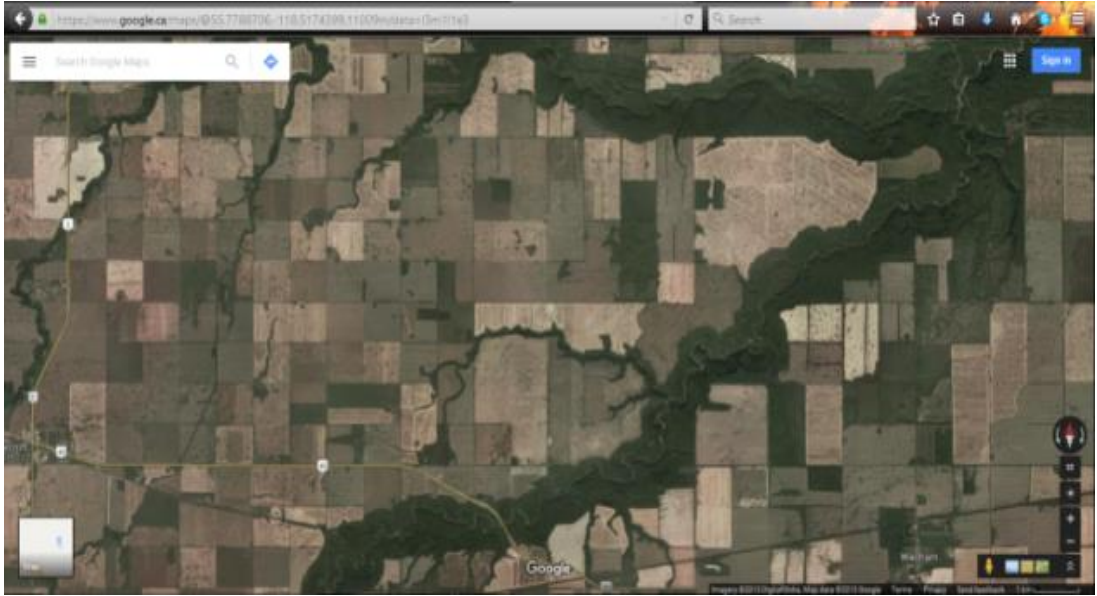


Fig 7. A Google Earth screenshot of an area of industrialized agricultural land in northern Alberta wherein each square is approximately one kilometre across (taken by Amalia Moir, November 2015).

Such an intensely agricultural way of life throughout the history of Western civilization has led to the view that humans are not just a superior species in terms of successful flourishing, but that they are also *separate* from the rest of the natural world.<sup>376</sup> By artificially drawing lines (imaginary, technological, physical walls, ideological barriers) between it and the rest of the natural world, this human has convinced itself that it is outside and at odds with the rest of the wild woodland community.<sup>377</sup>

Greenleaf's map (figure 8), which Henry David Thoreau used as a reference in *The Maine Woods*, provides a good example of the strong historical tendency in America to explicitly favour geometric regularities instead of naturally occurring topographical irregularities (which was deliberately done by largely excluding the

<sup>376</sup> John Vaillant, *Ten Lessons From a Tiger: John Vaillant at TEDxYYC* (TEDx, 2013), accessed March 31, 2016: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6J7\\_nZi9LQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6J7_nZi9LQ).

<sup>377</sup> Gail Davies and Claire Dwyer, "Qualitative Methods: Are You Enchanted or Are You Alienated?," *Progress in Human Geography* 31, no. 2 (2007): 257–66, doi:10.1177/0309132507076417.



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latter).<sup>378</sup> The stark difference between surveyed and unsurveyed landscape seen in Greenleaf's map is echoed in Frost's "Beech" in the first two statements of the poem and speaks of the traditional Western approach to space by tending towards divisions and dichotomies. This tendency was, in Casey's words, "symptomatic of a site-obsessed and characteristically Western conversion of place into space" by dislocating a phenomenologically meaningful physical place into an abstract dislocated representation.<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>378</sup>. Henry David Thoreau, "Ktaadn," (pp. 269–528), in Sayer, R. F. and Witherell, E. H. (eds.), *Henry David Thoreau: Walden, The Main Woods, and Collected Essays and Poems* (United States: Library of America, 2007): 282.

<sup>379</sup>. Edward Casey, *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002): 179.

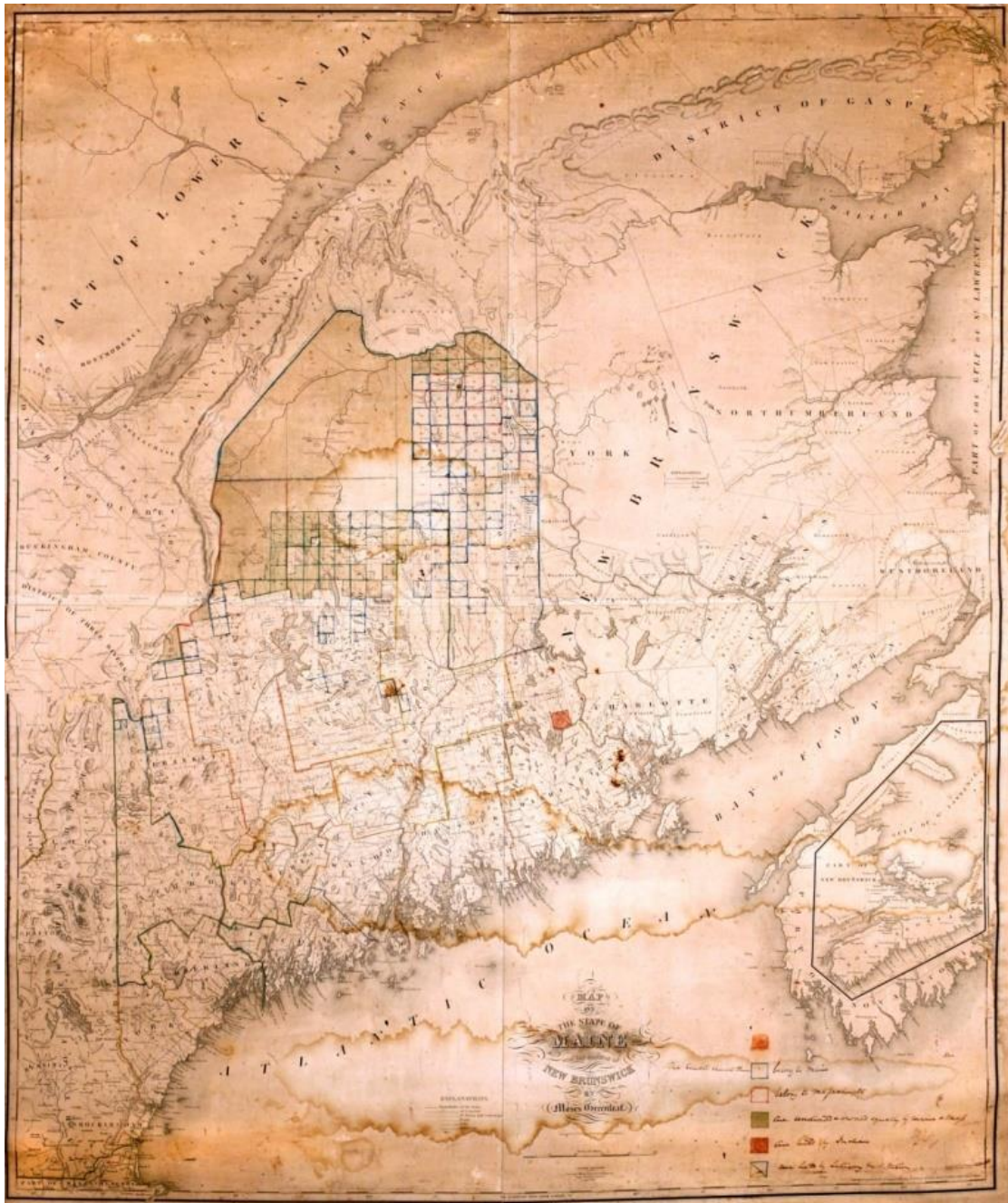


Fig 9. An early edition of the (Moses) Greenleaf map (1829) of the state of Maine and part of the province of New Brunswick (which was included as “the precise boundary between Maine and Canada remained in dispute”).<sup>380</sup>

Here, the difference between the land represented on the map or in a surveyor’s records and the actual land itself is that the represented place is, in actual fact, space—displaced place abstractly represented on paper and in the human mind.

<sup>380</sup>. Osher Map Library, “III: Thoreau and Maps,” *University of Southern Maine*, accessed March 31, 2016: from: <http://oshermaps.org/search/node/Thoreau%20and%20Maps>

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A place is an idea or representation of a physical space that has been transformed by the particular mode of representation and has been given a particular meaning or value; it is no longer a *terra nullius* or ‘no-man’s land,’ but someone’s property. As property, the surveyed area is perceived and treated according to the cultural values assigned to it. In this sense, the “*imaginary line*” is a social construct that allows the reshaping of place to fit cultural ideals and—in the case of intensive agrarian society—sets human dwelling apart from “*the wild*” “*woods*.”

What is missing in this understanding of time and space is a mode of representation that connects humans to the more-than-human world without the constraints of Cartesian dualism and material reductionism. What has been sorely overlooked from this Western relationship with the earth has, for a long time now, been the power of traditional narratives or myths and ritual storytelling. Despite the fact that the map is not the territory, without a common tradition of stories that securely roots and inspires an equally ecologically ethical and *wild*<sup>381</sup> imagination in the natural world, our Western epistemology clings to the only narrative that it knows. It binds itself to the map it has created, making it difficult to imagine what is represented there as anything other than property or detached, dislocated space.

While the surveyor bears witness to his marking of the tree and impressing it as “*Witness Tree*,” the beech bears witness to him and his action. This reversal of perspective raises a degree of uncertainty on the part of the speaker. With the presence of doubt, with the speaker questioning his action of branding or *impressing* the tree—of *bending it into servitude*—he raises a sense that this is all taking place in a moot world, something of his or humankind’s making through impressing upon nature his or their mark. By blazing a mark into the tree, the surveyor turned the

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<sup>381</sup>. Here, *wild* is not used in its pejorative sense (i.e., “barbarous”); instead, it is used in its original sense from its Germanic root *wilde* meaning “will” (as in willpower and free agency), also referring to “an original and natural [healthy] state” Della Thompson (ed.), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 9th Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995): 1780.

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beech into a servant to or participant in his work, it commits to memory its specific site on the map, which is remembered not as the *tree's place* in the forest, as part of the wood, but the place of one of the *property's corners*. The witness tree holds the mark, the memory of his stance, his understanding of it, and the way he acts or relates to it and the land through his agency in blazing the tree. It is a marked remembrance of how he *reduced its being* in the world to a lone tree with a sole purpose. The tree is but for a utilitarian purpose as is the forest, and the land seen only as *usable space* is a 'place' once it has been converted into someone's land, *purposed place*. As a part of the larger whole that is the natural world, the tree's branding sheds light upon the condition of Nature as having been reduced in the environmental imagination and human's relationship with it to its smallest unit of material utility. In this sense, the tree and the forest have no importance to the surveyor beyond mere measurable temporal-spatial materiality: land and wood for the building, buying, and selling of human properties and dwellings.

As Harrison pointed out, the Roman word *material* meant "wood"—specifically, it referred to the *usable* inner wood of a tree.<sup>382</sup> Fundamentally, this age-old utilitarian and anthropocentric approach to the forest and the tree—originating back in ancient Rome—has always failed to see the wildwood ecosystem and humanity's membership in it beyond wood. Just as a piece of land is carved out from the forest and make it a particular 'place,' a tree is singled out—a part of nature and the landscape—and made a meaningful site; all the while the agent remains myopic of the places beyond the confines of his or her imaginary lines. Our environmental imaginations seem boundless, but they are *limited by our way of thinking*—by our *worldviews*. Consequently, through repeated attempts over the ages to deal with limited wood supplies as Western imperialisms expanded—from felling far-away

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<sup>382</sup>. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests*: 28.

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forests to tree plantations<sup>383</sup>—a struggle persists with our Western consumptive culture and capitalist-political utilitarian worldview of forests and trees.<sup>384</sup>

The surveyor's limitedness, this "*being not unbounded*," refers to his stance and approach to the tree. Thus, like Henry David Thoreau, a question of ethics arises in "Beech" (albeit less explicitly as in Thoreau's text "The Beanfield"). *What right*<sup>385</sup> had the surveyor to impress the beech and shaped the fate of that corner of the wildwood? This is perhaps why Frost used the word doubt twice and in the same lines as "*dark*" and "*world*."

The boundedness expressed by Frost, signified by the mark on the tree is a theme featured prominently in Thoreau's nature writing that dealt with environmental witnessing and ethics, specifically in his chapter "The Beanfield" from *Walden; or Life in the Woods*. As he is hoeing his beanfield, Thoreau asks, "But what right had I to oust Johnswort and the rest, and break up their ancient herb garden?"<sup>386</sup> Although his is only "a half-cultivated field" in comparison to the mainstream total(itarian) cultivated fields, Thoreau does not excuse himself from his own criticism as he is participating in a method of farming that has forsaken the old respects and precautions taken in sacred agriculture. Respect for the land and all who depend on it as a whole has been replaced by the quest for greater control over it to reap greater profits. Herein lays the issue that one cannot simultaneously respect the limits of nature and treat it as though it were limitless. "By avarice and selfishness," Thoreau writes, "and a groveling habit, none of us is free, of regarding the soil as property."<sup>387</sup> Through such industrial materialistically-ambitious agricultural

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<sup>383</sup>. Britain exhausted its timber supplies by the early 17th century, and by the 18th century the empire sought its new supplies in the colonies of America. For more on this see Perlin, *A Forest Journey: The Story of Wood and Civilization* (Kindle Edition: Countryman Press, 2005).

<sup>384</sup>. Dick Miller, "The Witness Tree."

<sup>385</sup>. Henry David Thoreau, "The Beanfield," In *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (Norwalk: Connecticut: The Easton Press, 1854/1981): 126.

<sup>386</sup>. Ibid: 161.

<sup>387</sup>. Ibid: 134.

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methods, defined by “irrelevant haste and heedlessness,” the once sacred practice of “husbandry is degraded” and so too is the land. By greed and a will to master the land the modernized farmer (recognizing only the price, not the value of land), reduces and alters the landscape into calculable *costs*—those of *mathematical* farming—framed by private property lines. Similar to the land surveyor in Frost’s poem, the farmer’s limitedness is through his relation and attitude towards the land that he “knows Nature [only] as a robber.”<sup>388</sup> Hence, the meaning such people have invested into the land, the space and soil, has come to determine its fate: forests are cleared, crop sizes are maximized, and the soils richness or quality is consumed. The “wild and primitive state” of the land is now reduced to square and rectangular plots of properties (see figure 9) from which to pursue greater material and monetary gain.

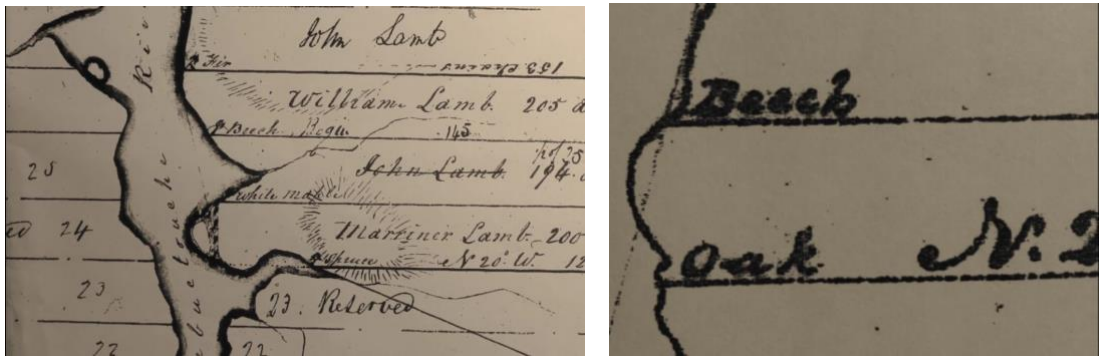


Fig 9. Parts of a nineteenth-century survey record from the New Brunswick public archives studied by forest ecologist and historian Donna Crossland.<sup>389</sup> Written along the right or east side of the river are the names of witness trees: “Fir,” “Beech,” “White maple,” “Spruce,” as well as the names of property owners (and one “Reserved” lot).

Like Thoreau, the speaker in Frost’s poem is a surveyor, surveying a selected area in the wild woods, measuring and carving up the land into a plot that is represented as an illustration or map, and in this case written out as a poem. In it, the surveyor is involved in a process of turning part of a landscape into a piece of property. Once mastered in this way it can be used to profit human commerce, or at

<sup>388</sup> Henry David Thoreau, “The Beanfield:” 126.

<sup>389</sup> Screenshots taken by Amalia Moir (2015) from the visual documentary, “The Witness Trees” by *A Beautiful Forest Inc.* (2015), accessed March 31, 2016: <https://vimeo.com/53369235>

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the very least no longer pose a threat as the ‘Other,’ an ‘antithesis’ to civilization and ‘outlaws.’<sup>390</sup> The surveyor, then, is the agent who carries out the first steps of transformative work of measuring, quantifying, and branding the land as servant. This is how one turns portions of nature into servant and slave through the darker side of Enlightenment reason, or the self-deception of a straight and ‘righteous’ *path*.<sup>391</sup>

As a surveyor, he knows the land as empty space to be altered for use as real-estate or property, as a *divider* and *geometer*. After the surveyor has divided the land into lots, administrators and proprietors take the land and alter it. In this way he is practicing a *negative form of witnessing* through the ritual marking of the tree—by *impressing* or *branding* it as instrument he further detaches himself for the alternate view of humans as being part of nature. It is a negative example story, a precautionary lesson in what to reconsider.<sup>392</sup> The tree’s place in its environment no longer sees the ecology of the area continuing; what continues is the classic Enlightenment cycle or sequence of reducing and domesticating a part of nature to his will and in doing so further alienates him.<sup>393</sup>

The case of the “Beech” as a witness points to the legalities or geo-political economy of nature framed by the ethical question of “right” (i.e., by ‘what right had I...?’) and one’s place with(in) the more-than-human world. The issue lies in the speaker’s act of impressing the tree as witness to his work, and the mark on the tree as testimony to his limitedness in the world. That, by assuming a power once

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<sup>390</sup>. In ancient Rome, anyone who left the city confines and went into the forest—the place out of the city’s laws—ventured outside of civilization, outside of the ‘law’ (hence Ernst Jünger’s notion of taking “the forest passage” the path of counter-hegemony and resistance). For more on this, see Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: Shadow of Civilization*.

<sup>391</sup>. I am not denying quantitative methods’ value; they are useful for providing clarity through simplicity among other things. What matters here is how such methods are used and what the implications are in how they are conducted, or rather, for what purposes and involving what topics. It is not necessarily the means, but rather the ends to which the means are used to achieve. Davies and Dwyer, “Qualitative Methods: Are You Enchanted or Are You Alienated?”

<sup>392</sup>. Sean Kane, *Wisdom of the Mythtellers*.

<sup>393</sup>. Ibid.

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ascribed to the divine,<sup>394</sup> the human knows nature once believed to belong solely to God only as robber,<sup>395</sup> proprietor, and oppressor; an arrogant and exploitative member of nature that has given itself the “right” to take without reciprocity—respect or conscientiousness for the whole. Consequently, the instrumental values and the hollow (instead of hallowed) meanings that are imbued in the tree and the land have come to determine their fate as legally binding and state controlled, domesticated land.

The tree, like the place it stands on, is both property and tool—a commodity, a product, meant to function for a single purpose. The speaker is guilty of knowing the tree—nature—only as property and servant—as *slave*. This representation destines the arboreal to a reduced existence valued upon its worth as a utility or commodity. Thus, in our quest for political and commercial property (i.e., civilization and cultivated/controlled nature; foundational structures of colonial American capitalism) portion after portion of woodlands have been and continue to be divided up, transformed, scarred, or lost. In other words, the dominant approach used in the quest for property distinguished from “wild” spaces requires we *alter* it and *cultivate* it—or at the very least cut pieces of it out, thereby breaking the integrity of its previous or original state. Similar examples of this type of language—the language of marking and ownership, *dominance*—are found not only in land surveying, but also in livestock farming and colonial or imperial timber harvesting as well. Whether it is *impressing* a tree as witness tree, *branding* livestock or *breaking* (i.e., taming/training) a wild horse, or *blazing* the best white pine trees with the King’s Broad Arrow,<sup>396</sup> it is difficult not to hear anthropomorphic—particularly European or Euro-American—exceptionalism at play.

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<sup>394</sup>. Sean Kane, *Wisdom of the Mythtellers*; Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests*.

<sup>395</sup>. Henry David Thoreau, “The Beanfield,” 126.

<sup>396</sup>. Moir, “Mythopoeia Sylvatica: A Critical Topographical Exploration of the Once and Future Forests of North America through Six Witness Trees.”, p. 113.



**The limits of a malnourished mythopoeic.** This boundedness was something that English artist and poet William Blake was already aware of during the Enlightenment period. His poem “The Garden of Love”<sup>397</sup> attests to what the speaker in Robert Frost’s “Beech” poem was lamenting with regards to a world circumstanced and surrounded by “*dark and doubt*”:<sup>398</sup>

I went to the Garden of Love, And saw what I never had seen: A Chapel  
was built in the midst, Where I used to play on the green. / And the  
gates of this Chapel were shut, And ‘Thou shalt not’ writ over the door:  
So I turned to the Garden of Love That so many sweet flowers bore; /  
And I saw it was filled with graves, And tomb-stones where flowers  
should be: And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds, And  
binding with briars my joys and desires.

Brian Walsh, a Chaplain and Theologian at the University of Toronto, explained that Blake was describing how the garden was once a place of beauty, joy, and freedom, and had been altered into a place of “Shall Nots,” death, and constriction.<sup>399</sup> He added that the priests, “who are supposed to be the agents of life” are, instead, binding the poet’s dreams—his joys and desires—with briars as they walk around doing their rounds. Blake’s garden of love, the place where his mind could be free to perceive, experience, and relate to the place or the world without the limitations of a single ideology was reduced to a place of strict and narrow parameters. Altered into a different place and marked with restricted (“Shalt Nots”), the garden of love and freedom was sectioned-off exclusively for someone’s particular agenda, someone else’s story or dreaming of the world and how people are to be in that place. They are binding a place where his mind once roamed freely with the unyielding woody and thorny branches of dogmatic constraints;<sup>400</sup> however, Blake looks beyond this.

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<sup>397</sup>. William Blake, “The Garden of Love,” in *The Book of Georgian Verse*, ed. William Stanley Braithwaite, Bartleby.c (New York, NY: Brentano’s, 1909), <http://www.bartleby.com/br/333.html>.

<sup>398</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>399</sup>. Frank Faulk, “Imagination, Part 2” (Canada: CBC Radio podcast, 2013), accessed March 31, 2016: <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/imagination-part-1-2-1.2913306>.

<sup>400</sup>. Frank Faulk, “Imagination, Part 2.”

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While Blake looks beyond the chapel, Frost's speaker only looks at the place that has become "*circumstanced with dark and doubt*." He stands outside it still, looking at it from afar and through the witness tree's polyvalence.

For Frost, the "*truth*" can only be "*established and borne out*" indirectly;<sup>401</sup> he has to confront it by seeing it reflected back to him through the "*deeply wounded*" "*Witness Tree*." In reflecting back to the surveyor what he projected into the tree and the wild woods through his imagination the beech tree provides a means for the poet to question the world in which he is a part. His actions are destructive in that they reduce the forest environment both physically by sectioning off a corner and intellectually by treating it as a flat area of space—transgressions that contribute to a kind of self-alienation as the surveyed plot is fated for some exclusive human use. But he only doubts this place, the beech and the wood, as he is representing them through the method of surveying; he does not think or imagine beyond it for he has been bound by the imaginary line of the collectively shared environmental imagination that restricts his understanding of humans and himself as being separate from the forest—the forest is still 'outside,' out there beyond the edges of civilization.<sup>402</sup>

The "*limits*, as the Romans called the frontier line of the centuriated land they surveyed," is "a line that is at once real (as a drawn or printed line standing in for the literal termination of a landmass) and imaginary (as a highly schematized representation of this very termination)."<sup>403</sup> In the poem, this focus on the "*imaginary line*" being drawn through a portion of the wild woodland is used to highlight the arbitrary boundary as it is understood between property and the wild forested lands. According to Edward Casey, "the line has the peculiar property of representing

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<sup>401</sup>. *Apotropaically*, "meaning the averting of the gaze, the avoiding of eye contact" (Bordo 2014, p. 808)

<sup>402</sup>. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests*: 49.

<sup>403</sup>. Edward Casey, *Representing Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002): 180.

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landscape in terms of dyadic pairs of exclusive alternatives,” such as “inside/outside” and “above/below.”<sup>404</sup> Thus, although the line described in the poem is imaginary, it still defines the perimeters of the site being shaped out by its author. Inside the line is the surveyed area or piece of real-estate; on the other side lay not place but unsurveyed ‘empty’ space—uncultivated and unimagined land—in short, an expression of “*the wilderness*.”<sup>405</sup> This predominant dichotomous view of where humans are and where all ‘the wild things’ are has certainly contributed to the anthropocentric and ethnocentric view that ‘civilized’ humans are superior *and* separate from the natural world of wildwoods and ‘savages’ paired with a history of intensively agrarian legacy which creates the illusion that ‘civilized’ homo sapiens do not need the natural world beyond their walls and fences.

This is how the speaker’s “*imaginary line*” comes to represent more than just a survey or property line once the poem has arrived at the dissonantly bleak conclusion. By the end of the poem, the “*imaginary lines*” suggest the thread of a mythopoetic narrative, another kind of ‘line’ with its linear structure of beginning, middle, and end. This narrative dictates a limited way of seeing and speaking the world into being through the creative collective perception and understanding. This is similar to the kind of myth-creation that J. R. R. Tolkien referred to as “Faërie,” in that the essential power of a language/discourse is “the power of making immediately effective by the will the visions of ‘fantasy’” or, in this case, narratives of the imagination.<sup>406</sup> It is *how* we talk about a topic or place that is the culturally discursive “aspect of ‘mythology’” which Tolkien distinguished as “sub-creation,” as opposed to “representation or symbolic interpretation of the beauties and terrors of

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<sup>404</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>405</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, “Picture and Witness at the Site of the Wilderness,” *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (2000): 224–247. Jonathan Bordo, “Picture and Witness at the Site of the Wilderness,” *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (2000): 224–47, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1344122>.

<sup>406</sup>. J. R. R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf*: 25.

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the world.”<sup>407</sup> It is this aspect of story and storytelling that Tolkien and others feel has been “too little considered.”<sup>408</sup>

Frost’s emphasis on doubting highlights the importance of questioning the meanings that come from the mythopoeic place. It also means to critically approach the particular ways we have come to see and treat the land as our particular responses to that mythopoeic vision of the landscape. As Blake expressed in “The Garden of Love,” the priests—spiritual leading storytellers, those who witness the continuation of a particular tradition of a knowledge and meaning—are binding rather than emancipating our imagination.<sup>409</sup> Like the piece of the wood being cut out of the wild, the surveyor’s imagination is bounded and divided; for this reason, because he is “*not unbounded*,” his ability to see beyond the forest’s edge is diminished even though the poem suggests he is standing with the tree in the woods. We can easily see the physical manifestation of this ecopsychological disadvantage every time we drive through the countryside outside urban or suburban areas: between forests, plantations, and fields no obvious transition is visible—the city and the cultivated field end abruptly at the forest’s edge. Natural (i.e., un-anthropogenically altered) boundaries between a forest and a clearing are less obvious and more complex, much like alternative understandings of space such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s ontology of flesh as a boundary between the self and the outside world. The world enters us through our sensory experiences of it; in this way, when we touch or see a tree or a forest, we are touched or seen by them. Thus, while a more complex understanding of boundaries teaches that we do not simply end at the surface of our skin or tips of our extremities, a limited conceptualization censors such a critical ecological pedagogy.

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<sup>407</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>408</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>409</sup>. Faulk, “Imagination, Part 2.”

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It seems that this narrow or simplistic understanding of limits and boundaries is what Frost wants us to question: what world do we live in, what mythopoetic narrative are we living by? So while “Blake wants to take us back to a garden” where the environmental imagination is free, “the problem” Brian Walsh highlighted in Blake, “is that we have been bound [...] with briars”<sup>410</sup> (plants with prickly woody stems) as well as by the unyielding structure of the chapel (an institution) with its fear-instilling commandments and solemn graveyard. Blake warns that we cannot return to that mythopoetic garden until we unbind our imaginations,<sup>411</sup> and Frost suggests that we can at least begin, in part, by challenging the worldview in which we and our relationship with the forests are constrained by doubting or questioning it. His moral statement as the conclusion of “Beech” hints at an ethical responsibility inherent in environmental witnessing and poetry.

As Tolkien pointed out, “History often resembles ‘Myth,’ because they are both ultimately of the same stuff.”<sup>412</sup> The “stuff” Tolkien referred to is memory: the manifold mental maps and cognitive schemas that store and organize our knowledge of the past, the world, and of ourselves and our relationships. Memories are reshaped each time we remember them.<sup>413</sup> We can no more remember the past exactly as it was then tell a story about an event exactly as it happened.<sup>414</sup> As memory is vulnerable to the rewritings of the lines of the imagination, the history of Western civilization, like mythology and “all human things” can “become diseased,” Tolkien cautioned. Ben Okri provides further insight into this warning when he wrote, “To poison a nation, poison its stories. A demoralized nation tells demoralized stories to

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<sup>410</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>411</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>412</sup>. J. R. R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf*: 31–32.

<sup>413</sup>. Shelly Carson and Jacob Hirsh in Frank Ibid.

<sup>414</sup>. Ben Okri in Fray, *Ben Okri: Why Do We Tell Children Stories?* (Africa Writes, 2015), <http://africawrites.org/blog/ben-okri-why-do-we-tell-children-stories/>.

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itself. Beware of the storytellers who are not fully conscious of the importance of their gifts, and who are irresponsible in the application of their art.”<sup>415</sup> With their ability to reduce perceptions of the natural world into dichotomies, thereby limiting the imagination, Tolkien added that “modern European languages,” in particular, “are a disease of mythology;” however, “[l]anguage cannot, all the time, be dismissed.”<sup>416</sup> It is a “[s]mall wonder,” wrote Tolkien, “that *spell* means both a story told, and a formula of power over living men;”<sup>417</sup> however, the ‘spell’ is broken the moment doubt or disbelief occurs, and the illusion that was once held in place by the mythopoeic narrative fails as does the art of ‘casting’ or telling it.<sup>418</sup> The energies of an audience cannot be directed without suspended disbelief. Therefore, aligned with Blake,<sup>419</sup> the promethean<sup>420</sup> Frost’s “Beech” makes a claim for the power of the environmental imagination on the issue of respect for nature, and a call for doubt or suspended belief.

Frost’s emphasis on “*a world of doubt surrounded*” thus acts like a signpost leading to an alternative path. “A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees,” wrote Blake; Frost’s tentative approach to the deeply wounded beech tree suggests that he is suspending his belief about the validity of his actions. This doubt becomes the beginning of a critical approach to the world he is creating with his “*imaginary line*” and the action of impressing the “*Witness Tree*.” As philosopher John Russon

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<sup>415</sup>. Ben Okri quoted in Amy E. Spaulding, *The Wisdom of Storytelling in an Information Age: A Collection of Talks* (Toronto, ON: The Scarecrow Press, 2004): 68.

<sup>416</sup>. J. R. R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf*: 24.

<sup>417</sup>. Ibid: 31–32.

<sup>418</sup>. Ibid: 32.

<sup>419</sup>. Blake called for a critical approach appropriate for the creative perception (imagination, ‘fantasy’) and response (epiphany, “an experience of sudden and striking realization” that guides our energies) throughout his work Nicholas O Warner, “‘The Eye Altering Alters All’: Blake and Esthetic Perception,” *Colby Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1983): 18–28.

<sup>420</sup>. As opposed to the “familiar Frost” who maintains a moderate style of writing on respect and veneration for nature instead of transcending it, the “Promethean Frost” is aligned with Blake in the sense that he makes a claim for the power of the human imagination in shaping or creating our perceptions of the natural world and things therein George F. Bagby, “The Promethean Frost,” *Twentieth Century Literature* 38, no. 1 (1992): 1–19.

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points out, “[w]e are witnesses by nature”<sup>421</sup>—that is, *storytellers* by nature<sup>422</sup>—and thus “we are vulnerable to the call to witness our own witnessing.”<sup>423</sup> We are made vulnerable, exposed, when we are called to tell our story, to testify to our actions and meanings because it is the nature of stories to reveal.<sup>424</sup> “This witnessing to witnessing is responsibility,” Russon continues, is essentially the seeing or hearing and subsequent passing along of story, of myth.<sup>425</sup> In this case, the moral duty inherent in environmental mythtelling is to ensure that the mythopoetic narrative is oriented towards sustainable goals, that it can keep humans in right relation to the world. Such is the purpose of telling stories, of education and passing on the values through an ever-unfolding mythopoeia through time and space.<sup>426</sup>

As witnesses to the poet’s witnessing, we too become called to responsibility to reflect on the consequences of our views, values, and how they influence our actions towards the wild woods. Frost, in the Promethean spirit of foresight, demonstrates what Brian Walsh referred to as “prophetic imagination;” a perception which counters the previous by “[entering] into the fray of public life with a different story” and asks, “What is the story that will shape our imaginations?” For Blake and Biblical writers, it was “an alternative story to empire.”<sup>427</sup> For Frost, introducing the possibility for a counter-narrative begins by breaking away from the narrative that binds his creative perception of the land; but first it requires that we suspend belief in the methods of the predominant Western myth and question how its mythopoetic structure determines what we are doing and its larger ecological consequences with respect to the tree and the wild forest.

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<sup>421</sup>. John Russon, *Bearing Witness to Epiphany: Persons, Things, and the Nature of Erotic Life*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009): 69.

<sup>422</sup>. Fray, *Ben Okri: Why Do We Tell Children Stories?*

<sup>423</sup>. John Russon, *Bearing Witness to Epiphany*: 69.

<sup>424</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>425</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>426</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>427</sup>. Brian Walsh in Faulk, “Imagination, Part 2.”

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This anthropogenic belief system espouses to the idea that so long as we leave nature to the experts and continue pursuing the '(North) American Dream' everything will be well.<sup>428</sup> The Western myth of progress may "serve the mythological function of providing a story to direct our energies, and" provide a vision that many accept "as a noble venture to serve future generations," but it is problematic in that it "makes for a *defective* myth."<sup>429</sup> It is defective in that its core epistemologies reduce the wildwood (and indeed the rest of the natural world) to basic extractive resources or materials (*matter*), seeing not a forest ecosystem but a stand of trees for certain human use. It further limits the social-ecological environmental imagination through societal designs in which people live increasingly farther away from forested environments. In his study of Blake's ethical and political ideas, Northrop Frye suggested that,<sup>430</sup>

To the extent that a man has imagination, he is alive, and therefore the development of the imagination is in increase and life. It follows that restricting the imagination must then tend in the direction of death, so that all imaginative restraint is ultimately, not that it always proceeds to ultimates, a death impulse.

A famous example of someone who felt this distressingly in his nineteenth century New England society (e.g., see "The Pond In Winter"<sup>431</sup>) was Henry David Thoreau who went into the woods of Walden and the wild woods of nineteenth century Maine "because [he] wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if [he] could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when [he] came to die, discover that [he] had not lived."<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>428</sup>. Andy Fisher, *Radical Ecopsychology: Psychology in the Service of Life, Second Edition* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2013), pp. 175-176.

<sup>429</sup>. *Ibid*: 176.

<sup>430</sup>. Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974): 55.

<sup>431</sup>. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life In the Woods*: 227-240.

<sup>432</sup>. Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life In the Woods*: 74.



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Thoreau was talking about regaining freedom from the ideological constraints one accumulates by virtue of growing up and living in a society that is owned by a particular set of politics or culture. In contrast, “forests cannot be owned” for the woods are free.<sup>433</sup> They are wild with bioecological ‘wills’ of their own. No human or civilization can grow a forest ecosystem. Thoreau “goes into the forest [...] as one who would put to the test the meaning of being on the earth.”<sup>434</sup> As Harrison put it, “life is an experiment of its meaning” of which Thoreau—like Blake insisted and as Frost suggested—had to experience for himself by journeying into the woods where he could see and ponder for free of societal constraints. Thus, to go to the woods is to go into the wild where one can unbind their imagination, where the freedom of the creative mind can restore its integrity, its own will. As Robert Macfarlane put it, “[t]o understand the wild you must first understand the wood,” not just because the association between the two words “runs deep in etymology,” but also for the reason that as forests declined as major civilizations spread, so too did wild spaces.<sup>435</sup> The wildwood, then, was and is where one can be in one’s entirety free. Although it is possible that Frost’s surveyor is with the witness tree in the woods, his imagination remains at the forest’s edge, “*off*” or on the outside of “*this corner in the wild.*” The concluding moral statement, then, becomes a kind of warning, and the poem itself an anticipatory elegy to what may come to pass should the mind remain bounded by the confines of such a cultural narrative about the wild wood.

Along with shifting baseline syndrome and collective environmental generational amnesia, one of the “key [pathologies]” in contemporary Western culture is the “reduction of the imaginations that we are too numbed, satiated, and

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<sup>433</sup> Ibid: 211.

<sup>434</sup> Harrison, *Forests*: 221.

<sup>435</sup> Robert Macfarlane, *The Wild Places* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007): 91.

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co-opted to do serious imaginative work.”<sup>436</sup> We need a counter narrative, an alternative discourse, to provide a vision of ourselves and the world in a more sustainable, a more holistic and healing relationship with the forests and rest of the world. This is always possible, for the power of story is in its ability to help us see;<sup>437</sup> once we can envision a reimagined relationship with the forests, we can achieve it. This, however, cannot be achieved without a liberated imagination. This brings us to a key if not the moral of the beech tree’s story, that we need a new unbounded and ethical mythopoeic of the geographical forests that reimagines them as something for all sentient and natural processes that depend on sylvan ecosystems, as something more than just the sum of its parts and not just “boards, feet, and fiber.”<sup>438</sup> As we will see in the next case, that of *The Jack Pine*, forests in Canada became valued not only for their usefulness in the nation’s economy, but also for their symbolic function as a fertile and cleared ground for the building of the country’s new identity through its first landscape myth.

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<sup>436</sup> Brian Walsh in Faulk, “Imagination, Part 2.”; Dick Miller, “The Witness Trees.”

<sup>437</sup> Ben Okri in Fray, *Ben Okri: Why Do We Tell Children Stories?*

<sup>438</sup> Miller, “The Witness Trees.”

Chapter Two: *The Jack Pine* and *Pinus Banksiana*

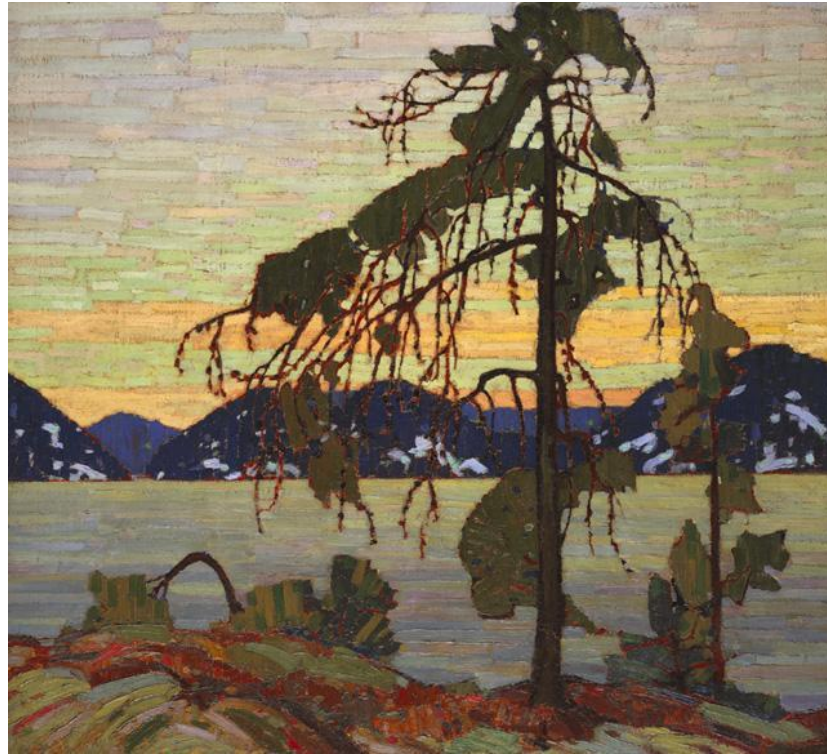


Fig 10. Tom Thomson, *The Jack Pine*, 1916–1917, oil on canvas, 50.35 x 55.03 in., The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.<sup>439</sup>

From the beech witness tree, we now move to another witness tree: the solitary northern Jack pine tree featured in Tom Thomson's 1917 painting, *The Jack Pine* (figure 10). After having mobilized the first Canadian landscape movement, the works of Thomson and the Group of Seven became the lenses through which the national landscape myth of Canada's Laurentian wild spaces were depicted as being devoid of human or animal life.<sup>440</sup> For the settler-descendants this kind of place made sense to a degree; the illusion of the absent Indigenous presence, on the other hand, was particularly problematic. This misrepresentation is what Jonathan Bordo

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<sup>439</sup>. Tom Thomson, "The Jack Pine, 1916–1917," *National Gallery of Canada* no. 1519 (2016), accessed March 31, 2016: <https://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artwork.php?mkey=11056>

<sup>440</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, "Jack Pine—Wilderness Sublime Or the Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 27, no. 4 (1992); Anthony Shelton, "Questioning Locality: The UBC Museum of Anthropology and Its Hinterlands," *Etnografica* 11, no. 2 (2007): 393.

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referred to as “the erasure of the aboriginal,”<sup>441</sup> the erasing of the presence or testimony of any First Peoples from the landscape, at least, in the popular national environmental imagination. By omitting the presence of Indigenous peoples and culture (e.g., culturally modified trees or landscapes) in the Canadian landscape paintings, the artists and their supporters promoted the perception that there were no Indigenous peoples or practices taking place.<sup>442</sup> Going back to Canada’s first century, this northern solitary tree also testifies to the presence and use of the wilderness as a symbolic form<sup>443</sup> in the pre-confederation imperial geopolitical landscape project to remove the Indigenous presence from the land for the new Anglo Canadian to be projected into that ‘landscaped’ space.<sup>444</sup>

It was not only the absence of Indigenous persons, but also the apparent absence of the artists themselves. The representation of the lone Canadian artist who ventured into the wilderness to paint the landscape on canvas became iconized by the figure of the solitary northern tree seen in Thomson’s *The Jack Pine* and *West Wind*.<sup>445</sup> Acting as a stand-in witness for the artist, the Jack pine in the painting is another witness tree important in examining the Canadian landscape myth of the wilderness aesthetic concerning the perceived forest frontier.

### Description and Critical Topographical Exploration

Like the next case, Tom Thomson’s *The Jack Pine* painting involves elements of geometry (*geo-* “earth” and *metron* “measurement;” earth measurement) and geography (*geographia*, “earth description”) in which there is an intersection between

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<sup>441</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, “Jack Pine—Wilderness Sublime or the Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape,” *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d’Études Canadiennes* 27, no. 4 (Winter 1992): 98–128; Jonathan Bordo, “The Terra Nullius of Wilderness—Colonialist Landscape Art (Canada & Australia) and the So-Called Claim to American Exception,” *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 15 (Spring 1997): 13–36.

<sup>442</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>443</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, “The Wilderness as Symbolic Form—Thoreau, Grūnewald and the Group of Seven” (pp. 149–169) in Pascale Guibert (ed.) *Reflective Landscapes of the Anglophone Countries* (New York: Rodopi, 2011): 162–166.

<sup>444</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>445</sup>. Ibid.

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two sections delimitating boundaries that distinguish the tree and the landscape. Like a common property lot, *The Jack Pine* painting is itself square, bordered by its limits or edges. Its shape as a painting is something that seems further accentuated by a physical picture frame that encloses the image within a tangible border like a surveyor's property line that runs square in woods (compared to, for example, a common Indigenous approach to or interpretation in representing nature; without a picture frame, the images in a painting appear free and unrestricted—see figure 11). The landscape's northerliness<sup>446</sup> and the figure's enclosure within signify its uniqueness—the figure stands out from the landscape and the landscape is distinguished from those of the south (United States) and the east (Britain, France). It is unlike the United States in that it is located further north of it (yet similar in their romanticized frontiers), and unlike Britain in that it is wild and untamed, yet similar in its relative northerliness (after all, Canada was, before Confederation, intended to become a “new Britain of the North” in North America<sup>447</sup>).

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<sup>446</sup>. Here, “northerliness” refers to Canadian geography which places the majority of the country's landscapes north of the United States of America (except for the state of Alaska).

<sup>447</sup>. Renisa Mawani, “Legalities of Nature: Law, Empire, and Wilderness Landscapes in Canada,” *Social Identities* 13, no. 6 (September 2007), p. 719.



Fig 11. Mark Anthony Jacobson, *Protecting the Environment*, 2014, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30 in., Images Boreales Gallery, Montreal.<sup>448</sup> In this representation of the environment, land (the forest, the turtle—possible reference to Turtle Island, otherwise known as the continent of North America), water, sky, and a trio of terrestrial, aquatic, and avian animals (wolves, turtle, and loons) are depicted as interconnected; seemingly communicating that in any ecosystem nothing exists in isolation. An unbound space characterized not by any obvious geometrically constricting boundaries or intellectual abstractions; rather only transitions are apparent. What *does* bind the animals, land, waters, and sky is a *shared interconnection*, a bioecological *kinship*. Such representations of relationship (direct and indirect) tell a different story than those of Thomson and the Group of Seven.

This northern horizon of sky, mountain line, and lake are intersected by the verticality of the standing northern solitary pine; symbolic ‘coordinates’ emphasizing an especially ‘*Northern*’ north, a place that is not to be mistaken with the northern states of America, but a place further North still: the ‘true north.’ This intersection of a time–space and value dynamic at play in the formation of the solitary Northern tree marks it as a site: that of the emergence of a new (1864 – circa 1960) Canadian national identity based on a “Laurentian wilderness aesthetic.”<sup>449</sup> It becomes a *site*—an axiological point in a particular time at a particular place that has been invested

<sup>448</sup>. Mark Anthony Jacobson, “*Protecting the Environment*, 2014,” *Mark Anthony Jacobson Catalogue Raisonné: Images Boreales Gallery*, accessed March 31, 2016: <http://markanthonyjacobsoncatalogueraisonne.blogspot.ca/2014/04/protecting-environment.html>

<sup>449</sup>. Bordo, “The Terra Nullius of Wilderness”; Bordo, “Jack Pine.”

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with a particular meaning(s) and memory(s).<sup>450</sup> The time is pre-1960, the space is the wilderness or ‘wild spaces’ of Canada, and the value was the Canadian identity framed by the country’s northern wilderness symbolized by the lone tree.

Lone figures by definition are characterized by individuality and a degree of isolation or disconnection—conditions of standing as a part separated from a whole; a theme common in traditional Western human–environment narrative. In this vein, the dominant belief that we are separate from the environment and other beings becomes part of the delusion that harm done to them will not affect us in turn; however, buying into this worldview made the colonial conquest for the New World easier for non-Indigenous social, industrial, and political groups. So, just as in the case of the beech tree, the thematic issue of diminishing the *integrity* of nature is present with the erasure of the Indigenous from the landscape. By removing Indigenous people from the landscape, the presence of First Peoples was reduced and temporally displaced in the environmental imaginations of people who shared the geopolitical vision of an empty Canadian wilderness aesthetic. The imperial or colonial nation building project was to *remake* the place into somewhere for the new country. This required, in part, manoeuvres to clear the landscape of public representations of First Peoples from the country’s mental schema of the land, of First Peoples’ legal ownership of the land, and of their physical removal which included removing their traditional ways of life (including language, ceremonies, etc.) from the land.<sup>451</sup> The attempts at a physical erasure of the Indigenous from the land ranged, over time, from outright assaults (in the earlier days of colonization)

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<sup>450</sup>. Richard Brock, “Envoicing Silent Objects: Art and Literature at the Site of the Canadian Landscape,” *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* 13, no. 2 (2008): 50–61.

<sup>451</sup>. John O’Brian and Peter White (Eds.), *Beyond Wilderness: The Group of Seven, Canadian Identity, and Contemporary Art* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007). ; Renisa Mawani, “Legalities of Nature: Law, Empire, and Wilderness Landscapes in Canada,” *Social Identities* 13, no. 6 (2007): 715–734.

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and promoting the spread of disease<sup>452</sup> to treaties of trickery,<sup>453</sup> and later forced or coerced assimilation into European/Euro-American society through residential schools and the banning of traditions and native languages, after which came social (e.g., stigmatization), political (e.g., failing to uphold the duty to consult in matters of the environment), and economic forms of marginalization that persist to this day.<sup>454</sup>

Jonathan Bordo problematized this wilderness ethos as a mode of representation depicting a Canadian landscape ideal as untouched and devoid of animal and human presences.<sup>455</sup> This puritan idealization of the wilderness as empty or vacant was the discourse of temporality that is what came to be represented by the image of a solitary northern tree that manifested in Tom Thomson's *The Jack Pine*.<sup>456</sup> The issue with this mode of representation, however, is that the painting is the artist's phenomenological testimony to having *been there* at the very place depicted, meaning that the landscape was touched by the physical presence of a human. Consequently, this trace testifies *against* the wilderness aesthetic; it is not as pure as its representation makes it out to be. Bordo refers to this as the "subjective trace" that is left behind as a kind of signature from the tension created between the artist's testimony against the absence of human presence and their necessity of the artist to "*be there*" in order to authenticate and deny any human presence in representations of the wilderness.<sup>457</sup> It is this subjective trace that the foregrounded lone northern tree signifies. Historically, the symbolic solitary tree bears witness to the "colonial presence, of that precarious hold on the land and its attempted capture

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<sup>452</sup>. Zander Sherman, *The Curiosity of School: Education and the Dark Side of Enlightenment* (Toronto, ON: Viking, 2012): 122.

<sup>453</sup>. Alanis Obomsawin (2014), *Trick or Treaty?* (84 min 43 sec), National Film Board of Canada (2014), accessed March 31, 2016: [https://www.nfb.ca/film/trick\\_or\\_treaty](https://www.nfb.ca/film/trick_or_treaty)

<sup>454</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>455</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, "Jack Pine—Wilderness Sublime or the Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape."

<sup>456</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, "The Terra Nullius of Wilderness—Colonialist Landscape Art (Canada & Australia) and the So-Called Claim to American Exceptionion."

<sup>457</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, "Jack Pine—Wilderness Sublime or the Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape."



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of the landscape imaginary.”<sup>458</sup> Similar to the surveyor’s deliberate removal of naturally occurring irregularities on the earth’s surface in mapping out the land, it was the artist’s deliberate exclusion of human and animal emplacement in painting the land.

As a subjective trace, the Northern solitary tree is a “symbolic deposit,” that stands in place of the artist.<sup>459</sup> The tree, then, represents the romanticized Canadian artist who had to journey into the wild to paint that very image of the land. The hard work, the solitariness, and the iconic Canadian northernness point to themes of puritanism.<sup>460</sup> When it became the icon for the wilderness aesthetic, *The Jack Pine* also “came to invent the “wilderness park” as a monumental site that represented a kind of human occupancy” or filling, which first required “the erasure of aboriginal presence” from the wilderness landscape as a system of representation.<sup>461</sup> To create this ideal, it had to be first perceived as such for the belief of a ‘purified’ place to take root.

The appearance of vacancy was created by the position of the solitary tree within the landscape amidst an absence of any Indigenous peoples or wildlife, a strategic (or at the very least naïve or misguided) act of removing the Indigenous from the then popular representation of and belief about the land. At first glance, a landscape that is *vacant* differs from one that is ‘unclaimed’ or ‘empty.’ Before the discursive erasure of Indigenous peoples across North America,<sup>462</sup> their presence was

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<sup>458</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, “The Terra Nullius of Wilderness—Colonialist Landscape Art (Canada & Australia) and the So-Called Claim to American Exception,” 21.

<sup>459</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>460</sup>. Puritanism in Canada, specifically the Laurentian region, was a reoccurring theme or reference in Henry David Thoreau’s text *A Yankee In Canada* (pp. 782-849), where he described what he saw of the Canadian people in his travels (In Sayer, R. F. and Witherell, E. H. (eds.), *Henry David Thoreau: Walden, The Main Woods, and Collected Essays and Poems*, United States: Library of America, 2007).

<sup>461</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, “Jack Pine—Wilderness Sublime or the Erasure of the Aboriginal Presence from the Landscape.”

<sup>462</sup>. Ronald L Trosper et al., “North America,” in *Traditional Forest-Related Knowledge: Sustaining Communities, Ecosystems and Biocultural Diversity*, ed. J. A. Parrotta and R. L. Trosper (Springer Science, 2012), 157–201; Sean Robertson, “Extinction Is the Dream of Modern Powers: Bearing

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diminished when their populations were reduced owing to “widespread epidemics of communicable diseases” from the settlers, creating an image of “a ‘widowed land.’”<sup>463</sup> This is akin to the pre-1960 national and popular view of wilderness as a place where humans may visit but do not dwell.<sup>464</sup> “Vacancy” in a landscape, like in the hospitality business, suggests a temporary stay or visit. It is neither human habitat as it is inhospitable once a person has overstayed his or her “welcome,” and nor is it humans’ “home” as it is not civilization. Like a vacancy sign in the hospitality business, however, such representation of a previously intimidating landscape makes it appear more welcoming and inviting.

Through this particular symbol, the import of the Group of Seven wilderness aesthetic, as a narrative, gave pre-1960 Canadian nationalism what it needed: a legitimizing connection or legal binding between nation state and land. “Beyond the particulars with which a given landscape is populated (rocks, trees, bushes [...]) etc.,” Edward Casey writes, “*place is what is primarily transmitted in landscape*

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Witness to the Return to Life of the Sinixt Peoples?,” *Antipode* 46, no. 3 (June 28, 2014): 773–93, <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12075>. ; Liz Newbery, “Canoe Pedagogy and Colonial History: Exploring Contested Spaces of Outdoor Environmental Education,” *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* 17 (2012): 30–45, <http://cjee.lakeheadu.ca/index.php/cjee/article/view/1112/653>. ; Richard Brock, “Envoicing Silent Objects: Art and Literature at the Site of the Canadian Landscape,” *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* 13, no. 2 (2008): 50–61; Mawani, “Legalities of Nature: Law, Empire, and Wilderness Landscapes in Canada.” ; Renisa Mawani, “Genealogies of the Land: Aboriginality, Law, and Territory in Vancouver’s Stanley Park,” *Social & Legal Studies* 14, no. 3 (2005): 315–39, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0964663905054907>. ; Ian Alexander Mortimer, “The Hybrid Monumental Symbols of Canada’s Warrior Nation Moment by Master of Arts Carleton University Ottawa , Ontario,” 2014. ; Theodore T E D Binnema and Melanie Niemi, “‘Let the Line Be Drawn Now’: Wilderness, Conservation, and the Exclusion of Aboriginal People from Banff National Park in Canada,” *Environmental History* 11, no. October 2006 (2006): 724–50. ; Bruce Willems-Braun, “Colonial Vestiges: Representing Forest Landscapes on Canada’s West Coast,” *BC Studies*, no. 112 (1996): 5–38, <http://ojs.library.ubc.ca/index.php/bcstudies/article/viewArticle/1666>. ; Susanne Porter-Bopp, “Colonial Natures? Wilderness and Culture in Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site” (York University, 2006). ; Sébastien Caquard et al., “A ‘Living’ Atlas for Geospatial Storytelling: The Cybercartographic Atlas of Indigenous Perspectives and Knowledge of the Great Lakes Region,” *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization* 44, no. 2 (2009): 83–100, <https://doi.org/10.3138/cart0.44.2.83>. ; Clare M. Lewandowski, “The Epistemology of Forgetting,” *Erkenntnis* 74, no. 3 (2011): 399–424, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>.

<sup>463</sup> Trosper et al., “North America.”

<sup>464</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* ; Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: Shadow of Civilization*.

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*painting*.”<sup>465</sup> For many Canadians, who never experienced the places firsthand, the land was seen through the artist’s lens and thought of through the common narrative that gave the representations life in the societal environmental imagination.<sup>466</sup> In the case of *The Jack Pine*, *place*—both a sense of the physical land and a sense of one’s place in it—is precisely what it conveyed through Thomson’s and the Group’s landscape paintings of the Canadian wilderness. As a landscape painting and symbol, *The Jack Pine* bore not only a sense of the physical land to Canadians; it also conveyed a sense of Canadian’s place in that land (represented by the Canadian artist who in turn is represented by the solitary northern tree), as belonging to it and it to them. With this symbol the young country finally had a signature—a collectively unique sign—and an “official” document upon which to mark its name and seal proprietorship of its new ‘real-estate.’ One cannot move into their new real-estate, however, while the previous home-owners are there; so Indigenous peoples were erased from the then official documentation. While the Canadian landscape artist simply created a representation of a northern land, it was this distinctively *northern* character that his work reinforced and consolidated in the icon of his solitary northern tree. The northern character iconized by a northern species of tree standing alone seemed perfect for an already established notions of geopolitical identity in a surging landscape myth. What *The Jack Pine* and its storytellers of its time achieved was to rally behind an icon lone tree, create and perpetuate a myth about the land being *vacant* (setting it apart as *wilderness*, “no-man’s land” or *terra nullius*), and in that apparent emptiness claim the landscape as uniquely Euro-Canadian. It was another wave of ‘colonialization,’ but this time it was a clearing and settling of the land as it was imagined and (dis)remembered.

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<sup>465</sup> Edward Casey, *Representing Place*, 114.

<sup>466</sup> Ronald L Trosper et al., “North America.”

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### **The Tree and the Land**

A singular entity set apart from and standing before a vast vacancy; within these characteristics are themes of the artist's orientation or phenomenological stance, geometry and topography (the framing, writing or representing of a place as topic), as well as temporality and locality (the artist having been at a particular time at that location in order to paint it). Temporality and locality are set the context of the painting. That is, the painting came about through the artist's sensory and perceptual experience of the specific space, representing it as he saw it. In other words, the painting is Thomson's testimony to his having been physically present in a part of the Canadian wilderness; he left his subjective trace and in painting a solitary Jack pine he turned it into a witness object, *The Jack Pine*.

The literary or discursive aspect of the image is the narrative that became tied to the representation of the tree and the landscape based on its distinctive characteristics that spoke to the Canadian aesthetic of valiantly venturing into the wild (a meaning attributed to the artist's subjective trace), the new country's unique northernness, and the perception of vacancy in (or 'purity' of) the landscape. The ethical aspect is the attitude or values that became invested in the solitary northern tree standing (seemingly) sentinel over an 'empty' landscape that was the Canadian Laurentian wilderness ethos that masked the symptoms of colonial imperialism: arrival/presence, seeing/witnessing or 'discovery', and acquisition. This was the meaning (that the tree masked symptoms of colonialism) that was established and borne out through this witness tree. The solitary northern tree, as witness or sign bearer to the Canadian stance in relation to that place, reflects the ethical aspect of his testimony to omitting the Indigenous presence from his representation of the land.

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Signifying all this, *The Jack Pine* testifies to the whole of traditional Canadian landscape visual narratives, which, until 1960 when it became highly criticized, fulfilled the Canadian desire for a sense of national identity by filling this imaginary empty space called ‘Canadian wilderness.’ Such representations and their supporters saw that they were creating a proud identity out of nothingness when, in fact, the darker truth was that they had made it appear as though human and animal life had been erased or at least significantly diminished (when in fact they were there for thousands of years before and never truly left) for their own mythified idealization or mythification of the land. Meanwhile, as this first Canadian landscape art movement was developed during the first half of the 1900s, hundreds of thousands of First Peoples had already vanished since first contact with Europeans and during the Church–State project to erase the Indigeneity physically and culturally through Western education and assimilation into non-Indigenous society administered through residential schools and foster homes.<sup>467</sup>

The socio-geo-political construction of a Canadian nation and its nationalism amounted to little more than the culmination of a collectively organized desire for a unique brand of nationalism and naïveté backed by the identity politics of an imperial colonial project. The intelligentsias of this art movement sought to fill the perceived ‘vacancy’ created by the previous colonial physical aggression of disease transmission and physical assaults that nearly wiped out numerous tribes and decimated the few that survived. Thus, it was through the Canadian landscape myth that the artists came, saw, and conquered the voided landscape. The erasure of the Indigenous from both land and landscape culminated visually in the Canadian wilderness aesthetic.

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<sup>467</sup>. Indigenous children who fell ill with tuberculosis at residential schools were deliberately sent home “to both lower the school’s mortality rates and spread the disease into Aboriginal communities.” As for the children who died at the residential schools, the institutions withheld the locations of the children’s bodies from their parents to deliberately “prevent some semblance of healing from taking place.” Source: Zander Sherman, *The Curiosity of School: Education and the Dark Side of Enlightenment* (Toronto, ON: Viking, 2012): 122.

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The depiction of a lone northern tree became a symbol that still stands before the rest of the landscape like an explorer before a newly ‘discovered’ land,<sup>468</sup> the Canadian landscape artist as surveyor/frontiersman,<sup>469</sup> lumberjack before a forest,<sup>470</sup> a tree planter before a clear-cut,<sup>471</sup> and an ecotourist before a national park of preserved wilderness in a government advertisement.<sup>472</sup> The representation of the lone tree gave the narrative its root, its foothold as a new landscape myth; however, once this iconic representation of the northern solitary tree was uprooted, the myth seemed to have transformed into not an ideological or mythic “tree,” but more of an identity that simply transferred into a different (yet related) *topos*: tree planting (the dominant representation of a single white privileged Canadian “planting a nation,”<sup>473</sup> and a lone ecotourist overlooking the a national wilderness park<sup>474</sup>).

The imperialist discursive assumptions that clung to the paintings of the Group of Seven and Tom Thomson were norms and ideologies of the status quo of the first third of the twentieth century, consequences of the British Imperial project of Canada.<sup>475</sup> Any native occupants to the place that came to be called Canada had to be removed or subdued in order for the new Canadian nationalism to take up authoritative occupancy, independent from Britain and distinguished from the United States. Consequently, as it had been in the United States before Canada, from the very beginning “[t]he country had to be “cleared” of trees; Indians had to be “re-

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<sup>468</sup> Ramsay Cook, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

<sup>469</sup> Tom Thomson, *The Jack Pine*, 1917; O’Brian, *Beyond Wilderness*.

<sup>470</sup> John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness and Greed* (Vancouver, BC: Vintage Canada, 2005): 88.

<sup>471</sup> Michael Ekers and Michael Farnan, “Planting the Nation: Tree Planting Art and the Endurance of Canadian Nationalism,” *Space and Culture* 13, no. 1 (January 31, 2010): 95–120, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331209358348>.

<sup>472</sup> Renisa Mawani, “Legalities of Nature.”

<sup>473</sup> Michael Ekers and Michael Farnan. “Planting the Nation.”

<sup>474</sup> Renisa Mawani, “Legalities of Nature.”

<sup>475</sup> Ibid.

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moved;” [and] wild animals had to be exterminated”<sup>476</sup> in order for the imperialist project of conquering this new land to be successful.

Geographical and political identity and the legalities of nature have been an inseparable and powerful synergy. For a people without a strong sense of collective emplaced identity, establishing an identity based on the land was just as important as dropping the great anchor of the ship that brought them there. It anchored the people’s sense of collective self in a place that eventually became home through generations of contact and involvement with the physical and imagined landscapes created through the national landscape myth. Once this aesthetic was critically challenged in the 1950s and 1960s by a new wave of scholars and counter-narratives,<sup>477</sup> however, it caused a disturbance in the collective sense of what it means to be Canadian in relation to the wilderness landscape.<sup>478</sup>

While Thomson’s and the Group of Seven’s works were becoming famous, Canadian governments and industries had already long been reshaping the actual lands through natural resource extraction and development. As the wild woods physically disappeared, they began to fill the canvases and picture frames of Canadian landscape artists; as the real disappeared, they began to reappear in the imaginary space of popular culture. As endangered and vanishing spaces and species and their ‘memories’ or testimonies start to fill the confines of national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, zoos, and picture books, they have more in common with North American nursing homes and obituaries.

When a forestscape is taken, reduced, or irreversibly transformed, it is more than a theft of access to territory and a removal of habitat; it is also a taking of *foundation* in both the physical and psychological sense of the term for the human

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<sup>476</sup> Roderick Nash, “The Value of Wilderness,” *Environmental Review* 1, no. 3 (1976): 12–25., p. 16.

<sup>477</sup> O’Brian and White (Eds.), *Beyond Wilderness*.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.

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communities who depend on the forests. Take away a people's land, and you take away their foundation, their supports, their *oikos* and *cosmos*, but this does not mean that a woodland culture or the forest is lost entirely. As we will see with the Haida heritage tree and Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole, trees that bear witness to a people's culture help to preserve portions of it so long as they coexist; so long as the woodland culture remains, the old and new forests can be protected and sustainably managed.

### ***Pinus banksiana*, Witness to Colonial Settlement**

Before the third case, however, there are two brief notes on the Jack pine species or *Pinus banksiana* (figure 2.3) to point out that are reflective of its iconography in the old Euro-North American imagination and its significance as an ecological witness tree today. Beyond the solitary northern Jack pine tree in Thomson's painting, Jack pines have and continue to bear witness to additional parts of the Euro-American relation to the boreal sylvan wilderness in eastern Canada. Besides the erasure of the Indigenous and its part in the myth of the empty wilderness in Canada, the Jack pine (as a species) existed in the superstitious minds of lumbermen of Canada. Centuries later, its common presence in the landscape of the once ancient Acadian Forest testifies to the presence of surveyors, settlers, and the transformation that took place to and in the landscape.





Fig 12. (Left) A Jack Pine, *Pinus banksiana*,<sup>479</sup> and (right) a Jack Pine forest with *Vaccinium* groundcover.<sup>480</sup>

According to one of the most influential nature writers, Donald Culross Peattie, until the early twentieth century, Jack pines were once the subject of a French-Canadian woodsmen superstition. This peculiar belief about Jack pines held that the trees were an ill presence on a lumberman's or farmer's property, for if a woman "passed within 10 feet of its boughs would become sterile."<sup>481</sup> Furthermore, it was also thought that any cattle that browsed near a Jack pine would "droop and die."<sup>482</sup> These notions, along with the belief that Jack pines "[poisoned] the very soil where it grew," Peattie speculated, may have arisen from observations made about the type of places Jack pines' were commonly found: "this tree is driven by its tall competitors to seek the most sandy or sterile soils, granitic rocks of the glaciated regions, and acid bogs."<sup>483</sup> Believing that "almost any misfortune that befell a man's ox or his ass or his wife could be blamed on the nearest Jack Pine," individuals who perceived the trees in this way sought to destroy them. "Yet so powerful [were] the

<sup>479</sup>. "Jack Pine, *Pinus banksiana*," *Classic Landscape Centre*, accessed March 31, 2016: [http://plants.classiclandscapes.com/11050016/Plant/299/Jack\\_Pine](http://plants.classiclandscapes.com/11050016/Plant/299/Jack_Pine)

<sup>480</sup>. "Jack Pine," *Wikipedia* (February 7, 2016), accessed March 31, 2016: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack\\_pine#/media/File:Pinus\\_banksiana\\_forest.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_pine#/media/File:Pinus_banksiana_forest.jpg)

<sup>481</sup>. Donald Culross Peattie, *A Natural History of North American Trees* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1948/2013): 74.

<sup>482</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>483</sup>. Donald Culross Peattie, *A Natural History of North American Trees*: 74.

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spirits of perversity” that “[inhabited] this ill-omened tree that no one who valued his life would cut it down;” so instead of cutting it they would pile kindling around its trunk and start a fire, as though the kindling was the agent that “set the tree ablaze,” thinking that “the powers of evil” that resided inside the tree “could not blame the man.” And so “the old-time lumberman left the knotty, stunted Jack Pine contemptuously alone.”<sup>484</sup>

Ironically, *Pinus banksiana* is a fire-loving tree in that it requires high temperatures to pop open its cones so it may release its seeds;<sup>485</sup> fire, in other words, is what helps Jack pines spread and thrive. Like the heads of the Hydra of Greek myth, the destruction of one Jack pine meant the return of many. Where forest fires occur, more spaces are made for the generation of new generations of Jack pines, which also benefit from the ash-fertilized earth; in other words, the “Jack Pine does better in burned-over land.”<sup>486</sup> Consequently, Jack pines are one of the first species that appears after forest fires have burnt the previous forest, and for this reason this tree is known as a *pioneer* species.<sup>487</sup>

Beside the dramatic consumption of the best white pines in the area within a twenty-year period (1820-1840) by the British Empire, this change was fostered by the increased frequency of human-sparked forest fires.<sup>488</sup> After a few millennia, a forest fire would occur and change the forest composition; but, as was the case across North America, post-European settlement witnessed countless forest fires every

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<sup>484</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>485</sup>. Elena. V. Ponomarenko, Donna Crossland, and Judy Loo, “Reconstructing Species Composition At the Time of Land Clearance: Two Approaches Compared,” in *Proceedings of the Fourth International Meeting of Anthracology*, ed. Freddy Damblon (Brussels: Archaeopress, 2013), 1–15.

<sup>486</sup>. Peattie, *A Natural History of North American Trees*: 75.

<sup>487</sup>. Donna Crossland and Judy Loo, “Historical Forest Condition In and Around Kouchibouguac National Park, NB,” *Forest Health & Biodiversity News* 11, no. 1 (2007): 1–2.

<sup>488</sup>. Donna Crossland and Judy Loo, “Historical Forest Condition In and Around Kouchibouguac National Park, NB.” For more on Jack pines and forest fires, and fire intervals in the boreal forest of Ontario, see chapter five, “The Boreal Forest” in Michael Henry and Peter Quinby, *Ontario’s Old-Growth Forests: A Guidebook Complete with History, Ecology, and Maps* (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry and Whiteside Limited, 2011): 158–160.

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year. Logging practices across the United States and Canada “transformed the forest itself into a major fire hazard,” largely owing to the quantity of slash (scrap wood and sawdust) left behind after cutting.<sup>489</sup> In the Acadian Forest of eastern New Brunswick, Europeans, fires, and Jack pines had formed a new cultural ecosemiotic trinity. Furthermore, this led to a decrease in biodiversity, the significant reduction of healthy white pines (*Pinus strobus*) along with other species such as Eastern hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*).<sup>490</sup> Hence, after the European pioneers began “improving” the land for settler and empire, the previously scarce Jack pine became a prevalent feature in the landscape of the Acadian forest. Similar to how Europeans colonized the land by diminishing the evident presence of the First Peoples from large portions of the land to reterritorialize with the new Euro-American nation, the pioneering Jack pines began populating large portions of the cleared landscape after settlers had removed most of the original forest.

This small number of people too frequently sought to eliminate that which they feared and failed to understand. Despite being a (likely) very small number of the local population in the region, lumbermen and anyone else who held this myth about Jack pines were nevertheless members of colonial society who had a large influence on the landscape. Besides a lack of knowledge about *Pinus banksiana*, a moral of this part of the Jack pine’s story is that once accepted as a dark meaning some people were stirred enough to seek the destruction of these trees when found on their properties out of their own self-generated fear and self-spun narrative. Represented as a negative symbol, as something that was potentially costly to their interests, it was regarded with little respect, something *Pinus banksiana* was already

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<sup>489</sup>. John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce*: 88.

<sup>490</sup>. Donna Crossland and Judy Loo, “Historical Forest Condition In and Around Kouchibouguac National Park, NB.” 2.; D R Foster et al., “Post-Settlement History of Human Land-Use and Vegetation Dynamics of a *Tsuga Canadensis* (Hemlock) Woodlot in Central New England,” *Journal of Ecology* 80, no. 4 (1992): 773–86..

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subject to as it held little value as timber for lumbermen at the time.<sup>491</sup> This is where we find a second layer of irony: what they feared lay not in the actual trees, but their own projection of what they held in their own minds. Jack pine/ *Jack Pine* became a colonial ‘mirror’ witness tree through which settlers’ fear of an unknown stemming from their displaced sense of place was directed, and then held in the new national landscape myth which Canada acted upon through the erasure of the Indigenous, while, in fact, the prevalent presence of this tree was a result of influences in the landscape. Thus, today the Jack pine (as a symbol and as an actual tree in areas of the Atlantic Maritime region and across most provinces where it can be found in its boreal forest biome) is also a recounting icon of how we transformed and colonized the northern woodlands. Seeing how the pioneering Jack pine was a more truthful witness tree to Canada’s geopolitical legacy of settler culture and landscape alterations, one wonders how its history may have been understood should it have been the national arboreal symbol instead of a leaf of the maple tree.

While North America has a wealth of tree species across its various ecozones and forest regions, there is one type of tree and ecosystem in particular that is threatened, their dwindling absence part of the legacies of Canada and the United States. In the next section, I explore the case of a Douglas-fir called Big Lonely Doug. Specifically, this obelisk of a tree stands witness to the ongoing industrial logging of the remaining old-growth coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem on Vancouver Island.

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<sup>491</sup>. “For the old-time lumberman left the knotty, stunted Jack Pine contemptuously alone.” Donald Culross Peattie, 2013: 75.

## Chapter Three:

## Big Lonely Doug and the Coastal Douglas-fir Ecosystem

But there's a tree, of many one,  
A single field which I have look'd upon,  
Both of them speak of something that is gone

– William Wordsworth<sup>492</sup>

It was a textbook specimen: four metres in diameter and seventy metres tall, its perfectly cylindrical trunk ascending for nearly half its height before the first branch broke the symmetry... Gibson's four-metre, eight-hundred-year-old 'Doug' fir would have taken all day to bring down. At dusk, when the heartwood finally gave way with a sternum-shuddering groan, [...] they watched as the fruit of their labours—weighing about as much as a jumbo jet—came crashing down to earth. Wrote Gibson: 'It seemed to pause in the air for a moment like an eagle in slow motion before starting down the mountainside, cart-wheeling, end over end and disappearing into the water at a 45-degree angle. After what seemed to be a five-minute lapse, it suddenly emerged on the surface like a giant whale breaching from the depths. It was completely devoid of branches and most of its bark had been stripped away by the 1000-foot (300-metre) passage over rocks and windfalls.' In his memoir *Bull of the Woods*, Gibson neglects to describe the sound a tree that size would have made as it tumbled down the mountain; it would have been absolutely thunderous—an echoing, earth-shaking avalanche of one

– John Vaillant<sup>493</sup>

Thirteen years passed since my last trip to Vancouver Island, the summer before I began my Master's thesis on witness trees and forests. On my first trip, I saw only Cathedral Grove, Meares Island, and a few other old-growth sites. It was not until my second trip, the summer in the middle of my doctoral dissertation, that I stood in a clearcut for the first time. Having spent most of these past years researching forests and forest loss and writing about and seeing this tree in photos, film, and even a representation at the Art Gallery of Ontario's *Anthropocene* exhibit, I had ideas about how I would feel once I arrived at Big Lonely Doug's location (figure 13).

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<sup>492</sup>. William Wordsworth, "Ode. Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," *Poems by William Wordsworth* (Edinburgh: William P. Nimmo, 1865): p. 301.

<sup>493</sup>. John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce*, 24-25.



Figure 13. Big Lonely Doug, as seen from the logging road. Photo by Harjee Makkar, August 2020.<sup>494</sup>

I was surprised at how many cars (there was at least ten to fifteen) were parked at T'l'oqwxwat (also known as Avatar Grove)<sup>495</sup> along the way to Big Lonely Doug, and how many people and a few animal companions arrived at the tree only minutes after we reached its base (figure 14). My husband and I had only a few minutes alone with the tree and everything around it, just a few moments before silent reflection was interrupted by the sounds of families with kids and dogs coming down the path. The way from the logging road to Big Lonely Doug is not managed; it is a trail made by people coming and going there.

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<sup>494</sup>. If you look closely at this photo, you can see the patchwork texture of the landscape. It is a mix of ancient woodland, new clearcuts, and planted forests of varying ages. What is called “forest” is changing. What place is this? What is a forest now—how does one make sense of “forest”? The landscape has been changing like this for generations.

<sup>495</sup>. T'l'oqwxwat is an area in the unceded territory of the Pacheedaht First Nation. According to Ancient Forest Alliance, the group who, along with the Port Renfrew Chamber of Commerce, led a campaign that spurred the provincial government to protect it starting in 2012.



Fig 14. (Left) The base of Big Lonely Doug. (Right) Looking up at BLD from the base.<sup>496</sup>

It has been almost a decade since the clearcut was made, and already plants and young trees (planted and wild) were covering the slash and once bare earth. As I passed a giant silvery stump along the path (figure 15), I noticed pink flowers growing here and there. It reminded me of the final scene of Studio Ghibli's *Princess Mononoke* (1997), when new plant life suddenly covered the deforested landscape, beginning signs of recovery. Young planted trees for the timber industry's next harvest, however, seemed to dominate.

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<sup>496</sup>. (Left) Photo by Harjee Makkar, August 2020. (Right) Photo by Amalia Moir, August 2020.



Fig 15. The giant silvery stump seen along the path to Big Lonely Doug. Photo by Amalia Moir, August 2020.

I looked at the photos my husband and I took and compared them to the one's TJ Watt published on Ancient Forest Alliance's website. The numerous before-and-after photos are striking. And while the young planted trees seem to be growing fast, it is not the same as what would occur should the land be left to manage itself.

Looking at the photos of Big Lonely Doug, I recalled a quote by Susan Sontag from her book *On Photography*,<sup>497</sup>

All photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability, precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt. Cameras began duplicating the world at that moment when the human landscape started to undergo a vertiginous rate of change: while an untold number of forms of biological and social life are being destroyed in a brief span of time, a device is available to record what is disappearing.

I am still trying to come to terms with my experience of this place, this tree. It is a tree, but one that I looked upon, and saw what around it is now gone. Much remains, but it is going fast. Alas, I was left without words as I looked upon the slash, silver bones below new green.

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<sup>497</sup>. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 1977), p. 13.



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Big Lonely Doug is a Coastal Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* var. *menziesii*) living at the base of Edinburgh Mountain in the Gordon River Valley near the town of Port Renfrew, on the southwestern side of Vancouver Island (Figure 22). What makes it stand out is its monumental size and that it is situated in a large clear-cut known as cutblock 7190 (Figures 23 and 24). BLD's official measurements are thus: height, 70.2 meters or 230 feet; circumference, 11.91 meters or 39 feet; diameter, 3.91 meters or 12.4 feet.<sup>498</sup> Should you ever want pay a visit, BLD's address is 48.64622 (latitude), -124.45051 (longitude).

In its long life, this tree has gone from being an anonymous tree in a forest to a survivor tree in a clearcut, to Canada's second largest Douglas fir tree, to a symbol of what is at risk on Vancouver Island. It has also become famous photographs (see below), the subject of a book, an art gallery display (figure 16), symbolic icons (used as Covid-19 floor spacers, figure 17), and a tourist destination for Port Renfrew. As a contemporary, living witness tree, Big Lonely Doug and its relation to the land testify to all that is prefaced to and that surrounds it in the cultural landscape: the highly contested western coastal temperate old-growth rainforests. I begin with the place question: *What place is this? Why this tree?*

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<sup>498</sup>. Ancient Forest Alliance, "Big Lonely Doug Officially Measured and Confirmed as Canada's 2<sup>nd</sup> Largest Douglas-fir Tree," 24 April 2014: <https://ancientforestalliance.org/big-lonely-doug-officially-measured-and-confirmed-as-canadas-2nd-largest-douglas-fir-tree/>

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Fig 16. The “Big Lonely Doug” augmented reality installation at the Art Gallery of Ontario’s *Anthropocene* exhibit (September 28, 2018 to January 6, 2019). Photos by Amalia Moir.<sup>499</sup>



Fig 17. Big Lonely Doug Covid-19 floor spacers. This same vector silhouette of the tree is also found on merchandise in Port Renfrew. Photo by Amalia Moir.

What saved the tree from the chainsaw was its enormous size, good health, and a person who saw something important in this tree. This person was a long-time

<sup>499</sup>. *Anthropocene* exhibit: <https://ago.ca/exhibitions/anthropocene>

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timber surveyor of about forty years. He was astonished by its presence, for which he decided to mark it with a green plastic ribbon that read “leave tree.” BLD’s size is also what makes it a site of interest for tourists and conservationists, and its testament to what once surrounded it. From “Canada’s second largest Douglas-fir tree”<sup>500</sup> to “Canada’s loneliest tree”<sup>501</sup> to “an unwitting monument to the fragility of old-growth forests everywhere.”<sup>502</sup> The synopsis to Harley Rustad’s book, *Big Lonely Doug* describes the tree as a “symbol of environmental activists and their fight to protect the region’s dwindling old-growth forests.”<sup>503</sup> Big Lonely Doug has become a symbol and a site to which people can rally around and address the issues that concern it. It is a new kind of “liberty tree,”<sup>504</sup> one might say. As Harley Rustad summarized Ken Wu, “It is the *story* of the trees that people are drawn to.”<sup>505</sup> Most importantly, this tree stands for what remains of the region’s ecosystems. It indexes, points, to what is left after previous centuries of aggressive cutting that moved from the eastern to the western coastal forests, and, perhaps, what could be once more if given time.

### **During Big Lonely Doug’s Younger Years**

As the once monumental white pines of the eastern forests disappeared into the shadow of empire nearing the end of the nineteenth century, the new nations of North America turned their gaze towards the western woods. There, they locked

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<sup>500</sup>. By Yuliya, Talmazan Web, and Global News, “Canada’s Second Largest Douglas Fir Tree May Have Been Found near Port Renfrew,” *Global News*, March 27, 2014, <https://globalnews.ca/news/1235236/canadas-second-largest-douglas-fir-tree-may-have-been-found-near-port-renfrew/>.

<sup>501</sup>. Mark Hume, “Big Lonely Doug: Canada’s Loneliest Tree Still Waiting on Help,” *The Globe and Mail*, June 8, 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/canadas-loneliest-tree-around-1000-years-old-still-waiting-on-help/article19064507/>.

<sup>502</sup>. Gina Decaprio Vercesi, “Big Lonely Doug — Tree, Unlikely Survivor, and Conservation Icon,” *The Sierra Club*, September 2020, <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/2020-5-september-october/explore/big-lonely-doug-tree-unlikely-survivor-and-conservation-icon>.

<sup>503</sup>. Harley Rustad, *Big Lonely Doug: The Story of One of Canada’s Last Great Trees* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2018).

<sup>504</sup>. For more on this, see the section on Eastern White Pines in Chapter Two in Moir, “Mythopoeia Sylvatica: A Critical Topographical Exploration of the Once and Future Forests of North America through Six Witness Trees.”

<sup>505</sup>. Harley Rustad, 151. Italics my emphasis.

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their sights on even bigger trees, and sunk the teeth of their industries into ancient, giant boughs; and into antiquity we go. As Donald Culross Peattie noted, “it was not until the lumbering of Eastern White Pine had laid waste to the [old] growth of that species that the great days of Northwest logging really began.”<sup>506</sup>

When settlers first arrived on the Pacific coasts in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries many were daunted by the immensity of the forests that greeted them; it was the impenetrable woodland all over again, this time, with far larger trees. The western forests became another “wilderness,” so that it seemed impossible to conquer at first, until proven otherwise. Further south, “the first giant sequoia was felled—not for the fantastic amount of wood it contained—but simply to prove that it could be done” in 1852.<sup>507</sup> Just as Ahab in Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* pursued a great white whale (thought to represent the spirit of the New World), ambitious lumbermen, timber companies, explorers, and other Euro-North Americans sought the fabled whales’ terrestrial equivalents.

At first, during the nineteenth century, western big trees—particularly in California and British Columbia—were treated like giant beasts of fascination that could make a ‘pretty penny’ by being put on display or used to put on a show by being cut down (figure 18). Often lavishly portrayed, the work of empire depicts Euro-Americans with giant cuts, trunks, and stumps as though such portrayals reify the mythopoeic “conflation of victor-and-vanquished.”<sup>508</sup> Even today, we can see this past “unqualified endorsement of the lumber value of big timber” from the east to the west in North America (figure 19).

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<sup>506</sup>. Donald Culross Peattie, *A Natural History of North American Trees*: 112.

<sup>507</sup>. John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce*, 93.

<sup>508</sup>. Karen Wonders, “Environment and History,” *Environment and History* 11, no. 3 (2005): 269.



Fig 18. (Left) An 1880 photograph of the Mother of the Forest with scaffolding used in 1854 to debark the tree still attached;<sup>509</sup> an engraving printed in *Heart of the Sierras* in 1888 by J. M. Hutchings reads: “Now, alas! the noble Mother of the Forest, dismantled of her once proud beauty, still stands boldly out, a reproving, yet magnificent ruin. Even the elements seemed to have sympathized with her, in the unmerited disgrace, brought to her by the ax; as the snows and storms of recent winters have kept hastening her dismemberment, the sooner to cover up the wrong.”<sup>510</sup> The bark from the Mother of the Forest was shipped to New England where it was put on display as an attraction in a similar way parts of Western red cedars from British Columbia were: (Right) An illustration in the *London News* in 1886 depicting a trunk section from a British Columbian Western red cedar.<sup>511</sup>



Fig 19. (Left) The World’s Largest Axe monument<sup>512</sup>. (Right) A nineteenth century photograph of a man with axe on the stump of a Coast redwood; this type of representation is “a variation on the trophy tree motif” depicting “the chopper’s axe embedded in the disembodied remains of the giant tree” as a celebratory expression of humankind’s “triumph [...] the [domination] over big trees” and “the [North] American conquest of nature.”<sup>513</sup>

After countless big trees passed through the wood-chipper of carnivalized spectacle in which trees were stripped, burnt, tunnelled through, and disembodied to

<sup>509</sup>. Karen Wonders, “Big Trees as Trophies,” *Cathedral Grove*, 2010, <http://www.cathedralgrove.eu/text/05-Pictures-Politics-4.htm>.

<sup>510</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>511</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>512</sup>. Image: “These 16 World’s Largest Things Ever Made Will Definitely Surprise You” (April 10, 2015), accessed February 26, 2016: <http://chirkup.me/these-16-worlds-largest-things-ever-made-will-definitely-surprise-you/7.html>

<sup>513</sup>. Karen Wonders, “Big Trees as Trophies,” *Cathedral Grove*, 2010.

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be shipped around the world as wonders to behold for a fee, volume and speed in harvesting timber became the long-held emphasis in major logging companies and governments alike (until relatively recently when scarcity and environmentalism spurred some change in policy). For instance, an article published in 1923 on “[t]he Forest Resources of Canada” talks about forests and forest trees not as ecosystems and biological organisms but as ‘standing timber.’<sup>514</sup> As Vaillant noted, “the working motto was ‘Get the cut out.’ It was nothing to clear-cut both sides of an entire valley and simply move on to the next; in fact, it was standard procedure.”<sup>515</sup> The value of wood was held so cheap because it was thought to be almost limitless. In British Columbia in particular, already after more than half a century of industrial logging, an estimate of the provinces timber holdings in 1921 revealed the quantity of remaining timber to be 366 billion board feet—“enough wood to build twenty million homes, or a boardwalk to Mars.”<sup>516</sup>

In 1788, the first recorded Douglas fir to be cut by a European, Captain James Cook,<sup>517</sup> on Vancouver Island was used for ship spars at Nootka Sound. In the same year, Captain John Meares sets the first Euro-American-built ship, named *North West America* weighing forty tons, made of Douglas fir wood; shortly thereafter, the first recorded export of timber from the area left for China with him.<sup>518</sup> The Douglas fir had become the next great conifer pursued for timber

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<sup>514</sup>. C. D. Howe, “The Forests and Forest Industries of Canada,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 107 (1923): 95–101.

<sup>515</sup>. John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce*: 41–42.

<sup>516</sup>. *Ibid*, 42.

<sup>517</sup>. Captain James Cook was a famous British explorer, naval ‘hero,’ and master cartographer and ‘discoverer’; however, despite his ‘worldliness’, Cook was described by grandfathers of Sally Morgan, a Palyku artist and author, as being a man “a man who couldn’t read the signs”. Ambelin Kwaymullina and Blaze Kwaymullina, “Learning to Read the Signs: Law in an Indigenous Reality,” *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 2 (2010): 195–208, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14443051003721189>, p. 195.

<sup>518</sup>. Vancouver Island Big Trees, “The Life Of A 350 Year Old Coastal Douglas-fir” (September 8, 2011), accessed February 26, 2016: <http://vancouverislandbigtrees.blogspot.ca/2011/08/life-of-350-year-old-coastal-douglas.html>

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exploitation in North America.<sup>519</sup> Today, as little as one percent of these ancient coastal wildwood ecosystems remains; even fewer remain intact.<sup>520</sup>

The landscape of British Columbia, and Vancouver Island in particular, will look different depending on how and from where you look at it. For most people, as a tourist new to the land there, images of “pristine” ancient forests, rivers, and mountains adorned with bears, eagles, wolves, and salmon as jewels of the province, “Beautiful British Columbia,” will likely have been advertised. Even what you would mostly see driving from one tourist location to another using Google Maps on your smartphone or GPS device will be different from the whole. For only a selection is sought, shown, and found. This is one of the first lessons of travelling to any place: the map is never the territory. A green space on a map is just that—an ambiguous green (or grey) space with given place-name, and somehow, we trust that simplicity to represent something so complex (figure 20).

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<sup>519</sup>. Although it bears “fir” in its name, the Douglas Fir is not a true species of fir (genus *Abies*); rather, it is a member of the *Pseudotsuga* family, a genus of evergreen conifers in the Pinaceae or Pine family.

<sup>520</sup>. Biodiversity BC, “Threats to Biodiversity in British Columbia,” Taking Nature’s Pulse: Section 3, 2009, <http://www.biodiversitybc.org/EN/main/downloads/tnp-3.html>.

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Fig 20. Using Google Maps navigation system versus the forests lining the road on the way to Port Renfrew. Photo by Amalia Moir, August 2020.

Modern digital technology aside, one piece of representation that has remained consistently accurate is Emily Carr's painting, *Scorned as Timber, Beloved of Sky* (1935) (figure 21). It contains the same landscape features as TJ Watt's photographs of Big Lonely Doug taken in 2016 (figures 22, 23, and 24): a few solitary survivor trees, clearcuts, stumps (or "screamers" as Carr called them), and remaining old-growth forest. In other words, this kind of "forest" landscape has not changed since Carr's time in the early twentieth century.





Fig 21. Emily Carr, *Scorned as Timber, Beloved as Sky*, 1935, oil on canvas, 44 x 21.12 in., Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Emily Carr Trust, Vancouver.<sup>521</sup>

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<sup>521</sup>. Image accessed 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021: [http://www.museevirtuel.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/emily\\_carr/en/popups/pop\\_large\\_en\\_VAG-42.3.15-b.html](http://www.museevirtuel.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/emily_carr/en/popups/pop_large_en_VAG-42.3.15-b.html)



Fig 22. “Big Lonely Doug,” Canada’s second largest Douglas fir, with a person standing at its base and another standing on a branch (third-from the top) for scale (Photograph by T. J. Watt).<sup>522</sup>

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<sup>522</sup> T. J. Watt, “APA Photo Galleries: Climbing Big Lonely Doug,” Ancient Forest Alliance (2016), image accessed February 14, 2016: <https://www.ancientforestalliance.org/photos.php?gID=27#1>.



Fig 23 A view from the top of Big Lonely Doug looking down at the witness tree's shadow stretching out across the slash-covered ground, pointing towards where the logging road, the clearcut, and the forest edge meet.<sup>523</sup>



Fig 24. An aerial photography showing the cutblock with Big Lonely Doug.<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>523</sup>. T. J. Watt, "Big Lonely Doug," *TJ Watt Conservation Photography*, accessed February 14, 2016: <http://www.tjwatt.com/big-lonely-doug-climb/yhyjs3391evdtlk39s4cnrf7html5s>

<sup>524</sup>. Yuliya Talmazan, "Canada's second largest Douglas fir tree may have been found near Port Renfrew," *Global News* (April 26, 2014), accessed February 25, 2016: <http://globalnews.ca/news/1235236/canadas-second-largest-douglas-fir-tree-may-have-been-found-near-port-renfrew/>

**Big Lonely Doug: A Witness Tree with Living ‘Memory’**

Big Lonely Doug is neither a painting nor a representation of a tree like *The Jack Pine*, but a living tree bearing witness to a landscape being converted according to a similar political–industrial capitalist sylvan mythopoeic<sup>525</sup> as in the past. According to the University of British Columbia’s Big Tree Registry, this coastal Douglas fir (ID#386) is officially Canada’s second largest *Pseudotsuga menziesii*. Last measured on April 14, 2014, the tree has a recorded height of seventy metres (or two-hundred-seventeen feet— “about as tall as an 18-storey building”<sup>526</sup>) and a circumference of thirty-nine feet (twelve feet in diameter).<sup>527</sup> Big Lonely Doug is estimated to be at least one thousand years old, a statement to powerful old forms of life that can be achieved in these western forests.<sup>528</sup>

Today, the whole of the coastal Douglas fir ecozone in British Columbia is endangered, making it “the most threatened ecosystem in British Columbia.”<sup>529</sup> Within a North American context, the Georgia Basin ranges from Southwestern British Columbia and part of the Pacific Northwest in the United States and is “a classic example of [this] endangered but extraordinarily diverse” historic Douglas fir ecosystem.<sup>530</sup> Quickly converted by human activities, the Basin now retains less than 0.3 per cent of its historic forests older than 250 years.<sup>531</sup> Before European

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<sup>525</sup>. Environments shaped by a narrative of the imagination; or, more simply, imagined places.

<sup>526</sup>. The Canadian Press, “Big Lonely Doug Officially 2nd - Largest Fir In Canada,” *The Huffington Post* (June 24, 2014), accessed October 20, 2015: [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/04/24/big-lonely-doug-second-largest-fir-canada\\_n\\_5206970.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/04/24/big-lonely-doug-second-largest-fir-canada_n_5206970.html)

<sup>527</sup>. University of British Columbia Faculty of Forestry, “Coastal Douglas - Fir,” BC Big Tree Registry, n.d., [http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/04/24/big-lonely-doug-second-largest-fir-canada\\_n\\_5206970.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/04/24/big-lonely-doug-second-largest-fir-canada_n_5206970.html).

<sup>528</sup>. Ancient Forest Alliance, “Tree-Climbers Scale ‘Big Lonely Doug’, Canada’s 2nd Largest Douglas-fir Tree, Highlighting BC’s Endangered Old-Growth Forests,” Ancient Forest Alliance Media Release (June 6, 2014): <https://www.ancientforestalliance.org/news-item.php?ID=801>

<sup>529</sup>. Schuster, “Systematic Conservation Area Design in the Coastal Douglas Fir Zone.” <http://arcese.forestry.ubc.ca/research/>.

<sup>530</sup>. Richard Schuster, Tara G. Martin, and Peter Arcese, “Bird Community Conservation and Carbon Offsets in Western North America,” *PLOS ONE* 9, no. 6 (2014): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0099292>.

<sup>531</sup>. *Ibid.*

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colonization of the Pacific Northwest, the coastal Douglas fir forest consisted of trees of various ages, most of which were greater than three hundred years. Parts of this ecozone were divided “by shallow and deep-soil meadow and woodland communities maintained in part by Indigenous land management practices to enhance hunting opportunities and root and fruit harvests.”<sup>532</sup> The original coastal forest home to Big Lonely Doug on Vancouver Island, however, is dissected by clearcuts.<sup>533</sup>

Once surrounded by many monumental Douglas firs, Western red cedars, and Western hemlocks, Big Lonely Doug stands in a 2012 clearcut. Although known by the colonial names of Gordon River or Walbran Valley near the town of Port Renfrew on the Southwest side of Vancouver Island (the ‘Tall Trees Capital’ of Canada), the land of which this tree lives is part of “unceded traditional territory of the Pacheedaht First Nation band.”<sup>534</sup> Despite this, the land was licensed out to Teal Jones logging company by the British Columbian government to both of whom the area is known as “Tree Farm License 46”<sup>535</sup> (figure 4.5). Although the land is publicly owned according to the federal government, because the area is contracted or rented out to the logging company by the provincial government, Big Lonely Doug belongs to the corporation according to provincial law.<sup>536</sup>

A consideration of the three aspects of Big Lonely Doug’s testimony (phenomenological stance, a narrative, and an attitude or ethic) reveals few differences in the way the forests are viewed and valued compared to decades (and to an extent, even a few centuries) past. Today, an approximate sixteen per cent of the

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<sup>532</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>533</sup>. Ancient Forest Alliance, “Tree-Climbers Scale ‘Big Lonely Doug’, Canada’s 2nd Largest Douglas-fir Tree, Highlighting BC’s Endangered Old-Growth Forests.”

<sup>534</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>535</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>536</sup>. Faculty of Forestry, University of British Columbia, “ID#386,” BC BigTree Registry, accessed October 20, 2015:  
[http://bcbigtree.ca/index\\_registrymenus.a5w?setViewPort=supersearch&setSuperSearchParam=ID#](http://bcbigtree.ca/index_registrymenus.a5w?setViewPort=supersearch&setSuperSearchParam=ID#)

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coastal Douglas fir ecozone in British Columbia is on publicly-owned land.<sup>537</sup> Big Lonely Doug's phenomenological stance in relation to the surrounding stumps is that of solitude, born of the space emptied by industrial political economy, provincial politics, and a contemporary expression of the same economic attitude towards forests in North America. Big Lonely Doug testifies to a legacy of technological progress towards maximizing the efficiency of fast and high-volume removal of wood from ancient forests. The detached relationship with forests that was once defined by a utilitarian economic value has become defined by a privatized economic value system with lesser government regulation. This system qualifies trees according to consumptive capitalist values in its focus on greater volumes of wood and speed of cutting to maximize profits. Surrounded by a field of giant stumps, Big Lonely Doug bears witness to ongoing issue with the traditional industrial approach to logging—the clearcut (the “fastest and safest” way to harvest timber)<sup>538</sup>—but also to the Anglo-forest story as it unfolded across North America.

As a lone survivor, Big Lonely Doug bears witness to the loss of the space around it. It is the *absence* of the surrounding forest and the *presence* of this single tree that marks Big Lonely Doug as “Witness Tree.”<sup>539</sup> Another way it bears witness is through the symbology of its given name by the Ancient Forest Alliance. The tree's relationship to the space and its environmentalist-given name, Big Lonely Doug, testifies to at least two different narratives of the western forests. On one hand, the forest is imagined as a matrix of Aristotelian-Roman *hyle* or wood-as-matter; and the other as a new mythopoeia sylvatica—the forest re-imagined according to a

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<sup>537</sup>. Schuster, “Systematic Conservation Area Design in the Coastal Douglas Fir Zone.”

<sup>538</sup>. Judith Lavoie, “Maps show impact of overcutting old-growth forests, conservation groups say,” Times Colonist (May 13, 2013), accessed March 13, 2015: <http://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/maps-show-impact-of-overcutting-old-growth-forests-conservation-groups-say-1.177503>.

<sup>539</sup>. Robert Frost, “Beech,” *A Witness Tree*: 6.

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narrative that includes the myriad parts of the forest ecosystem—the forest as *oikos* or home/habitat.

The act of naming Big Lonely Doug distinguishes it, emphasizing its testimony to unsustainable industrial practices. In other words, the name of this Douglas fir witness tree gave Big Lonely Doug a unique identity that makes it and its story of survival and irreparable ecological damage to its vanishing ancient ecosystem more relatable for the public. A coupling of the tree’s name and its photographic documentation offer an intimate look at the survivor and its surroundings. For example, photographs from up in the branches of Big Lonely Doug show that these ancient trees are not just masses of wood, but an extension of the forest ecosystem as a whole; home to numerous other flora and fauna (figure 25). Images such as these make it possible for the public to see parts of the forest and trees they otherwise could not.



Fig 25. Big Lonely Doug’s branches showing other forms of plant life—moss, ferns, and what appears to be a species of shrub or young tree<sup>540</sup>—an example of the uniquely rich biodiversity, life growing on top of life, at all levels of the Coastal Douglas fir ecozone.

Among the components of the name, “Big” signifies the champion status of the tree (i.e., its age, height, and size), revealing the forest from which it originated. The forest that once surrounded it is now fragmented beyond the clearing. The name “Lonely” ensigns this tree, indicating its survivorship and isolation from the remaining forest. Its solitude testifies to more than a thousand years of growth

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<sup>540</sup>. Ancient Forest Alliance, “Tree-Climbers Scale “Big Lonely Doug.”

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dependent on other old-growth gone in less than one year. “Doug,” of course, refers to the common name of the species, which was named after David Douglas, who, in 1825, identified Douglas fir as a species that would “carry that name, in a hundred useful products, to the ends of the earth.”<sup>541</sup>

Prior to 1800, Vancouver Island was comprised of predominantly highly productive old-growth forests, home to countless monumental Douglas firs, Western red cedars, and Western hemlocks among others (figure 26, top). By 2012, most of these forests have been lost (figure 26, bottom) and continue to be degraded. In 2015 hikers discovered logging tape tied to numerous trees marking a new falling boundary—bracketing it as a new cutblock elsewhere in the Walbran Valley (figure 27). Although the logging company Teal Jones denied having any serious plans, the logging tape and maps obtained by the Wilderness Committee testify to its true intention; in fact, the corporation has eight more cutblocks planned within the Walbran Valley.<sup>542</sup>

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<sup>541</sup>. Donald Culross Peattie, *A Natural History of North American Trees*: 111.

<sup>542</sup>. Ancient Forest Alliance, “Canada’s Two Grandest Old-Growth Forests Under Logging Threat by the Teal-Jones Group!” Wilderness Committee obtained map: [https://www.wildernesscommittee.org/sites/all/files/CentralWalbran\\_Map\\_June2015\\_0.pdf](https://www.wildernesscommittee.org/sites/all/files/CentralWalbran_Map_June2015_0.pdf)



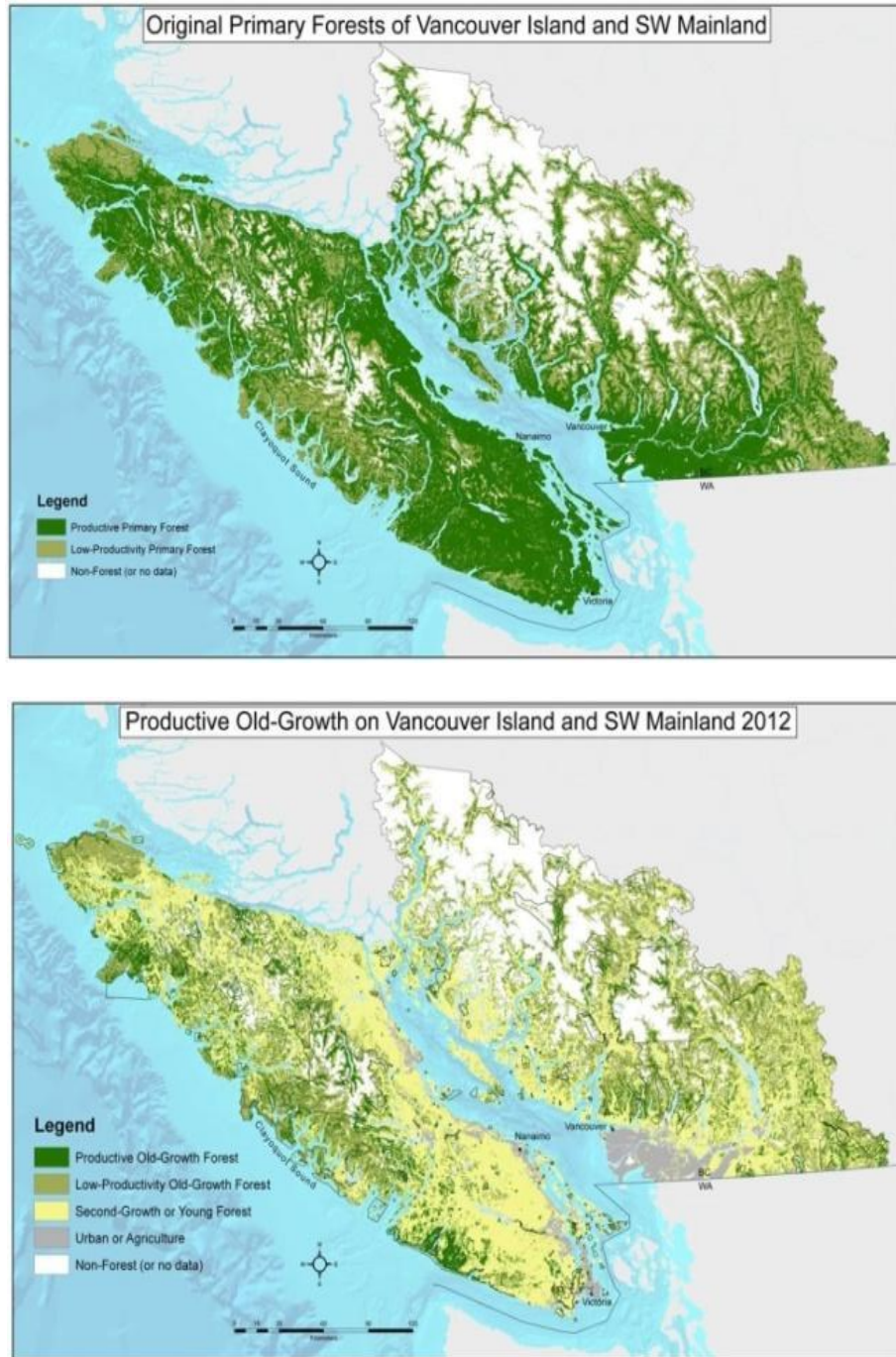


Fig 26. (Top) A visual estimation of the original productive old-growth forest (dark green), low productive old-growth, including alpine and marshy forest (light green), non-forested regions (white), second-growth or young forest (<250 years) (yellow), and urban or agricultural (grey) land cover on Vancouver Island and the Southwestern mainland of British Columbia just before the twentieth century; and (bottom) productive old-growth by 2012.<sup>543</sup>

<sup>543</sup>. Ministry of Forests, “Maps: Remaining Old-Growth Forests on BC’s Southern Coast,” Ancient Forest Alliance, 2012, <https://ancientforestalliance.org/learn-more/before-after-old-growth-maps/#map>.



Fig 27. A moss-covered tree bound with logging tape that reads: “FALLING BOUNDARY.”<sup>544</sup>

This year, the BC Supreme Court granted “an extension of injunction” to Teal Cedar Products (a part of the Teal Jones corporation), prohibiting “the Western Canada Wilderness Committee and other environmental activists” from interfering with the company’s plans. Intended to keep witnesses away from the clearcutting, the order requires conservationists and activists to “maintain a 50-metre safety zone from any motor vehicle engaged in active logging.”<sup>545</sup> According to the BC government, then, the logging company must be allowed “to carry on its work unimpeded” between January and the end of March,<sup>546</sup> enough time to ‘get the cut out.’<sup>547</sup>

<sup>544</sup>. TJ Watt, “Old Growth Logging,” *TJ Watt Conservation Photography*, accessed February 25, 2016: <http://www.tjwatt.com/old-growth-logging/jwr9nrvze3pdc4klexb3b6jrhlncp>

<sup>545</sup>. Cindy Harnett and Andrew Duffy, “Walbran Valley Logging Buffer - Zone Injunction Extended,” *Vancouver Sun*, January 5, 2016, [http://www.vancouversun.com/business/resources/walbran+valley+logging+buffer+zone+injunction/11631656/story.html?\\_\\_lsa=be88-3d05](http://www.vancouversun.com/business/resources/walbran+valley+logging+buffer+zone+injunction/11631656/story.html?__lsa=be88-3d05).

<sup>546</sup>. Cindy Harnett and Andrew Duffy, “Walbran Valley Logging Buffer - Zone Injunction Extended.”

<sup>547</sup>. John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce*: 41-42.

### Enumeration of the Losses

If one were to encapsulate the entire history of Western logging into a thirty-second film, its effect on the Northern Hemisphere would be comparable to the effect of the eruption of Mount St. Helens on the surrounding forest: both represent irresistible waves of energy that originated in a relatively small, specific area and expanded rapidly, levelling everything in their path.

– John Vaillant<sup>548</sup>

Indeed, lumbering in the Northwest in the early days was often a “two-fisting” business, in which one would say that neither the lumber barons (who came to be known as “tyees”) nor the lumberjacks, had learned a thing from the wastage, the fires, the boom-and-bust days, and stump countries of eastern history. Nothing, that is, expect greatly increased efficiency at whirlwind exploitation. [...] It is said that in some thirty years one-half of all the virgin Fir in Washington and Oregon has been lumbered, and in the neighborhood of railroads and highways it is all gone. [...] Lands cut over by wasteful methods in early days have too often reverted for delinquent taxes to the counties—but as desolate stump lands from which even the hardest lumberjack or tyee averts his eyes.

– Donald Culross Peattie<sup>549</sup>

During the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, even after much of the original forests of the east and Midwest were transformed, North American forests were still viewed antagonistically.<sup>550</sup> A combination of technological industrial developments, urban sprawl, sociopolitical pressure to acquire more land, and major changes to the cultural landscape meant that the forests occupied the same place as wolves in the environmental imagination.<sup>551</sup> Vilified, the forests of the west were treated much with the same degree of disdain as those in the eastern and mid-western regions. Vaillant pointed out that even the word “lumber” originally carried a derogatory meaning; “lumber” refers to “anything useless or cumbersome.”<sup>552</sup> Consequently, such vast and densely forested land was perceived “less as ‘place’ than

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<sup>548</sup>. Ibid, 85.

<sup>549</sup>. Donald Culross Peattie, *A Natural History of North American Trees*: 112, 117–118.

<sup>550</sup>. Ibid, 24–25.

<sup>551</sup>. Nathan Andersen, “Exemplars in Environmental Ethics: Taking Seriously the Lives of Thoreau, Leopold, Dillard and Abbey,” *Ethics, Place & Environment* 13, no. 1 (March 2010): 43–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13668790903554170>.

<sup>552</sup>. John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce*: 89.

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as a cheap commodity” and the Anglo-American treated it as such: “They cut the forest the way they breathed the air—as if it were free and infinite.”<sup>553</sup>

**The New Forest of modernity.** During the twentieth century, an accumulation of clear-cutting and slash-fire events combined with a major clear-cutting/timber grab event earned Canada “the derogatory nickname of ‘Brazil of the North’” rather than the ‘Britain of the North,’ which it held know as centuries before. It was massive clearings like the Bowron clearcut of the 1980s, located in the Bowron Valley near Prince George, which earned Canada this informal title.<sup>554</sup> In the 1990s, the area became an extensive plantation after it was replanted with three species of tree and officially named “New Forest” (figure 28).<sup>555</sup>



Fig 28. (*Left*) The Bowron Clearcut as seen from space. (*Right*) The “New Forest” of the Bowron River Valley (late 1990s) is an extensive plantation of over 62.5 million trees across 44,150 hectares in all, comprised of three tree species (seventy per cent interior spruce, twenty-eight per cent lodgepole pine, and two per cent Douglas fir).<sup>556</sup>

In logging operations such those conducted by Teal Jones Inc. (also Canfor, Weyerhaeuser, TimberWest, etc.), an occasional tree or two are left standing to act as a wildlife tree and or to reseed the clearing (hence the conditions surrounding Big

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<sup>553</sup> Ibid.

<sup>554</sup> Ibid: 101.

<sup>555</sup> Kathy J Lewis, Prince George, and B C Vn, “Forestry and the Forest Industry in the Central Interior of British Columbia,” *Western Geography* 12 (2002): 185–215. ; Phillip Krasukopf and Lisa Nordin, *The Bowron River Watershed Project: A Landscape-Level Assessment of the Post-Salvage Change in Stream and Riparian Function* (2007), 2007, <https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hre/ffip/Bowron.htm>. ; John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce*: 106.

<sup>556</sup> Russ Cozens, “The Upper Bowron Spruce Beetle Outbreak: A Case History,” Edited by John A. McLean (August 2004), accessed February 21, 2016: <http://web.forestry.ubc.ca/fetch21/Upper%20Bowron%20Spruce%20Beetle/ubsbo.htm>

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Lonely Doug and one other tree also left standing). This form of natural reforestation is slow and not always successful. Without a surrounding forest to help buffer high winds, young trees are at risk of being broken and blown down. So far one such wind storm in 2014 broke a major branch from Big Lonely Doug. It would take near a millennium before such a diverse monumental or big tree old-growth forest ecosystem would return. Thus, manual tree planting of one or a few species is commissioned in some places and in others required. The trees that are planted are, however, genetically modified so that the next generation of trees can grow faster and in time for the next harvest. It is at this point—when an original forest has been logged and the land planted with a new generation of trees originating from a nursery—a forest becomes a timber crop and tree cutting becomes true timber *harvesting*. These new places characterized by stands of trees are given names such as “New Forest”—they are the new *working* forests of modern sylvan mythopoeic. Places like this and the clearcut around Big Lonely Doug persist as symbols and reminders “of the ambiguous and co-dependent relationship between the provincial government [of British Columbia] and the huge multinational [companies] that now control most of the timber industry” in Canada.<sup>557</sup> In hindsight, with the long history of the English–Anglo–North American forest story in consideration one cannot help but ponder what the true core difference is between the ‘Britain of the North’<sup>558</sup> and a ‘Brazil of the North’ when it comes to the general ideological regard for forest ecosystems and sylvan-sympathetic peoples.

***Ceci n’est pas une forêt*—the treachery of terminology.** If forests are to be managed as a public trust and thus determined by a range of values, it is crucial that

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<sup>557</sup>. John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce*: 101.

<sup>558</sup>. Malawi, “Legalities of Nature: Law, Empire, and Wilderness Landscapes in Canada.”

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“more information on the amount and types of change [happening] to our forests,”<sup>559</sup> clear representations of forests and what is meant by the term is provided. Here, just as *The Jack Pine* taught us, what is omitted or neglected is just as important as what is presented. A lack of clear information can influence how forests are imagined in North America when only select—and thus biased—representations are shown to the public (e.g., documentaries on a single area, reality television series). This is especially a concern when those depictions are of small parcels of original forests, with the growing presence of planted ‘forests’ are either deliberately left out or neglected in favour of the more aesthetically pleasing imagery of places like the Great Bear Rainforest. Unaware of the changes to intact forest landscapes, fewer people remember or know what intact forest landscapes, old-growth, and monumental “big tree” forests remain or look like (let alone the physical *experience* of being or—less-so—*living* in such places). This forgetting or place-blindness, over time passing over one generation after the next, will likely lead to the majority of North American society (those who do not live, work, or frequently visit and spend time in endangered forests) inadvertently accepting the generic modern working ‘forest’ for granted. One of the biggest issues is that these endangered and vanishing places exist on the periphery, out of the public’s and politicians’ sight.

**Big conflicts over common values on the periphery.** Shifting baseline syndrome becomes more prevalent as fewer people have a direct relationship with the forests, owing to increased urbanization and contemporary geo-socioeconomic

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<sup>559</sup>. Anita De Wolfe, Francisca Olaya, and David Bruinsma, “Industrial-Caused Changes to Canada’s Forest Frontier: 1990–2001,” in *Global Forest Watch Canada 10th Anniversary Publication #10* (Edmonton, 2010), 2.

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contexts<sup>560</sup> among other factors.<sup>561</sup> It would be inaccurate to say that absolute basic social-ecological values have changed, as Herb Hammond put it, many “[p]eople have always valued clean water, clean air, fish, animals, plants,” and aesthetic beauties of woods—implying that such “values are merely fashionable” is problematic.<sup>562</sup> Compared to individuals who rely on forests from afar and indirectly through industry/corporate or provincial products and services (e.g., town water, electric or gas heating, superstore markets, other employment opportunities, etc.), those living in close proximity to or in direct reliance on woodlands are more likely to have stronger or more consciously acute recognition of sylvan social-ecological values. More accurately, then, the problem of values appears to be between those of the public to varying degrees (i.e., who is more aware or connected to woodland ecosystems and our direct/indirect relationship to them) and those of individuals within particular corporations and political groups. Despite a growing discourse in Canada and the United States towards sustainable forestry and conservation, those values are not necessarily held by political groups who determine environmental policies while considering economic interests, and receiving corporate financing, and

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<sup>560</sup>. I used “geo-socioeconomic contexts” to refrain from using the word “lifestyles” as ‘style’ of life implies that all living situations are chosen when, in there are countless living situations that are never chosen, such as financial restrictions on where a person or people can live and how they can live. Typically, if you are below the poverty line and are restricted to living in an urban area where there is employment or work opportunities as you cannot afford personal automobile transportation, it is unlikely that public transit or the amount of free time you have will get you to more remote places to enjoy leisurely trips or recreational activities in provincial or national parks let alone more remote places such as Meares Island, Tofino, BC.

<sup>561</sup>. Peter H. Kahn, Rachel L. Severson, and Jolina H. Ruckert, “The Human Relation with Nature and Technological Nature,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 18, no. 1 (2009): 37–42. ; Yard, “Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough: Accessing the Affective Topography of Logging Poetry and Labour.” ; Louise Takeda and Inge Röpke, “Power and Contestation in Collaborative Ecosystem-Based Management: The Case of Haida Gwaii,” *Ecological Economics* 70, no. 2 (December 2010): 178–88. ; Evelyn Pinkerton, Robyn Heaslip, and Jennifer J Silver, “Finding ‘Space’ for Comanagement of Forests within the Neoliberal Paradigm: Rights, Strategies, and Tools for Asserting a Local Agenda,” *Human Ecology* 36 (2008): 343–55, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10745-008-9167-4>. ; Willems-Braun, “Colonial Vestiges: Representing Forest Landscapes on Canada’s West Coast.”

<sup>562</sup>. Herb Hammond, “Forest Practices: Putting Wholistic Forest Use into Practice,” In Ken Drushka, Bob Nixon, and Ray Travers (Eds.) *Touch Wood: BC Forests at the Crossroads* (1993), p. 103

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what methods of forestry are permitted and how much is (de)regulated.<sup>563</sup> For instance, in order to trivialize the issue of exchanging ancient forest ecosystems for planted forests for later harvest as well as raw log exports, and logging on Indigenous ancestral lands, logging companies explained the reason behind conflicts between them and environmentalists as being the result of shifting public values.<sup>564</sup>

In interviews with loggers, Jaime Yard found that they reserved their “most vehement disdain” for people they called “greeners”—urban residents “who loved trees they could not identify and caricatured loggers as pitiable chauvinists of false consciousness.”<sup>565</sup> For timber corporations who profit from unsustainable forestry practices, conflict between loggers and environmentalists functions to keep direct attention off the logging company and its methods. It becomes a handy trick of misdirection which also deepens the polarization between the political identities of loggers and environmentalists; a dichotomized narrative of the imagination that becomes self-perpetuating between the two groups. What the discursively constructed narrative of conflict does not focus on is the fact that loggers and environmentalists—like all human beings—share the same fundamental values of social-ecological well-being meaning access to healthy foods and clean water and air, meaningful employment and economic security, and so on.<sup>566,567</sup> Thus, the core issues of how society obtains its wood and treats forests and each other goes unaddressed

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<sup>563</sup> M C J Stoddart, “‘British Columbia Is Open for Business’: Environmental Justice and Working Forest News in the Vancouver Sun,” *Local Environment* 12, no. 6 (2007): 663–74.; Klaus Edenhoffer and Roger Hayter, “Restructuring on a Vertiginous Plateau: The Evolutionary Trajectories of British Columbia’s Forest Industries 1980–2010,” *Geoforum* 44 (2013): 139–51.

<sup>564</sup> Jaime Yard, “Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough: Accessing the Affective Topography of Logging Poetry and Labour,” 60.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid.

<sup>566</sup> Herb Hammond, “Forest Practices: Putting Wholistic Forest Use into Practice,” 103.

<sup>567</sup> Thomas Dunk, “Talking About Trees: Environment and Society in Forest Workers’ Culture,” *Canadian Review of Sociology* 31, no. 1 (1994).; Roger Hayter, “‘The War in the Woods’: Post-Fordist Restructuring, Globalization, and the Contested Remapping of British Columbia’s Forest Economy.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 93, no. 3 (2003): 706–729.



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whenever corporate and political leaders deliberately or inadvertently misdirect or misrepresent people and place.

Like the logging industry, policy makers use selective words and names to represent practices and laws governing logging operations. The term *old-growth* is sometimes used as a smokescreen by industry, politicians, and some researchers. For instance, is the misleading use of statistical information on arboreal quantity (of trees) and sylvan quality (type of forest) by “[overinflating] the amount of remaining ancient forests” presented to the public.<sup>568</sup> This most often happens when the term “old-growth” is used as a sign for both high and low productive old-growth forest ecosystems.<sup>569</sup> High productive old-growth forests include Edinburgh Mountain Ancient Forest and the forests of Gwaii Haanas, Haida Gwaii, while low productive ancient forests “include vast tracts of bog and subalpine forests consisting of small, stunted old-growth trees of little to no commercial value.”<sup>570</sup> Informing the public that there is still significant quantities of old-growth forest (a word generally associated with and accepted as ‘quality’ or ‘the best’) effectively waters down awareness of the severity of logging endangered high productive (“big tree”) old-growth landscapes, thus easing public concern. This is most obviously with the Pacific temperate forest regions in North America<sup>571</sup> where monumental old-growth trees are cut and exported behind a veil of abstracted information, with insufficient attention directed to representation in the political and public sphere.

Compared to the eastern forests in North America, where “[l]ess than 1% of the northeastern forest is in an old-growth state (i.e., primary forest),”<sup>572</sup> British

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<sup>568</sup>. Ancient Forest Alliance, “Tree-Climbers Scale “Big Lonely Doug”, Canada’s 2nd Largest Douglas-fir Tree, Highlighting BC’s Endangered Old-Growth Forests,” (June 6, 2014), accessed April 8, 2015: <http://www.ancientforestalliance.org/old-growth-maps.php>

<sup>569</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>570</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>571</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>572</sup>. John S. Gunn, Mark J. Ducey, and Andrew A. Whitman, “Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Carbon Temporal Dynamics in the Northern Forest (Northeastern USA),” *Forest Ecology and Management* 312, no. 2014 (2014): 41.

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Columbia houses the last frontier of significant intact ancient temperate rainforests. These forests—along with scraps of the primary forest in the Atlantic maritime and the Boreal forest in northern and mid-western Canada—continue to be unsustainably logged and irreversibly degraded or altered according to Peter Lee, the executive director for Global Forest Watch Canada.<sup>573</sup> In 2012, government data revealed that approximately “75% of the original, productive old-growth forests on BC’s southern coast (Vancouver Island and Southwest Mainland) have been logged,”<sup>574</sup> as well as “over 90% of the highest productivity, valley bottom ancient stands where the largest trees grow.”<sup>575</sup> Of old-growth Douglas firs, ninety-nine percent “on BC’s coast have also been logged,” making places such as the site of Big Lonely Doug’s the final one per cent of ancient Douglas fir ecosystem remaining.<sup>576</sup>

Linked to the belief that a planted forest is ‘better’ (industrially-speaking) is the idea of cutting forests to “save” or “improve” them, a concept which one conservationist declared “is nothing new.”<sup>577</sup> While less celebrated in the public sphere today, this remains the industrial value that was ceremoniously established in the first half of the twentieth century (figure 29). Conservation writer Josh Schlossberg notes how, in America—and as we have observed in Canada (i.e., the Bowron Valley cutting)—“the Forest Service focuses on ‘sick’ forests that can only be ‘cured’ through chainsaw surgery.”<sup>578</sup> This flawed focus on biomass—the living

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<sup>573</sup>. Miller, “The Witness Trees.”

<sup>574</sup>. Ancient Forest Alliance, “Canada’s Two Grandest Old-Growth Forests Under Logging Threat by the Teal-Jones Group!”; Karen Wonders, “Big Trees Destroyed,” *Cathedral Grove*, 2010, <http://www.cathedralgrove.eu/text/02-Protest-1.htm>.

<sup>575</sup>. Ancient Forest Alliance, “Canada’s Two Grandest Old-Growth Forests Under Logging Threat by the Teal-Jones Group!”; Schuster, “Systematic Conservation Area Design in the Coastal Douglas Fir Zone.”

<sup>576</sup>. Ancient Forest Alliance, “Tree-Climbers Scale “Big Lonely Doug”, Canada’s 2nd Largest Douglas-fir Tree, Highlighting BC’s Endangered Old-Growth Forests.”

<sup>577</sup>. Josh Schlossberg, “Will National Forests Be Sacrificed to the Biomass Industry?,” *Earth Island*, October 15, 2015, [http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/elist/eListRead/will\\_national\\_forests\\_be\\_sacrificed\\_to\\_the\\_biomass\\_industry/](http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/elist/eListRead/will_national_forests_be_sacrificed_to_the_biomass_industry/).

<sup>578</sup>. Josh Schlossberg, “Will National Forests Be Sacrificed to the Biomass Industry?,” *Earth Island*, October 15, 2015,

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and recently living (decaying) biological material<sup>579</sup>—services the interests of the timber industry which exclusively depends on cutting wood and profits significantly more from old-growth cutting. Larger trees mean bigger timber and more short-term profits.



Fig 29. (Left) A photograph from the 1920s of the section of a large sugar pine in Collier State Park, Oregon with a plaque titled, “TIMBER IS A CROP;” what is discernable on the rest of the plaque includes, “Harvested when ripe it gives us beautiful logs for [finish (?)], [\_\_\_\_\_] and [pattern stock (?)]. May you always have soft sugar pine to house you from the cradle to the grave. Sugar pine – *Pinus Lambertiana* [measurement in] inches [...and] volume [in cubic] feet...”<sup>580</sup> (Right) At the “Beaufort Tree Farm Opening Ceremony” in 1947, a sign was erected proclaiming “Timber is a Crop” (MacMillan Bloedel Tree Farm, Vancouver Island, BC).<sup>581</sup> Here, the term “Ceremony” suggests inaugurations of “new” ‘forests’ as tree farms and timber as crop ritual happening with ritual occurrences and near-religious significance. Ultimately, they were/are religious ceremonies in a capitalist ‘cosmology.’

Clearcut logging is even promoted as “good” for the “forest”. For instance, an American site from Oregon has “[p]rofessional foresters” defining clearcutting practices “as the harvest of nearly all standing mature trees within a specific area for the purpose of then regenerating a new young even-aged forest.”<sup>582</sup> The young even-aged forest is then promoted as being more important than old-growth forests in the issue of climate change in that it offers an alternative source of wood so the industry

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[http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/elist/eListRead/will\\_national\\_forests\\_be\\_sacrificed\\_to\\_the\\_bioma\\_ss\\_industry/](http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/elist/eListRead/will_national_forests_be_sacrificed_to_the_bioma_ss_industry/).

<sup>579</sup>. Limin Dai et al., “Effects of Climate Change on Biomass Carbon Sequestration in Old-Growth Forest Ecosystems on Changbai Mountain in Northeast China,” *Forest Ecology and Management* 300 (2013): 106.

<sup>580</sup>. “The Conservation Movement Grows 1898-1917,” *Forest History* (April 18, 2008), accessed August 12, 2016: <http://www.foresthistory.org/ASPNET/Publications/highlights/sec4.htm>

<sup>581</sup>. Karen Wonders, “Galleries of Shame,” *Cathedral Grove* (2010), accessed Feb 21, 2016: [http://www.cathedralgrove.eu/galleries/Gallery\\_of\\_Shame/index.htm](http://www.cathedralgrove.eu/galleries/Gallery_of_Shame/index.htm)

<sup>582</sup>. Rex Storm, “Clearcutting,” *Associated Oregon Loggers Inc*, 2016.

does not have to rely on intact forest landscapes.<sup>583</sup> In this sense, planted forests play an important role in sustainability; however, the question of *how much* of *what* ‘forest’ is being sustained or conserved? If an old wildwood is not protected for wildlife habitat conservation or ecotourism, it is left open to the freeholds of logging companies. The industry’s argument for logging monumental old-growth forests thus becomes based on the premise that old trees are not as efficient as young trees at sequestering carbon; a hypothesis proven to be false.<sup>584</sup> Another inaccuracy included in the industry’s argument for young and easy-to-harvest ‘forests’/plantations is that they are ‘healthier.’ This suggests that old-growth trees of Canada and the United States are wasted wood when left standing. This ignores that dead and dying logs in old-growth forests provide important habitat for various flora and fauna, but also act as nurse logs for new generations of trees in the forest which, in turn, sequester more carbon and create more habitat. Industrial-forestry sees naturally-occurring old-growth forests as ‘wasted land’ (as it could be used for more efficient tree-growing and harvesting, and large old-growth trees are highly short-term profitable wood going to waste as it decays).<sup>585</sup>

Gradually the political landscape have introduced what Pinkerton and colleagues attribute to “roll-back neoliberalism”—a phenomenon involving “the restructuring of state-based regulation in ways that promote privatization, free

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<sup>583</sup>. Francis E. Putz and Kent H. Redford, “The Importance of Defining ‘Forest’: Tropical Forest Degradation, Deforestation, Long-Term Phase Shifts, and Further Transitions,” *Biotropica* 42, no. 1 (2010): 10–20.

<sup>584</sup>. E. Paul-Limoges et al., “Effect of Clearcut Harvesting on the Carbon Balance of a Douglas-Fir Forest,” *Agricultural and Forest Meteorology* 203, no. 2015 (2015): 30–42, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agrformet.2014.12.010>. ; Andrew Baldwin, “The Nature of the Boreal Forest: Governmentality and Forest-Nature,” *Space and Culture* 6, no. 4 (November 1, 2003): 415–28, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331203253189>. ; John S. Gunn, Mark J. Ducey, and Andrew A. Whitman, “Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Carbon Temporal Dynamics in the Northern Forest (Northeastern USA),” *Forest Ecology and Management* 312, no. 2014 (2014): 40–46, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foreco.2013.10.023>. ; Limin Dai et al., “Effects of Climate Change on Biomass Carbon Sequestration in Old-Growth Forest Ecosystems on Changbai Mountain in Northeast China,” *Forest Ecology and Management* 300, no. 2013 (2013): 106–16, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foreco.2012.06.046>.

<sup>585</sup>. Vandana Shiva, “Coming Tragedy of the Commons,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 21, no. 15 (1986): 613–14.

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trade, deregulation and global competitiveness.”<sup>586</sup> The “roll-back” characterizes withdrawals or deregulations “of state intervention in favor of ‘market rule.’”<sup>587</sup> Elements of recent “‘roll-out’ variants of neoliberalism” have achieved their success by capitalizing on technocratic economic management and “deeply interventionist [agendas] in social and environmental issues.”<sup>588</sup> Privatization of the timber industry, allows multinational companies to achieve greater economic and political power over both private and public lands, including the ability to sideline community forestry and small-business logging operations which tend to be more sustainable.<sup>589</sup> In other words, the increased agency of large corporations influencing the industry under a neoliberal paradigm has resulted in, among other things, significant bureaucratic obstacles and limitations to not only the way politicians and the public view and understands the forests, but also to alternative and more sustainable methods of logging. In short, they achieve a greater monopoly over the industry and the forests.<sup>590</sup>

### **Witnesses to the Witness Trees: Loggers and Tree Planters**

Big Lonely Doug has already seen loggers come and go, and now waits to be visited by tree planters (those tasked with “reforesting” the clearings logging companies make). These two roles proved their own perspectives toward the environmental degradation witnessed by Big Lonely Doug (as with other witness trees) and are worth discussing. In a sense, the icons of the logger and tree planter

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<sup>586</sup>. Pinkerton, Heaslip, and Silver, “Finding ‘Space’ for Comanagement of Forests within the Neoliberal Paradigm: Rights, Strategies, and Tools for Asserting a Local Agenda,” *Human Ecology* 36 (2008), 347-348.

<sup>587</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>588</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>589</sup>. Takeda and Røpke, “Power and Contestation in Collaborative Ecosystem-Based Management: The Case of Haida Gwaii.”

<sup>590</sup>. Larry Pynn, “B . C . Forestry Watchdog Finds Timber Companies Have Too Much Power,” *Vancouver Sun*, December 26, 2015, [http://www.vancouversun.com/forestry+watchdog+finds+timber+companies+have+much+power/11613128/story.html?\\_\\_lsa=c750-c9e2](http://www.vancouversun.com/forestry+watchdog+finds+timber+companies+have+much+power/11613128/story.html?__lsa=c750-c9e2).

stand on either side of the repeating symbol of a solitary tree and complete the trinity of agent, ‘victim’ or survivor, and witness.

**The marketed lumberjack.** The names of the timber trade’s tools reveal common attitudes towards forest trees and forests generated by the logging industry by the mid-twentieth century. Axes and saws, in particular, and the more modern and mechanized chainsaws, were elevated to new ‘noble’ heights in North American culture by the logging industry through modes of capitalist competition which expanded their distribution and use well into the twentieth century.<sup>591</sup> Like hunting, this made chopping and sawing wood into a sport.<sup>592</sup> Logging festivals glorified the act of cutting through bigger and tougher trees as fast as (techno-) humanly as possible; for instance, “one demonstration” in particular, “a man named Peter McLaren hacked his way through a thirty-three centimeter gum tree log in forty-seven seconds.”<sup>593</sup> Eventually, names manufacturers gave to axes promoted “this humble implement from a mere tool to a potent—even sexualized—facilitator of manifest destiny.”<sup>594</sup> A list of example includes:

Model names were often an axe’s only distinguishing characteristic, and many sound as if they were dreamed up by the same ad agencies that promote motorcycles and firearms [and even condoms manufacturers] today. Climax, Demon, Endurance, Cock of the Woods, Red Warrior, Hiawatha, Hottentot, Black Prince, Black Chief, Battle Axe, Invincible, XXX Chopper, Woodslasher, Razor Blade, Stiletto, Forest King, and Young American were just a few of the choices. One model, for sale in Vancouver, was called the Gorilla.<sup>595</sup>

Such names reflect not only sexualized and aggressive attitudes (portrayed in some corners of today’s popular media on logging), but also violent, racist, and colonially

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<sup>591</sup>. John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness and Greed*, Vintage Canada (Vancouver, BC: Vintage Canada, 2005), 95.

<sup>592</sup>. Karen Wonders, “Hunting Narratives of the Age of Empire,” *Environment and History* 11, no. 3 (2005): 269–91, <http://www.cathedralgrove.eu/media/05-4-hunting-narratives.pdf>.

<sup>593</sup>. John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce*, 95.

<sup>594</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>595</sup>. Ibid.

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appropriative (i.e., “Hiawatha”<sup>596</sup>) mindsets towards the forested landscape and its indigenous residents.

Today, popular television shows pass on this cultural valorization of the masculine logger and his aggressive tools of woodland domination and exploitation to another generation, and while viewers see the kinds of forest in which these loggers work in which they are taken for granted as being ‘legal’ or designated areas for logging old-growth trees. One such representation, for instance, is the History Channel’s television series, *Axe Men* (2008 – present; nine seasons and going) (figure 30). *Axe Men* follows teams of “America’s greatest loggers” returning to the mountains and pushing deep “into uncharted territory” to “take on America’s deadliest job.”<sup>597</sup> The show also features teams of loggers competing for the prize of “Kings of the Mountain” as it takes place across the Pacific Northwest, ranging from Alaska down across British Columbia’s and Oregon’s temperate rainforests (although most of the trees are very large, none or few if any come close the size loggers were felling in years past). Throughout, the forest appears to be represented as ‘mere backdrop’ or ‘setting’<sup>598</sup> (figure 30, right) and individual big trees are set in an antagonistic light, threatening to harm or kill the loggers.<sup>599</sup> While it presents a not-so-new idealization of “America’s greatest loggers,” the show, however, is not necessarily a justifiable representation of what some loggers identify as the “‘real’ logger”<sup>600</sup> and logger experiences of working in the ancient wild western woods. As

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<sup>596</sup>. The true Hiawatha, or Aiyenwatha, Aiyonwatha, or Haiëñ’wa’ta as he was known in Onondaga, was an Onondaga pre-colonial leader and co-founder of the Haudenosaunee or Iroquois Confederacy.

<sup>597</sup>. “Axe Men: Season 9, Episode 1,” *History Channel* (2016), accessed February 18, 2016: <http://www.history.ca/ax-men/video/life++limb/video.html?v=595485763769&p=1&s=da#ax-men/video>

<sup>598</sup>. Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1995).

<sup>599</sup>. “Axe Men: Season 9, Episode 1,” *History Channel* (2016), accessed February 18, 2016: <http://www.history.ca/ax-men/video/life++limb/video.html?v=595485763769&p=1&s=da#ax-men/video>

<sup>600</sup>. Jaime Yard, “Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough: Accessing the Affective Topography of Logging Poetry and Labour,” *Emotion, Space and Society* 6 (2013).

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always, testimony is truest to the individual's experience when told the persons themselves instead of filtered through popular media and industry propaganda. For other individuals, such as some retired loggers and logger-poets with whom Jamie Yard spoke, there is much distance between the ideal of the "real" logger of the past and the one of today. This felt distance "was amplified by the changed provincial social context in which loggers had passed from admirable pioneers to enemies of the environment."<sup>601</sup>



Fig 30. (Left) The icon that appears on iTunes and Google when a search is made for "History Channel, Axe Men;" (Middle) a poster for the same television series showing a lone logger standing upon felled trees looking out over the forest landscape and a logging helicopter over the horizon.<sup>602</sup> (Right) An image from History Channel's *Axe Men*, depicting a solitary man standing atop (what appears to be) a freshly cut Douglas fir, with chainsaw in hand, overlooking what appears to be an unlogged western wildwood.<sup>603</sup>

**Mythopoeia of mourning.** The last people to see an ancient wildwood alive are those whose careers and income, paradoxically, depend on it—namely timber cruisers and loggers. West coast old-growth loggers in particular have been portrayed in various guises over the last hundred years from frontiersman, to outsider, hero, ecological antagonist, and contemporary economic braves. An understanding of local economic dependence on the industry, personal investments (i.e., labour, identity, way of life), and a need for the woods provide a unique

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<sup>601</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>602</sup>. Google Web search, "History Channel, Axe Men," *Google* (2016), accessed February 21, 2016: <https://www.google.ca>

<sup>603</sup>. History Channel, "Axe Men: The Complete Season 1," *Amazon* (2016), accessed February 21, 2016: <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Ax-Men-The-Complete-Season/dp/B001SHTWUS>



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perspective in a place where environmental and economic values meet in the physical landscape. In the testimonies of some timber cruisers, loggers, and managers, represented in letters, film (figure 31),<sup>604</sup> poetry, and interviews, a question is raised about the dominant anthropocentric ethos framing the way North American societies have treated and represented forests.



Fig 31. Snapshot from the film, *Hadwin's Judgement* (2015) by Sasha Snow.<sup>605</sup> Standing furthest in the distance, appearing just off the bend of the actor's (playing Grant Hadwin) shoulder is Big Lonely Doug.<sup>606</sup>

Before loggers arrive, surveyors and “timber cruisers” walk the woods, determining what areas with the most profitable trees should and can be sectioned off for the logging operation. As the first people to arrive, they are “avatars of the Heisenberg uncertainty principle [... where] woods-wise and tree-friendly as they may be, their observations are destined to have a dramatic, if not catastrophic, impact on the landscape.”<sup>607</sup> Such work does not go without a higher-than-average degree of

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<sup>604</sup>. John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce: A True Story About Myth, Madness, and Greed.*; Sasha Snow (April 27, 2015), *Hadwin's Judgement*, National Film Board of Canada (88 minutes), accessed March 13, 2016: <http://www.hadwinsjudgement.com/thefilm/#titlepage>

<sup>605</sup>. Sasha Snow (April 27, 2015), *Hadwin's Judgement*, National Film Board of Canada (88 minutes).

<sup>606</sup>. DirtClunker, “Big Trees Vancouver Island – \*Update\* Big Lonely Doug,” *Dual Sport BC* (April 5, 2014), accessed March 14, 2016: [http://www.dualsportbc.com/forums/showthread.php?13229-Big-Trees-of-Vancouver-Island-\\*Update\\*-Big-Lonely-Doug](http://www.dualsportbc.com/forums/showthread.php?13229-Big-Trees-of-Vancouver-Island-*Update*-Big-Lonely-Doug)

<sup>607</sup>. John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness and Greed.* 107.

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epistemic duty. In bearing witness to an intact forest for the last time, marking a falling boundary, and bringing this information to the timber company, one heralds the fate of a forest. Aware of this, sociopolitical pressures made any attempt “to try to alter this course, or even to question it within the industry, was out of step—not just within the culture but with the current era.”<sup>608</sup> In Vaillant’s book, descriptive accounts of those involved in forestry conveyed a sense of loss. Comparing Vancouver Island’s Nimpkish Valley as it was in the 1950s to today, a timber surveyor-turned environmental activist and writer named, Paul Harris-Jones spoke of how a forest of many kilometers of “hemlock, fir, and cedar trees two to four metres in diameter and growing as thick as corn-stalks” upon his return found the “dark and dense and gorgeous” forest was decimated—nothing was left standing except a mere forty-acres.<sup>609</sup>

Just as trees are anthropomorphized,<sup>610</sup> forests are also described as living entities, representing an ancient forest akin to “a great, old, noble beast” to quote N. Scott Momaday.<sup>611</sup> At another forest, further north on the archipelago of Haida Gwaii, a second-generation logger working for Evans Woods Products described how he and other loggers “basically gutted the place.”<sup>612</sup> Through such a lens—acknowledging a forest as a living breathing being of sorts—empathy for a fragmented or annihilated place causes painful awareness. As Vaillant pointed out,

The evaluation of success involves a strange and subjective calculus: at what point does the brown cloud over an industrial city become a “problem” as opposed to a sky-high banner proclaiming good times? When does the ratio of clear-cuts and Christmas tree farms to healthy, intact forest begin to cause aesthetic and moral discomfort, or real

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<sup>608</sup>. Ibid, 107.

<sup>609</sup>. John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce*, 107.

<sup>610</sup>. Galen A Johnson, “Forest and Philosophy : Toward an Aesthetics of Wood,” *Environmental Philosophy* 4, no. 1 (2007): 59–75.

<sup>611</sup>. N. Scott Momaday, “The Colors of Night,” In *In the Presence of the Sun: Stories and Poems, 1961–1991* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico, 2009) (digital/Kindle Edition): location 768 of 1963.

<sup>612</sup>. John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce*, p. 103.

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environmental damage? How does one gauge this in a place as big as British Columbia, or North America?<sup>613</sup>

Perchance, it is what we are looking for (coming from a particular attitude) that determines what we see (a particular narrative), and what we see is contingent upon what we are aware of (a particular phenomenological stance).

In exploring the complex emotional and embodied relations behind loggers' experiences in co-shaping the landscapes, Jaime Yard related the life stories of retired loggers and poetry published by loggers such as Peter Trower, Robert Swanson, David Day, and Patrick Lane.<sup>614</sup> These stories testify to "an incomplete, melancholic process of mourning for personal and environmental losses sustained in logging labour."<sup>615</sup> Contained within this complex ecophenomenology of their particular human–environment relationship, interviewees described "psychical losses and environmental catastrophes [...] in vivid detail"<sup>616</sup> also reflected in loggers' poetry.

During the Depression, the province presented loggers as men who were once jobless or homeless vagrants improved through the arduous labour of converting Canada's and the United States' immense volumes of wood into economic worth. Public discourse during the first half of the twentieth century glorified the logging industry and loggers by associating the size of monumental trees with power, masculinity, and technological prowess.<sup>617</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, the forest became a place of rehabilitation "from booze, heroin, and other drugs."<sup>618</sup> Reflected in Peter Trower's poetry is an "ambivalent relation to the woods" through a

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<sup>613</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>614</sup> Jaime Yard, "Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough: Accessing the Affective Topography of Logging Poetry and Labour:" 54, 58.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid.

<sup>616</sup> Jaime Yard, "Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough:" 56.

<sup>617</sup> Michael Ekers, "The Political Ecology of Hegemony in Depression-Era British Columbia, Canada: Masculinities, Work and the Production of the Forestscape," *Geoforum* 40, no. 3 (2009): 303–15, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2008.09.011>.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid.

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representation of the strenuous and dangerous life where labour and the outer landscape of the forest and the inner landscape of inner “demons” waged war against each other, all “in the service of capital.”<sup>619</sup> This is largely what brought about the peak of twentieth century old-growth West coast logging that “was not so much tree-cutting as it was a kind of terrestrial whaling: determined, poorly paid men working in remote areas [...] using temperamental machinery and simple hand tools to subdue enormous, often unpredictable creatures that could squash them like bugs—and [often] did.”<sup>620</sup> Hence, like the white pines in the east a century earlier, the biggest and best Douglas firs were intensively logged.

Peter Trower’s poetry “exhibits an historic moment when the contradictions, exclusions and dispossessions this ideology rests upon can no longer be ignored.”<sup>621</sup> The places described by two of Trower’s poems—Mt. Elphinstone and Skookumchuk, both situated on the Sechelt Peninsula—have since been extensively logged since the nineteenth century. After a forest fire, increasingly larger sections of the forests were removed each time logging operations brought with them new technological innovations making the areas more accessible. Today, the forest on Mt. Elphinstone “continues to be logged” with the exception of 139 hectares saved for parkland, “or as one interviewee put it ‘the kind of nature you city folk want to get to.’”<sup>622</sup> Trower pointed out how the forest on the side of the mountain where he logged has never grown back, a consequence called desertification, which he described as having “created a moonscape.”<sup>623</sup>

A consistent moral value in the loggers’ stories was what Yard called “an inversion of the conservation ethic predominant in environmentalist discourse in

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<sup>619</sup>. Jaime Yard, “Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough,” 58.

<sup>620</sup>. John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce*, 32.

<sup>621</sup>. Jaime Yard, “Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough: Accessing the Affective Topography of Logging Poetry and Labour,” *Emotion, Space and Society* 6 (2013), 58.

<sup>622</sup>. *Ibid*, 58.

<sup>623</sup>. *Ibid*, 58-59.

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British Columbia.”<sup>624</sup> Although none of the loggers “denied that their labour had contributed to the destruction of old growth habitat,” they attributed the diminished existence of endangered and vanishing places “primarily to government and corporate mismanagement.”<sup>625</sup> This perspective protected the pride in what being a logger meant to the interviewees, what it meant to be someone in North American society and to preserve a sense of place in the landscape.

One of Trower’s two poems analyzed by Yard is “The Last Spar Tree on Elphinstone Mountain.”<sup>626</sup> Another witness tree, perhaps, but unlike Big Lonely Doug it does not survive in the same way. A spar tree is by definition a solitary tree turned into a piece of logging equipment by stripping it of all branches and fixing to it cords used to haul cut trees out of the forest (figure 32). The poem begins,

The last spar tree on Elphinstone mountain / through drunken Sunday  
binoculars / pricks the blue bubble of the sky / on that final ridge where  
the scar tissue peters out / Been four years quiet now on the battered  
mountain’s back / except for shakecutters hunters and stray  
philosophers / The trucks are elsewhere some of the drivers dead and /  
the donkey gone to barber another hill.

Later Trower compares a cut tree to a battered woman,

I can vault to that ridge in my mind / stand at the foot of that tree,  
forlorn as a badly-used woman / become merely landmark and raven  
perch / I can touch its bark sun-warm as flesh / feel the engines still  
shaking it functional / with vibrations that never quite die...

Later in the poem, he describes how logging is<sup>627</sup>

either a cornfield or a catastrophe / Either a crop or a tithes or a privacy  
/ has been taken from this place / What matter? it’s done Beyond that  
ridge is a valley / I helped hack and alter”. Ending with a stanza  
reading, “Dream on in peace, old tree / perhaps you’re a truer  
monument to man / than any rock-top crucifix in Rio De Janeiro.

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<sup>624</sup>. Ibid, 58.

<sup>625</sup>. Ibid, 55.

<sup>626</sup>. Jaime Yard, “Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough:” 60.

<sup>627</sup>. Ibid: 58.

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According to Yard, with these last three lines Trower cynically “proclaims the death of both God and the good in man.”<sup>628</sup>



Fig 32. A spar tree in a Green Point Logging Co. Ltd. logging operation (August 1932).<sup>629</sup>

Although Trower was critically aware of the political economy and ecological issues caused by the industry he continued “contributing to the ongoing mythologizing of modern logging in BC.”<sup>630</sup> To shed light on this, Yard demonstrated that “what is exhibited in Trower’s work is not a critique of modernity but rather a distilled version of its founding ideological coupling: modernity-as-progress/modernity-as-loss.”<sup>631</sup> Instead of an expression of grief for the glorified days of logging, the sense of loss is found in a combination of nostalgia ‘and the repetitive construction of the “real” logger’ in Trower’s poems.<sup>632</sup> According to Bruce Braun’s theory, such nostalgia for the past is “an effort to secure a desire that

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<sup>628</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>629</sup>. Stuart Thompson (1932), “Green Point Logging Co. Ltd.,” *City of Vancouver Archives*. Accessed February 21, 2016: <http://searcharchives.vancouver.ca/green-point-logging-co-ltd-spar-tree-log-loading-3>.

<sup>630</sup>. Jaime Yard, “Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough:” 60.

<sup>631</sup>. Jaime Yard, “Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough:” 60.

<sup>632</sup>. Ibid.

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was never really met in the past, nor possible to meet in the present.”<sup>633</sup> What is trying to be achieved here, then, is “a security that [...] can only ever be achieved in narrative form.”<sup>634</sup> The rehearsal of mourning provides a kind of pleasure, a space where “in the absence of an ability to escape modernity there is a repetition—compulsion of its founding break.”<sup>635</sup> Although modernity as loss or progress appear in opposition, they are in fact “complementary in the construction of modern subjects” Yard explained; that is, “nature and human freedom are sacrificed for efficiency and productivity.”<sup>636</sup> All things wild and free, in other words, are sacrificed and reshaped according to the constructs and confines of an Enlightenment industrial ethos in the name of or for *an idea* of progress.

For the loggers, the act of crafting their ecophenomenological testimony into poetic form—their mythopoeic representation of their place in the contested space of the forest—is as an act of witnessing that testifies to environmental degradation and loss in the great predicament of the modern industrial human–forest relation. More accurately, it seems as though the loggers’ narratives become a kind of confession, statements in defence of the integrity of their sense of place in the forests. In other words, the loggers’ eco poetic representations of the forest and their place in that *topos* is a search for redemption in the ecopsychological stance in confronting or making sense of the experience of environmental loss.

Jaime Yard asked whether or not personal or environmental rehabilitation is at all possible, whether it occurred locally, and what the fate of a landscape means to the worker “after a logging scar has been established.”<sup>637</sup> A section from Peter Trower’s poem about a site characterized by controversy provided answers. The site

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<sup>633</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>634</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>635</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>636</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>637</sup>. Ibid: 61.

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is an old logging camp at Skookumchuck Narrows in a poem simply titled “Skookumchuk” after a Chinook word for “turbulent waters.”<sup>638</sup> The key component in “Skookumchuk” is not the actions of the loggers, but the movement of the trees growing in the open ‘wound’ of a cutblock:<sup>639</sup>

Relieved for a merciful moment [...] / I watch *the alders move* like  
great grey reeds / to a wrinkling wind / below the ruined watersheds  
wrung slopes / where new roads snake past the snowline / and the  
black amputated claws of charred stumps / grip dirt in the scarcountry

I have stumbled back to the woods / after drunken years of absence /  
driven again by several needs – / found my way to this woebegone place  
/ of weatherbattered buildings / where a disused landing barge /  
landed forever / rusts in the bushes / like all my hamstrung dreams

Sing a song of recompense – / noisy joshing suppertimes / in a  
cookhouse [...]  
Sing a song of necessity / in this ancient logging camp / by the tidal  
rapids called Skookumchuck / which means Strong Water / and must  
be drunk / beyond bottles.

The area indicated here suggests a vast cutblock that reaches down past the watersheds at the bottom of and all the way above the line (altitude) where snow falls on hill- or mountain sides (figure 33). Specifically, Trower is referring to the red alder (*Alnus rubus*), a small native deciduous broadleaf pioneering species which are the first to grow in clearcuts in the western woods (figure 33, bottom).

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<sup>638</sup>. “Chinook jargon refers to a Creole of many West Coast First Nations languages used for intra-group communication prior to colonial contact, which incorporated many French and English terms post-contact. By 1962 the Summer Institute of Linguistics estimated that approximately 100 Chinook speakers remained in North America and by 1990 the Creole language was considered nearly extinct” (Jaime Yard, 2013, p. 61).

<sup>639</sup>. Italics my emphasis. Jaime Yard, “Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough:” 61.





Fig 33. (Top) A cutblock/clearcut with “healthy looking young trees” amongst “black amputated claws of charred stumps”<sup>640</sup> (photographs taken in British Columbia and Alberta in October 2014 by Jonathan ‘Scooter’ Clark).<sup>641</sup> (Bottom) A solitary young Western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) in a cluster of Western red alders (*Alnus rubus*).<sup>642</sup>

From the perspective of the industry’s economy, the red alder is more of a weed than a tree as it yields littler volumes of wood better suited for fewer specialty hardwood products. The red alder thus becomes the eco-poetic in this *mythopoeia sylvaticus*: “What more romantic vision of labouring nature and self could there be than this, the alder: underappreciated, essential.”<sup>643</sup> In witnessing the first signs of life that have emerged from the earth post-devastation, the red alder is thus “invoked

<sup>640</sup>. Jaime Yard, “Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough:” 61.

<sup>641</sup>. Jonathan ‘Scooter’ Clark, “Healthy looking young trees,” *Replant* (October 2014), accessed March 29, 2016: [http://www.replant.ca/photos2014\\_viewing.html](http://www.replant.ca/photos2014_viewing.html)

<sup>642</sup>. Larry Workman QIN, “Lone western hemlock in a red alder stand - 201502LJW,” *Panoramio*, accessed March 29, 2016: <http://www.panoramio.com/photo/116966657>

<sup>643</sup>. Jaime Yard, “Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough:” 61.

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continuously by many logger poets to signify the beginnings of natural regeneration.”<sup>644</sup> For Trower, this is a reprieving tree which he refers to as “forest fixers;” their presence compared to a healing balm over an open wound seen on the land and felt in the psyche, for the “ruined self” seen “reflected in the Skookumchuck hillside.”<sup>645</sup> Instead of the evanescence of a gradually vanishing forest, the movement of the red alders takes the place of the already fleetingly felled forest. Unlike yet similar to Robert Frost’s poem “Beech” where the first stage of changing the landscape is taking place (i.e., surveying, akin to timber cruising)—that of the fleeing forest in the surveyor’s or timber cruiser’s mind—this is the evanescence of the clearcut. It is the process by which the gaping evidence, the yawning grave, is gradually filled in, covered up like a white sheet laid over the face of the dead. It hides the industry’s most obvious mark upon the landscape and some of the poet’s indignity behind disrespectful acts towards the forest.

At the site in the poem “Strong Waters,” a reversal takes place “in which losses emerge as excessive survivals” contextualized by “the explication of the commodification of natures, human and non-human.”<sup>646</sup> While the growth of red alders suggests “that the tenure of [humankind] and machine will ultimately be superseded by forces of nature and time,” Yard cautions that the perception of redemption in the presence of red alders may too passively offer “a refuge from responsibility and engagement with contemporary environmental politics.”<sup>647</sup> For members of Canada’s First Nations who (rightfully) feel anger at the sight of clearcutting on ancestral lands such as Haida Gwaii, the red alder means something else. To others such as Dave Quinn, they are a less attractive sign of a scab healing over the open clear-cut wounds of the lost old-growth forests that stood prior to the

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<sup>644</sup>. Jaime Yard, “Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough:” 61.

<sup>645</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>646</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>647</sup>. Ibid.

assault of colonial and industrial logging.<sup>648</sup> In writing about the logged islands of Haida Gwaii, Quinn referred to clear-cut areas of land being filled by the red alder as “alder-choked hillsides,” and described how “the open sores of landslides continue to ooze today, nearly 40 years later.”<sup>649</sup> Like the Jack Pine, despite the fact that these pioneering trees are “laying the foundation for a new forest”<sup>650</sup> respective to their geoclimatic zone, or bandaging the open ‘wound’ in the landscape, the veil of the red alder still testifies to the loss of the old forest.

Often, who or whatever can heal or restore a forest becomes perceived as an agent of healing and redemption; however, the replacement of trees where an ancient forest once stood does not always mean the ‘problem’ is fixed. In quoting Don Mitchell, Yard highlighted the argument that it is not human culture that does or causes things—“human ‘culture’ does not go to work on nature”—but “people working under specific historic and geographical conditions.”<sup>651</sup> Also constructed through their labour at the site of the forest clearcut are tree planters; yet another rugged individualistic figure working in the clearings amongst sparse and spared trees, along the forest edge, and travelling along the same roads.

**Myths of messianic tree planters.** Like the archetypal “real” logger’s ‘Doppelgänger’<sup>652</sup> the icon of the “messianic tree planter” emerged out of the early days of the environmental movement and developed through various popular and artistic representations (figure 34) in Canada.<sup>653</sup> Although tree planting was once the

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<sup>648</sup> Dave Quinn, “Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole — First Monumental Pole in 130 Years Celebrates Haida Past and Future,” *North Wind*, 2013, accessed June 1, 2014: <http://northword.ca/features/gwaii-haanas-legacy-pole-first-monumental-pole-in-130-years-celebrates-haid/#sthash.siSLskLB.dpuf>.

<sup>649</sup> Jaime Yard, “Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough.” 61.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid.

<sup>651</sup> Ibid.

<sup>652</sup> In folklore, a Doppelgänger (literally “double-doer”; German, *Doppel-* “double” and *Gänger* “walker” or “goer”) is “a ghostly counterpart of a real person.” Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2015), accessed February 24, 2016: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/doppelg%C3%A4nger>

<sup>653</sup> In her book *Eating Dirt*, Charlotte Gill points out that in the United States, planting trees for timber companies is largely the work of “Pineros”—“uninsured, Mexican migrant workers that

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labour assigned to “misfits, prisoners, and relief camp workers,” the placement of the tree planter has been adopted and stereotyped in a ‘noble’ light, as a “messiah” in an industry dependent upon the mass removal of forest trees. Furthermore, along the same vein of rugged individualism framed within the modern wage-based neoliberal system as loggers, tree planters “are paid through a piece-rate wage scheme centred on individual achievement.”<sup>654</sup> As industrial tree planting is work created by the logging industry, a per-tree system, tree planters are kept in business because of the need, not the cause.<sup>655</sup> It follows the same ethos as the logging industry: value is measured according to greatest quantity and speed, be it cutting trees for timber or planting new trees for more timber. It is still about amassing (cutting/planting) the greatest amounts of *materia* or wood as fast as possible. The only difference is that tree planter stands on the other side of the land-transformation process from the logger. Together they form the ‘brackets’ of the clearcut.

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experience no end of occupational abuse.” Robyn Smith and Fiona Tinwei Lam, “Eating Dirt,” *The Tyee*, 2011, accessed March 13, 2014: <http://thetyee.ca/Books/2011/10/21/Eating-Dirt/>.

<sup>654</sup> Ekers and Farnan, “Planting the Nation: Tree Planting Art and the Endurance of Canadian Nationalism,” *Space and Culture* 13, no. 1 (January 31, 2010): 95–120.”

<sup>655</sup> Colleen Kimmitt, “Who Will Revive BC’s Forests?,” *The Tyee*, 2008, <http://thetyee.ca/News/2008/04/28/ReviveForest/>.



Fig 34. (Top) An image from Reader's Digest Magazine (June 2012)<sup>656</sup> previewing a section from tree planter and author Charlotte Gill's book *Eating Dirt* (2012).<sup>657</sup> (Bottom) "Kerry, Princeton, British Columbia, 1988" by Lorraine Gilbert (Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography; no. EX-96-21).<sup>658</sup>

Taking after the apparent tradition of glorifying abstractions of solitary witnesses to the Canadian wilderness, this has become a kind of "rite of passage" in Canada according to Michael Ekers and Michael Farnan, particularly amongst middle-class, Euro-Canadian youth or young adults with a university education and

<sup>656</sup>. Brinkman & Associates Reforestation Ltd. (2014), accessed February 22, 2016: [http://www.brinkmanreforestation.ca/articles/eat\\_dirt\\_excerpt.php](http://www.brinkmanreforestation.ca/articles/eat_dirt_excerpt.php)

<sup>657</sup>. Charlotte Gill, *Eating Dirt: Deep Forests, Big Timber, and Life with the Tree-Planting Tribe* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2012).

<sup>658</sup>. Lorraine Gilbert, "Kerry, Princeton, British Columbia, 1988," *National Gallery of Canada* (1996), accessed February 24, 2016: <http://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artwork.php?mkey=95117>

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an inclination for travel and exploration.<sup>659</sup> Labour surrounding the idea of this “popular lore” of “planting the nation,” a meaning of being ‘Canadian’ in relation to the forest landscape is constructed around how middle-class Euro-Canadian “university students, artists, travelers, and ‘ski-bums’ go tree planting for the hard work, chiseled bodies, camaraderie, and the chance to be ‘in nature’ and do something ‘good’ for the environment” has led to a new romanticism in the nation’s environmental imagination.<sup>660</sup> By going out into the great Canadian wilderness to plant trees in clearcuts the work becomes ‘enshrined’ “as an obligatory passage” where individuals can “access both the ‘pioneering’ moments of the nation and the promised greener tomorrow of Canada’s future.”<sup>661</sup>

Despite the fact that most Canadians have not and will never cut down a tree during their life, there remains “the historical habit of ‘going up north’” that lingers in the Canadian environmental imagination.<sup>662</sup> Similar to going to the cottage, or to see a national or provincial park, many people go north for seasonal work. The mythopoeic of ‘going up north’ for summer work to plant trees becomes a ritual act that connects the Canadian mythic figure across time and space for some among the young Euro-Canadian middle class.<sup>663</sup>

In tree planting, however, the task of re-‘forestation’ is not as romantic as author and tree planter Charlotte Gill highlights in her account of a year with the “Tree-Planting Tribe.”<sup>664</sup> Tree planting, in most cases in Canada, most often means planting the next generations of trees for commercial timber harvest for the next

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<sup>659</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>660</sup>. Michael Ekers and Michael Farnan, “Planting the Nation: Tree Planting Art and the Endurance of Canadian Nationalism,” 83.

<sup>661</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>662</sup>. Jean-Sébastien Landry and Navin Ramankutty, “Carbon Cycling, Climate Regulation, and Disturbances in Canadian Forests: Scientific Principles for Management,” *Land* 4 (2015): 90.

<sup>663</sup>. Michael Ekers and Michael Farnan, “Planting the Nation: Tree Planting Art and the Endurance of Canadian Nationalism.”

<sup>664</sup>. For more reading on this topic, refer to Charlotte Gill, *Eating Dirt: Deep Forests, Big Timber, and Life with the Tree-Planting Tribe* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2012).

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crop rotation, typically within seventy to one-hundred-twenty years depending on the region.<sup>665</sup> With fast-growing species of trees planted in convenient rows and evenly spaces apart, the second cutting is more efficient and is more profitable.<sup>666</sup> It is this stage of the land-transformation process that witnesses not the reforestation but the *replacement* of a forest for a tree plantation of a “managed forest,” both on the land and in the mythopoeic landscape of the nation.

### Critical Place-Based Remembrance

Returning to the site of Big Lonely Doug and Vancouver Island, Ancient Forest Alliance is unique in that its environmental witnessing work is successful in organizing people to venture into these places to see these places first-hand and offer to educate the public. To attract the attention of the public, the group also named certain groves after contemporary stories in popular media. In particular is the Fangorn Forest Grove inspired by the forest of the same name in J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* for its characteristic and impressive moss-laden old-growth trees. There is also the Avatar Grove which was named after James Cameron’s popular film *Avatar* (2009). The purpose of these acts of naming was to respond to shifting baseline syndrome amongst the public. In a 2014 documentary on the organization, Ken Wu noted that,<sup>667</sup>

When [people from the city] come up to these sorts of areas, they see trees that are 11 inches in diameter and think these are really good, healthy reasonable forests. / Their calibration is from urban settings, or much more devastated settings. / So across generations as kids come of age in these more degraded conditions, they calibrate on these and think

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<sup>665</sup>. Jean-Sébastien Landry and Navin Ramankutty, “Carbon Cycling, Climate Regulation, and Disturbances in Canadian Forests: Scientific Principles for Management.”

<sup>666</sup>. The idea of growing trees similar to the way one would grow corn emerged as the brain-child of France and pre-unification parts of Germany. The increasingly typical forests of today—the Modern or New ‘Forest’—is a physical manifestation of the values and visions of Western silvicultural imaginations originally from eighteenth century wood shortage crises in continental Europe as in Britain. For more discussion on this, refer to Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests: Shadow of Civilization*.

<sup>667</sup>. Peter Khan (National Histories Project Lecture) quoted in Darryl Augustine, “Ancient Forest Alliance” (16:36), Roadside Films (December 10, 2014), accessed September 23, 2015: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hg9dcc2WPjk> ; <http://www.ancientforestalliance.org/news-item.php?ID=857>

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that this is normal and healthy. / If we don't solve the problem of this environmental generational amnesia, I don't see how we're going to solve the large issues. Because the problem is people don't recognize that there's a problem.

New visitors' responses to seeing the big trees and ancient spaces of the Pacific temperate rain forests testifies to the fact that much of the public has already forgotten the old forests or holds a misrepresentation of them in mind. Here, fiction is used to communicate meaning that history and environmental statistics otherwise cannot. That is the strength of poetry or ecopoetics in this case: to convey something that the language of everyday and the language of specialization cannot. Thus the hope lies in making a meaningful connection between real spaces and fictional places so that the ethical import of a mythopoeic may transfer to public perceptions of these vanishing and endangered forests and monumental trees.

The greater issue is that the majority of the public in North America are unaware of the reality that is unfolding in the forests. Compared to those who work and live in the peripheries, the general populace have a different mythopoeic picture of the real forestscape compared to the original or old wildwoods and how governing and managing bodies (government and industry) manage or 'care' for woodlands or wood-covered lands. As maps are never the actual territory, they must be kept up-to-date as the landscape changes; however, most people's maps of North America's forests are out-of-date regarding many or most regions, while others never possessed an accurate representation of the landscape past-present in the first place.<sup>668</sup> Now it is also the meaning, the memory, of the word "forest" that is or has largely changed. The Group of Seven is perhaps one of Canada's greatest phenomena of 'treachery of images' in forming false imagined narratives and ideas of the land and the First

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<sup>668</sup>. Tong Wu, Michael Anthony Petriello, and Yeon-Su Kim, "Shifting Baseline Syndrome as a Barrier to Ecological Restoration in the American Southwest," *Ecological Restoration* 29, no. 3 (2011): 213–15; James R. Miller, "Biodiversity Conservation and the Extinction of Experience," *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* 20, no. 8 (2005): 430–434. ; Henry, "The Past Isn't What It Used to Be," 2015.



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Peoples whose cultures and presence was once widely and closely woven into the ‘fabric’ of the land. Since then, the presence of a solitary figure standing before a landscape continues to haunt the forests from east to west in different forms: the solitary tree, the lone lumberjack, the tree planter, and the ecotourist.

The modern process of ‘improving’ the land—“reforestation” and “sustainable forestry” as politicians, industry leaders and some others may call it—is to *re-make* the forest. In order to re-make something from the ground up, the prior state must be destroyed, deconstructed so it may be reconstructed. Big Lonely Doug tells a story of an anthropocentric and ethnocentric relationship fostered by governing and acting bodies. For economy focused government and capitalist industries, old forests are never ‘good enough’ on their own as they are. Situated in a once part of the Ancient Forest of *Dùn Eideann* (the Gaelic name for Edinburgh) Mountain, it coincidentally yet not so surprisingly calls back to the Forest of Caledonia; the ghost of the forgotten forest of the Scottish Highlands now echoes from the clearcuts of British Columbia.

This Douglas fir’s testimony was born from its survivorship and isolation from the nearby forests shaped by the emptied space surrounding it. Like a spar tree, it stands at a site equivalent to an epicentre<sup>669</sup> in a modern industrial logging operation surrounded by the space where part of the forest once was and could have been. In this way, Big Lonely Doug bears witness to the once and future forests of southern Vancouver Island that continue to erode as environmental policies and cutting methods are slow to change and the value systems even slower when left up to the Anglo- legal system.<sup>670</sup> In response to the threat of losing what little remains

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<sup>669</sup>. “**epi-centre** *n.*, **1** *Geol.* The point at which an earthquake reaches the earth’s surface. **2** the center or heart of something.” Katherine Barber (ed.), *Canadian Oxford Dictionary, Second Edition* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2004): 502.

<sup>670</sup>. Louise Takeda, *Islands’ Spirit Rising Reclaiming the Forests of Haida Gwaii* (Vancouver, Canada: University of British Columbia Press, 2015). ; Ryan Bowie, “Indigenous Self-Governance and the Deployment of Knowledge in Collaborative Environmental Management in Canada,” *Journal*

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of the ancient Douglas fir ecosystem and forgetting what has already been lost, Ancient Forest Alliance has been moving through the landscape as are other groups such as Global Forest Watch Canada with the use of hand-held photography, drone footage, and satellite documentation to witness changes and record the knowledge/memory of the landscape and the forest ecosystems. The use of conservation photography by contemporary environmental witnesses such as TJ Watt who worked with witness trees like Big Lonely Doug as well as trees marked in logging surveys and ‘witness stumps,’ they are able to help keep a watchful eye on the forests and provided education and guidance for people who come to bear witness to the remaining ancient forest communities. In this way, they fulfil a role similar to the Haida Watchmen (discussed in the next case).

Still, these are, however, only a few groves in a country with many more intact forest landscapes. Conservation via protected parks (also known as “demonstration forests” or nodes to conservation), like charity, are limited to seeing only the desperate need, but not the causes of the crises. No number of parks can protect natural forest communities from the ‘savageness’<sup>671</sup> of a civilization whose very foundations are built on the stumps of trees and disrespect for the more-than-human world, and whose culture is deeply anthropocentric and intolerant to alternative social-environmental worldviews and practices. Why else do we build

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*of Canadian Studies* 47, no. 1 (2014): 91–121, <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/jcs/summary/v047/47.1.bowie.html>. ; CBC News, “New Crown Forestry Plan Greeted with Shock, Dismay.” <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/new-crown-forestry-plan-greeted-with-shock-dismay-1.2570803> ; Elizabeth May, “Bill C-38: The Environmental Destruction Act,” *The Tyee*, May 10, 2012, <http://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2012/05/10/Bill-C38/>. ; Andrew Macleod, “BC Government Killing Forest Industry: Auditor General,” *The Tyee*, February 17, 2012, <http://thetyee.ca/News/2012/02/17/BC-Government-Killing-Forest-Industry/>.

<sup>671</sup>. Here I use the word ‘savageness’ for the same meaning as it is traditionally used in the English language, denoting an aggressive and unrestrained state and *demeanor* from “behaviour towards others” from a long line originating from the Latin word *minari*, “to threaten.” (Source: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/demeanor>)

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fences around these endangered spaces and keep them enclosed for the public to visit like they do animals in zoos?

Very few people today have *living memory* of the way the forests once were in most regions in North America. Even fewer proportions of the populace are aware of the presence and effects of shifting baseline syndrome (neither was I before working in a conservation area a few summers ago). Visiting parks and protected areas may give a glimpse into what once was, but not what is. Environmental witnessing is the response to this place-blindness and forgetting. Hence, even after a place is lost, so long as there remains memory of that place, one can make a map and remember, return to it once again. Already we have seen the consequences of living off the land directly (pre-settler and agricultural) and indirectly (industrial and urban) without an ethical or sustainable habit of storytelling that keeps the forest ecosystem in mind even when they are out of sight. This is what a tradition of stories provides: collective ecopsychological maps (i.e., imagination, memory, language, concepts, narratives, etc.) of the forests, waters, animals, and interconnecting thread that link humans and thought and action with the larger more-than-human world. As we will see in the next case, environmental witnesses such as those of conservation groups and witness trees like Big Lonely Doug themselves help to pass on the memory of these monumental trees and ancient forests, including the knowledge of other trees that share the western woods with the Douglas fir, such as and in particular the Western red cedar and the cultures that ‘grew up’ out of the earth with it over millennia and would see their future.

## Chapter Four:

### The Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole and *Thuja plicata*

There is a saying among the peoples of the Northwest Coast: “The world is as sharp as the edge of a knife,” and Robert Davidson, the man responsible for carving Masset’s first post-missionary pole, imagines this edge as a circle. “If you live on the edge of the circle,” he explained [...], “that is the present moment. What’s inside is knowledge, experience: the past. What’s outside has yet to be experienced. The knife’s edge is so fine that you can live either in the past or in the future. The real trick,” says Davidson, “is to live on the edge.”

– John Vaillant<sup>672</sup>

It began with a Western red cedar’s (*Thuja plicata*) transformation into the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole in the social and ecological contexts of old-growth forests of British Columbia’s coast. What follows is an analysis of the Gwaii Haanas Pole as a form of witness tree exerting a counter-monumental effect by its act of witnessing. This fourth and final case follows the three-part transformation of a Red Cedar tree from the ancient forests of Haida Gwaii into a legacy or heritage (witness) tree of the Pacific Northwest coastal peoples, showing what it and its forest ecosystems mean to the people in its “more complex first life,”<sup>673</sup> and then the tree in its “second life”<sup>674</sup> as it has been transformed into a monumental work of art. Here I will examine the carver’s intersubjective phenomenological testimony to the culture and political relationships, the monument, and the place, before turning to narrative communicated by the Legacy Pole of the social-ecological relations between the pole, the people, and the place. Finally, I will discuss the ethical dimension of the pole as a work of art and as a counter-monument.

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<sup>672</sup>. John Vaillant, *The Golden Spruce*, 186

<sup>673</sup>. Galen A Johnson, “Forest and Philosophy: Toward an Aesthetics of Wood,” *Environmental Philosophy* 4, no. 1 (2007): 61.

<sup>674</sup>. *Ibid.*

### Social-Ecological Mythopoeia and the Red Cedar

Western red cedar, *Thuja plicata*, derives its botanical name from *plicata*, coming from Greek meaning “folded in plaits” in reference “to the braidlike arrangement of the small, scaly leaves” (figure 35 and 36).<sup>675</sup> The genus *Thuja* is also referred to as “*Arborvitae*,” a combination of two Latin terms meaning “tree of life.” It has lived up to its namesake: Western red cedar has been a true life-giving tree from the very beginning of the northwest coastal people’s relationship with it, according to archaeological evidence dating back eight thousand years.<sup>676</sup> Throughout its life, from germination until death, cedar was and is still used by coastal indigenous peoples, and like other trees such as the birch tree (*Betulaceae*) and white pine (*Pinus strobus*) in the east,<sup>677</sup> it has provided a wealth of material for the formation and survival of whole cultures. Another variety of cypress is highly cherished by the First Nations of the west coast: the yellow-cedar or Nootka cypress (*Cupressus nootkatensis*) which bears the earlier anglicized name of the Nuu-chah-nulth peoples of Vancouver Island in its botanical name.<sup>678</sup>

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<sup>675</sup>. Hilary Stewart, *Cedar: Tree of Life to the Northwest Coast Indians* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1995): 24.

<sup>676</sup>. Wade Davis, “In the Shadow of Red Cedar,” *Manoa* 25, no. 1 (2013): 123–37, <https://doi.org/10.1353/man.2013.0001>.

<sup>677</sup>. Diana Beresford-Kroeger, *Arboretum America: A Philosophy of the Forest* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2003): 24–30, 104–110.

<sup>678</sup>. Donald Culross Peattie, *A Natural History of North American Trees* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1948/2013), 222.



Fig 35. The monumental Red Cedar is a Haida heritage tree. This tree was selected from the old-growth forests of Haida Gwaii for the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole and photographed by Jaalen Edenshaw.<sup>679</sup>

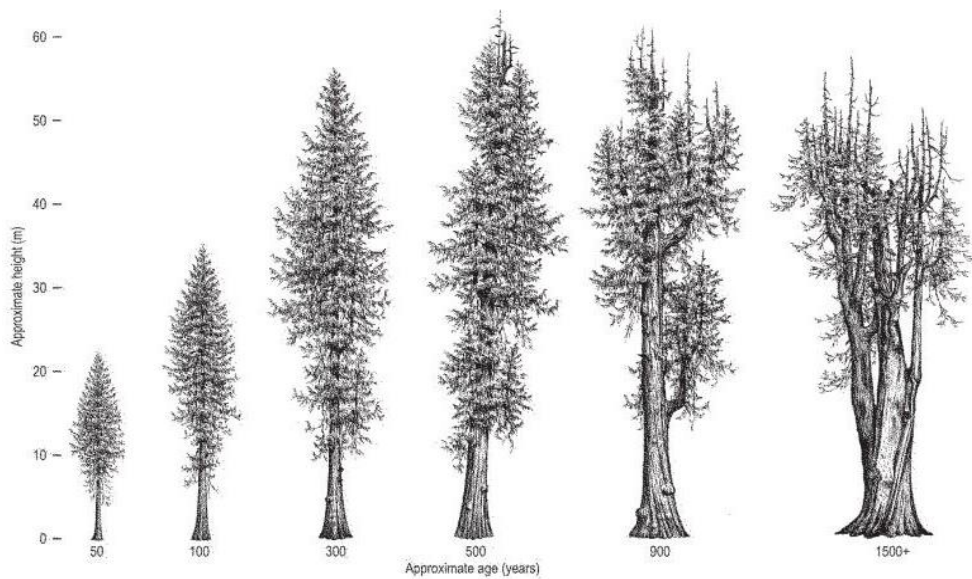


Fig 36. A drawing illustrating how the crown of Western red cedar changes over centuries.<sup>680</sup>

<sup>679</sup>. Jaalen Edenshaw. "Carving Gallery 1," *Parks Canada* (August 1, 2014), accessed March 31, 2016: <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/bc/gwaiihaanas/natcul/natcul5/natcul5-gallery1.aspx?a=1&photo={82D6BD82-CC1E-4222-8F5C-DEF5939E9EAE}>

<sup>680</sup>. "The western red-cedar: A 1,500 year old giant," *Ear to the Ground: Washington State Department of Natural Resources* (July 20, 2015), accessed March 5, 2016: <https://washingtondnr.wordpress.com/2015/07/20/the-western-red-cedar-a-1500-year-old-giant/>

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Indigenous peoples had practices that deliberately altered parts of their landscapes, such as the flat-bottom silty coves around Haida Gwaii that were created by the Haida's ancestors to foster larger clam populations<sup>681</sup> and controlled burns (e.g., Yosemite National Park area), and the maintenance of oak savannas and promoted fruit and nut-bearing trees in the eastern regions of North America.<sup>682</sup> The difference from Europeans and Euro-North Americans in the way they worked with the landscape lay in their respect for the principle of sustainability.<sup>683</sup> If the integrity of the woods as self-managing ecosystems were to be destroyed, the people would be uprooted and displaced. The Haida used the land to its as well as their advantage, for example, by transplanting salmon eggs to another river that did not previously have salmon in it. With fish in more rivers, there was more food for bears, wolves, and other animals. Bears, for instance, would frequently bring their catch of fish further into the forest away from the river. Bones and flesh remaining from the meal contribute nutrients to the soil and enable trees, such as spruce (*Picea*), to grow up to three times larger than trees along rivers where there is no salmon.<sup>684</sup> Each form of life was perceived and treated with consideration for its well-being as fellow members of one life shared by all beings.<sup>685</sup> Whether it is an indigenous language from the Acadian forest of the Eastern Maritimes (such as the Maliseet, Mi'kmaq,

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<sup>681</sup>. CBC, "The Wild West" (episode), *Wild Canada Productions* (documentary, Series 1) (05:30) (March 21, 2014). Retrieved from iTunes.

<sup>682</sup>. Diana Beresford-Kroeger, *Arboretum America: A Philosophy of the Forest* (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2003): 78–84, 124; "A study of witness-tree distribution in southeastern Pennsylvania revealed that Native American village sites had increased density of hickory, walnut and black locust but decreased density of white oak." For more on this see M. D. Abrams and G. J. Nowacki, "Native Americans as Active and Passive Promoters of Mast and Fruit Trees in the Eastern USA," *The Holocene* 18, no. 7 (2008): 1132; Jonathan Phillips, "Forgotten Hardwood Forests of the Coastal Plain," *Geographical Review* 84, no. 2 (1994): 162.

<sup>683</sup>. John Vaillant, "The Tooth of the Human Race," In *The Golden Spruce: A True Story of Myth, Madness and Greed*.

<sup>684</sup>. CBC The Nature of Things, "The Wild West," *Wild Canada Productions* (documentary, Series 1) (21:25) (March 21, 2014). Retrieved from iTunes.

<sup>685</sup>. Nancy Turner, *The Earth's Blanket: Traditional Teachings for Sustainable Living* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2005).

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and Passamaquoddy First Nations people),<sup>686</sup> or from the coastal temperate rainforests of the Pacific Maritimes, the words for trees (as for other aspects of the environment) refer to them as *animate*. Animate names for trees mean that the speakers speak not about *what* but about *who*; trees, in this sense, are beings with their own lives and spirits. To the Northwest coastal peoples of Canada, red cedar is both a biological and supernatural being known as “Long Life Maker,”<sup>687</sup> for it is from this tree that they carved out their ways of life, cultures, and clan-family crests. According to a Coast Salish origin myth of the red cedar:<sup>688</sup>

There was a real good man was always helping others. Whenever they needed, he gave; when they wanted, he gave them food and clothing. When the Great Spirit saw this, he said, ‘That man has done his work; when he dies and where he is buried, a cedar tree will grow and be useful to the people—the roots for baskets, the bark for clothing, the wood for shelter.’

This myth is one example of many origin myths of red cedar that speak about how it has been a keystone and a sacred species for indigenous cultures across the range of the coastal temperate rainforests of British Columbia for four thousand years.<sup>689</sup> Experiences and beliefs recognize the cedar as having its own life and therefore its own spirit; their relationship with and myths about cedar trees witness that this tree is sacred because it is *life-giving*. The Haida way of life supports and protects the life of the red cedars; and, in turn, the red cedars help support the Haida and other coastal First Nation cultures. By calling a red cedar a Tree of Life, cedar takes on a special meaning; by bearing this particular sign of sanctity, it becomes a symbol itself for the continuation of life, ecology, and culture. These values are taught through the tradition of telling the myth or story of the cedar tree and by continuing ritual

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<sup>686</sup>. A Beautiful Forest Inc. (2015). “*A Beautiful Forest*,” John David Thornton (director), Lloyd Salomone and Nelson Milley (Producers). Documentary retrieved from: [http://goodhearted.ca/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=136&Itemid=244](http://goodhearted.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=136&Itemid=244)

<sup>687</sup>. Hilary Stewart, *Cedar: Tree of Life to the Northwest Coast Indians*, 27.

<sup>688</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>689</sup>. Nancy J. Turner, *The Earth's Blanket*, 12.



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practices that involve it, such as the cedar harvest. For instance, in the Kwakwaka'wakw culture there is the story of *čəqaməy*, an ancestor who survived a great flood in the hollow of a giant western Red Cedar tree. The story tells the aetiological myth of their people's cedarbark ceremony, or their "*gelgalis*—how they originated," their people's "sacred origin."<sup>690</sup> It is Daisy Sewid-Smith (*Mayanilth*)'s story of her ancestor, *čəqaməy*, who, like Moses, was foretold of a coming flood and how to prepare for it. As the story goes, *čəqaməy* made the preparations by hollowing out a giant Red Cedar within which he and his family survived the Great Flood. While inside the great cedar, he made the first items of ceremonial cedar dress that came to signify that he was saved by the cedar tree and was from then on to "respect the cedar that saved his life."<sup>691</sup> As a result, he was the first of his people to perform the cedarbark ceremony. This event was a transformative one, also signifying that, "When he entered the cedar tree, his name was *harwilk<sup>w</sup> ala*, which means "cedar tree," but when he came out, he [would] [...] be *čəqaməy*, [...] a name which meant that he became "the first person ever to perform the cedarbark ceremony."<sup>692</sup>

It is from this origin myth that the Kwakwaka'wakw people get their name for the Red Cedar: "[T]he name *čəqaməy* has the same root as *čəqa*," hence they "call the Red Cedarbark ceremony *čəqa*."<sup>693</sup> Since the time of this story, they "have honoured the cedar tree in a special ceremony during the Kwakwaka'wakw Potlatch."<sup>694</sup> Similarly, the Haida name for cedar is *Tsuuay*<sup>695</sup> and their traditions around stories and practices involving cedar trees helps ensure the well-being on not

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<sup>690</sup>. Nancy J. Turner, *The Earth's Blanket*: 53.

<sup>691</sup>. Ibid: 52–53.

<sup>692</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>693</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>694</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>695</sup>. Council of the Haida Nation, "Haida Gwaii Yah'guudang," 2004, [https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/natural-resource-use/land-water-use/crown-land/land-use-plans-and-objectives/westcoast-region/haidagwaii-slua/haida\\_land\\_use\\_vision.pdf](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/natural-resource-use/land-water-use/crown-land/land-use-plans-and-objectives/westcoast-region/haidagwaii-slua/haida_land_use_vision.pdf).

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only their people and culture, but that of the tree species, which “[provides] habitat for forest creatures, some of which are an important feature of Haida crests and histories.”<sup>696</sup> As a result, the integrity of the old-growth forest ecosystem is maintained. Furthermore, the cedar harvest on Haida Gwaii is a demonstration of an important positive act of witnessing in that, their actions and the marks left on trees (culturally modified trees, see figures 37 and 38) bear testimony to the Haida’s symbiotic relationship with the forest, the meanings they imbue in these trees (and by implication the forest itself). Their awareness of the importance of these testimonial aspects at play between them and their environment is a social-ecological truth or system that drives their ethics. Their ethic of social-ecological truths is what they call *Yah’guudang* or “respect for all living things,”<sup>697</sup> and it is their fundamental guiding principle that determines how they treat the lives of the forest or how they manage themselves in their relationship with it. So, when a Haida weaver or carver goes into the forest and carefully removes bark from the cedar tree or selects a tree for a pole according to their tradition of *Yah’guudang*, as one Haida weaver expressed it, it “is about making a commitment and promise between the forest, the tree, and yourself. So, when you’re accepting the harvest, you’re saying, ‘I’m here. I’ll protect you no matter what.’”<sup>698</sup> In this way, such acts are positive forms of witnessing to which the cedar bark ceremony and carving of monumental poles testify.

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<sup>696</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>697</sup>. Ibid: 9.

<sup>698</sup>. Haida weaver, April Churchill quoted in Patrick Floyd, “11 Ways the Haida Nation Protects Its Land and Heritage,” *Rainforest Alliance* (6<sup>th</sup> August 2015): <http://thefrogblog.org.uk/2015/08/06/11-ways-the-haida-nation-protects-its-land-and-heritage/>



Fig 37. A photograph from the 'Namgis Nation showing an arborglyph on a culturally modified tree located deep in the Nimpkish Valley in the northeast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia.<sup>699</sup>



Fig 38. Culturally modified trees (CMTs): (*left*) holes bored into a tree to test whether the quality of its trunk was appropriate to use for a pole or canoe, and (*right*) a section where bark was harvested.<sup>700</sup> “When a Haida person goes for bark, a pole or a canoe, the trees are approached with respect. Their spirits are hailed in a song and thanked with prayer. A bark gatherer takes care that the tree will go on living. A canoe builder ‘looks into the heart’ of a cedar (test holes) so that trees with unsuitable qualities will be left standing alive much as before.”<sup>701</sup> Hence, these culturally modified trees “are the sacred workplaces of [their] ancestors.”<sup>702</sup> In this way, culturally modified trees are the markers of sacred sites and sites of memory throughout these ancient coastal forests.

<sup>699</sup>. 'Namgis Nation and Jim Stafford, “Namgis Arborglyph,” *Northwest Coast Archaeology* (December 6, 2013), accessed March 31, 2016: <http://qmackie.com/2013/12/06/namgis-arborglyph/>

<sup>700</sup>. Rainforest Alliance, “11 Ways the Haida Nation Protects Its Land and Heritage,” *The Frog Blog* (August 6, 2015), accessed March 31, 2016: <http://thefrogblog.org.uk/2015/08/06/11-ways-the-haida-nation-protects-its-land-and-heritage/>

<sup>701</sup>. Haida Land Use Vision, 2004: 9.

<sup>702</sup>. Ibid.

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An important note to make is that when Daisy Sewid-Smith (*Mayanilth*) tells this story to people with no living memory of how large red cedars can grow, she says that they “cannot even visualize what the great trees were like.”<sup>703</sup> This is because the trees she refers to are pre-European contact when cutting such giant trees was still an infrequent ceremonial practice. Instead, she said, “they think about a little cedar tree that you would see today,”<sup>704</sup> survivors of the ancients of the ancestral woods that were lost to Euro-American colonial settlement, industrial development activities, and capitalist resource extraction. These ancient cedar trees were something else, something titanic. She was “talking about *first-growth* forest cedar trees”<sup>705</sup>—trees that were and are testimony to the power that life could and can achieve in the northwest temperate rainforest.

Modern industrial Western felling methods—that is, felling “without proper respect or without recognizing their sacredness or their deep historical relationships with human societies”<sup>706</sup>—means not just the loss of materially and culturally significant trees, but the loss of forests ecosystems that will take at least eight hundred years before it can return.<sup>707</sup> Thus, the sight of red alders pioneering a clearcut is for some mournful rather than hopeful;<sup>708</sup> one individual described the sight as “[those] alder-choked hillsides and the open sores of landslides<sup>709</sup> [that] continue to ooze today, nearly 40 years later.”<sup>710</sup> Such practices have been the ongoing trend across the western coastal forests since Europeans began settling

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<sup>703</sup>. Nancy J. Turner, *The Earth's Blanket*: 52–53.

<sup>704</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>705</sup>. Ibid. (Italics my emphasis).

<sup>706</sup>. Ibid, 54.

<sup>707</sup>. Juan A. Blanco, “Forests May Need Centuries to Recover Their Original Productivity after Continuous Intensive Management: An Example from Douglas-Fir Stands,” *Science of the Total Environment* 437 (2012): 91–103.

<sup>708</sup>. Jaime Yard, “Taking tea with Granddaddy Tough:” 61.

<sup>709</sup>. Once the root system that holds the earth together and helps stabilize it is removed, rain and active weather conditions trigger the exposed and loosened earth to form into landslides.

<sup>710</sup>. Dave Quinn, “Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole—First monumental pole in 130 years celebrates Haida past and future.”

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there,<sup>711</sup> and continues to this day (an issue which I will go into in further on and in chapter two).<sup>712</sup> Specifically, the European and Euro-North American traditional approach to logging is to remove not just large areas of forest (i.e., clear-cuts), but to harvest the largest and the healthiest trees first as these hold the greatest volumes of timber and thus the most profitable.

Heritage trees are witnesses to what the forest once was before Western land use practices and colonial politics began their attempts to erase the native forests and people by transforming them into controlled ecological and socio-political systems of oppression and exploitation. Such trees carry life of peoples' cultures both physically in their second life as art (as well as in everyday uses such as houses, boats, etc.) and symbolically in the socio-ecological values and meanings they hold and transmit through language and narrative. As we can see in Sewid-Smith's story, in these ways—through peoples' physical and cultural dependence upon monumental cedar and the tree as a symbolic carrier of meaning—heritage trees are also holders of memory that stand sentinel to collective indigenous pasts and their potential futures. They represent, in other words, not only the once and future forests as a key indicator species but of the once and future culture of the Haida, Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, and other First Peoples. As Deborah Rose Bird put, "When memory is held in place by trees, how better to eradicate it than to chop them down?"<sup>713</sup> Hence, in addition to the wealth of wood in these ancient boughs that benefited European settlements, the colonial attempt to erase the Indigenous (at least culturally if not physically) from the landscape focused on harvesting timber from the biggest, healthiest, most culturally significant trees.

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<sup>711</sup>. Karen Wonders, "How Dare They Do This," *Cathedral Grove*, 2010.

<sup>712</sup>. Sarah Petrescu, "Taped Trees in Walbran Valley a Red Flag for Environmental Group." ; Wilderness Committee, "War In the Walbran," (16<sup>th</sup> June 2015): <http://vancouverislandbigtrees.blogspot.ca/>

<sup>713</sup>. Deborah Bird Rose, "On History, Trees, and Ethical Proximity," *Postcolonial Studies* 11, no. 2 (June 2008): 157–67, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790802004687>.

### The Historical Geo-Political Landscape of Haida Gwaii

Sitting on the edge of the continental shelf, isolated from the mainland by the Hecate Strait and the Alaska Panhandle, stands the archipelago at the edge of the world named Haida Gwaii (*X̱aayda gwaay*, literally “Islands of the Haida People”).<sup>714</sup> Owing to its influence as a glacial refugium during the last ice age and its geographical isolation since, today, the archipelago is home to one of the highest densities of biological diversity unique to the region and remains one of the last refuges of intact first-growth forests on the planet.<sup>715</sup> Fittingly, this place is sometimes referred to as the “Galapagos of the North” for its unique ecological wealth of biodiversity.<sup>716</sup> Despite its geographical isolation and protective bodies of water, such as the Hecate Strait,<sup>717</sup> Haida Gwaii became a highly coveted place for first the British imperialist and later Canadian agendas.<sup>718</sup> The rare archipelago was the beautiful bird that got caged in the clash between cultures, political economy, and (neo-) colonial avarice voracity.

Marking the beginning of a new era of resource exploitation on the archipelago was first contact with a European in 1774.<sup>719</sup> As contact gradually increased, early activities included whaling, fishing, hunting and trapping, mining, and then explosion of industrial logging during the second half of the nineteenth and twentieth century.<sup>720</sup> Then, in 1852, tensions between economics, natural resources,

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<sup>714</sup>. Jean-Louis Martin, Anthony J Gaston, and Simon Hitier, “The Effect of Island Size and Isolation on Old Growth Forest Habitat and Bird Diversity in Gwaii Haanas (Queen Charlotte Islands, Canada),” *Oikos* 72, no. 1 (1995): 115–31, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3546045>.

<sup>715</sup>. Deborah Rose Bird, “On History, Trees, and Ethical Proximity,” 166.

<sup>716</sup>. Louise Takeda, *Islands’ Spirit Rising: Reclaiming the Forests of Haida Gwaii* (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 2014): 4.

<sup>717</sup>. Named after a surveying ship, the HMS *Hecate*, the Hecate Strait is the area of ocean between Haida Gwaii and the British Columbian mainland. The combination of the surrounding geoclimatic conditions and the channel’s wide and flat shape, the Hecate Strait is prone to violent storms which make it a highly dangerous passage to travel through or across; today it holds thousands of shipwrecks. Named after a surveying ship, the HMS *Hecate*.

<sup>718</sup>. Louise Takeda and Inge Røpke, “Power and contestation in collaborative ecosystem-based management: The case of Haida Gwaii,” *Ecological Economics* 70, no. 2 (2010): 178–188.

<sup>719</sup>. Louise Takeda, *Island Spirit Rising: Reclaiming the Forests of Haida Gwaii*, 5.

<sup>720</sup>. *Ibid*, 5–8.

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and culture increased when a gold rush “created a new frontier economy and the establishment of the islands as a Crown colony”<sup>721</sup> and further increased European political occupation and settlement. With the increased presence of and pressures from colonialists and settlers and competing interests on the archipelago, the geopolitical battle for the resources of Haida Gwaii had begun.

To the colonists’ advantage, the prevalence of diseases they had introduced exacerbated and reduced the Haida population to horrifically low numbers: by 1915, the pre-contact population of approximately fifteen to twenty thousand was reduced to an estimated 588.<sup>722</sup> Diseases included tuberculosis, measles, and smallpox—the worst of which came in the form of a smallpox epidemic in the 1860s. With their numbers reduced by the turn of the nineteenth century, the survivors of Haida Gwaii’s twenty villages were forced into one of two towns designated by European colonialists: Old Massett in the north and Skidegate in the south of Graham Island.

With the remaining Haida people gathered in these two sites under early Canadian occupation inherited from the old British colonial presence, the project to erase Indigenous claim commenced on these “Islands at the Boundary of the World.”<sup>723</sup> As the Haida and other coastal First Nations held a fundamentally different relationship, narrative, and ethical position towards the natural environment from that of the Euro-Americans, the Haida way of life and language was a problem to the colonial project. Through systematic banning of key cultural traditions (e.g., potlaches, ceremonies, language and mythtelling, direct relationship with the forests and waters) and the forced assimilation into Euro-Canadian society

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<sup>721</sup>, Ibid, 6.

<sup>722</sup>, Ibid.

<sup>723</sup>, Sean Kane, *Wisdom of the Mythtellers*.

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through residential schools and Western economy the assault on Haida culture took place, culminating in the cultural genocide that Canada stands accused of today.<sup>724</sup>

Much of the Haida Nation's cultural and political resurgence came from strength drawn from traces of their ancestors are found through the landscape, living memories, and continued daily and ceremonial rituals practiced in their home-place. The forests and shores of Haida Gwaii recorded memories of the local social-ecological history similar to impressions of past experiences left upon human memory. As the old trees testified to their own enduring presence, marks where bark was removed and holes burrowed into trunks to test the heartwood before felling a tree for a pole testify to the Haida's deeply rooted presence and cultural practices, marking sacred sites throughout the forests.<sup>725</sup> Other artefacts such as unfinished canoes that had been left behind remained despite being slowly reclaimed by the forest (figure 39); ghost villages dotted the islands with old silvery cedar poles standing sentinel at the border between the ocean and the forest (figure 40) waiting for the spirit of the people to return; and fellow members of the land and waters, such as the raven, the eagle, the salmon, monumental cedar trees, and (up until 1997) K'iid K'iyas ("Elder Tree"), acted as reminders of ancestral identities, memories, and associated teachings.<sup>726</sup> In this way, a caring coexistence between the people and the environment helped them carry one another through the various challenges they faced since the arrival of the Europeans.

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<sup>724</sup>. Mawani, "Genealogies of the Land: Aboriginality, Law, and Territory in Vancouver's Stanley Park.;" W S K Cameron, "Wilderness and the City: Not Such a Long Drive After All," *Environmental Philosophy* 3, no. 2 (2006): 28–33, [https://www.pdcnet.org/852575440069BD1A/file/DA125A209CEC4F0785257576004E7F9D/\\$FILE/envirophil\\_2006\\_0003\\_0002\\_0028\\_0033.pdf](https://www.pdcnet.org/852575440069BD1A/file/DA125A209CEC4F0785257576004E7F9D/$FILE/envirophil_2006_0003_0002_0028_0033.pdf); Brock, "Envoicing Silent Objects: Art and Literature at the Site of the Canadian Landscape.;" Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network, "Canada's Top Judge Says Country Committed 'cultural Genocide' against Indigenous Peoples," *APTN National News*, April 29, 2015, <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/05/29/canadas-top-judge-says-country-committed-cultural-genocide-indigenous-peoples/>.

<sup>725</sup>. Charles M. Mobley and Eldridge Morley. "Culturally Modified Trees in the Pacific Northwest," *Arctic Anthropology* 29, no. 2 (1992).

<sup>726</sup>. Jaime Yard, "Softwood Lumber and the Golden Spruce: Two Perspectives on the Material and Discursive Construction of British Columbian Forests," *Topia* 21, no. Spring (2009): 85–103, <http://topia.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/topia/article/view/23256>.





Fig 39. (Left) An incomplete Haida canoe in forest of Haida Gwaii (photo by Martin Lalune);<sup>727</sup> (right) another partially finished Haida canoe in Haida Gwaii's old-growth forest (photo by Marlene Lidde).<sup>728</sup>



Fig 40. For scale, this image shows Norm Hann from the documentary film *Stand* (2014) standing before old poles at SGang Gwaay Llnagaay (Haida name which means, "Wailing Island"), one of the Haida villages to be abandoned after the epidemics during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>729</sup>

After decades of old-growth forests vanishing at astounding rates, “an estimated 105 million cubic metres of raw logs, valued at over \$12 billion, left the islands during the twentieth century,”<sup>730</sup> the increasing number of mountain sides and forest valleys skinned bare foreshadowed a tipping-point of the remaining endangered forest ecosystems. As these forests on Lyell Island were protected under

<sup>727</sup>. Martin Lalune, “Haida Gwaii 2008,” *Picasa* (2011). Accessed March 31, 2016: <http://picasaweb.google.com/108148439323153471580/HaidaGwaii2008?gsessionid=0V7gV-XgiNSkCHKBzU9LVQ#5260215610175823986>

<sup>728</sup>. Haida Gwaii Management Council (2013). Accessed March 31, 2016: <http://www.haidagwaiimanagementcouncil.ca/>

<sup>729</sup>. Anthony, “Haida Gwaii Expedition Complete,” *Stand* (June 20, 2012), accessed March 31, 2016: <http://standfilm.com/2012/06/20/haida-gwaii-expedition-complete/>

<sup>730</sup>. Louise Takeda, *Islands' Spirit Rising: Reclaiming the Forests of Haida Gwaii*: 7.

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Haida law, the Haida began enforcing it by blockading the logging roads into the forests in 1985; thus, the blockade was not a protest as the media made it appear.<sup>731</sup>

When neither the logging company Weyerhaeuser or the provincial or the federal governments acknowledged Haida law, Haida elders and leaders began blockading, after which Canadian authorities began making arrests. In all, Canadian authorities arrested seventy people for interfering with the logging company's agenda.<sup>732</sup>

Industry pitted employees of the logging companies against the Haida blockaders; leading loggers to conflict with the Haida about not being able to go to work and make a living, versus the Haida who were fighting to protect what remained and increase their control over what happened to the forests of their homeland. After new logging permits were granted for cut blocks on Lyell Island, the Haida began preparing for another blockade. This time, they welcomed loggers to join them in discussion over a feast to clarify that the issue was not with the loggers, but with the way the companies were treating the land<sup>733</sup>. Eventually, with continued Haida resistance, surmounting international pressures, and attention and support from across Canada forced the Canadian government to reach an agreement with the Haida Nation.<sup>734</sup>

In 1988, Canada signed the South Moresby Agreement with the Haida Nation, bringing logging to a halt and created South Moresby National Park. A major concern with the creation of a National Park on Haida Gwaii was that, as in the past, the creation of National Parks entailed "that lands were set aside for tourists and the Haida" were consequently "excluded from hunting, fishing, trapping,

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<sup>731</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>732</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>733</sup>. Ibid, 62.

<sup>734</sup>. Drushka, Ken, Bob Nixon, and Ray Travers (Eds.). *Touch Wood: BC Forests at the Crossroads*. (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1993); Bowie, "Indigenous Self-Governance and the Deployment of Knowledge in Collaborative Environmental Management in Canada."

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or living there.”<sup>735</sup> The Haida were determined to prevent their presence in the land would not be omitted as it had been in years past—the erasure of the Indigenous would not happen again.

The 1988 agreement, however, was only enough to stop logging; the issue of *who* determined the fate of the forests remained the same as did *how* the forests were managed. At that point, while monumental cedars were not being taken from the southern third region of South Moresby, they continued to be harvested by logging companies on a large majority of the rest of Haida Gwaii. Haida values continued to be excluded from the land use planning processes and South Moresby National Park remained a colonial protected area, much like Stanley Park on the mainland in Vancouver.<sup>736</sup> The Haida made sure their presence retained a powerful grip in and on the land by reinforcing the Haida Watchmen Program in which Haida Watchmen/women would dwell throughout the Gwaii Haanas area of South Moresby and provide education to tourists while keeping an eye on the place. They also ensured “commercial *kaarw* (roe on kelp) fishery” remained active to keep other Haida people in the area.<sup>737</sup> With visitors to Gwaii Haanas (then South Moresby National Park) supportive of the way things were run and no pre-established solutions or protocols to remedy or circumvent the issue, the government of Canada entered further negotiations with the Haida Nation. Finally, the two nations signed the Gwaii Haanas Agreement in 1993 and bound Canada to a pact of co-management of the region.<sup>738</sup> South Moresby National Park was renamed Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site as it entered a new phase of co-management between the two nations, with equal number of representatives from Canada and the

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<sup>735</sup>. Ibid, 63.

<sup>736</sup>. Mawani, “Genealogies of the Land: Aboriginality, Law, and Territory in Vancouver’s Stanley Park.”; Renisa Mawani, “Legalities of Nature: Law, Empire, and Wilderness Landscapes in Canada.”

<sup>737</sup>. Louise Takeda, *Islands’ Spirit Rising: Reclaiming the Forests of Haida Gwaii*. 63.

<sup>738</sup>. Ibid, 7.

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Haida Nation who make up the Archipelago Management Board that oversees park operations, management, and planning.<sup>739</sup>

Despite this achievement, two years later, “a 1995 provincial government report [...] demonstrated a cut rate 2.2 times the long-term sustainable harvest rate,” which caused forest management conflicts to flare up once again.<sup>740</sup> Industrial logging continued as a result of the government having stepped back industrial management; thus with greater deregulation of the industry, logging companies were able to circumvent the agreement between the Haida and the Canadian government.<sup>741</sup> This time, industrial logging practices were detrimental to not only coastal Indigenous peoples’ interests, but those of non-Indigenous peoples’ and their communities who depended on the local economy. Thus, not only Haida were concerned, but local community members, loggers, and other coastal First Nations as well.<sup>742</sup> These various stakeholders collaborated together for five years in the Turning Point Initiative launched by northern and central coastal British Columbian First Nations, including the Haida, in 2000.<sup>743</sup>

Five years later, the Council of the Haida Nation introduced *The Haida Land Use Vision* in 2004. For the campaign, it contributed the founding principle of *Yah’guudang* (“respect for all living things”) that would guide the British Columbian government land use planning process.<sup>744</sup> Essentially, the principle of *Yah’guudang* is “about knowing our place in the web of life, and how the fate of our culture runs parallel with the fate of the ocean, sky and forest.”<sup>745</sup> Along with the Turning Point

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<sup>739</sup>. Louise Takeda, *Islands’ Spirit Rising: Reclaiming the Forests of Haida Gwaii* (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 2014), 63.

<sup>740</sup>. Ryan Bowie, “Indigenous Self-Governance and the Deployment of Knowledge in Collaborative Environmental Management in Canada,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 47, no. 1 (2013), 111.

<sup>741</sup>. Louise Takeda, *Islands’ Spirit Rising: Reclaiming the Forests of Haida Gwaii*.

<sup>742</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>743</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>744</sup>. *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>745</sup>. Council of the Haida Nation. 2004; Haida Gwaii Yah’guudang (respect for This Place): Haida Land Use Vision, p. 3.

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Initiative, “The Haida Land Use Vision” led to the signing of yet another agreement in 2007 called the *Haida Strategic Land Use Agreement*,<sup>746</sup> however, this time the agreement was between the Haida Nation and the provincial government of British Columbia. Fortunately, the 2007 Haida Strategic Land Use Agreement was successful in not only reducing the annual cut-rate of over two million cubic meters to eight hundred thousand meters; it also helped extend the series of protected areas on Haida Gwaii to eight hundred thousand square meters.<sup>747</sup>

An important note to make is that, what the Haida were demanding was not to stop all and any logging on the archipelago as a whole, but for a radical change in the way logging was practiced and who would manage it. Rightfully, they demanded that the Haida Nation have the say in where, how, and how much logging would take place on Haida Gwaii, leaving Gwaii Haanas exclusively for traditional Haida uses. Furthermore, what logging was to continue on designated areas of the archipelago was to be managed according to the Haida Land Use Vision, “respect for all living things.”<sup>748</sup> With so much natural wealth on Haida Gwaii and other areas of British Columbia’s coastal forest range, industry and neocolonial politics continue to create tensions; and so the Haida Watchmen continue to hold their posts.<sup>749</sup>

Beginning with the 1985 blockade which led to the 1993 Agreement, followed by the introduction of the 2005 Haida Land Use Vision that instigated the 2007 Haida Strategic Land Use Agreement, the Haida Nation gained greater control over logging on their archipelago.<sup>750</sup> This collective indigenous-environmental-community movement was a breakthrough as it was the first to bring traditional

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<sup>746</sup>. Haida Gwaii Management Council, *Forest Strategy Forum Themes and Path Forward*, 2015.

<sup>747</sup>. Ryan Bowie, “Indigenous Self-Governance and the Deployment of Knowledge in Collaborative Environmental Management in Canada,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 47, no. 1 (2013).

<sup>748</sup>. Council of the Haida Nation. 2004. Haida Gwaii Yah’guudang (respect for This Place): Haida Land Use Vision: 3.

<sup>749</sup>. Louise Takeda and Inge Røpke, “Power and contestation in collaborative ecosystem-based management: The case of Haida Gwaii,” *Ecological Economics* 70, no. 2 (2010), 178-188.

<sup>750</sup>. Ibid.

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cultural principles of indigenous land-use practices into a collaborative ecosystem-based forest management between the Canadian federal government and the Haida Nation.<sup>751</sup> The movement was also the first to create the first protected area of its kind in Canada: Gwaii Haanas National Park and Haida Heritage Site (figure 41).<sup>752</sup>

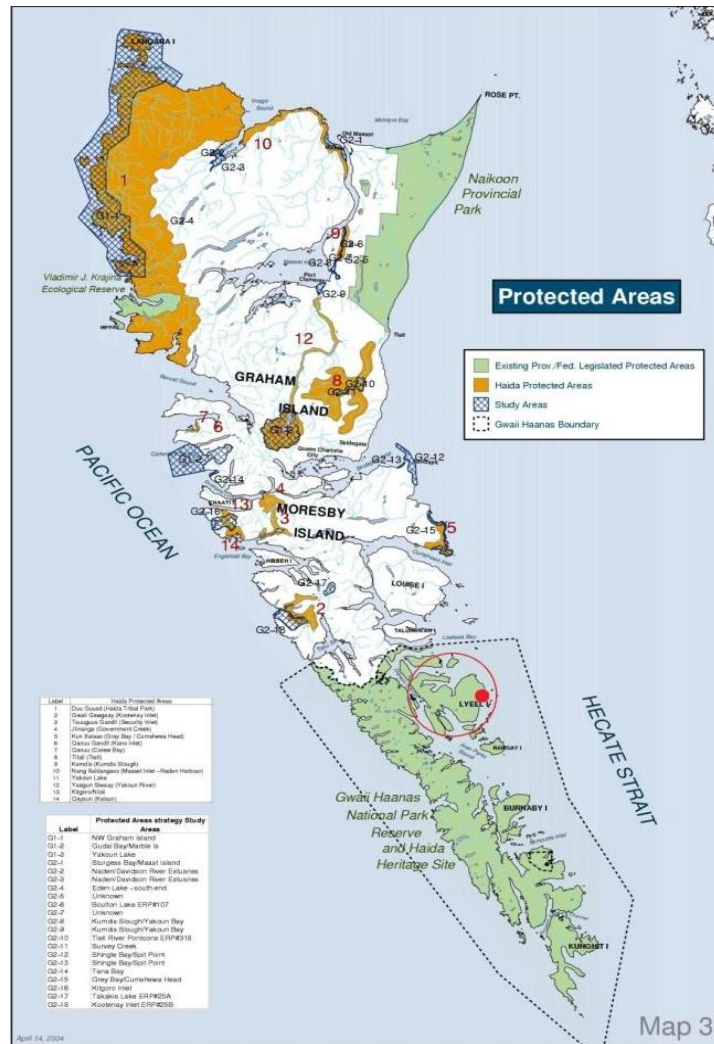


Fig 41. Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site, Haida Gwaii. Circled in red and marked by a red dot (my emphasis) is the approximate location of Windy Bay on Lyell Island.<sup>753</sup>

In 2013, Parks Canada and the Council of the Haida Nation commissioned Masset carver Jaalen Edenshaw to create a monumental pole to commemorate

<sup>751</sup>. Ibid.; Louise Takeda and Inge Røpke, “Power and contestation in collaborative ecosystem-based management: The case of Haida Gwaii.”

<sup>752</sup>. Jodi Stark, “Raising a symbol of partnership: Learning from the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole,” *David Suzuki Foundation* (23<sup>rd</sup> August 2013): <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/blogs/panther-lounge/2013/08/raising-a-symbol-of-partnership-and-belief-in-a-better-world-1/>

<sup>753</sup>. Image retrieved from: <https://www.for.gov.bc.ca/tasb/slrp/lrmp/nanaimo/haidagwaii/docs/maps/>

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twenty years of co-management. The entire process of selecting, carving, and ceremonially raising the Legacy Pole was itself significant as it signified the continuation of a new generation of young Haida carvers and carriers of cultural through the knowledge and tradition of storytelling through art (figure 42). Today, the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole is the first monumental pole to have been raised in the area in over 130 years (figures 43 and 44).<sup>754</sup>



Fig 42. Jaalen Edenshaw and assistant carvers working on the Raven carving of the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole. The pole took approximately six thousand hours of labour and over a year to complete (photo by the Haida Nation).<sup>755</sup>



Fig 43. Lead and assistant carvers standing near the Eagle carving at the top of the Legacy Pole during the blessing ceremony when the Pole is sprinkled with eagle down-feathers.<sup>756</sup> (Left) The raising of the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole at Windy Bay, Lyell Island on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2013.<sup>757</sup>

<sup>754</sup>. “Many Good People Working Together: Raising the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole at Hlk’yah GaawGa,” *Haida Laas* (Gaaw (Old Massett), September 2013), [http://www.haidanation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Working\\_Together.pdf](http://www.haidanation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Working_Together.pdf).

<sup>755</sup>. Heather Ramsay, “The First Monumental Pole Raised in Gwaii Haanas in 130 Years,” Accessed March 31, 2016: <http://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/the-first-monumental-pole-raised-in-gwaii-haanas-in-130-years-512806991.html>

<sup>756</sup>. Mein Kanada Reiseplaner, “5 Reiseziele zu den First Nations in Kanada” (3<sup>rd</sup> August 2014), Accessed March 31, 2016: <http://meinkanada-reiseplaner.de/kanada/eine-reise-zu-den-urspruengen-der-first-nations-in-kanada/>

<sup>757</sup>. Image retrieved from: Jaalen Edenshaw, Haida Artist and Craftsman, “Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole” (2013): <http://jaalen.net/>



Fig 44. The Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole in front of the Looking Around and Blinking House at Windy Bay on Lyell Island, Haida Gwaii.<sup>758</sup>

### **The Legacy Tree Witness to the Story of Gwaii Haanas**

The Legacy Pole is a kind of witness tree as a cultural heritage tree—red cedar or *Tsuu'aay*. Through the people's dependence on the tree for mundane to ceremonial items and survival, sacred meanings are carried within this species; and along with the many culturally modified (witness) trees found throughout the forests of Haida Gwaii, the red cedar is the Haida's Tree of Life symbolically and physically.

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<sup>758</sup>. Go Haida Gwaii (2013), accessed March 31, 2016: <http://www.gohaidagwaii.ca/photo-gallery/gwaii-haanas>



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Furthermore, today, with the current political system involving industrial logging and forestry practices in Canada and British Columbia, forests housing many stands of monumental red cedars would not exist.<sup>759</sup> So now with the Legacy Pole as the ‘reincarnation’ of the Haida tree of life, the Legacy Tree stands as a symbol for the social-ecological legacy of the forests and waters of Gwaii Haanas.

With its core theme being “Land, Sea, People,” the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole tells the story of Gwaii Haanas and the people who made the stand to protect their ancient coastal forest ecosystem from further industrial development.<sup>760</sup> Each crest (figure 45) is connected to a particular part of the people’s historic relationship with the place. The Pole is a tradition of storytelling with each element alluding to a particular set of stories, all of which are different and various and known to traditional Haida. This monumental witness tree is a positive act that witnesses the continuation of the forests in coexistence with the indigenous culture. It marks that Haida cultural values and the Haida Forest story are witnessed by Haida and non-Haida alike, held in place by the monumental pole.

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<sup>759</sup>. Council of the Haida Nation, “Haida Land Use Vision” (2004).

<sup>760</sup>. Haida Laas, “Many Good People Working Together,” (2013).



Fig 45. The Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole crests (image by Canadian Geographic online magazine; yellow text added by Amalia Moir, 2015).<sup>761</sup>

As *Tangghwan Llaana* (literally, “Sea Dweller”), a Grizzly Bear depicted with orca fins, is the headman of the sea beings and the spirit of weather originating from

<sup>761</sup>. Brittany Harris, “Q&A with a totem pole carver,” *Canadian Geographic* (July/August, 2013) accessed: [http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/magazine/ja13/gwaii\\_haanas\\_legacy\\_totem\\_pole.asp](http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/magazine/ja13/gwaii_haanas_legacy_totem_pole.asp)

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the ocean,<sup>762</sup> Jaalen Edenshaw's figure "Grizzly Bear" is seated at the senior position at the base of the Pole. There are at least fifteen myths involving Grizzly Bear and his enigmatic son, Raven, told in order in Haida by Skaay of Qquuna to the anthropologist John R. Swanton, who recorded them in *Haida Myths and Texts: Skidegate Dialect* (1905). This text was subsequently translated by Robert Bringhurst in *Being in Being*.<sup>763</sup> The Grizzly Bear witnesses the legitimacy of Haida oral mythtelling and its authority as an epistemology.<sup>764</sup> It tells of the Haida oral stories about grizzly bears on the island and the recent archaeological findings of the ancient presence of grizzly bears on Haida Gwaii thirteen thousand years ago. Haida oral history remembers not only the time when grizzly bears roamed the archipelago, but also the time before the last ice age, great floods, and changes in sea levels. What is more, Haida myth also recalls the appearance of the 'first' trees on the archipelago and the emergence of the 'first' forests.<sup>765</sup> The myth "Raven Travelling" tells how Raven created Haida Gwaii in myth-time, when by the instructions of a shaman elder on the seafloor he spat pieces of two quartz shaman's stones onto the sea surface.<sup>766</sup>

And he bit off a piece of the one that glittered  
and spat this piece at that one.  
It stuck too.  
Trees came into being then, they say.

Further up the Pole, in the left ear of the figure Edenshaw refers to as "Wasco" (also *Wassghu* of "Sea Wolf" a mythbeing), is the figure of the "Dog" which also represents

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<sup>762</sup>. "Sea Dweller (Haida *Tangghwan Llaana*) is the principal spirit being of the sea. In northern Haida texts, he is often called by his Tlingit name, *Gunnkadeit*." Skaay of the Qquuna Qiighawaay, *Being in Being: Collected Works of a Master Haida Mythteller*, Translated by Robert Bringhurst (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001), 376.

<sup>763</sup>. Skaay of the Qquuna Qiighawaay, *Being in Being*, Translated by Robert Bringhurst (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001), 376.

<sup>764</sup>. Jaalen Edenshaw, "Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole Crests," *YouTube* (Published 6<sup>th</sup> August 2013 by Jaalen Edenshaw): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUL0a1DH9I8>

<sup>765</sup>. Council of the Haida Nation (2004): 3.

<sup>766</sup>. Skaay of Qquuna, "Raven Travelling" (§1. 141-5), In *Skaay Being in Being*. Translated by Robert Bringhurst (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001): 288. ...Interestingly, the Haida grizzly evolved a special mouth and jaw structure for eating crustaceans.

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archaeological findings of ancient dogs on the island and that they hunted grizzly bears with ancient Haida.<sup>767</sup> Thus, the “Grizzly Bear” and the “Dog” are witnesses to Haida myhtelling and the Haida’s ancient presence on Haida Gwaii. Further evidence has also attested to the ancient Haida having practiced deep-water fishing since approximately 10,700 years ago as well.<sup>768</sup>

Held by “Grizzly Bear” is the figure called “Sculpin,” which represents the ocean floor. The sculpin is a bottom-feeding fish<sup>769</sup> and one of many Haida family crests<sup>770</sup> as it is for other coastal First Peoples.<sup>771</sup> Together, the “Sculpin” at the bottom and the “Eagle” figured at the top testify to the Agreement between the Haida Nation and the government of Canada to protect the land and waters Gwaii Haanas. They teach the importance of keeping Gwaii Haanas protected from the ocean floor to the mountain tops through a system of trust and collaboration between nations.

Although it has no precursor in traditional mythology, the figure “Five People Standing Together” is situated above “Grizzly Bear” and “Sculpin.” It conveys solidarity in its representation of the people who made a stand against the logging industry during the logging blockades of the 1980s. People who formed the blockade included predominantly members of the Haida Nation, as well as people not of the Haida Nation but who were in support of their cause. These blockades led to the end

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<sup>767</sup>. Jaalen Edenshaw, “Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole Crests,” *YouTube* (Published 6<sup>th</sup> August 2013 by Jaalen Edenshaw): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUL0a1DH9I8>

<sup>768</sup>. Council of the Haida Nation (2004).

<sup>769</sup>. Sculpins (*Cottidae*) are bottom-feeding fish found in the ocean around Gwaii Haanas and other areas.

<sup>770</sup>. Jaalen Edenshaw, quoted on Spirit of the Northwest Coast webpage: <https://www.spiritofthewestcoast.com/product/two-sculpins-haida-print/>

<sup>771</sup>. “...used by families from the Haida Nation, the Kwakwaka’wakw, Kwakiutl or Kwaguilth People as well as families from other West Coast Nations. The Sculpin is closely associated with Komokwa, the King of the Undersea World and has an affinity to copper as well as treasures” ([https://www.spiritofthewestcoast.com/symbol/the\\_sculpin/](https://www.spiritofthewestcoast.com/symbol/the_sculpin/)).

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of logging in the area and the eventual creation of Gwaii Haanas as a protected land.<sup>772</sup>

As myth speaks of a relation between the Raven and the Grizzly Bear, Raven is frequently depicted as emerging from the Sea Bear. Here, however, the “Raven” figure sits above “Five People Standing Together.” The “Raven” represents one of two sides or halves of Haida civilization and the Eagle represents the other.<sup>773</sup> Traditional marriages in Haida society were exogamous, meaning that if a person was born of the Eagle clan, he or she could only marry a person from the Raven clan and vice versa. As exogamous marriage required each couple to consist of an Eagle and a Raven, each person from a different village, the two clans were thus stitched together. In this sense, the “Raven” and “Eagle” figures on the Legacy Pole speak of cooperation between families and community ties. Jaalen Edenshaw noted that the Raven and Eagle also signify the importance of cooperation between family members so they can “move forward and get things done.”<sup>774</sup> He also noted, the “Raven” also reflects “the Gwaii Haanas blockade when the people of Old Massett and the people of Skidegate” who came together and formed the line on the logging road.<sup>775</sup>

Above “Raven” is “Sacred-One-Standing-And-Moving” who, according to John R. Swanton’s translation of the Haida name *Kuuya Gyaagandal*,<sup>776</sup> is referred to as “Honoured Standing Traveller” in Robert Bringhurst’s translation of the myths of Skaay in *Being in Being*.<sup>777</sup> Soon after Edenshaw began carving the Legacy Pole, a 7.7 magnitude earthquake shook Haida Gwaii, after which hot springs in Gwaii Haanas dried up. This inspired Edenshaw to carve “Sacred-One-Standing-And-Moving” on

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<sup>772</sup>. Jaalen Edenshaw, “Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole Crests,” *YouTube* (Published 6<sup>th</sup> August 2013 by Jaalen Edenshaw): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUL0a1DH9I8>

<sup>773</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>774</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>775</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>776</sup>. John R. Swanton (editor and translator), *Haida Texts and Myths: Skidegate Dialects* (Washington DC: Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 29, 1905): 190.

<sup>777</sup>. Skaay of the Qquuuna Qiighawaay, *Being in Being*, Translated by Robert Bringhurst (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001): 156–168.

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the Pole.<sup>778</sup> According to Haida myths, this mythbeing is responsible for producing earthquakes that affect the archipelago.<sup>779</sup> In Haida myth-time, spirit beings tasked *Kuuya Gyaagandal* to hold the housepole of the worlds on his chest. The weight of the poles grinded upon his chest is what creates earthquakes. Sacred-One-Standing-And-Moving or Honoured Standing Traveler invented a way of measuring them by measuring the movement of the Mallard Duck oil in a Horseclam shell.

Worn upon “Sacred-One’s” back is the figure Edenshaw refers to as “Wasco,” another Haida mythbeing also known as *Waasghu* or “Sea Wolf,” who is the power and allure of the physical world.<sup>780</sup> “Wasco is a re-spelling of Swanton’s word *wasgo*. In Bringhurst’s orthography, it is *waasghu*.”<sup>781</sup> Identified by Sean Kane, “this is the name of the Sea Wolf, the mythbeing who seems to stand for the visible physical world of time and space in its power and allure. The Haida hero in myth often catches and skins a sea wolf, thereby demonstrating his power over physical reality.”<sup>782</sup> Upon “Wasco’s” back is “Marten,” a figure representing the American or pine marten, *Martes americana*, who is a member of the weasel or *Mustelidae* family. Here, Edenshaw described “Marten” as the one who warns of an impending earthquake: the Marten “runs up and down the Pole before an earthquake.”<sup>783</sup> According to Robert Bringhurst in Skaay’s *Being in Being*, “Plain Old Marten” or “*Kkuuxuginaagits* [...] is the mythname of the marten.”<sup>784</sup> Featured in numerous myths of Skaay, Marten (along with the Swallow) “are called to run a line from the

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<sup>778</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>779</sup>. Jaalen Edenshaw, “Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole Crests,” *YouTube* (Published 6<sup>th</sup> August 2013 by Jaalen Edenshaw): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUL0a1DH9I8>

<sup>780</sup>. Skaay of the Qquuuna Qiighawaay, *Being in Being*, Translated by Robert Bringhurst (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001).

<sup>781</sup>. John Reed Swanton, *Haida Texts and Myths, Skidegate Dialect* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905): 194–195. Accessed March 6, 2016: <https://archive.org/stream/haidatextsmythss00swan#page/n5/mode/2up>.

<sup>782</sup>. With much gratitude I thank Sean Kane for providing me with this information (November 5, 2015).

<sup>783</sup>. Jaalen Edenshaw, “Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole Crests.”; Skaay of the Qquuuna Qiighawaay, *Being in Being*, Translated by Robert Bringhurst (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2001).

<sup>784</sup>. Ibid, 371.

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depths of the earth to the apex of heaven,” and while “[t]here is no classical Haida text that quite explains the link, [...] it appears that this line and its associated pole can be used [...] to provoke or measure earthquakes.”<sup>785</sup> Here, “Marten” runs up and down the carved red cedar tree—the Haida Tree of Life—which now stands transformed and sentinel as the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole.

In the left ear of the Wasco is the “Dog” figure, which signifies archaeological findings that have been backed up by the Haida’s stories about their presence on the archipelago going back at least thirteen thousand years.<sup>786</sup> To date, these dog remains are “the oldest evidence of humans on the island.”<sup>787</sup> Hence, “Dog” also acts as another reminder of long-standing presence of the Haida on the Island of the People. Sean Kane pointed out that, while dogs are mentioned in Haida myths, they are not speaking personages like the wild animals.<sup>788</sup> In the other ear of “Wasco” is a figure called “The Visitor.” Edenshaw included this feature as it acknowledges visitors as a contemporary part of the landscape of Gwaii Haanas. “If you go down there in the summer,” he explained, “the visitors are part of the landscape and part of the story down there now.”<sup>789</sup>

The figure called “Three Watchmen” was made in honour of the Haida Watchmen and the Watchmen Program on Gwaii Haanas. Traditionally, Watchmen figures are often found atop Haida poles; however, there is no known reference to Haida myth. Their position near the top of the Legacy Pole reflects their level of importance and the significance of witnessing and keeping an attentive eye on the place. Named after them are the official watchmen who guard Haida heritage sites

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<sup>785</sup>. Ibid, 371.

<sup>786</sup>. Jaalen Edenshaw, “Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole Crests,” *YouTube* (Published 6<sup>th</sup> August 2013 by Jaalen Edenshaw): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUL0a1DH9I8>

<sup>787</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>788</sup>. Sean Kane, personal communication, November 5, 2015.

<sup>789</sup>. Jaalen Edenshaw, “Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole Crests,” *YouTube* (Published 6<sup>th</sup> August 2013 by Jaalen Edenshaw): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUL0a1DH9I8>

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and run the Watchmen Program which provides a safe space for keeping knowledge and memories of ancient pre-contact Haida life in place.<sup>790</sup> After the systematic post-contact clearing of these places through waves of epidemics and European colonial occupation passed, Haida watchmen (men and women alike) returned to keep an eye on these sacred places and eventually created the Watchmen Program to welcome and educate visitors. In the past thirty to forty years, these heritage sites have become destinations to which visitors travel. With the guidance of the Haida Watchmen, they receive critical education about the history, people, and traditional cultural as well as the spiritual meanings cradled by the forests, the sea, and the sky. Edenshaw expressed that the “Three Watchmen” figure is “also there [...] for those who have been [in Gwaii Haanas] guarding over the land in the last few decades;” this includes wardens, researchers, Haida citizens, and others.<sup>791</sup> The old poles in the village site of SGang Gwayy (a UNESCO world heritage site) and those in the old village of K'uuna Lnagaay are the physical and symbolic traces of the pre-contact world of the Haida; spirit-places of the past now have a symbolic bridge connecting them to the present with the new presence of the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole.

The Legacy Pole ends at the top with the “Eagle” figure, which represents the other side of Haida civilization. It also references the audience’s attention to the 1993 Agreement between the Haida Nation and the Canadian government by signifying the mountain tops, the highest reaching point of the protected area.<sup>792</sup> The Pole begins and ends with this point of the story of Gwaii Haanas and the Haida people: that the two nations and the people within them need to work together *mutually* for the good of the forests and waters of Gwaii Haanas. Without this agreement, little can be achieved. Success of coexistence comes through

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<sup>790</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>791</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>792</sup>. Jaalen Edenshaw, “Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole Crests,” *YouTube* (Published 6<sup>th</sup> August 2013 by Jaalen Edenshaw): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUL0a1DH9I8>



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collaborating efforts and acknowledgments of one another's perspectives, narratives, and values, honouring each other's testimonies regarding the place in a binding contract. In this sense, the Eagle represents the Agreement as a kind of Indigenous–non-Indigenous environmental covenant of Gwaii Haanas as a type of commons for the continuation of all life including the Haida way of life.<sup>793</sup>

The Legacy Pole's commission was in name of the 1993 Agreement that protects the land and the sea of Gwaii Haanas, but this is not where its story begins or ends. Its dominant themes are coexistence and cooperation and of Haida cultural emplacement. Two features (Grizzly Bear and Dog) are witnesses to the Haida's ancient presence and to the validity of oral traditions and Western science. Sacred-One-Standing-And-Moving along with Marten, and the Sea Wolf or Wasco are depictions of mythical figures, one of the earth and the other of the sea, which bear witness to the continuation of Haida mythtelling. The Eagle and Raven, representing the two clans of the Haida Nation and the Eagle representing the Agreement between the Haida Nation and Canada testify to successfully achieving healing and social–ecological well-being through cooperation and respectful co-existence.

### **The Legacy Pole's Critical Pedagogy as a Counter-Monument**

Like traditional Haida myths that focus more on everything and everyone in the story instead of focusing exclusively on the human characters, it dismisses heroic imagery and focuses on telling the various stories of the place, plants, animals, and people involved in the local history of Gwaii Haanas. As an original Indigenous art form, it is meant to be interactive and inclusive—it pulls its audience members in to read or 'hear' the stories for themselves—especially if you are not at first familiar with the meaning behind the individual crests and how mythtelling works in the

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<sup>793</sup>. Ibid.

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people's tradition. One must delve deeper to begin to understand the complex storied social and ecological relationships depicted. One cannot read a pole the way one reads a book. While it requires active participation in the transmission of its stories, it is still highly accessible regardless of familiarity: each figure on the pole is a direct reference to people, events, and relationships. The overall meaning or moral of the pole's story of cooperation and coexistence to sustainably manage the land and waters emerges as one learns about or begins to understand the meanings signified the crests. It tells the stories of Gwaii Haanas and carries the meaning of ancestral memories, the health of the landscape and the people, as well as their deeply woven connection with the place. While it cannot tell the complete story of the Haida people and Haida Gwaii, it offers a doorway into the forests of Haida Gwaii and of the Haida culture that emerged with those ancient forests whose trees testify (i.e., culturally modified witness trees) to this shared life. This life, witnessed by the Haida Legacy Tree/Pole, is the testimony that counters that of the traditional Euro-Canadian colonial way of relating to the forests and the people of Haida Gwaii.

Similar to the way a surveyor marks a tree to impress it as a witness tree, so the forestscape can be transformed into a piece of real-estate, the people who build monuments and place them in a particular place mark it as belonging to them in order to reterritorialize it. In the case of Canada's colonial past and neocolonial present, the placing of traditional monuments in areas previously occupied by indigenous persons or people act to erase their story of belonging in that place, replacing it with the new imperial narrative of dominion, or by selectively retell the story of First Nations. Perhaps nowhere else is this found more than in cases when monuments are said to be *for* First Nations rather than having been built and placed in an area *by* First Nations themselves.

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For brief comparison to the Haida Legacy Pole, an example of this issue of representation is found within part of the Coast Salish lands that became Vancouver's Stanley Park, an area advertised as a piece of primeval forest wilderness.<sup>794</sup> There, at Brockton Point in Stanley Park, commemorative and educational plaques are meant to provide historical and political context for ten poles that were bought from different locations and brought there at different points in time. The problem, however, is that those poles were not raised in an act of witnessing to the continuation of the Coast Salish way of life—the people who were forcibly removed from the area that is Stanley Park today—in this place. Furthermore, the plaques were “carefully scripted as a telos of colonial progress, telling us selectively about Coast Salish histories, traditions, and previous uses of the land.”<sup>795</sup> What was omitted by the plaques is “the colonial legal practices that have constituted the landscape,” and the “ongoing land claims.”<sup>796</sup> Renisa Mawani notes clearly that “While the Centre recognizes the Coast [...] Salish—their past, present, and future place in the nation—it also works to erase the legal and political struggles that have been formative of Stanley Park, thus reproducing the landscape as fixed and natural.”<sup>797</sup> Quoting Ernest Renan, she points out that the function of forgetting in colonial expressions of monumentalism “is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation.”<sup>798</sup> Thus, these ‘monumental’ poles with their commemorative educational plaques in Stanley Park are witness not to the Coast Salish people, their story, or their way of life, but to strategically (re)write their post-colonial place (as the city and province see it) in the remanence of the ancient forest the Coast Salish still call home. As a result of the plaques and the discourse that represents these icons of

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<sup>794</sup>. Renisa Mawani, “Legalities of Nature: Law, Empire, and Wilderness Landscapes in Canada,” *Social Identities* 13, no. 6 (2007).

<sup>795</sup>. *Ibid.*: 728.

<sup>796</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>797</sup>. *Ibid.*: 729–730.

<sup>798</sup>. Mawani, “Legalities of Nature”: 731.

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Coast Salish culture, these Stanley Park poles bear witness not to Coast Salish heritage like the Haida's Legacy Pole does for the forests of Gwaii Haanas; instead, the plaques overcast the poles and work to erase the presence of these people and their culture from the environmental imaginations of the public.

Embodied by a red cedar, the Legacy Pole does not create the illusion of permanence; unlike the meaning of a stone or metal monument—as if “stone somehow guarantees the permanence of the idea it commemorates”<sup>799</sup>—its temporariness conveys the importance of teaching and carrying on the values of the Haida Nation: *Yah'guudang*, respect for all living things for the well-being of the environment and future generations. Their way of life and their forests can only continue if there are future generations of Haida and monumental Red Cedars to witness it and its continuation. The Legacy Pole, then, represents the social-ecological system of interdependence between the Haida Nation and the forests of Haida Gwaii. It is a testament to responsible coexistence, which requires the people mindfully manage themselves and the way they treat the trees for it will determine the fate of their forests, and the fate of their forests, in turn, means the fate of their culture.

Unlike traditional monuments that convey a promise of permanence through their composition of metal and stone,<sup>800</sup> the Legacy Pole—as a heritage red cedar tree standing as a monumental pole in its second life—“directly provoke[s] analysis of historical incompleteness, inherent errors, contradictions, and decay.”<sup>801</sup> As an organic material that will eventually return or be reclaimed by the forests from where it originated, completing a cycle as did the many poles before it (figure 46).

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<sup>799</sup>. Sue-anne Ware, “Contemporary Anti-Memorials and National Identity in the Victorian Landscape,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 28, no. 81 (2004): 121–33.

<sup>800</sup>. Birgit Neumann, “Monumentalism and Monuments in Postcolonial Literatures: Dismembering Tradition,” *Anglia* 131 (2013): 262–81, <https://doi.org/10.1515/anglia-2013-0036>.

<sup>801</sup>. Adrienne L Burk, “Beneath and Before: Continuums of Publicness in Public Art,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 7, no. 6 (2006): 949–64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649360601055862>.

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Symbolic in itself, this natural process of transformation, decay, and return represents not only the intimate relationship between the Haida, the trees, and the woods—an expression of an intergenerational belongingness to the forests—but also the organic and flowing nature of their oral traditions and values that seek to be carried or witnessed by future generations. This is sustained by the Haida's presence in these forests and the continuation of their way of life that witness the continuation of their woodlands.

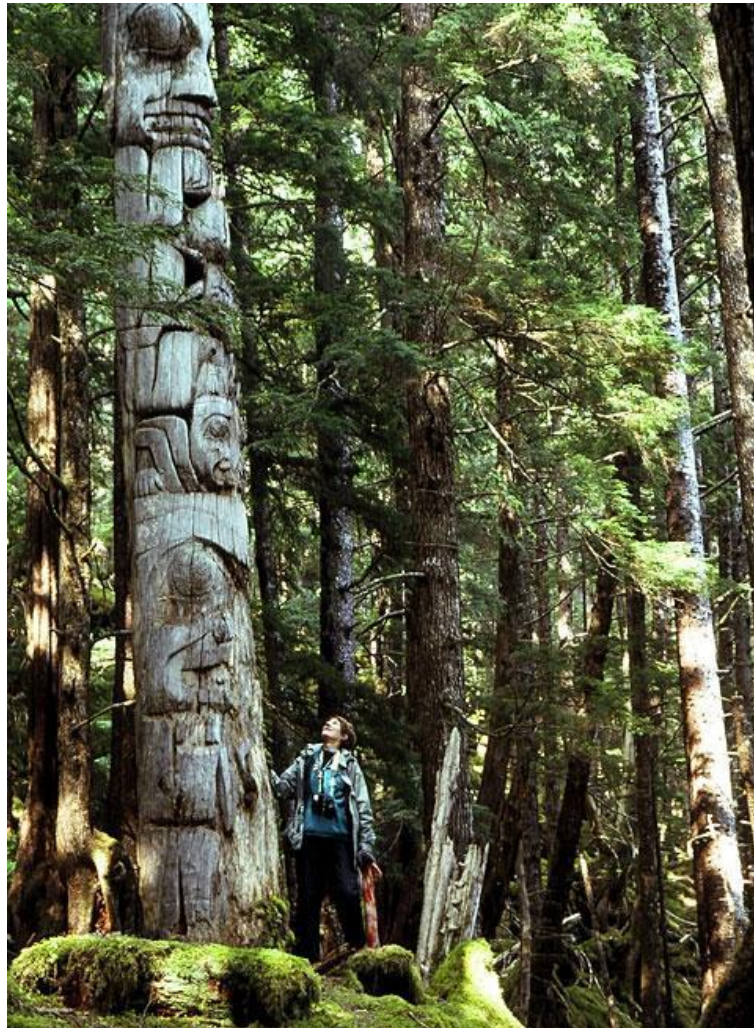


Fig 46. Time has begun to pull this old pole back into a forest on Haida Gwaii<sup>802</sup> and illustrates how art made of wood (as it was in traditional times) is intended to be perishable. Poles then are *meant* to be reclaimed by the forests and this in itself is reflective of the traditional indigenous human–sylvan relationship. Art is seen as being as mortal as the artists and their materials. The more decay the greater the impulse to create new/more works of art.

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<sup>802</sup>. CBC, “Haida Gwaii - Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia,” *Seven Wonders of Canada* (2016), accessed March 31, 2016: [http://www.cbc.ca/sevenwonders/wonder\\_haida\\_gwaii.html](http://www.cbc.ca/sevenwonders/wonder_haida_gwaii.html)

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Unlike the surveyor's mark that signifies an inclusion–exclusion dichotomy, The Legacy Pole represents not just the two clans of the Haida Nation, but those who worked with the Haida Nation to change the way the forests of Gwaii Haanas were managed. The lead carver, Jaalen Edenshaw deliberately selected a design that includes crests that reflect others in the pole: visitors, the many good people who stood together for the forests, the Haida watchmen, Eagle and Raven clans, archaeologists, the land and waters of Gwaii Haanas and Canada.<sup>803</sup> While it acknowledges Canada, the Legacy Pole also denies the historic (and at times presently pervasive) hegemonic discourses in the public and political spheres as a counter-monument. These hegemonic forms of representing the Haida are the same that are still an issue that depicts indigenous populations as “wards of the State”<sup>804</sup>—a view spun by the federal government pervasively during era of the erasure of the Indigenous, the period of residential schools and forced assimilation, while propagating the industrial economic values behind Western logging practices:<sup>805</sup> “The commissionaires employed a for-their-own-good argument to justify expropriation. For the authors of early Federal Government considerations about Indians, then, discursive constructions of the Indian as childlike wards of the state were intrinsically linked to more material and grounded practices of territorial expansion.”<sup>806</sup> The Western values and narratives that maintained unsustainable logging practices and the marginalization of the Haida people are the issues that the

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<sup>803</sup>. Jaalen Edenshaw, “Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole Crests,” *YouTube* (Published 6<sup>th</sup> August 2013 by Jaalen Edenshaw): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUI0a1DH9I8>

<sup>804</sup>. Sarah de Leeuw, “‘If anything is to be done with the Indian, we must catch him very young’: colonial constructions of Aboriginal children and the geographies of Indian residential schooling in British Columbia, Canada,” *Children's Geographies* 7, no. 2 (2009): 128.

<sup>805</sup>. Ibid; Drushka, Ken, Bob Nixon, and Ray Travers (Eds.), *Touch Wood: BC Forests at the Crossroads* (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 1993).

<sup>806</sup>. Leeuw (2009): 128.

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Legacy Pole welcomes viewers to critically contemplate and discuss; issues of “ownership, memory, identity, and control” in other words.<sup>807</sup>

Like the monumental red cedar that became the Pole, the place where the Pole was raised was also selected by the Haida carver and the Haida Nation. Since it is located at Windy Bay on Lyell Island, the Legacy Pole’s work as a counter-monumental witness tree is maximized for it not displaced. The displacement of monumental poles, as exemplified by the poles in Stanley Park, effectively makes them vulnerable to entanglements of non-indigenous representations and colonial discourses about them, the social-political history, and their place in that narrative.

From its conceptual beginning to its material manifestation, the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole has been, as it continues to be, in the hands of the Haida Nation and the soil of Gwaii Haanas where it stands sentinel between the waters of Windy Bay and the forests of Lyell Island. The crests were chosen by its carver to tell the Haida people’s story of Gwaii Haanas from their perspective and the perspective of the place (i.e., the interests of the other beings that inhabit and depend on the ecosystem) and carved by Haida artisans. Altogether the crests are not just motifs but visible story arcs that run across the mountains and into the forest, sky, and sea. Together, they make up a living ecology of stories, a mythology. The poetic effect of this mythology relating the real and mythopoeic worlds overwhelms the viewer with this inexpressible totality which is so much greater than what can be conveyed by a monument alone; it requires an audience, people to witness it and its stories and imports.

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<sup>807</sup>. Adrienne L. Burk, “Beneath and Before: Continuums of Publicness in Public Art,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 7, no 6. (2006): 952.

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The length of time devoted to carving the Legacy Pole (“[m]ore than a year’s worth of hours” according to Jaalen Edenshaw<sup>808</sup>) and the labour involved in transporting it to and raising it at Windy Bay is significant in that it represents the way this counter-monument has come to function as an emplaced mnemonic device. That is, as a witness object situated in the landscape it serves as a memory device used to teach about the history of Gwaii Haanas, the ecosystems, the Haida Nation, and the government of Canada’s agreement to co-manage the area with the Council of the Haida Nation. The time period in which the Pole was created and raised involved three members representing the new Haida generation of carvers and four hundred people—mostly members of the Haida Nation—who participated in the Pole’s raising; time that allowed the inclusion and participation of different generations of members of the Haida Nation. Most importantly, although the Legacy Pole was commissioned by the Archipelago Management Board—an equal number of members from the Haida Nation and the government of Canada—it is a monument that was created *by* the Haida *for* the Haida.

The event of raising a monumental pole is sacred and required ritual activities specific “to the traditions of those who have requested, carved, and raised the pole,” ceremonies that “[mark] a transformation in the relation of the pole with its community.”<sup>809</sup> According to Haida tradition, two days after the Pole was raised the Haida Nation held a large community celebration to commemorate the event.<sup>810</sup> As a whole, the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole came from an old-growth red cedar from the ancient forests of Haida Gwaii, was carved, raised, and feasted on the

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<sup>808</sup>. Jaalen Edenshaw, quoted in a transcript, titled “Q&A with a totem pole carver,” of an interview with Brittany Harris of Canadian Geographic (July/August 2013 issue): [http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/magazine/ja13/gwaii\\_haanas\\_legacy\\_totem\\_pole.asp](http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/magazine/ja13/gwaii_haanas_legacy_totem_pole.asp)

<sup>809</sup>. Adrienne L. Burk, “Beneath and Before: Continuums of Publicness in Public Art,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 7, no 6. (2006): p. 957.

<sup>810</sup>. Haida Laas, 2013; Parks Canada, <http://www.pc.gc.ca/eng/pn-np/bc/gwaiihaanas/natcul/natcul5.aspx>



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archipelago,<sup>811</sup> and Windy Bay has witnessed once again the return of the descendants as their ancestors did.

Windy Bay, the site of the Legacy Pole, has for one of the first times since the long interruption of European and Euro-Canadian colonization performed as a gathering site for the monumental event as it and other sacred sites in Gwaii Haanas once did in the past. In this way, the Pole is more than just a monument; it is a positive act of witnessing in that it means “that the Haida way of life is continuing,” and while things change over time “the meaning of what [they] do stays the same.”<sup>812</sup> Once it was emplaced in Gwaii Haanas, the Legacy Tree became an official site to which people are now travelling. The continuance of Haida cultural traditions, in turn, signifies the continuation of the existence of monumental Red Cedars and the integrity of the forests of Gwaii Haanas as first-growth coastal temperate forests. As the first monumental pole to rise up out of the earth of Gwaii Haanas in over one-hundred and thirty years, the Legacy Pole forms a vital bridge with the old poles of Gwaii Haanas heritage village sites, opening a direct connection to the past for the Haida Nation and a connection between the once and future forests of Gwaii Haanas, among the last of their kind in the world.

The Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole marks a significant point in the Haida Nation’s progress in regaining greater control over their lands under the ‘post-colonial’ government of Canada. Since the Haida Nation blockades in the 1980s many other First Nations and indigenous peoples from elsewhere in the world have looked to them for insights into creating similar change for their people and lands. Within this counter-narrative ‘spoken’ by the Legacy Pole, the traditional Haida forest story protects the integrity of their testimony to their social-ecological relationship with

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<sup>811</sup>. “Feasting’ refers to the tradition when a pole is considered to become a living member of the life of a community.” Source: Adrienne L. Burk, “Beneath and Before: Continuums of Publicness in Public Art,” *Social & Cultural Geography* 7, no 6. (2006): p. 957

<sup>812</sup>. Jaalen Edenshaw, quoted in the video, “The Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole,” by Parks Canada (2013).

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the forests. Ultimately, it simultaneously presents a memory of the way the forests once were and vision of the future forests—it presents the possibility of a reimagined forest in the North America environmental mind should this story be heard.

A brief comparison of a Canadian community Pole to the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole reveals how these two peoples imagine the forests and what it means to them: the “Town Pole” monument at the Evergreen Mall in Sooke, Vancouver Island, BC (figure 47), is dedicated to the heritage of the logging industry in the region. Two metal (larger than real human) figures represent two white male loggers. The figure at the top of the Pole is a *high rigger*, the person who would climb the highest tree in a cutblock, cut off the top, and harness it, turning it into a spar tree used to clear the forest around it. Closer to the bottom is another logger standing on a springboard and is holding an axe swung into the side of the pole. Despite the fact that the historical west coast logging has changed owing to twenty-first century policies, “dubious land transfer schemes” had since been “arranged whereby logged off forests are subdivided for real estate”. This is something New Democrat Party member John Horgan referred to as a “Tree Farm Giveaways.”<sup>813</sup>



Fig 47. (Left) The “Town Pole” monument at the Evergreen Mall in Sooke, Vancouver Island, BC; (right) for scale, the “Town Pole” shown beside two Douglas fir trees, which have since been felled for unclear reasons (Photographs by Karen Wonders).<sup>814</sup>

<sup>813</sup>. Goldstream News Gazette, “The Tree Farm Giveaway,” *MLA Report*, October 17, 2007, <http://www.firstnations.de/media/06-0-horgan.pdf>.

<sup>814</sup>. Karen Wonders, “Haida Nation v. BC & Weyerhaeuser,” *Cathedral Grove* (2010), accessed March 5, 2016: <http://www.cathedralgrove.eu/text/09-Related-Stories-3.htm>

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Most town monuments in Canada are tributes to industries and industrial cultures, be they logging or mining, which have legacies of imperial and post-colonial (neocolonial) exploitation. In examining Stanley Park in Vancouver, Renisa Mawani pointed out an important insight made by Jane Jacobs's in her work on the postcolonial city that reminds us that,<sup>815</sup>

imperialism “lingers in the present as the idea of empire itself, as a trace which is memorialized, celebrated, mourned and despised”. This “is a potent memory,” Jacobs tells us, one “which can shape trajectories of progress, drive nostalgic returns and establish the structures of difference though which racialized struggles over territory operate.” The ambivalence that Jacobs locates in the postcolonial city is also evident in landscapes of nature. At the same time that Stanley Park honours Vancouver's imperial history with its commemorations of the past, new histories are cultivated, celebrated, and displayed.

Occupying meaningful public places, town/city monuments—be they crafted or part of a landscape like Stanley Park—work to promote and reify a particular set of values carried in the stories their monuments tell. When we speak of wild forest trees in their second life, transformed into things of our making, it is important to safeguard their memory by also speaking of them in their first life, enplaced in non-human nature, so we do not *displace* them when we imagine them. Doing so helps us remember the life of a tree true to the life of a forest by seeing the tree in the monument and foresee the forest in the tree. To see a tree in a seed and a forest in a tree, see the forest for the tree, and the tree for the monument. As the poetic logger Peter Trower concluded in his “Last Spar Tree” poem, “Dream on in peace, old tree / perhaps you're a truer monument to [humankind] / than any rock top crucifix...”<sup>816</sup>

When it comes to monumental works of art that positively witness the continuation of a particular relationship between a people and a place, it is important

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<sup>815</sup> Renisa Mawani, “Legalities of Nature: Law, Empire, and Wilderness Landscapes in Canada,” 731-732.

<sup>816</sup> Jaime Yard, “Taking Tea with Granddaddy Tough: Accessing the Affective Topography of Logging Poetry and Labour,” 60.

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to ask, as Haydie Gooder and Jane Jacobs did, “when the settler nation fantasizes about coexistence, is it engaged in remembering or forgetting?”<sup>817</sup> Mawani noted how “[j]ust as the nation requires the erasure of its violent ontology [...], landscapes of nature [become] deeply contingent upon concealing the histories of their prior uses and previous inhabitants, and the violence of their removal.”<sup>818</sup> It is not enough to solely intellectualize social-ecological degradation and loss when searching for redemption and reconciliation; it must also be felt (more or less) so it may be fully understood in the process of reimagining the forests and so a new forest story sustained.

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As we have seen, following the Highland Clearances and forest of forgetting at the end of Part One, “BEECH” is about the colonial *clearance*. It is about doubting the dominant or traditional settler-colonial environmental imagination and actions that reify it. *The Jack Pine* is about Indigenous *erasure* and Canada’s landscape myth of “the wilderness.” It is a symbolic record of the colonial legacy in Canada. Big Lonely Doug is about what *remains* or *presence* despite growing number of clearances as well as the mirroring traumas between the land and the work of its destruction. It expanded on the personal clearance in “BEECH” and questioned the clearances made in the name of a Canadian industry. Lastly, the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole is also about *presence*; it takes the colonial attempts at erasure and purges the myth of a vacant, pristine “wilderness” by asserting Haida (Indigenous) presence. In doing so, this Legacy Tree is a statement and a demonstration of an alternative social-ecological system to that of the settler-colonial states.

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<sup>817</sup>. Renisa Mawani, “Legalities of Nature: Law, Empire, and Wilderness Landscapes in Canada,” *Social Identities* 13, no. 6 (2007): 731.

<sup>818</sup>. Ibid.

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In the next part, I work with the concept of the *Wild Other* (which I take from the root of the word wilderness, *wild-deor* or “wild deer”) using the symbol of the wild deer (“beast of pleasure”) and bears (“ravenous beasts”) as ways to further explore the dis-ease at play in social-ecological degradation and harm. I use this notion of the Wild Other as a kind of go-between, a guide in or to the process of working through social-ecological loss. I take up Sigmund Freud’s notion of grieving as a process of *working through* social-ecological loss versus *reacting* to it, using three examples. First the case of Grant Hadwin, the Haida Nation (following the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole), and *Kiid k’iyaas* or the Golden Spruce. In this case I also return to the poetry of Peter Trower for insights into the parallel trauma between the psyche and land. Lastly, I explore reflections on bears and humans—according to Charlie Russell<sup>819</sup> and Sid Marty<sup>820</sup>—to elaborate the notion of “*dis-ease*” and to explore an Indigenous understanding of consent, recognition, respect, and compassion as discussed by Umeek, E. Richard Atleo in *Principles of Tsawalk*.

Part One is about recognizing social-ecological grief—that there is a long-standing dis-ease at play in a common Western cultural psyche, one found time and again in clearances dating back to the time of Gilgamesh. Then, Part Two looked at the long legacies of social and ecological destruction in Canada and the United States, where notions of “improvement,” “progress,” and “forest, forestry” were imported from the British Isles and mainland Europe. Lastly, Part Three takes up mourning as confrontation and taking responsibility for social-ecological grief, an effort towards reconciliation and redemption, and perhaps a glimpse of what “healing” and new beginnings might be like.

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<sup>819</sup>. G. A. Bradshaw, *Talking with Bears: Conversations with Charlie Russell* (Toronto: Rocky Mountain Books Ltd, 2020).

<sup>820</sup>. Sid Marty, *The Black Grizzly of Whiskey Creek* (Toronto: Emblem, 2008).

PART THREE  
The Wild Other in Social-Ecological Grief

*if you can't see all sides around you,  
you're walking too fast in the forest*  
FRANK MEUSE

barefoot, you feel  
terrain  
pressing back to you  
each step a call and return  
of wild things

– Shalan Joudry<sup>821</sup>

And once I saw a stump move in the slashwaste  
become a bear and patch the distance blackly  
an audience of one who watched us coldly  
his great cocked head, a blot of disapproval  
He'd seen us come and go, the burly beggar  
whitefaced intruders born to savage beauty  
Soon we'd be gone again He shrugged his shoulders,  
Showed us his rump and prowled away disdainful

– Peter Trower<sup>822</sup>

For those whose lives are regularly in direct contact with or observation of the environmental changes taking place in this era of the Anthropocene, ecological grief is readily present. Indigenous communities and ecologists are a few examples of people on the frontlines, the former being some of the most negatively affected by climate change.<sup>823</sup> For most people living in developed areas, fully comprehending these massive changes to entire landscapes seems difficult to near impossible, and can, mostly, only be learned of from afar. Around the world, ways of life have also been drastically changing as more young people in traditional cultures are sent away to be educated by the standard Western education system or to find a means to live. As the world becomes increasingly homogenized according to the Western education, economic, and agricultural systems, there are fewer ways to approach the

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<sup>821</sup>. Shalan Joudry, "Slow Walking," *Waking Ground* (Kentville: Gaspereau Press, 2020), 57.

<sup>822</sup>. Peter Trower, "A Mountain Shudders Through Me" (pp. 102 – 103) in *Chainsaws in the Cathedral: Collected Woods Poems* (Victoria: Ekstasis Editions Canada Ltd, 1999).

<sup>823</sup>. Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman (eds.), *Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief* (Kingston: McGill & Queen's University Press, 2017).

social and ecological issues to which such systems contribute. Paying attention to particular places, specific species, or particular aspects of the global crisis is one way to engage in the process of ecological mourning without getting swallowed up by the overwhelming issue of climate change and all that it entails. While it seems that, as Sabine Hofmeister put it, “what we call nature is known down to the atmosphere, genomes, brains, and functions of reproduction” among other things,<sup>824</sup> we in the Western world know the environment and other beings herein only according to such perspectives, scientific (taxonomy, ecological roles for ecological services), economic (biomass), and so forth. We are concerned with the materiality of wild others, of the land and waters; but not the beings themselves. What is the common cultural sense of connectedness to wild-others? How can anyone face and see the harm the dominant modes of human-animal and human-forest relations have done to living, breathing, will-full beings? How can our dominant societies achieve social and ecological justice if they cannot recognize others as individual beings unto themselves?

This part delves deeper into the notion of social-ecological grief by looking at the specific aspect of the loss and grief of wildness or wild others—other-than-human beings as well as other human cultures—that is, wills other than those of the modern Western ethos. It is about facing ones who our systems have harmed. This notion of the wild other, which I also refer to as the *wild-déor* aspect contained by forests is taken from the keywords *wildness* and *wilderness*. The term *wild-déor* literally means “wild” and “deer,” but was used to refer to wild animals more generally. The word “wild” comes from the root word *wilde*, meaning “will.”<sup>825</sup> I argue that *wild-déor* generally—other-than-human species and multispecies assemblages, as well as

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<sup>824</sup> Sabine Hofmeister, “Natures Running Wild: A Social-Ecological Perspective on Wilderness,” *Nature and Culture* 4, no. 3 (2009): 293–315, <https://doi.org/10.3167/nc.2009.040305>, 294.

<sup>825</sup> Della Thompson (ed.), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 9th Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995): 1780.

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peoples outside modern Western cultures—are a vital part of the co-becoming ecological mourning process for it imports a greater kincentric lens and thereby has the capacity to foster more inclusive, socially and ecologically just relationships. It is about the larger life of the forest—the multispecies and multicultural communities being harmed. It is about a question of relationship and *belonging* in the wider web of life.

Facing the growing loss of biodiversity, languages, and ways of life in the wake of an increasingly biocultural homogenization through industrial development and the standard modern education system, I ask: What are we losing when we lose bioculturally diverse forests like the ones surrounding the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole or Big Lonely Doug?<sup>9</sup> To answer this question, I explore the notion of the *wild-déor* aspect of the ancient woods. I look at some examples of bears and forests and what they can teach us about our ways of seeing them. For it is in the destruction of forests that we are confronted with wild species rendered homeless, traumas created in our interrelations with other peoples and other-than-human beings in the more-than-human world. It is in addressing this *relational trauma* that I explore how ecological mourning is all about co-creating kinship and cultivating more responsible, ethical relationships beyond ourselves in the modern Western world. First, a few discussions on biocultural diversity and mourning.



## Chapter One: Biocultural Diversity

When Auden wrote, ‘A culture is no better than its woods,’ he knew that, having carelessly lost more of their woods than any other country in Europe, the British take a correspondingly greater interest in what trees and woods they still have left. Woods, like water, have been suppressed by motorways and the modern world, and have come to look like the subconscious of the landscape. They have become the guardians of our dreams of greenwood liberty, of our wildwood, feral, childhood selves, of Richmal Crompton’s Just William and his outlaws. They hold the merriness of Merry England, of yew longbows, of Robin Hood and his outlaw band. But they are also repositories of the ancient stories, of Icelandic myths of Yggdrasil the Tree of Life, Robert Graves’s ‘The Battle of the Trees’ and the myths of Sir James Frazer’s Golden Bough. The enemies of the woods are always enemies of culture and humanity.

– Roger Deakin<sup>826</sup>

Biocultural diversity refers to the connection and parallel between biological diversity and cultural diversity, a nexus between the biosphere and the ethnosphere. A measurable example of comparable parts of these two “trees” of the cultural and biological worlds are language and species diversity (examples of this are discussed in Part One). Places with higher biological diversity also typically have higher linguistic diversity.<sup>827</sup>

Biocultural legacies can be read in the forest landscapes like a palimpsest. The integrity of biologically diverse old woodland ecosystems that were kept and worked with by the array of Indigenous cultures that co-evolved or co-became with those places. What is of interest here is, as Wade Davis argues, the way that a people see the more-than-human world influences what kind of beings they are in relation to the land and waters. How the governing or residing people in a forested land see those woodlands determines the fate of those places, creating distinct cultural landscapes. It is a cultural fact that Canada, for example, has forested landscapes defined by clear-cuts, timber plantations, and “wilderness” parks (among other forms of development).

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<sup>826</sup> Roger Deakin, *Wildwood: A Journey Through Trees* (New York: Free Press, 2007), xii.

<sup>827</sup> Jonathan Loh and David Harmon, *Biocultural Diversity: Threatened Species, Endangered Languages* (Zeist: WWF Netherlands, 2014), [http://wwf.panda.org/wwf\\_news/press\\_releases/?222890/Biocultural-Diversity-Threatened-Species-Endangered-Languages](http://wwf.panda.org/wwf_news/press_releases/?222890/Biocultural-Diversity-Threatened-Species-Endangered-Languages).

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The forests of Great Britain for example, as Roger Deakin's quote above illustrates, holds the many histories that shaped the landscapes of the nation. The keyword "forest" is loaded with meanings specific to the peoples of those lands. While many of the woodlands of Great Britain have been altered for the cultivation of timber, there remains a greater sense of what has been lost there, as Jonathan Bordo and Blake Fitzpatrick note:<sup>828</sup>

British artists had and continue to have reparative ambitions, contributions to healing the land, acts of apology, everywhere and always a trace that diminishes rather than increases the human footprint. In many of these aesthetic practices, the search is for an aesthetic analogue to correspond to an ethical injunction—to leave no traces, to find a way in Goldsworthy's phrase 'to shake hands with a place,' to pass through places as a sojourn...

Where there are forests, there is a wealth of the human imagination expressed through unique myths and histories, traditional architectural forms and textures, social and political identities, and place-based ecological knowledge and land uses. So, when a community loses a forest, it is losing much more than just biodiversity; it is losing something of itself. As the way we relate to forests and wild others changes, and these forested spaces are altered with climate change and continued deforestation and re-"forestation,"<sup>829</sup> we give up or lose aspects of our social-ecological ties. Where forests are becoming increasingly homogenized according to industrial scientific forestry, what kinds of expressions of the human imagination will there be? What kind of imagination will mass industrialized "forests" inspire when slivers of the old forests remain? What kind of world do wilderness parks promote (keeping in mind that by definition "wilderness" involves the exclusion of human presence, save for only human visitation)?

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<sup>828</sup>. Jonathan Bordo and Blake Fitzpatrick, "Place Matters: Critical Topographies in Word and Image," 2020, 11.

<sup>829</sup>. CBC News, "Old-Growth Logging Approvals in B.C. Have Gone up over the Past Year Report Suggests," *CBC News*, May 3, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/old-growth-logging-approvals-up-wilderness-committee-1.6012700>.

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Because “wild” places are defined in opposition to modern Western civilization, modern Western and westernized societies can only really relate to the woods and the *wild-déor* through regulated procedures and boundaries of inside-outside. Consequently, the mainstream way of relating to the land are characterized by this duality of separateness. An abusive relationship inflicted upon the land and others means that our recreational visits to most *wild-déor* things or beings have to be regulated. Visitations are limited and come with a set of rules rather than being self-managed by shared beliefs about respecting the land and its many other inhabitants. In places like Canada’s “wilderness” parks, there is a lot of talk of “wildlife management” or “forest management” when, in fact, what truly needs intensive management and supervision is the dominant human presence. Human management, however, was the task of the modern Western education system, which ensured that all peoples conformed to modern industrial standards of economic efficiency.

Compared to the forestry industry, the business of conservation is constantly an uphill battle. Canada, like other industrialized nations, knows more about how to extract from than live respectfully with the world of *wild-déor*. It is a nation that never grew up with the land, waters, and wildlings; it was a colonial birth, and was taught only one view of “civilization.” No wonder conservation is so difficult and development so easy. There is no culture that knows how to *live with* undeveloped or non-Western lands and peoples.

A *living culture* is like “an ecosystem, a complex web of relationships between human beings and the land they live on. As in any ecosystem every element is intertwined with all the others.”<sup>830</sup> In modern Western and westernized countries,

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<sup>830</sup>. Carol Black, *Schooling the World: The White Man’s Last Burden* (2012). Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021: <http://carolblack.org/schooling-the-world>

there is traditionally little cooperative or compassionate, mutual dealings with wild others when industrial interests are concerned. In contrast, the forests of Haida Gwaii and Vancouver Island, for instance, were and are seen by their Indigenous communities as living entities populated by beings who are kin in different forms; not as places defined by their value as standing reserve and development potential.<sup>831</sup> Timber extraction and species co-existence was and remains possible.

Traditional cultures remained strong insofar as they maintained the ecological health and integrity of their regions. Languages were and are inclusive in recognizing the lives and lifeways of other beings. These traditional cultures survive so long as the integrity of the ancestral wildwoods survive and have self-determinacy. That every being has their own will that they can freely express means that their wildness is recognized, respected, and can continue.

Our modern Western culture is, as Davis put it, “only one model of reality.” Where colonial forces went, they attempted to “educate” people of local traditional societies. From India to Canada to Australia and beyond, forcing and coercing people through the modern Western education system meant that huge proportions of the next generations of Indigenous peoples were taught how to live in a modern Westernized economy. Languages and ways of life were stripped and forcibly forgotten. Today, the trend continues, but with less obvious colonial force.

Western lifestyles are promoted, encouraged, and rewarded; traditional ways of life are marginalized and discouraged. Greater urbanization means that traditional relationships with the land and waters continue to be threatened and dwindle. In places like Ladakh, India—a predominantly Buddhist region—local women say that spiritual teachings of compassion and cooperation are being discontinued with the increase of youth being sent to be educated for life in a modern economy.

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<sup>831</sup>. Council of the Haida Nation, “Haida Gwaii Yah’guudang.”

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Furthermore, another woman said that youth with modern educations are left standing with their “hands in their pockets” because they know nothing of their land when they return home and thus are unable to live according to traditional ways.<sup>832</sup> This modernizing system was inserted by Westerners who believed that other people were not schooling their children because they did not recognize traditional forms of education. They saw other ways of living with the land as being poor or uncivilized. To the colonial mind, the solution was to make all others like oneself. An orderly world is easier to predict, manipulate, and control. This stripping of the independent or different wills of others was one of the first great global traumas.

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<sup>832</sup>. Carol Black’s *Schooling the World: The White Man’s Last Burden* (2012). Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021: <http://carolblack.org/schooling-the-world>.

## Chapter Two:

The *Wild-déor* Aspect of the Wildwood

I am Red Fox – why do you need me?

I am your double,  
                                   your ghost, your other,  
 The spirit of wild,  
                                   the spirit of weather,  
 Red is my fur and  
                                   red is my art,  
 And red is the blood  
                                   of your animal heart.

– Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris<sup>833</sup>

High above on a branch was a fine, fierce-looking owl, much larger than *Xenoglaux*, staring at me. [...] For me, this was *it*: I felt that I was encountering the very spirit of the forest, the herald of something tremendous. With hindsight I can reflect rationally upon the encounter: that powerful body and those brilliant, fierce eyes were merely adaptations for hunting. [...] But in the moment of meeting in the real world and in the memory I have of it, such thoughts were secondary to the overwhelming magnificence of the animal—an emblem of the vibrancy and power that life itself can achieve in a forest.

– Caspar Henderson, *The Book of Barely Imagined Beings*<sup>834</sup>

When the majority of people living in an urban or suburban area encounter a wild animal for the first time, especially one not expecting to ever see in person, it striking in a unique way. The feeling of being watched in the woods (or perhaps even in our own backyard), shifts one’s sense of self-awareness. One becomes aware of being seen, one’s presence witnessed. This is part of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s ontology or “reversibility of flesh;”<sup>835</sup> it speaks of a site, an intersection, formed between two beings—that to touch or see is to be touched or seen in return.<sup>836</sup> That is, this reversibility is about having an inter-subjective awareness take place between

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<sup>833</sup>. Robert Macfarlane and Jackie Morris, “Red Fox,” *The Lost Spells: A Spell Book* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2020).

<sup>834</sup>. Caspar Henderson, *The Book of Barely Imagined Beings: A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Bestiary* (London: Granta Books, 2012), 336–337. Italics my emphasis.

<sup>835</sup>. Jacob Rogozinski, “The Reversibility Which Is the Ultimate Truth,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 49, no. 4 (2016): 469–83, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-016-9366-4>.

<sup>836</sup>. Patricia M. Locke, “The Liminal World of the Northwest Coast,” in *Merleau-Ponty and Environmental Philosophy: Dwelling on the Landscapes of Thought*, ed. Suzanne L. Cataldi and Williams S. Hamrick (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 51–65.

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two perceiving bodies when they encounter each other. It is a sensory and sometimes emotionally energized moment, an exchange, in which mutual recognition can occur.<sup>837</sup> It is the sensed recognition of another conscious and perceiving mind akin to one's own, capable of possessing agency; an "other," another sensing self.

The more-than-human world is full of agencies—*wills*—other than our own. That is, it is the *will* of others, *wild others*, that seems to set them apart from those of us living according to the traditional Western ethos. I do not mean to imply that non-wild or domesticated species lack a will of their own. Indeed, many domesticated species often have to be trained to behave according to our wills or purposes, like "breaking" a horse (to "break" its wild nature, to tame). Domesticated species can periodically "act out," like when a dog bites. The point is that all forms of life have a will of their own.

I also use the term "wild" from *wilde* in much the same way as Canadian poet, Don McKay used "wilderness" to refer to "the capacity of all things to elude the mind's appropriations" in addition to imperiled spaces.<sup>838</sup> Things and other beings can be, in one instance, familiar, but this familiarity can also become destabilized, the way art can take the familiar and make it topsy-turvy, disordered, or disorganized when removed from its or their usual contexts. Even humans can be wild, like the iconic "wild man" figure, or the feral child, Victor of Aveyron when out of the context of "civilization" or "culture." In one sense, for many, what *seems* to make wild animals (e.g., cougars, wolves, mice, mosquitos) or humans feel like they have their own will more than domesticated species (e.g., cows, dogs) is that, when we encounter them, they behave according to their own lifeways or interests rather than expressing characteristics set for the lifeways we selected for our purposes (e.g., docile, friendly,

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<sup>837</sup>. Beata Stawarska, "Reversibility and Intersubjectivity in Merleau-Ponty's Ontology," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 33, no. 2 (2002): 155.

<sup>838</sup>. Don McKay, *Vis-à-Vis: Field Notes on Poetry and Wilderness* (Kentville: Gaspereau Press, 2001), 21.

obedient, human-dependent). Furthermore, McKay asks: “To what *degree* do we own our houses, hammers, dogs? Beyond what line lies wilderness?”<sup>839</sup> One way or the other, *wildness* is a state that is typically defined, understood, or experienced in opposition to civility or domesticity, predictability and there is always a temptation to draw a line between one and the other, self and other.

Yet, there remains a phenomenology of the *wild-déor* between self and other, like “the inner life finding outer form” when making a home or place for oneself; the “settling of self into the world.”<sup>840</sup> There is a line, and even if it is drawn horizontally between self and other, it still forms a kind of reflective connection between them. In the Western ethos, this line acts more like a one-way mirror-window; the industrial, capitalist Western way sees only itself, its ways. English, the primary language that shaped the Western world, is the tool used to draw this line.

Language shapes our perception. For one, as Rupert Ross pointed out after learning from members of Indigenous communities, we rely heavily on nouns and consequently see primarily objects rather than energy, forces, and processes that form connections. Ross noted that his Indigenous friends felt strained when they used mostly English in a day and that it was important that they refrain from even thinking in English during the Sun Dance so they could focus on “the forces that contain the Nakota part.”<sup>841</sup> *Wilde*, “will,” is a force—willpower—that gets expressed. It is a kind of energy that is part of the process of life and living. Even the dead participate, such as nurse logs, which are in death full of new life. Yet, as Ross noted, in English, “we use a noun to represent an unchanging state,” such as “offender.” Furthermore, he says, “we can say, ‘The tree died,’ and it seems to make sense,” but

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<sup>839</sup>. Ibid. ; When we die, one might say that we belong to the world, the earth, the more-than-human world more than any of it ever belonged to us.

<sup>840</sup>. Don McKay, *Vis-à-Vis*, 22.

<sup>841</sup>. Rupert Ross, *Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2006), 122–123.



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how can we “speak about that event in a way that acknowledges that what we really have is just a conversion of matter into a different form and to other uses, with its essential energy—or spirit—remaining undiminished?”<sup>842</sup> A tree is cut down to carve a monumental pole. It is not “dead” in the complete sense we typically think of it in English. As it is being carved, the wood is creaking, still expressing itself. A Haida perspective sees this transformation and expression as part of the tree’s being in the world. While working on a four-hundred-year-old cedar tree, Haida carver Reg Davidson’s put it this way, “In our connection, I mean even doing this [(carving)], this tree is still living. It’s cracking, it’s moving.” He works *with* the tree to transform it from one “form to another form.”<sup>843</sup>

All beings have agency. Even amongst settler-colonial members, trees, especially when they challenge our technology or our willpower, are often experienced and recognized as having a will of their own. When they reach a certain size, ancient trees of the temperate rainforests require manual cutting, which is extremely dangerous for loggers. A kind of struggle takes place between two when their wills conflict with one another. As the old-time logger-poet, Peter Trower documented, west coast logging was more like being on a kind of dangerous battle ground.<sup>844</sup> Similarly, Derrick Jensen and George Draffan aptly titled their book on old-growth logging as being *Strangely Like War*.<sup>845</sup> Forests, in other words, did not make it easy for timber extractors, perhaps, however, until the logging industry turned them into tree farms that resemble forests from afar. Still, there are great profits sought by the industry in the ancient forests and, so, the logging continues in

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<sup>842</sup> Rupert Ross, *Returning to the Teachings*, 122.

<sup>843</sup> Reg Davidson, in Sasha Snow, *Hadwin’s Judgement*, 00:32:00.

<sup>844</sup> Peter Trower, *Chainsaws in the Cathedral*.

<sup>845</sup> Derrick Jensen and George Draffan, *Strangely Like War: The Global Assault on Forests* (White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2003).

the Canadian “wilderness” as elsewhere in the ancient world like the Amazon Rainforest.

The forested wilderness—the *wildwood*—is a kind of place that still occupies the Western environmental imagination with special significance. As Robert Macfarlane wrote,<sup>846</sup>

The association of the wild and the wood [...] runs deep in etymology. The two words are thought to have grown out of the root word *wald* and the Old Teutonic root *walthus*, meaning ‘forest’. *Walthus* entered Old English in its variant forms of ‘weald,’ ‘wald’ and ‘wold’, which were used to designate both ‘a wild place’ and ‘a wooden place’, in which wild creatures—wolves, foxes, bears—survived. The wild and the wood also grafted together in the Latin word *silva*, which means ‘forest’, and from which emerged the idea of ‘savage’, with all its connotations of ferality.

Places where modern Western human settlements (cities or suburbia) cannot exist and where humans generally do not live, but can only visit, are often thought of as being “wilderness.” A wild place is thought of somewhere to which most people have to travel to instead of finding in their own neighbourhoods. While deserts and oceans are also forms of wilderness, woodland landscapes and language, as Macfarlane pointed out, have long been associated with one another. The etymology of wilderness, then, brings us to its old root: *wild-déor*, or “wild deer”/“wild animal.” Wilderness is a Western concept and has been traditionally understood as places where civilization or human presence is absent, where the land is untouched by humans, and where only wild “beasts” dwell. As Jonathan Bordo noted, the idea of “wilderness” is a myth for it was conceived to be an unwitnessable place. It simultaneously attracts and repels.<sup>847</sup> And yet we never cease to seek it out.

When Henry David Thoreau embarked on a journey to Canada, it was to see how much of the old forests were left.<sup>848</sup> He also attentively documented the presence

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<sup>846</sup> Robert Macfarlane, *The Wild Places* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007), 92.

<sup>847</sup> Jonathan Bordo, “Picture and Witness at the Site of the Wilderness,” *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (2000): 224–47, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1344122>.

<sup>848</sup> Henry David Thoreau, “A Yankee In Canada” (pp. 782–849) in Sayer, R. F. and Witherell, E. H. (eds.), *Henry David Thoreau: Walden, The Main Woods, and Collected Essays and Poems* (United

and absence of certain tree species including their great sizes—in particular eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*)<sup>849</sup>—during his three journeys into the wild woods of Maine.<sup>850</sup> Eastern white pine was of particular interest as it became the prized species for naval shipbuilding beginning in the eighteenth century. The best trees were branded with the King’s Broad Arrow, and anyone without the king’s permission was forbidden from taking them.<sup>851</sup> As the tallest species in the eastern woodlands, monumental white pines meant bigger war ships and so most had already been cut a hundred years prior to Thoreau arrival.<sup>852</sup> Even further south, much of the old forests of New England had already been felled and the landscape transformed, and wild animals like moose were far and few between if at all.<sup>853</sup> Hence, one of these excursions north was specifically to accompany a moose hunt so Thoreau could also see a moose in person. To see the biological diversity as well as the heights and sizes trees and forests can reach because of a history free of selective overharvesting and mass clearances can be a transformative experience as much as seeing its destruction and absence. These are the things one might say, ‘you need to see it to believe it,’ or, ‘until you see it you don’t really get it.’

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States: Library of America, 2007). Jonathan Bordo, “The Wilderness as Symbolic Form – Thoreau, Grünwald and the Group of Seven” (pp. 149–171) in Pascale Guibert (ed.) *Reflective Landscapes of the Anglophone Countries* (New York: Rodopi, 2011).

<sup>849</sup>. In “Ktaadn,” in *The Maine Woods*, Thoreau noted that he was able to take shelter from the rain under the stump of a giant white pine. Who could find one so big today? “I had just selected the prostrate trunk of a huge pine, five or six feet in diameter, and was crawling under it.”

<sup>850</sup>. “we saw only the stumps of the white pine here, some of them of great size, these having been already culled out, being the only tree much sought after, even as low down as this.” Henry David Thoreau, “Ktaadn,” (pp. 269–528), in Sayer, R. F. and Witherell, E. H. (eds.), *Henry David Thoreau: Walden, The Main Woods, and Collected Essays and Poems* (United States: Library of America. 2007).

<sup>851</sup>. Strother E. Roberts, “Pines, Profits, and Popular Politics: Responses to the White Pine Acts in the Colonial Connecticut River Valley,” *The New England Quarterly* 83, no. 1 (2010): 73–101.

<sup>852</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>853</sup>. Susy Svatek Ziegler, “The Past and Future of White Pine Forests in the Great Lakes Region; Geography Compass,” *Geography Compass* 4, no. 9 (2010): 1179–1202. ; Michael Henry, “The Past Isn’t What It Used to Be,” Ancient Forest Exploration & Research, 2015, <http://www.ancientforest.org/category/forest-history/>. ; George P Buchert et al., “Effects of Harvesting on Genetic Diversity in Old-Growth Eastern White Pine in Ontario, Canada. Efecto de La Cosecha Sobre La Diversidad Genética; Tica de Un Bosque Maduro de Pino Blanco Del Este,” *Conservation Biology* 11, no. 3 (1997): 747–58, <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1523-1739.1997.96074.x>.

*Transformative learning* is something that is most likely to occur when an individual experiences a destabilizing situation or a crisis. Pierre Walter (2013) posits that transformative learning is a mixture of rational thought as well as emotional and spiritual experiences that accumulate over time, but are marked by acutely emotional experiences. Specific events like killing and or watching an animal die (e.g., Leopold and the female wolf he shot), encountering a clear-cut and experiencing social and political discrimination (e.g., David Suzuki), or learning more and more about the damages of chemical pesticides (e.g., Rachel Carson), have prompted individuals into action.<sup>854</sup>

There is always a question of boundaries and boundary crossings in this question of relationality. This also applies to people visiting forest parks (i.e., having an awareness of being in “bear country”). This brings us back to the inside/outside theme of the keyword *forest*: who dwells on what side often determines what state (civilized/wildness) they occupy in the environmental imagination. It is at this spot, this “X,” this threshold, the boundary between “us” and the “wild other,” that I explore below: our relationality to those under pressure and too often rendered homeless—not simply “habitatless,” which sounds too distant from our understanding of home outside “civilization.” The changes to our planet—a changing climate, more wild fires, floods, hurricanes, and ongoing intense logging among other major human-driven processes—will render many more humans and many more other-than-humans homeless in the coming years. Thus, it is in the lived experience between us, our shared vulnerability and precarity, that I turn.

Picking up again from the case of the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole in chapter two, I argue that a more social-ecologically just future can only come about through

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<sup>854</sup>. Pierre Walter, “Dead Wolves, Dead Birds, and Dead Trees: Catalysts for Transformative Learning in the Making of Scientist-Environmentalists,” *Adult Education Quarterly* 63, no. 1 (2013): 24–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713611426348>.

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an evolved *co-created* relationship with the *wild-déor* and other human communities and ways of knowing the more-than-human world. It is about many people/beings working together. This topic is concerned with kinship in loss, trauma, and transformative healing—or, grief as a form of not only resilience, but also resistance to social-ecological injustice. I begin with an exploration of a notion of connectedness, a spirituality of ecology to see how it might inform social-ecological grieving in losing *wild-déor*, be it bears, ancient trees, or one's sense of belonging.

### Chapter Three:

#### A (Missing) Spirituality of Ecology

It is not enough to simply “know” from a scientific perspective that an ecosystem is maintained so long as its multispecies assemblage is intact. Western epistemology is not enough. It requires a more diverse approach to have a broader understanding of what it means to lose more and more wildness, more *wills*, of the more-than-human world. Thus, I want to explore this notion of a “spirituality of ecology,” a term Sid Marty used to capture what he had learned from Stoney elders’ account of what their expression, “the earth is the bear’s ear” meant and what bears mean to them. Here is the opening to his book,<sup>855</sup>

Stoney tribal elder the late John Stevens was part of the Bearspaw band at Morley, Alberta, in the foothills of the Rockies. I was fortunate to spend a few hours talking to John and Nora Stevens in September 2005, while their son Virgil translated. Historically, bears were important to native people for both food and medicine, and they remain so today. The elders told me that they did not approve of the way Parks Canada interfered with the bears in Banff National Park. They told me that the earth is the bear’s ear, that when we talk about the bear it hears us, so we have to be careful and speak respectfully. “We use them in our ceremonies; we ask for guidance from them,” said John. “When one is tranquilized or trapped, it affects all the bears.”

John Stevens was suggesting, if I understood him correctly, that when we upset the community of bears, the effect is to unbalance, in a sense, the people who are spiritually connected to them. There appears to be what we might call an “ecology of spirituality,” a spiritual interconnectedness between animals and between people and animals that mirrors the physical ecology in which all life forms are connected. When we mess with the bear, we mess with the bear’s medicine. The bear cannot help us anymore, and it might elect to hurt us instead.

Such a perspective—to see another species as so closely connected to oneself and one’s community—sounds like a kind of emotional intelligence, one that keeps a person in tune with the world outside the walls of their home, like being in-touch with the members of one’s family so one knows when someone needs help or

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<sup>855</sup>. Sid Marty, *The Black Grizzly of Whiskey Creek* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 2008), 1.

relationships needs attention. The presence and well-being of bears for John and Nora Stevens and their community was integral to their own. Without healthy bears, fundamental aspects of their life-worlds—food, medicines, ceremonies, guidance—become affected. Haida stone carver Martin Williams put it this way, “We’re so connected with everything. That’s why we have so many transformation stories. To us, we’re all *one*, and that’s never changed. We’re all part of each other. So, when we lose one piece, it’s like losing one of the family.” This worldview means that it makes Williams “more cautious of what [he’s] doing, and how [he’s] doing it, because [he doesn’t] want to do more damage” that what is needed to coexist.<sup>856</sup> Similarly, the Nuu-chah-nulth view of reality is that of *tsawalk*, meaning “one,” and “relationships are *qua* (that which is).”<sup>857</sup>

Understood as kin, other (“wild”) beings are felt to be closer to oneself. In this there is a greater perceived fluidity between forms of life rather than rigid, fixed categories that can be arranged according to one group’s specific social, political, or economic interests. Separateness is an illusion. As such, transformations and co-becoming between beings are more easily understood and accepted; a boy can turn into a tree,<sup>858</sup> a bear can take off his coat and take the form of a human,<sup>859</sup> or that earthquakes are the acts of a spirit-being.<sup>860</sup> The world is much more diverse and alive with many more wills to be mindful of. As G. A. Bradshaw put it, “What our

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<sup>856</sup> Martin Williams in Sasha Snow, *Hadwin’s Judgement* (00:33:00).

<sup>857</sup> Umeek/E. Richard Atleo, *Principles of Tsawalk: An Indigenous Approach to Global Crisis* (Toronto: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), 1.

<sup>858</sup> Pansy Collison, “The Golden Spruce” (pp. 139–151), *Haida Eagle Treasures: Traditional Stories and Memories from a Teacher of the Tsath Lanas Clan* (Brush Education, 2017).

<sup>859</sup> The Bill Reid Centre, “Bear Mother,” Simon Fraser University, 2021, <https://www.sfu.ca/brc/imeshMobileApp/imesh-art-walk-/bear-mother.html>.

<sup>860</sup> Jaalen Edenshaw, speaking of Standing-One-Moving-and-Shaking on the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole in Parks Canada, “The Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole,” *YouTube* (October 16, 2013): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vT4Yc9ask58>

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eyes perceive—bear, human, elk—are individual expressions rooted in the common substrate of life.”<sup>861</sup>

In North America, bears and other wild animals are seen differently. They are largely strangers to us, and us to them. Bears are still seen as “Other” in a strange, unfamiliar, and even fearful sense (or cute, cuddly, and comedic depending on the persona media applies); not as another being with a will of his or her own like you or me. Bears are perceived first through a cultural lens. A Euro-centric lens fraught with competitive attitudes about bears was first imported to North America by European settlers.<sup>862</sup>

As the newcomers set about taming the new continent the abundant black bears they encountered were curious, sometimes entertaining and occasionally destructive. Bears, like nature itself, were tolerated only to the extent that they provided amusement; after that the project of civilizing a new world demanded that they be killed.

Such views came from a dark past. Europe had old traditions of making a mockery of bears or forcing them to act for entertainment, using them as tied-down bait to train hunting dogs (otherwise known as bear baiting, also used as a gambling sport), and subjecting them to various caricatures, from goofy to villainous.

Perceptions of bears were not always antagonistic and harmful—in fact, bears once occupied a place of worship and respect in Europe—but views of and relationships with them changed after the Roman Empire’s conquests in Europe.<sup>863</sup>

The nations tamed under the Roman Empire, however, had a different relationship with bears. They were obsessed with imposing human order and control [over] nature. For them, bears represented nature’s power and savagery. Aristocrats in these societies often sponsored public displays involving the torture of bears, perhaps to demonstrate man’s dominance over nature. Histories say the Roman emperor Gordian liked to watch bloody matches pitting bears against dogs or gladiators. He watched the deaths of close to a thousand bears. The attraction of bear-baiting persisted for centuries; England’s Queen

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<sup>861</sup>. G. A. Bradshaw, *Talking With Bears: Conversations with Charlie Russell* (Rocky Mountain Books, 2020), 44.

<sup>862</sup>. Kevin van Tighem, *Bears: Without Fear* (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 2020), 26.

<sup>863</sup>. *Ibid*, 23–24.



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Elizabeth I reportedly enjoyed the sight of thirteen bears being torn apart by dogs.

What happens to the human heart after generations of such cultural traditions? A Canadian Broadcasting Corporation documentary titled *The Edge of Eden* noted that in the last century, approximately ninety-one humans were killed by grizzly bears while two hundred thousand grizzlies were killed by humans.<sup>864</sup> That estimate does not even include other species of bear.

To have such a horrific historical relationship with another species that has gone unrecognized and unmarked is concerning. Today, thankfully, settler-colonial relations with bears are not so appalling; in fact, they are improving despite the maintenance of an ambivalent distance. Yet, the modern Western world continues to have simplified or estranged perceptions of bears. Kevin van Tighem pointed out that these common views fall into one of “three dominant themes: the loveable clown, the marauding monster, or the besieged wilderness creature.”<sup>865</sup> Managing the dominant representation and narratives of bears, Indigenous peoples, and forests is an old method for exerting power over them to achieve one’s political and economic goals. In the case of wild others, what these perceptions do is perpetuate “icons for human superiority over lesser creatures (the friendly clown), our fears of wild nature (the marauding monster) or our nostalgia for paradise lost (beleaguered wilderness creature).”<sup>866</sup> Indeed, in the world of conservation, bears are one of the “most frequently invoked [...] symbols of threatened nature.”<sup>867</sup> This perception seems to generate sympathy for bears, but still little understanding.

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<sup>864</sup>. Jeff and Sue Turner (director), *The Edge of Eden: Living with Grizzlies* (2006).  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjv1l5XEykI&t=28s>

<sup>865</sup>. Kevin van Tighem, *Bears: Beyond Fear* (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 2020), 28.

<sup>866</sup>. *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>867</sup>. Mark C.J. Stoddart, “Grizzlies and Gondolas: Animals and the Meaning of Skiing Landscapes in British Columbia, Canada,” *Nature and Culture* 6, no. 1 (2011): 41–63,  
<https://doi.org/10.3167/nc.2011.060103>. p. 50.

In 2020, a black bear approached a jogger. He or she reached out to touch the jogger, who ran away. The bear did not run after her, and while the city had intentions to have the bear darted and removed—and possibly killed if deemed “too familiar” with humans—many locals advocated for the bear’s protection. The news clip documenting this went on to talk about how bears are “naturally curious” and are often seen exploring human buildings and neighbourhoods.<sup>868</sup> This is another thing about bears as a “significant other” (to borrow Haraway’s term):<sup>869</sup> they frequently cross that boundary that humans have drawn between the human world and the rest, much because of human encroachment upon their territories, but also out of curiosity.

Bears, like other beings who we encounter, are always reminding us that we are but one member of a much larger multispecies neighbourhood. The relationship with bears, however, remains one that is kept at a distance because we do not know how to live with them otherwise. On the whole, we are still strangers to one another with unexamined pasts and uncertain and precarious presents. Even though Canada and the United States is not deliberately trying to drive large predatory animals off the land as they did historically, there is still a constant push back against the *wild-déor* of the woods.

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<sup>868</sup>. CBC News: The National, “Viral video sparks debate about B.C. bears,” YouTube (September 2, 2020): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bMMjllTrh5s>

<sup>869</sup>. Stoddart, “Grizzlies and Gondolas: Animals and the Meaning of Skiing Landscapes in British Columbia, Canada.”, 43.

## Chapter Four: Strangely Like War

It was strangely like war. They attacked the forest as if it were an enemy to be pushed back from the beachheads, driven into the hills, broken into patches, and wiped out. Many operators thought they were not only making lumber but liberating the land from trees...

– Murray Morgan, *The Last Wilderness*<sup>870</sup>

In *Strangely Like War*,<sup>871</sup> Derrick Jensen and George Draffan look at anthropogenic deforestation as a phenomenon that has been around since the time of Gilgamesh. Deforestation has been repeated around the world, and exacerbated at an alarming rate with the spread of imperial colonialism, industrialization, and global capitalism. In North America, the assault on the land was also conducted upon the First Peoples and wild “beasts,” such as bears.

When Europeans arrived in North America, they met landscapes almost entirely new to them. Maintaining a negative sense of the “Other” when faced with many of the First Peoples and wildlife of the lands meant that settler-colonial’s own insecurities and competitiveness grew. A common response to the *wild-déor* of the wildwoods was to conquer them and the land. “The frontier ethos called for damming rivers, killing bears and subjugating ‘Indians’: transferring the violence of the newcomers’ own fears onto the objects of those fears.”<sup>872</sup> Anyone deemed “Other” had to conform to colonial and settler-colonial narratives, standards, and expectations; not doing so was deemed “failure,” “deviant,” or “problematic.”

Up to the present, Bradshaw summarized issues discussed by Charlie Russell, retired park warden Sid Marty, and Kevin van Tighem: increasing loss of homeland and the continuation of a “shoot on sight” policy has generated increased stress on bear populations. To be more specific, these include “individuals stressed and traumatized by witnessing their mothers killed and being targets themselves of

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<sup>870</sup>. Murray Morgan quoted in Derrick Jensen and George Draffan, *Strangely Like War: The Global Assault on Forests* (White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2003), back cover.

<sup>871</sup>. Derrick Jensen and George Draffan, *Strangely Like War*.

<sup>872</sup>. Kevin van Tighem, *Bears: Beyond Fear* (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 2020), 29 – 30.

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ranchers and trophy hunters, generation after generation.”<sup>873</sup> In his decades of living with bears and humble efforts to understand them as individuals led Charlie Russell to recognize that, for bears who suffered physical and or psychological trauma at the hands of humans, they act out this trauma upon humans when pushed further. This was likely the case with the grizzly bear Marty wrote about: after it attacked a human, it was eventually hunted down and killed. Upon closer inspection of his body, there were scars from numerous bullet wounds. There was also evidence that this bear was experiencing many other anthropogenic pressures in his environment. Efforts and “methods to ‘manage’ and ‘conserve’ bears exacerbate the situation. Noisemakers, earsplitting ‘bear jammer’ sirens, rubber bullets, darting, trapping, translocation and death have worked their way into bear minds and society.”<sup>874</sup> It must feel like one and one’s home is under siege or perpetually a target.

What many people forget or fail to consider, Bradshaw notes, is that while they are spending leisure time doing recreational activities in the woods, “the bears they encounter are not on vacation, they are on the job.” Anthropogenic stressors (e.g., hunting and killings, habitat loss, noise pollution, recreational vehicles) have created near “war zone conditions” have “intensified the natural press for food.” Consequently, they are tempted by potential food sources created by humans, be it a backpack, backyard picnic, or garbage dump. There have even been cases of people leaving food out to lure bears in for their imagined social media gains. But then the old fear returns when a bear presses further in search of more food.<sup>875</sup>

Marty’s black grizzly still haunted his consciousness, influencing him to write his book. This bear, as others who come to be in his situation, are not known by any name, but a number. This individual was simply labeled “757.” To others, however,

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<sup>873</sup>. G. A. Bradshaw, *Talking with Bears: Conversations with Charlie Russell* (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 2020), 23.

<sup>874</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>875</sup>. Ibid, 31–32.

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he and his kind were known as “*Wahtonga* (“Biggest Bear”) to the Stoneys, the Real Bear of *Pah’-ksi-kwo-yi* (“Sticky Mouth”) to the southern Blackfoot, but known at one time to another mountain-dwelling tribe as *Mustahyah* (“Our-Brother-Across-the-River”).”<sup>876</sup> In contrast, the Western taxonomical title given to the Grizzly or brown bear is *Ursus arctos horribilis*, a name which imports something ill sentiment: *horribilis* is the Latin root of the English word “horrible,” horrible bear of the Holarctic range, in other words.

In North America, policy demands that bears act in certain ways. When they deviate from those expectations, they become “problem” animals. This was not unlike the way Canada and the United States treated Indigenous population, by deeming them a “problem” that needed to be “solved” through policies of cultural and physical elimination and exclusion.<sup>877</sup> Othering of both Indigenous people and animals was achieved by marking them out as non-persons. Some, like Marty’s “Sticky Mouth” (as he took to calling him), are given a number, much like inmates in prison or Indigenous children at residential schools.<sup>878</sup> Marty noted that even amongst the anti-hunting lobby, there is the expectation that “the bear must live by its terms,” but in reality, these terms are expected to mean “a teddy bear, a cartoon bear or even a wild bear—just not too wild.”<sup>879</sup>

To say that someone or something is “too wild” is a relative construct with “wild” generally meaning “out of control” or “outside” the bounds of a governing agency and interests. Matthew Battles pointed out that the root word *Wilde* “glosses the Latin word *indomitus*—a word associated by more than phonetic similarity with the domestic,” adding to the wild–domesticated binary. Traditionally, the “wild is

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<sup>876</sup> Sid Marty, 9.

<sup>877</sup> Umeek/E. Richard Atleo, *Principles of Tsawalk*, 88–89.

<sup>878</sup> Erin Hanson, Daniel P. Gamez, and Alexa Manuel, “The Residential School System,” Indigenous Foundations, 2020, <http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/government-policy/the-residential-school-system.html>.

<sup>879</sup> Sid Marty, 2.

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that which is not dominated, not governed, also that which does not take shelter in a house” (*domus*) and is masterless or without an owner or lord (*dominus*, “owner”). The only in-between this binary is the “feral,” for “the *feral* creature is liminal,” like a feral cat or even a feral human child. The English environmental imagination was already classifying much of the world according to this binary as early as the ninth-century, Battles points out. The world was arranged “according to that which resides inside or outside,”<sup>880</sup> included or excluded.

Charlie Russell noted that the “reality” from which wildlife management operates is a purely human agenda, one that excludes the wild other, our significant others. Just as fear of bears is more about the human, so too is bear management more about the human, yet it is not framed as such, which maintains an illusion of power and control over the species. Russell described wildlife management in an interesting way:<sup>881</sup>

It’s like living in a house and calling the house the entire world and looking out the window at nature as if it’s something unrelated and unimportant compared to the human house-world. Bears are ordered around from inside that house. They are told to “go with the flow,” obey humans or else pay for it. We are brainwashed to think that nature is here for humans, that nature is infinite and we can do what we want with bears and the land without any consequences. Of course, this doesn’t make any sense and doesn’t even agree with science. Thinking that we can get away with this, thinking that humans are stronger and smarter than nature, actually makes us weak. If you fit in with nature, you are stronger because you aren’t using up all your energy fighting nature.

Even when we think we are acting in a mutual interest by creating national or provincial parks and conservation areas where bears and other wildlife and humans can be “in nature” together, the way we behave is not for mutual interests. Many humans, but not all, take and are given priority. We are still working against the larger social and ecological grain. Russell was right when he said that conducting

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<sup>880</sup>. Matthew Battles, *Tree* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2017), 23.

<sup>881</sup>. Charlie Russell in G. A. Bradshaw, *Talking with Bears: Conversations with Charlie Russell*, 42–43.

ourselves in such ways makes us weak. The assault on ancient forests and inequalities affecting the Indigenous populations and the animals whose lifeways depend on those ecosystems persists, however, and stories like those of bears are not unique.

A similar story to Marty's black grizzly bear can be found in the case of a Siberian tiger who killed two men in the Russian Taiga; all stressors were anthropogenic in origin (logging, habitat loss, hunting, competition for prey species). Like Marty's bear, it was discovered post-mortem that this tiger had scars that suggested a traumatic familiarity with humans.<sup>882</sup> Furthermore, those two humans killed by the tiger were themselves struggling with systematic socioeconomic inequalities and were trying to survive in the taiga. In the end, the tiger's behaviour was anthropomorphized as having been about "vengeance."<sup>883</sup> More generally, however, *Umeek* suggests that animals and the land express their traumas and disturbances when they reflect them back to us, ranging in expression from wildlife attacks to earthquakes and intensified weather events.<sup>884</sup> As in war, no one is left unaffected. Facing this inter-subjective trauma in human-animal and human-land conflict is the first step to "staying with the trouble"<sup>885</sup> and recognizing where one is able to respond intelligently, humbly.

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<sup>882</sup>. John Vaillant, *The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2010). ; Sasha Snow (director), *Conflict Tiger*, Sasha Snow Film Production. <https://www.sashasnow.com/conflict-tiger>

<sup>883</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>884</sup>. *Umeek* E. Richard Atleo, *Principles of Tsawalk: An Indigenous Approach to Global Crisis*, 1.

<sup>885</sup>. Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (London: Duke University Press, 2016).

### Chapter Five: Intelligent Responsiveness

One thing real bears do, as large omnivorous creatures quite similar to ourselves, is they keep us alert when we are in the same vicinity in the more-than-human community. This state of being mindful of others is key, especially now more than ever in a human-dominated world of diminishing biodiversity and undeveloped spaces. It is a visceral kind of awareness that differs from the kind of awareness we experience from the comfort of our homes. When we learn about others in the classroom or from books or televisions in our own dens, it remains more of a conceptual experience rather than a phenomenological one. To look at a picture of a bear cannot and does not compare to locking eyes with one and then being made to reflect on the experience and one's place in relation to that and other bears.<sup>886</sup>

Traditionally, we learn about bears through two main mediums: wildlife management information (that comes more from scientific research) and traditional cultural symbols and narratives (e.g., Winnie the Pooh, movies, pictures of Kodiak bears roaring on hind legs). More recently there is input from social media, like entertaining and sometimes concerning Instagram posts of bears seen on people's holidays. What seems to dominate are an ambivalence, nervousness, or naivety about real bears when we are in their territory.

Too much of European and settler-colonial cultures have been fueled by fear when it comes to encountering *wild-déor* in the woods, specifically any being that can challenge the human. Stories like Little Red Riding Hood did not help human-wolf relations. Repeated depictions of bears as angry, violent aggressors only instilled more fear. Even the word *berserk* comes from the word *berserker*, which referred to

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<sup>886</sup>. Although my experience is limited to one direct encounter with a black bear at Silent Lake Provincial Park and a few indirect experiences (seeing fresh and old scat while hiking on Vancouver Island), I never felt in danger, but a small twinge goes through my mind to stay mindful that I am passing through someone else's neighbourhood and need to act accordingly, more self-aware than at home in Mississauga, Ontario.



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bear-skin wearing warriors who venerated the bear, and who were reputed for their “wild” (in the rageful sense) fighting style.<sup>887</sup> It was only with characters like Winnie the Pooh and the naming of the Teddy bear that bears were seen with “fuzzy” sentiment focused on soft and gentleness, yet not as equal beings deserving of recognition or respect as the story behind the name “Teddy bear” attests.<sup>888</sup> It comes from the story of President Theodore Roosevelt hunting bears in 1902: after poor luck, his hunting companions and their dogs fought and chained a weakened female black bear to a tree for him to shoot. Roosevelt was made famous by the press for refusing to kill this bear because there was no “fair” chase involved. This decision was seen by the public as “compassionate,” yet no one thought about what it is to hunt bears for fun or the fact that this bear had been chased, harmed, and restrained in the process leading up to the moment of “mercy.”

In addition to such mixed representational messages, there are no traditions that bind the dominant society and its people to the land in a way that teaches about how to appropriately coexist with bears and other wildlife besides keeping a safe distance. Even then, there are people who defy regulations banning people from feeding wildlife. Such attempts, if anything, speak to a desire to connect with one’s significant others, and in that there is hope for developing a kind of interspecies social intelligence that does not pose risks to the well-being of the bears or humans involved. What has not been widely considered or thoroughly explored is how modern society might attempt to *understand* wild others, our significant others, beyond documenting what we can “know” of them through scientific observation.

One example of a person who attempted a different epistemological path despite the one previously bestowed by his society was Charlie Russell. What is interesting is how he learned to behave around bears, that he took a very different

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<sup>887</sup>. Kevin van Tighem, *Bears: Beyond Fear* (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 2020), 23.

<sup>888</sup>. *Ibid.*, 33.

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approach to understanding them than the traditional scientific method. Bears were not objects of study; they were thinking, feeling individuals dwelling in this same world, and that is how he related to them. By striving to let them be themselves on their terms, he let them teach him who they are to an extent that he could grasp.

From Russell's perspective, his approach to bears required coming from a place of love, respect, and non-judgemental openness, rather than fear (including fear of losing them and subsequently trying to manage them for their sake). To Russell, fear was not a "pervasive state of mind;" instead, it was a helpful "source of information," which he employed in deciding how to act towards and respond to bears while out on the land.<sup>889</sup> Fundamentally, the questions Russell asked were different from biologists' questions (e.g., how many calories they need, feeding and mating habits) in that his were concerned about understanding bears at the level of individuals rather than as a species. By caring about them as such, what he learned about them involved a greater *interpersonal* understanding about bears rooted in particular places.<sup>890</sup>

Russell spent seven decades living amongst bears in North America and Russia. His lifetime of experience with them gave him insights into their world and perspectives from their view, at least, insofar as Russell could deduce. As Marty noted, the anthropogenic pressures including wildlife management methods meant that, and as Charlie regularly observed, "bears were denied what they needed:" making a living (finding the right food), raising their cubs, and feeling safe. What Russell witnessed "was that bears couldn't live their lives in the ways they needed because of what people do to them."<sup>891</sup>

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<sup>889</sup>. G. A. Bradshaw, 21.

<sup>890</sup>. Ibid, 20.

<sup>891</sup>. Charlie Russell in G. A. Bradshaw, 20–21.

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Russell's approach was similar to Jon Young's sit spot for learning about birds and what he calls "deep bird language,"<sup>892</sup> or artist Andy Goldsworthy's notion of "shaking hands with a place."<sup>893</sup> All three approaches involve spending a lot of time becoming familiar with a place, its rhythms, cycles, and climate, its inhabitants and their comings and goings. For Russell, it meant "meant getting to the woods, water and wildlife with whom [a bear] lived," getting to that same place and seeing it as a whole "season after season, year after year." In order to have a better idea about someone, it is important to understand their relationships that are important to them. For Russell: "If you pay attention to what is going on, then you can begin to see how everything and everyone fits together. That's how you build trust—by respecting someone enough to take time and care to understand."<sup>894</sup>

It is not only about paying attention to what and who is around you; for Russell it meant being *self-aware* in a place and in relation to significant others.<sup>895</sup> For Andy Goldsworthy, mindfulness and a caring respect is shown by leaving no trace; his works of art are made locally using only what he finds in a place and working with the elements and time of day using only his bare hands.<sup>896</sup> For Jon Young, it was about being aware of how one's own presence can be in tune with everyone and everything around oneself, that one can be disruptive or harmonious. In other words, you are mindful of your own behaviour, and, with gentleness of presence and an open awareness, wild others can and do go about their business. As a result, you can learn to understand what the various signals from different birds

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<sup>892</sup>. Jon Young, *What the Robin Knows: How Birds Reveal the Secrets of the Natural World* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012).

<sup>893</sup>. Andy Goldsworthy, *Andy Goldsworthy's Rivers and Tides*. (90 minutes), Thomas Riedelsheimer (director) (2003; Mediopolis Film and Skyline Productions, 2003).

<sup>894</sup>. Russell in Bradshaw, 17.

<sup>895</sup>. Bradshaw, 68.

<sup>896</sup>. Andy Goldsworthy, *Andy Goldsworthy's Rivers and Tides*.

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mean, how different species are paying attention to one another and behaving accordingly (e.g., song birds and squirrels when a cat or hawk enters the area).

There is a kind of multispecies etiquette to be observed that grants a sense of *belonging* while cultivating mutual recognition and respect; Russell:<sup>897</sup>

People talk about how peaceful they feel being in nature. I think what they're feeling is the harmony which comes with mutual respect. If you play by nature's rules, you begin to fit in and that creates a feeling of mutual belonging. This kind of respect brings a quiet peace. Bears respond to this. They are naturally respectful. But when humans break rules by yelling, using noisemakers and trying to chase and kill them, bears become fearful and they mirror that disrespect. No one likes a bully.

Much of Russell's empathetic approach to bears also came from his own abusive experiences at the hands of a human, a draconian school teacher who regularly bullied him. In the context of bears—who for Russell were misunderstood, intelligent and social beings<sup>898</sup>—the commonality would likely translate to creating no disturbance or doing no harm, including feeding bears or treating them as objects, even if just for a photograph.

There is something about the ways the modern Western world looks at bears: for science and conservation, for management, for tourism and entertainment, and predation (hunting). What these all have in common is the human gaze and human control over bears' bodies and lands. As for the gaze, Russell pointed out that bears respond to a human with a camera similarly to one with a gun as both involve stalking:<sup>899</sup>

Bears know if people are interested in them for other than casual or benign reasons. Even a biologist studying bears at a distance can feel like a threat. After all, it isn't much different than what hunters do with their rifles and scopes. In both instances, humans are acting like predators because bears are targets of either a camera or a bullet. Taking inventory of bear behaviour not only keeps them apart from

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<sup>897</sup>. Charlie Russell quoted in Bradshaw, 49–50.

<sup>898</sup>. Neil Genzlinger, "Charlie Russell, Who Befriended Bears, Dies at 76," *The New York Times*, May 10, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/10/obituaries/charlie-russell-who-befriended-bears-dies-at-76.html>.

<sup>899</sup>. Charlie Russell quoted in Bradshaw, 74.

you, it puts you above a bear and they can feel a controlling tension. The kind of privileged attitude that humans carry around immediately raises suspicion in a bear or any other animal. We always assume our needs are the most important and forget that we are walking right into the living room of a bear or other animal.

Susan Sontag made a comparable point about the gaze through a camera lens: “To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and, therefore, like power.”<sup>900</sup> When we care about an individual, we do not attempt to exert this kind of power over them; knowing someone helps us understand them. Learning about another being thus “becomes something that isn’t just about you, collecting facts for your own purpose. It’s about seeing the world through their eyes and getting to know what is important to them.”<sup>901</sup>

Bradshaw pointed out that behaving as if we, as humans, are separate from the rest of “nature” means we “operate in an artificial world that has meaning and use for humans alone.”<sup>902</sup> We might conserve wildlife populations enough to keep ecosystem services running for our needs, but to lose any mutually meaningful connection with the *wild-déor*, the presence and expression of the wills of significant others, means to be trapped in our myopically constructed Euro- and anthropocentric world. As Stephanie Rutherford argues, “if we imagine ourselves as outside of nature, then there are only *a very limited number of ways in which we can both interact with and work to preserve it.*”<sup>903</sup> Now, even time to change how we manage ourselves on this planet is becoming increasingly limited. As Davis said in the quote at the start of this chapter, the dominant view of reality is one that we can no longer afford. The

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<sup>900</sup>. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Picador, 1977), 4.

<sup>901</sup>. Charlie Russell quoted in Bradshaw, 20.

<sup>902</sup>. Bradshaw, 42.

<sup>903</sup>. Stephanie Rutherford, “‘This Sounds Dramatic, and It’s Intended to Be’: Why Imagining Ourselves as ‘Outside’ of Nature Does More Harm than Good,” University of Minnesota Press Blog, 2012, <http://www.umninpressblog.com/2012/02/this-sounds-dramatic-and-its-intended.html>. Italics my emphasis.

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presence of significant others helps us learn how to coexist, how to achieve mutual belonging; without them there can be no conversation, no co-becoming. We also need to work with significant others and other cultures to work through the grievances created by the traditional Western ways of modern industrial life.

According to G. A. Bradshaw, “The idea of living by a *species-pluralistic ethic and culture*, wherein humans and bears are guided by shared values and precepts, is not outlandish. It is how our human gatherer ancestors existed before a manufactured lifestyle took over.”<sup>904</sup> The dominant way of life, however, is seen wholly incompatible with such an ethic or culture. We do not even have a common understanding of what it is to live by or in a species-pluralistic ethic or culture. Such cultures and ethics were the very targets of the colonial conquest of North America and elsewhere.

Charlie Russell’s approach to bears was not recognized or appreciated by everyone, least of all members of the hunting community in both North American and Russia,<sup>905</sup> but his life’s work trying to understand bears and change dominant perspectives of them led to an important concept worth perusing and developing:<sup>906</sup>

People insist that it is dangerous if a bear loses fear of humans [...]. That’s why people are told to make all sorts of noise if they see a grizzly—not just to scare her off but to make sure that no connection is made with the bear. My experience shows just the opposite, that being fearful in that way is not normal for a bear. You can’t feel negative or superior because fear causes hostility. Scaring a bear is threatening, and that makes him defensive. Being fearful is all about the human, not about the bear. Most of the time in nature, there’s nothing to fear if you pay attention. Bears and other animals pick up on whether someone is scared or interested in them in a good way. They like it when someone is genuinely interested in them. I’ve called it “intelligent responsiveness.”

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<sup>904</sup>. G. A. Bradshaw, *Talking with Bears: Conversations with Charlie Russell* (Calgary: Rocky Mountain Books, 2020), 43. Italics my emphasis.

<sup>905</sup>. Genzlinger, “Charlie Russell, Who Befriended Bears, Dies at 76.”

<sup>906</sup>. Charlie Russell in Bradshaw, 30.

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*Intelligent responsiveness* is about approaching another being with respect that comes from a place of mutual recognition and respect; not from a state or mindset rooted in fear or hate.

For every culture there is a particular etiquette. The same seems to go, from what we might be able to tell to some extent, for different species (and individual differences therein). Charlie Russell made it clear what this etiquette seems to be for the bears whom he lived amongst. Not every species or individual within a group will respond the same way to “bear etiquette.” If crows can distinguish between different human languages, and have regional dialects of their own, why not also have possible different comfort levels when they encounter members of *homo sapien*?<sup>907</sup>

Many people can attest to the individual and group differences within and between animals in their lives. An example from my own humble, domestic experience comes from 18 years living with my cat, Maya. The greeting etiquette for Maya is similar to a human handshake in that anyone who wants to say “hello” must first extend their hand or forehead calmly and wait for her to reach her nose out to inspect. If she touches you with her face or head, it means she is comfortable with further interaction. Anytime a person would try to touch her without first observing this etiquette, Maya would back away and refuse being touched by said person. I tried this with other cats and found it seemed to work well, including refusals to “shake hands” and showing respect by not touching or pressing the individual to interact with me further. While this is far from scientific rigour, the point is that everyone has their own comfort levels based on various factors and that there is always some kind of communication to be observed. It is about pay attention to what significant others are saying when we encounter them. Again, the point is to learn

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<sup>907</sup>. Kaeli Swift, “Crows Are Watching Your Language, Literally,” Corvid Research, 2021, <https://corvidresearch.blog/2020/06/21/the-crows-are-watching-your-language-literally/>.

how to respond intelligently and respectfully (as much as one is able) when presented the opportunity.

Intelligent responsiveness, as Russell has articulated it, seems to be a kind of social intelligence that goes beyond the human for a cultivating a species-pluralistic ethic. That is, an ethic in which one considers the relationship between self and other or self and the more-than-human community first, rather than solely one's own particular human society. Similar to European's encounter with wild animals, Umeek/E. Richard Atleo pointed out that when Europeans encountered Indigenous peoples at contact, neither had enough experience or knowledge about one another. This lack, Umeek noted, is "what defines an immature stage of social development."<sup>908</sup> In order to respond intelligently to another being, another people, a certain degree of social intelligence—the ability to understand and navigate interpersonal relationships—is required. This includes inter-species relationships.

For both the Nuu-chah-nulth people and Indigenous people of Peru, plants and animals are persons, beings with agency and lifeways of their own. They came to understand this through their respective epistemologies, through traditional ceremonies and generations of careful, respectful observation.<sup>909</sup> For both communities, plants and animals are to themselves as we are to ourselves in our respective worlds; to us, we are simply us (people), and the same is true for plants and animals in their own worlds. A bear, tree, or fly does not experience itself as "a bear," "a tree," or "a fly" as we know them. To themselves, they are "people" in a similar or same self-familiar sense capable of communicating with one another, exerting their own presence and agency in the world. Animals "make plans regarding where they are going to go. They check to see if their group is all together, or if one is missing, what happened. Each place where they sleep, they keep lists, they control things as

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<sup>908</sup>. Umeek/E. Richard Atleo, *Principles of Tsawalk*, 90.

<sup>909</sup>. Umeek, *Principles of Tsawalk*, 5.



they go,” an Indigenous Peruvian noted.<sup>910</sup> This is getting at what Umeek means by recognition. One must first learn *to see* the other in a mutually respectful way.

“‘To see’ someone,” according to Umeek, “means to observe a significant relationship.” Seeing something, therefore, means to foster a stronger relationship. The example Umeek writes of is that of the way one would joyfully welcome family members into one’s home upon each visit. This kind of recognition—one founded in love or appreciation and respect—is about encouraging the continuation of that relationship, that one’s relatives will always return. The same applies for other species, such as salmon, he says: “It makes sense to treat salmon in the same way, so that they will continue to return to fulfill a natural and healthy role as a food resource.”<sup>911</sup> Even after death, salmon are treated respectfully. Haida carver, Reg Davidson gave an example of how this was done by his grandfather: when food fishing, they would always work on their fish by facing it upriver, “so the spirit will still go upriver.”<sup>912</sup> It a performative act acknowledging that the salmon had a place it was trying to reach, and it still has to keep going if it is to continue returning to them, to the same place, the same relationship. In stark contrast, no such thing is done in the tradition of industrial salmon aquaculture. Confined to overcrowded sea pens, salmon are exposed to diseases such a sea lice and other stressors.<sup>913</sup> For these fish, their entire existence and sole destination are the supermarkets of the global economy—and not as fish of traditional environmental imaginations (i.e., the way a child might depict fish in rivers, lakes, and oceans), but as highly managed biomass commodities.

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<sup>910</sup>. Umeek quoting a person indigenous to Peru in *Umeek*/E. Richard Atleo, *Principles of Tsawalk*, 82–83.

<sup>911</sup>. *Ibid*, 84.

<sup>912</sup>. Reg Davidson in Sasha Snow, *Hadwin’s Judgement*, 00:16:10.

<sup>913</sup>. Stephen Bocking, “Science, Salmon, and Sea Lice: Constructing Practice and Place in an Environmental Controversy,” *Journal of the History of Biology* 45, no. 4 (2012): 681–716, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41653592>.

Respecting and recognizing the lifeways of salmon as described by Davidson is one way a person might perform a spirituality of ecology. Salmon are beings of the forest as much as the bears who depend on them for food—even the trees near rivers benefit from bears leaving salmon carcasses to be absorbed into the soil for the trees' nutrients. Trees, bears, salmon, and myriad other beings make up a forest—a multispecies community that is deeply appreciated and regarded with spiritual significance by those who maintain their versions of a species-pluralistic ethic and culture, like people of the Nuu-chah-nulth and Haida communities. Further inland, the Stoney elders, John and Nora Stevens, also spoke of being embedded in their own network of physically and culturally sacred relationships. Sid Marty referred to this sense of belonging and interconnection to the more-than-human world as a “spirituality of ecology,”<sup>914</sup> a perspective that is more inclusive of not only emotions such as grief and love, but also other ways of understanding and relating to the more-than-human world.

For every group, for every individual—human, bear, cat, bird, or even a forest, river, or mountain—there are step-by-step ways of learning to “shake hands,” that is, greeting, becoming acquainted, and then becoming familiar over time in the hopes that the wild or significant other will continue to be around and in relation to us. What it requires at the very least is a *recognition* of the other as a being, another entity equally worthy of respect. In order to behave in such a way, it is necessary to try to understand others—to *see* them as Umeek and Russell mean it—through a kind of species (social) intelligent responsiveness and respectfulness.

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<sup>914</sup>. Sid Marty, *The Black Grizzly of Whiskey Creek*, 1.

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Much of the Western world has caused irreparable and often unspeakable harms and losses to peoples and beings inside and outside their communities. The time-place we all now live in is called the “human age,” the *Anthropocene*—a sixth mass extinction as a result of industrial human activities. Yet these new troubling realities are not equally shared or experienced, or equally created by all people. The most vulnerable are most often the least responsible for the planetary changes and loss of species, ecosystems, languages, and cultures taking place. Those collectives with greater responsibility should not assume they can reverse the issues they created on their own. The way of thinking needs to change or at least diversify. Societies of the Western world cannot resolve the social and bioecological problems purely on their terms alone; in this new world, approaches to adapting to regional and planetary changes need to be done as a co-creation. That is, *working with* other cultures and species.

As for *wild-déor*, these wild other-than-humans are beings with wills and lifeways of their own. Through the destruction of their habitats, they too have many grievances, many losses. Addressing theirs can be a way of addressing our own grief for the harms and losses that have accumulated over the centuries. How modern Western societies have treated the land, the waters, and the wild beings therein has left traumas not only upon the earth and its wild inhabitants, but in our relations with them. Working with Wild Others is one path towards improving relations with the multispecies community in a changing world. This is how the work of mourning is about inclusiveness, staying with shared environmental troubles, and the building of a more ethical or responsible sense of belonging in the more-than-human world.

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Moondogs, moondogs,  
 tell me the difference between tricks  
 and wisdom, hunting  
 and grieving.  
 I listen in the tent, my ear  
 to the ground. There is a land even  
 more bare than this one, without sage,  
 or prickly pear, or greasewood. A land  
 that can only wear its scars, every crater  
 etched. Riverless. Treeless. You sing to its thin  
 used-up light, yips and floated tremolos and screams,  
 sculpted barks like fastballs of packed  
 air. Echoes that articulate the buttes and coulees and  
 dissolve  
 into the darkness, which is always listening.

– Don McKay<sup>915</sup>

This dissertation began by discussing old-growth deforestation as being “like a war” and introduced the theme of social-ecological grief with the loss of the Golden Spruce. The Haida boy became the Tree when he looked back towards the home he lost. Wherever one stands in the fields of loss, one is “remade in times of grief, broken apart and reassembled.”<sup>916</sup> To lose a home, a community, might be understood as a kind of exile. In exile, the desire to return makes “it is impossible not to look back,” because “stripped of memory” a person or people are hardly themselves.<sup>917</sup> Memory is a complex link that binds a person or people to a place; memory is a root.

In contrast, industrial imperial and settler-colonial communities have long fostered a form of self-exile from the more-than-human world. This has been and is done by modes of alienating the non-human and the “Other” more generally from oneself, whether by means of dominant narratives (e.g., “wilderness”) and exclusion and erasure, and acts of physical and symbolic violence. It is a long-cultivated

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<sup>915</sup> Don McKay, “Song for the Song of the Coyote,” *Camber*, 167.

<sup>916</sup> Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*, 1.

<sup>917</sup> Czeslaw Milosz quoted in James William Booth, *Communities of Memory*, 35.

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collective<sup>918</sup> way of being in the world at the level of politics, economics, and infrastructure, among other institutions that reinforces itself. Environmentally and infrastructurally speaking, consider how,<sup>919</sup>

The perfectly straight concrete road cut through a boreal forest is a thought structure *concretely* articulated, and in turn it seeds the imagination with opportunities of how to encounter (or use) that forest in ways unthinkable—and thus unreal—without the road. Likewise, a dam built into a salmon river is abstract thought physically articulated; in turn, the presence of the physical structure gathers the imagination around particularly mechanistic, utilitarian opportunities for encountering the river. Narrative and technology reinforce one another in powerful feedback loops, each contributing their share to revealing the world in a particular manner.

The perceived structure of the world shapes, to a certain extent, how a people experience it. What has to happen is a serious questioning of the mode of reality that is presented. This was seen in the case of the beech tree when, in Robert Frost's poem, the theme of casting doubt is raised and an affectively charged moral reflection opens up. It leads to the question of what binds a person to a place.

Place attachment runs deeper when there are more connections within a relationship to a place. An individual or group can legally own an area of land, but that is not the same thing as intimately knowing it or belonging to it. Ownership is a one-way relationship that lacks mutual reciprocity. A home or habitat is a place characterized by a complex web of interconnected and interdependent relations, in contrast; it goes beyond a two-way relationship. Thus, when a person belongs to such a multispecies community, a network of relationship, loss of that place or being displacement from it is a trauma. In so many instances such losses occur through act of violence, as is the case in colonization and human-driven famines and floods. In

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<sup>918</sup>. This is not to say that everyone in such a given collective goes along or agrees with the status quo; rather I am referring to the way a nation such as Canada or the United States runs industries like forestry and logging, typically blending the two (e.g., see the Forest Product Association of Canada), and how large proportions of the public live unaware of the issues at play within the status quo.

<sup>919</sup>. Martin Lee Mueller, *Being Salmon Being Human: Encountering the Wild in Us and Us in the Wild* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2017), 27.

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the Haida myth of the golden spruce or *K'iid K'iyaa*s, the loss of the boy's village to the worst snow storm resulted from an imbalance or disrespect that transpired between a human and natural forces.

Displacement has been and is increasingly becoming a common issue worldwide as the climate changes and various environmental issues force people and animals out of their homes and habitats. Place, like an ancient forest, is lost first by being destroyed or irreparably changed; and again, when memories, traces, and relationships tied to it are lost. The loss of ancient and old-growth forests spells the loss of cultural ties to the past and hope for the future, the loss of memory. Hope and the quest for home, however, spring from ruins.

Again, it becomes a question of place reiterated: what kind of places, what kind of homes (belonging, relationships), are to be formed? This is where the work of social-ecological or environmental-based grief and mourning are vital for confronting the losses and challenges of today. As with other environmental cases, griefwork that follows from losing ancient and old-growth forests becomes "soul work," in that "it requires courage to face the world as it is and not turn away, to not burrow into a hole of comfort and anesthetization."<sup>920</sup>

In speaking about a commercial on prime television, Alette Willis points out that "pain disrupts business as usual" and the common response is that it "should be palliated so that people can return to being productive members of society. The analgesic in the commercial is a technique of power for disciplining disruptive bodies, but then so is the story."<sup>921</sup> Etymologically, Willis also points out how "to palliate"

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<sup>920</sup>. Ibid, 7.

<sup>921</sup>. Alette Willis, "Restorying the Self, Restoring Place: Healing through Grief in Everyday Places," *Emotion, Space and Society* 2, no. 2 (2009): 86–91, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2009.09.001>, 86.

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means “to cloak.” In contrast, healing is “to make whole, holy, to make sacred” and “is concerned with underlying causes and their transformation.”<sup>922</sup>

Grief might be thought of as the other side or twin of love. Like love, it connects us to the world in a way that helps us get at the heart of things.<sup>923</sup> To mourn is to allow oneself to be changed by loss, to embrace it. Francis Weller warns that “Without this awareness and willingness to be shaped by life, we remain in the adolescent strategies of avoidance and heroic striving,”<sup>924</sup> much like old king Gilgamesh.

In his book *Juvenescence*, Robert Pogue Harrison argues that there are different ways of grounding time in age(s). For instance, just as there are chronological and biological histories, there are also cultural ones. The cultural age in which we find ourselves, call it the Anthropocene (despite its criticisms<sup>925</sup>), is charged with responsibilities yet to be fulfilled. Indeed, our “Human Age” might be seen as a kind of adolescence in which the status quo seems so preoccupied with being young, achieving new extremes, consumerism, and self-absorption. Harrison argues that what is needed is “new and younger forms of cultural maturity,” and that, “Nothing is more important in this regard than resolving to act [...] our historical age.” This means accepting and taking responsibility for the fact that the past continues to have an effect in the present—even if it has been forgotten. The task is to retrieve our “humic foundations,” that which has been buried,<sup>926</sup> and make

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<sup>922</sup> Ibid.

<sup>923</sup> Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*, 9.

<sup>924</sup> Ibid.

<sup>925</sup> Not all humans are equally responsible for the crisis currently present on Earth; indeed, it is the least responsible who are the most vulnerable to the various crises witnessed today. The responsibility arguably lies with countries and communities with greater responsibility for the messes littered across the globe, such as members of the Global North with histories of imperialism and colonization in particular.

<sup>926</sup> “A humic foundation is one whose contents have been buried so that they may be reclaimed by the future. The humic holds in its conserving element the unfinished story of what has come to pass.” Robert Pogue Harrison, *Dominion of the Dead* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), x.

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concerted efforts towards reconciliation and taking responsibility and responding intelligently.

From the time of Gilgamesh, “A multimillennial history lurks inside us, whether we are aware of it or not.”<sup>927</sup> This is a history that traces back to the beginnings of Western civilization and has unfolded time and time again. Reemergent over time and across space, the place question concerning forests, or the Forest Question, is always present.

The United Kingdom has its Greenwood and English pastoral;<sup>928</sup> Scotland has its Caledonian forest and the once forgotten wildwood of *A' Ghàidhealtachd*;<sup>929</sup> Germany has its *Deutscher Wald*;<sup>930</sup> the United States has its northeastern woodlands and Big Tree forests imagined as “Paradise Lost” in the west;<sup>931</sup> and Canada has its vast “wilderness,”<sup>932</sup> where most of the old wild woodlands are confined to “wilderness” parks while the rest remain open to industrial tenure.

Today, in North America, three types of forests have emerged out of the Forest Question: the demonstration forest, the nature reserve, and the working forest. National parks are a kind of demonstration forest that are often a “rejuvenating *mea culpa* for continuing business-as-usual,”<sup>933</sup> a palliation cloaking the bigger story at play beyond the beauty strip that borders between the roads we travel along and the clearcuts beyond. The deeper, more concerning story of the

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<sup>927</sup>. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Juvenescence: A Cultural History of Our Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), xii.

<sup>928</sup>. Roger Deakin, *Wildwood: A Journey through Trees* (New York: Free Press, 2007): xii.

<sup>929</sup>. Hand, “The Forest of Forgetting.”; Connell-Szasz, “A’ Ghàidhealtachd and the North American West.”

<sup>930</sup>. Larry Silver, “Forest Primeval: Albrecht Altdorfer and the German Wilderness Landscape,” *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 13, no. 1 (1983): 4–43.

<sup>931</sup>. Christina Ljungberg, “Wilderness from An Ecosemiotic Perspective,” *Sign Systems Studies* 29, no. 1 (2001): 169–376, <http://www.uni-kassel.de/upress/online/frei/978-3-933146-63-2.volltext.frei.pdf#page=173>, 174.

<sup>932</sup>. Jonathan Bordo, “The *Terra Nullius* of Wilderness—Colonialist Landscape Art (Canada and Australia) and the So-Called Claim to American Exception” (pp. 13–36) in Kenneth McRoberts et al., eds., *Time, Space and Place, International Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 15 (International Journal of Canadian Studies, 1997).

<sup>933</sup>. Yard, “Softwood Lumber and the Golden Spruce: Two Perspectives on the Material and Discursive Construction of British Columbian Forests.”



## DISCUSSION

Anglo-North American forests is one of a *neuartige Waldsterben* or “new form of forest death,” that’s is, how wildwoods die and are forgotten gradually over generations.

In the eastern regions of North America, there are no ancient intact forest ecosystems left. What old woods remain are pockets of old-growth forest, kept mainly within park and preserve boundaries. The few ancient wild woods that remain in British Columbia and the vast northern Boreal Forest stretching across Canada are currently still being logged. Furthermore, although a recent pledge by Canada and other nations at the Cop26 climate summit to end “forest loss” by 2030 was made, no clear understanding of “forest” in “forest loss” was given.<sup>934</sup> And what of halting existing and contracted logging tenures in the ancient and old-growth forests in British Columbia? The same vagueness can also be found on the website of the Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC), who promotes the narrative that “Forests are complex ecosystems” that “need to be monitored and taken care of,” suggesting a one-way relationship with only one agency, that of some humans. Nowhere on this website could I find a clear description of what is meant by “forest.”<sup>935</sup> Perhaps the FPAC might find it beneficial to leave this up to the environmental imaginations of anyone visiting its website and the ideals they may have imbibed. The question remains: What is a “forest” and, subsequently, what does “loss” mean? How is “forest” and “loss” conceptualized?

“Forest loss” typically means “deforestation,” defined as the *quantitative* loss of tree cover that formed the previous forest. A “forest” is not considered “deforested”

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<sup>934</sup>. UN Climate Change Conference UK 2021. Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021: [https://ukcop26.org/glasgow-leaders-declaration-on-forests-and-land-use/?utm\\_source=Wildlands+League&utm\\_campaign=9c5895badc-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2021\\_08\\_20\\_05\\_10\\_COPY\\_01&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_1b6e144b5c-9c5895badc-454194214](https://ukcop26.org/glasgow-leaders-declaration-on-forests-and-land-use/?utm_source=Wildlands+League&utm_campaign=9c5895badc-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2021_08_20_05_10_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1b6e144b5c-9c5895badc-454194214)

<sup>935</sup>. Forest Products Association of Canada, “Our Story” (2021). Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021: <https://www.fpac.ca/story>

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so long as the cleared land is replanted with new trees, equally a “new forest.” Such “new forests,” however, as discussed in this dissertation, are a completely different kind of space, or “non-places”<sup>936</sup> in our peripheries.

As for the new pledge made by 130 nations at Cop26, a recent article by CBC News pointed out that Canada already made such a promise in 2014, at The New York Declaration of Forests. Again, like then, the new pledge is non-binding and seeks “only to end net deforestation, where forests aren’t replanted” according to some ecologists.<sup>937</sup> The article also cites a report published in November 2020 that states that deforestation increased globally by forty per cent since 2014.<sup>938</sup> The kind of deforestation happening in Canada is the loss of ancient, or “primary,” old-growth forests in exchange for biologically non-diverse planted “forests”—often a single or a few species—intended for later harvest. As I have argued here and elsewhere,<sup>939</sup> the article acknowledged that Canada and other countries lack definitions of deforestation that account for such kinds of wild and diverse woodland loss.

What Canada and other nations are yet to do is critically reconsider their cultural relationships and cultural histories with forests at the levels of their institutions and industries. A reimagining of a nation and the forests to which it is dependent locally and globally is desperately needed. While such griefwork—that is, the labour of delving into and sincerely confronting an imperial, colonial past and present—has been occurring amongst Indigenous allies, many environmentalists and scholars, and other members of the public, the dominant economic and political institutions have been slow to change. Collectively, domestically and internationally,

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<sup>936</sup> Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Verso, 2009).

<sup>937</sup> Emily Chung, “What Canada Did — and Didn’t Do — at the UN Climate Summit,” *CBC News*, November 15, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/canada-cop26-summary-1.6247069>.

<sup>938</sup> “Progress On the New York Declaration of Forests,” 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/canada-cop26-summary-1.6247069>.

<sup>939</sup> Moir, “Mythopoeia Sylvatica: A Critical Topographical Exploration of the Once and Future Forests of North America through Six Witness Trees.”

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much of the issue appears to be a problem of representation, a treachery of environmental imagery and imagination. Regarding forests, Robert Pogue Harrison:<sup>940</sup>

Although they were brought early on within the jurisdiction of public institutions (royal preserves, forest management, ecology, and so forth), they have nevertheless retained to this day their ancient associations in the cultural imagination. Their antecedence and outsidership with regard to the institutional order has not really changed in our minds. What has changed recently is our anxiety about the loss of an edge of exteriority.

Similarly, as Wade Davis put it, “We live at the edge of the clearcut.”<sup>941</sup> The loss of forests, wildlife, and other human cultures means that our dwelling place is harmed and further threatened. Confronted with “[existing] in the mode of exclusion from that which has either disappeared or is disappearing before our very eyes,”<sup>942</sup> a healthy, constructive response is grief. Be it in the form of anxiety, fear, anger, or depression, environmental based grief can be thought of as, to borrow from the field of cognitive behaviour therapy, a “constructive unpleasant emotion” or a “CUE.”<sup>943</sup> It positions or prepares the bereft and mourners for transformation. A lack of a disruptive emotional response to seeing a clearcut landscape where there was an ancient or old-growth forest is symptomatic of a deeper issue, be it at the psychological or cultural level (though the former is often grounded in the latter).

As a transformative power, grief can lead down different pathways.

Environmental-based grief, in other words, needs to be guided not by one but many perspectives. One place to start is to question one’s relation to a given place. While her work concerned the Russian Forest, I agree with Jane T. Costlow that,<sup>944</sup>

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<sup>940</sup>. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests*, 247.

<sup>941</sup>. Wade Davis speaking at the Milton K. Wong Lecture in the Frederick Wood Theatre at UBC. Source: Wade Davis in “Catalogues of Culture,” produced by *Ideas from CBC Radio* (September 23, 2015), accessed October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015: <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/catalogues-of-culture-1.3239209>.

<sup>942</sup>. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Forests*, 249.

<sup>943</sup>. Greg Dubord, “Part 6. The CUE Question,” *Canadian Family Physician* 57, no. 5 (2011): 573, <https://www.cfp.ca/content/cfp/57/5/573.full.pdf>.

<sup>944</sup>. Jane T Costlow, *Heart-Pine Russia*, 5 .

Our task [...] should be to revisit cultural contexts with new eyes. By ‘cultural context’ I mean a dense tissue of stories, images, and metaphors, a thick braid of meanings that emerge over time as authors and artists explore the emotional resonance and cultural significance of place. Russian critics who of late have studied their culture’s traditions of imagining the natural world tend to speak of a ‘feeling for nature’—*chuvstvo prirody*. The term asks us to think about sensibility and the senses, about feeling—both tactile and inward—that precedes and accompanies *thinking* about landscape.

In this, “[w]e are all victims of selective perception,”<sup>945</sup> and what we have attended to over the years has come to define the state of woodlands near to and far from us whether we have forgotten the cultural history or not. “Revisiting cultural contexts with new eyes,” thus, requires the inclusion of many voices and interests of diverse beings and peoples, particularly those of Indigenous communities who have known and depended on the forest landscapes for millennia, each forest a particular place to a people. This is how striving for ecological justice is also be about social justice.

There is hope with the introduction and discussions of Indigenous-led conservation movement.<sup>946</sup> *Wah-nuh-jus – Hilth-hoo-is*, also known as Meares Island in British Columbia is the first Tribal Park in Canada, declared and watched over by the Tla-o-qui-aht and Ahousaht First Nations of Clayoquot Sound.<sup>947</sup> Tribal Parks and Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) are examples of places where conversations between traditional local cultures and the land continue. The national and provincial governments can claim to “own” forested lands, but do not intimately know them the way members of the respective local First Nations do, for the difference is a question of place-attachment defined by the presence and

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<sup>945</sup> Christa Walck, “Healing the Divided Mind: Land as an Integrating Concept for Organizations and the Natural Environment,” *Organization & Environment* 17, no. 2 (2004): 170–94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086026604264882>.

<sup>946</sup> Megan Youdelis, Kim Tran, and Elizabeth Lunstrum, “Indigenous-Led Conservation Reading List,” 2021, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d3f1e8262d8ed00013cdf1/t/6195732cf21157081be1474f/1637184301967/Indigenous-Led+Conservation+Reading+List%2C+Final+%282021%29-compressed.pdf>.

<sup>947</sup> Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks, “About Tla-o-qui-aht Tribal Parks,” Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation (2021). Accessed 1 December 2021: <https://tribalparcs.com/tribal-parks-guardians/>

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continuation of memory and mutual relations with place. By working together, settler-colonial and Indigenous communities can preserve old and co-create new arrangements with woodlands while developing understandings of the forest as a kind of space generally and what particular places mean specifically to different people and how those meanings and senses of place might become respectfully and responsibly shared. Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site is considered a successful example of co-management between a First Nation and settler-colonial governments; however, the Haida Nation never ceded any of their land or waters, nor did they sign any treaties.<sup>948</sup> They did recently sign the GayGahlda or “Changing Tide” agreement, which recognizes the Haida Nation’s Title and Rights to Haida Gwaii and their right to self-govern.<sup>949</sup> Such acts of working together can be thought of as new intercultural processes in which discussions and actions are co-performed with the land and its original inhabitants.

A new sense of the meaning of place—of both forests themselves and belonging upon the land—can emerge, as Jane Costlow put it, “both from engagement with the place itself and with the cultural traditional already alive there.”<sup>950</sup> And it is not only the people Indigenous to a place, but also the interests of the multispecies communities that matter in conversations about the forest question.

The Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole is an example and testament of place-based healing and reconciliation. Grieving the loss of forests (and other parts of one’s community) is work that needs to be localized. Even where forests may appear to be largely non-existent, like much of the General Toronto Area and elsewhere, for

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<sup>948</sup>. Ian Gunn, “Battle for Oil-Rich Canadian Lands,” *Haida Laas: Journal of the Haida Nation*, no. April (2002), [https://www.haidanation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/jl\\_Apr.02.pdf](https://www.haidanation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/jl_Apr.02.pdf).

<sup>949</sup>. Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, “New Agreement Lays Foundation for Reconciliation of Haida Nation Title and Rights,” Government of Canada, 2021, <https://www.canada.ca/en/crown-indigenous-relations-northern-affairs/news/2021/08/new-agreement-lays-foundation-for-reconciliation-of-haida-nation-title-and-rights.html>.

<sup>950</sup>. Jane Costlow, *Heart Pine Russia*, 6.

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example, there are places for environmental mourning and healing. Environmental-based mourning needs to be place-based, otherwise risk its abstraction and palliation. While connecting with “nature” is one way to approach ecological-based grief, it is important to bear in mind that, as Willis warns, “Leaving the ordinary places where one dwells in order to spend a small amount of time in a place deemed to be therapeutic is more likely to result in palliation than healing.”<sup>951</sup> Furthermore, she adds that “Palliating painful emotions may pose a danger to individuals, places and societies if it defuses an urgent need for healing,” to which she argues for “the excavation and amplification of alternative stories, stories of healing in and of place.”<sup>952</sup>

For the people of the Haida Nation, the forests of Haida Gwaii are their home; not “wilderness.” Most Canadians, however, live in developed areas situated away from large forest landscapes and have to visit one kind of forest park or another. To this, Willis’ additional warning is pertinent: that in travelling to a place such as a national park to heal with and in “nature,” risks idealizing some spaces over others, to which not everyone can gain access. She cautions that,<sup>953</sup>

It is here, in the splitting and the categorizing and the valuing and the commodifying that therapeutic landscapes run into the same problems Cronon (1995) describes for the concept of ‘wilderness’. If some places are designated as special, if they are ‘idealized’, that means that other places, the places where most of us live, are not idealized and therefore become available to be exploited or abused or just plain neglected. In such a dualistically divided world, health-giving places are available only to the privileged few, while other places risk becoming ‘sacrifice zones’. The separation of health-giving from ordinary places means that not only do relationships in and with ordinary places remain unhealed and un-healing, these relationships may actually deteriorate. By separating out and idealizing some places as therapeutic we risk reifying all places and we risk equating ‘healing’ with palliation. By labeling and even marketing and promoting some places as therapeutic, the possibility of healing landscapes elsewhere is at best ignored and at worst denied.

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<sup>951</sup>. Willis, “Restorying the Self, Restoring Place: Healing through Grief in Everyday Places,” 87.

<sup>952</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>953</sup>. Ibid, 87–88.

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Healing cannot be simply about creating or visiting a special park or preserve and then simply “going home” (“home” inside the city or town will not be such if the forest, the “exterior,” ceases to exist or is in an ill state).

Environmental healing must involve a wider, more inclusive sense of a place as home in which relational selves mourn beyond “individual psyches and biologies.”<sup>954</sup> For, “Embedded individuals cannot heal in isolation but must instead transform in and through relationships to and within a range of places.” In other words, “Wholeness involves others.”<sup>955</sup> This can be achieved by expanding our sense of place and relational belonging in the world beyond our physical and cultural boundaries. For instance, working with Indigenous peoples and the land is a vital start.

Furthermore, Willis suggests that making stories of transformed places more available is another way to emphasize healing and foster therapeutic affective geographies.<sup>956</sup> Bearing witness is part of the process of griefwork that confronts environmental losses by exploring painful histories and emotions and facing where and how one is or might be complicit. A beginning step is the restorying of self and to place.<sup>957</sup>

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<sup>954</sup>. Ibid, 86–87.

<sup>955</sup>. Ibid, 86–87.

<sup>956</sup>. Ibid, 90.

<sup>957</sup>. Alette Willis, “Restorying the self, restoring place: Healing through grief in everyday places,” 86.

## CONCLUSION

As an expression of grief itself, this dissertation has focused on environmental-based grief through the social and ecological contexts of forests ranging from ancient Mesopotamia to Great Britain to Anglo-North America. Part One explored deforestation of ancient trees as an issue that has been present in the record of Western civilization since the time of ancient Mesopotamia in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* where the urban human was framed in opposition to all that lived beyond the city walls (both physical and institutional). This led to a discussion of the topic and theme of the clearing and clearances—that of trees, woodland habitats, and the killing and displacement of peoples. Lastly, *forest* was studied as a keyword and revealed how there are often discrepancies at play between what is meant or understood linguistically/symbolically and what is physically on the land.

Part Two offered a critical topography of environmental witnessing using four witness tree case studies. The first three concerned the dominant settler-colonial treatment of ancient forests while the fourth was an Indigenous case, which provided an alternative mode of a human-land reality. Each witness tree testified to the way different social-ecological relations with wild woodlands result in different ecological footprints. The beech witness tree in Robert Frost's poem testified as a sign standing in for the surveyor and symbolically as a traditional Anglo- or Euro-North American culturally modified tree. The message from "Beech" and *Fagus grandifolia* was to question our relation to wild woods and the boundaries we trace through the land and upon our ways of perceiving it. *The Jack Pine* and the species it was representing, *Pinus banksiana*, testified to the power and dangers inherent in landscape myths. The Jack pine's message: check the accuracy of the maps you follow, for they are not always the reality of the territory they represent. Then in the western regions, Big Lonely Doug and the absence of the surrounding trees (other



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Douglas-fir, Sitka spruce, Western hemlock, and Yellow cedar among others) testify to the myth of sustainable forestry in Canada and the United States. Where economy and cultures are dependent upon healthy wild wood ecology, the dominant approach is still that of industry and permitting politicians and their policies, as well as supportive members of the public. Big Lonely Doug's message: mind your meanings and how your leaders talk about the forests, for the unsustainable past was never put behind us. National quests for more wood were simply transferred from colonial agendas to mercantile or economic ones.

Distinct from the first three trees, the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole and *Thuja plicata* testified to an alternative model of reality in which humans, culture, and wild woods work together. It also demonstrates the importance of social-ecological witnessing, enplaced and ethical remembrance, and minding coexistence. Furthermore, it points Anglo-North America in the direction of cultural and ecological reconciliation as a place to begin, to not only reimagining the forests as more than just wood, timber, pulp and fibre; but as a diverse social-ecological system of resilience through ethical woodland community forestry.

Part Three was an essay about witnessing the Wild Other in environmental grief with North American bears as an example. Wildlife who are connected to the forest are important witnesses to our relations to them and the woods. Their loss of habitat and other harms committed upon them and estranged relations (i.e., lack of understanding how to more broadly coexist) is reflected back to us when and where humans and these Wild Others clash. Losing Wild Others—be they bears, caribou, spotted owls, wolves, a tree, or a forest—to extinction or extirpation means that we lose more links to the multispecies community that define biologically diverse old-growth and ancient forests. Losing beings of cultural significance also means losing parts of Indigenous cultures. The Wild Other provides eyes into and with which an

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intersubjective, reflexive gaze can take place in larger discussions of what it means to belong to the Earth more generally and places in particular. The Wild Other, in other words, raises the questions of place in terms of belonging, relationships, and responsibilities to the more-than-human world.

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There was once a ship that disappeared below the sea, and then rose back up again. The ship's cargo was salt. When it dissolved in the ship's hold, the ship resurfaced. It is not the ability of wood to burn, but its ability to float that saved the ship. The moral: 'the mystery of wood is not that it burns, but that it floats;' that we decide to see what destroys something, or what saves it.<sup>958</sup>

The land and the psyche are like wood in that they "can be scorched, scarred, singed, or consumed by fire."<sup>959</sup> We can be consumed by grief, by harm, trauma, and loss done to the land and its inhabitants, and so we must continue to critically examine how social-ecological grief transforms people and the land in turn and work through it. Can dominant societies and human relationships with the once and future forests mature and act according to our historical age?

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<sup>958</sup>. Anne Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces* (London: Bloomsbury, 1997), 27–28.

<sup>959</sup>. Richard Raubolt, "The Mystery of Wood Is Not That It Burns, but That It Floats," *Other/Wise* 2, no. Fall (2009), <https://ifpe.wordpress.com/2009/09/14/the-mystery-of-wood-is-not-that-it-burns-but-that-it-floats/>.

## APPENDIX: MAPS

Figure 48 illustrates the forest biomes of North America; the ones examined here include the eastern temperate broadleaf/mixed wood biome of North America and part of the boreal biome in northeastern Canada, and the western temperate conifer biome. Specific forests in the eastern region include the Acadian/Appalachian Forest, the old-growth white and red pine forests of New England and eastern Canada, the forests of the St. Lawrence/Laurentians. The forests in the western region includes the ancient temperate rainforests of Haida Gwaii, the Great Bear Rainforest of British Columbia's mainland coast, Groves on Vancouver Island (e.g., Edinburgh Mountain Ancient Forest, Cathedral Grove), the British Columbian southwestern interior (e.g., what survives today as Stanley Park) and part of the BC mainland interior (e.g., New Forest of the Bowron River Valley, Banff National Park), the forests home to America's "Big Trees" (Coast Redwood and Giant Sequoia), and the mountain forest ecosystems of the Great Basin National Park. Figure 49 illustrates the approximate historic range of the species represented by the six witness trees examined in this thesis: (a) *Fagus grandifolia* of American beech, (b) *Pinus banksiana* or Jack pine, (c) *Pseudotsuga menziesii* or Douglas fir, and (d) *Thuja plicata* or western red cedar.<sup>960</sup> Figure 50 shows the approximate range of remaining intact forest landscapes, while Figures 51 and 52 demonstrate the protected areas of and the human footprint on North America today.

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<sup>960</sup>. Elbert L. Little, Jr., "Digital Representations of Tree Species Range Maps from 'Atlas of United States Trees'," *Geosciences and Environmental Change Science Center* (January 9, 2013), accessed March 23, 2016: <http://esp.cr.usgs.gov/data/little/>

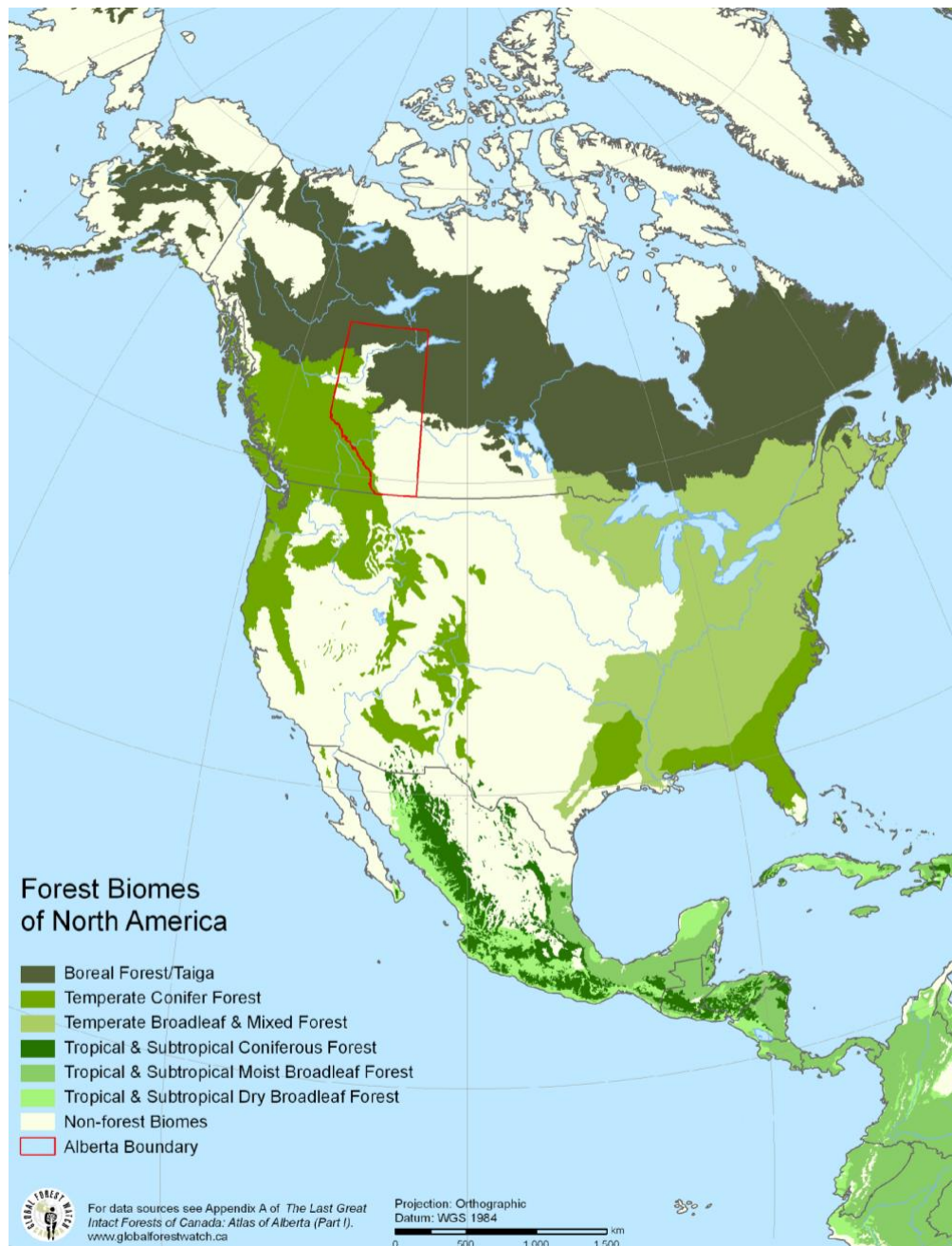


Fig 48. Forest Biomes of North America.<sup>961</sup>

<sup>961</sup>. Global Forest Watch Canada, "Forest Biomes of North America," in *Maps - The Last Great Intact Forest Landscapes of Canada: Atlas of Alberta: Part I* (2014), accessed March 3, 2016: [http://www.globalforestwatch.ca/publications/20090402A\\_MapsI#mapsectionA](http://www.globalforestwatch.ca/publications/20090402A_MapsI#mapsectionA)

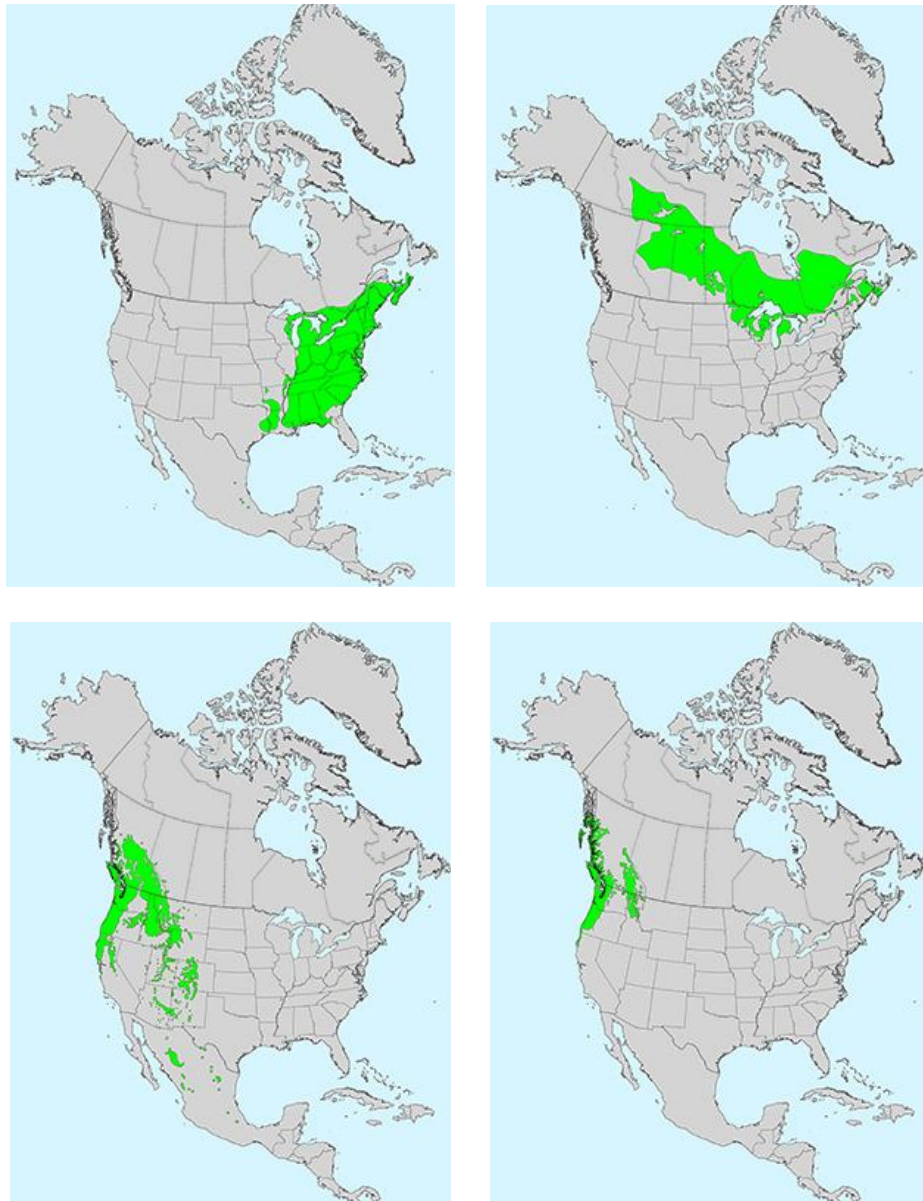


Fig 49. (Left to right) Historic range or original natural occurrence of (a) American beech, (b) Jack pine, (c) Douglas-fir, and (d) Western red cedar.<sup>962</sup>

<sup>962</sup>. Virginia Tech Dendrology, "American beech, *Fagus grandifolia*," *Virginia Tech Department of of Forest Resources and Environment Conservation* (2021). Accessed 24 November 2021: [https://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/landowner\\_detail.cfm?ID=47](https://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/landowner_detail.cfm?ID=47).

Virginia Tech Dendrology, "Jack pine, *Pinus banksiana*," *Virginia Tech Department of of Forest Resources and Environment Conservation* (2021). Accessed 24 November 2021: <https://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/syllabus/factsheet.cfm?ID=100>

Virginia Tech Dendrology, "Douglas fir, ," *Virginia Tech Department of of Forest Resources and Environment Conservation* (2021). Accessed 24 November 2021:

<https://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/syllabus/factsheet.cfm?ID=105>

Virginia Tech Dendrology, "Western red cedar, *Thuja plicata*," *Virginia Tech Department of of Forest Resources and Environment Conservation* (2021). Accessed 24 November 2021:

<https://dendro.cnre.vt.edu/dendrology/syllabus/factsheet.cfm?ID=260>



Fig 50. Intact forest landscapes today (dark green) compared to eight thousand years ago (light green).<sup>963</sup>

<sup>963</sup>. Global Forest Watch Canada, “Intact Forest Landscapes of North America,” in *Maps - The Last Great Intact Forest Landscapes of Canada: Atlas of Alberta: Part I* (2014), accessed March 3, 2016: [http://www.globalforestwatch.ca/publications/20090402A\\_MapsI#mapsectionA](http://www.globalforestwatch.ca/publications/20090402A_MapsI#mapsectionA)



Fig 51. Protected areas of North America.<sup>964</sup>

<sup>964</sup>. Global Forest Watch Canada, "Protected Areas of North America," in *Maps - The Last Great Intact Forest Landscapes of Canada: Atlas of Alberta: Part I* (2014), accessed March 3, 2016: [http://www.globalforestwatch.ca/publications/20090402A\\_MapsI#mapsectionA](http://www.globalforestwatch.ca/publications/20090402A_MapsI#mapsectionA)

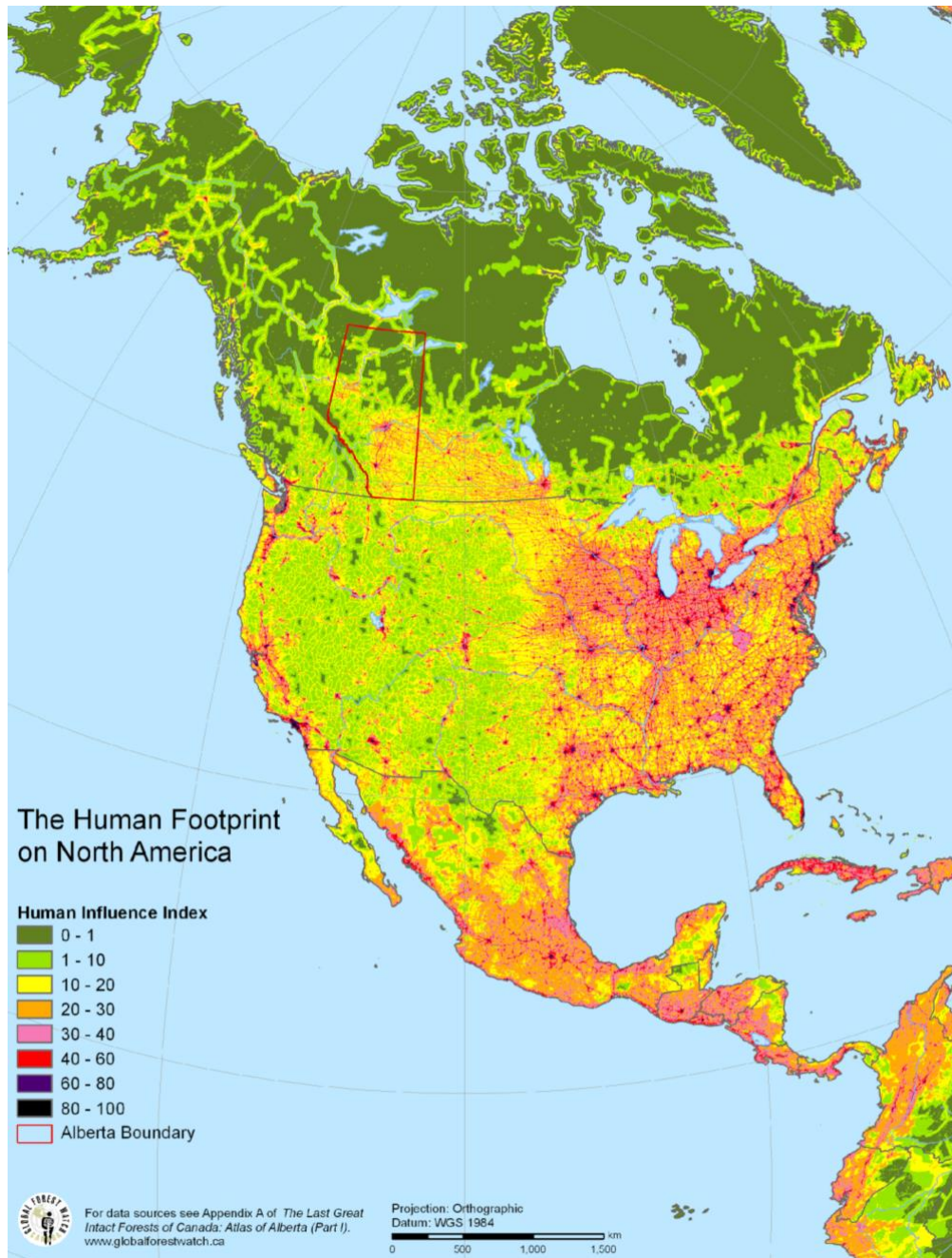


Fig 52. The human footprint on North America.<sup>965</sup>

<sup>965</sup>. Global Forest Watch Canada, “The Human Footprint on North America,” in *Maps - The Last Great Intact Forest Landscapes of Canada: Atlas of Alberta: Part I* (2014), accessed March 3, 2016: [http://www.globalforestwatch.ca/publications/20090402A\\_MapsI#mapsectionA](http://www.globalforestwatch.ca/publications/20090402A_MapsI#mapsectionA)



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