Departure

*(*description of intended focus of major paper and its context with respect to Plan of Study)

This Major Paper is offered in the context of an ongoing journey, as the beginning of an investigation, contemplation of my own and others' relationships to the natural world and to Canadian wilderness environments in particular. It rests as the culmination of many of my educational experiences within (and outside) the Faculty of Environmental Studies over the past two years. It contains elements of past coursework and independent research as well as practical experiences and unforeseen life events. This Major Paper attends to all three components of the Area of Concentration in my Plan of Study, extending them into a deeper investigation while drawing them into a personal reflection and an experiential context.

As a journey, this paper attempts to ask questions and focus on a sense of respectful curiosity and search for meaning. It does not pretend to offer concrete conclusions but rather to extend my Plan of Study and recognize within it a lived experience. It is both a grasp and a gift in that it is an attempt to take hold of ideas, sensations, to make meaning, and at the same time offers glimpses into some of my own and others' relationships to the world and wilderness.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to those who have helped make my journey possible.

Firstly, to Cate Sandilands and Peter Cole whose support, encouragement, patience and friendship have helped me to discover and begin exploring a fascinating world of thoughts and words. Their guidance has encouraged me to embrace my own creativity and to challenge myself, to realize my own potential.

Angela Stiller, Catherine Pazderka and James Davis, whose emotional support and senses of humour have been invaluable.

Eric Finstad, my river translator and fellow “expeditionist”

My sponsors, whose generous donations made my paddling dream a reality:
Mountain Equipment Co-op, Toronto
North Water (paddling safety equipment)
Langford Canoe
Salus Marine Wear
Algonquin Outfitters
AquaBound Paddles
Andy Mitchell, MP Muskoka – Parry Sound
Paddy Torsney, MP Burlington
Outdoor Solutions
RapidMag – Canadian Paddling Magazine

All the people I met in the Ontario “wilderness” who so graciously agreed to speak with me about such important and personal issues.

And to the Creator whose wilderness remains, for me, a powerful mystery and a priceless gift.

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Expedition Outline and Itinerary

Proposed Route and Time Frame:
June 23 - August 31, 2002
Starting Point: South River, ON (hometown)
Destination: Thunder Bay ON (on the north shore of Lake Superior)
Route: (1800 km in total) South River – Lake Nipissing – French River – Georgian Bay and North Channel (Lake Huron) – St Mary's River – Lake Superior

September 1, 2002 – July 31, 2003
Starting Point: Plan of study and Major Paper Proposal
Destination: Major Paper
Route: see References (end of document) and speak to author

There is something. Something that separates us, something I can see when he lowers his eyebrows and scrunches up his forehead and speaks about standing on the edge of a mountain, or beside a raging river, facing a sunset, or that time when a windstorm blew down the forest near his home. It can be a point of contact, a shared experience as we both feel the wind on our faces, or a biting cold in our toes, but there is a personal component, a moment of reflection in which no other person can belong, except in the aftermath, in a shared communication.

This journey begins at home, in the town where I was born. Perhaps then, I should introduce it with a little historical anecdote. In my reading, I've discovered that the name given to my home – the region bordered by Hunstville, North Bay, Algonquin Park and Dunchurch – was the result of a $50 Name-The-Area Contest in 1958 sponsored by the *Burk's Falls Arrow*, a local newspaper. The winner was a tourist from Forest Hill in Toronto with her submission: Almaguin. AL for Algonquin, the indigenous tribe that hunted in the area, MAG for Magnetawan River which runs through the interior of the highlands and UIN (pronounced 'win') which was apparently added to "create an Indian flavour and tie in with the area being a communal hunting ground of the native population". The *Arrow* is quoted as having written it's approval of this "good old Indian name – the same as Muskoka and Algoma – manufactured by the white man".[1] It is already a messy and difficult beginning.

This paper is an account of a journey, several journeys, some occurring simul-

taneously. They include the writing, thinking and reading practices of myself, and many others, surrounding notions of wilderness and the natural world in which we live. They also gesture toward lived physical, sense experiences in wilderness environments in Ontario.

But, what is wilderness? What is wild and how can it be defined? The Oxford English Dictionary offers the following definitions:

1. an uncultivated, uninhabited and inhospitable region.
2. a neglected or abandoned area of a garden or town.
3. (*figurative*) a position of disfavour, especially in a political context.[2]

The origin of wilderness is cited as the Old English word: *wildçornes* 'land inhabited only by wild animals', from *wild dçor* 'wild deer'.[3] The difficulty of using wilderness (as defined above) to describe what it is that this paper claims to investigate, must be noted. Applying this definition to wilderness areas in Ontario suggests that the land is uninhabited and therefore ignores the presence both past and present of individuals who consider "wilderness" to be home. Interestingly, preserved wilderness areas such as provincial and national parks often include sites that are considered to be of historical and cultural significance. These places bear tangible evidence of ancient human presence on the land and a term such as "wilderness" as applied in the traditional sense, could only ignore the presence of these people or, at best, categorize them as wild animals.

Here, in these pages, wilderness moves beyond the previously cited definitions. Although it remains steeped in notions of place as the natural world, land, water and sky, it also includes animals and people that live in or travel through wilderness areas. It is actor and process, a state of mind, a realm of power, mystery, spirit. It is the Other, but not exclusively.

So, why are (how can) linguistic practices (be) offered here as a journey? It is important to recognize that these written journeys will only scratch the surface of an ongoing passage. Within these pages there is an attempt to observe diverse journeys,

to embrace the richness of difference and the dynamic that allows and encourages multiple possibilities. It is in movement that Others are encountered. This is a conscious effort to meet Others, to listen and to learn, to offer something of myself.

There is no prescribed method by which to read this paper. One may wish to read it several times as separate stories, a double path, or to engage with different sections of the texts as though they were joined and continuous. The choice is up to the reader. It is my hope that these writings will investigate and illustrate perceived disjunctures between perception, expression and experience with respect to humans and the natural world. I hope that there is space for self awareness, room to recognize oneself as an agent along the journey, to imagine one's own place and perhaps glimpse the presence of Others.

The following are some questions that I and others have asked along these journeys: Is there wilderness within language? Within perception? Does the unknown reside within the known? Outside of it? Can perception/writing be anything besides a restructuring of the world? Do questions just ask words about other words about the world? What place does the individual view, the poetic view occupy in representations of wilderness? How does one perceive supposed binaries like self and other, freedom and constraint, or belonging and abjection bound up within self and within relationships? How does human embodiment as part of nature affect these relationships? How does one attempt to write/live embodiment through wilderness experience? How do we ask in respectful ways? How do we ask without probing? It is my hope that these and more questions will surface in the following pages and that those who embark will have a wonderful journey.

A Note on Editing:

The journal accounts of my physical wilderness journey have been edited in order to reduce them to a more manageable length. As a result some of the thematic repetition in conversations has been removed, as have some conversations entirely. These

editing decisions were very difficult and undertaken with the intentions of portraying conversations in the spirit in which they were held. As a result the journals do not always include my own commentary. I hope, through these accounts, to have conveyed some of the feel of the journey without writing individuals into specific roles or having them appear to answer pre- (or post-) determined questions.

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[1] Taim, Astrid. Almaguin: A Highland History. Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History, 1998. p.138.

[2] Pearsall, Judy (ed.). The New Oxford English Dictionary. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. p.2111.

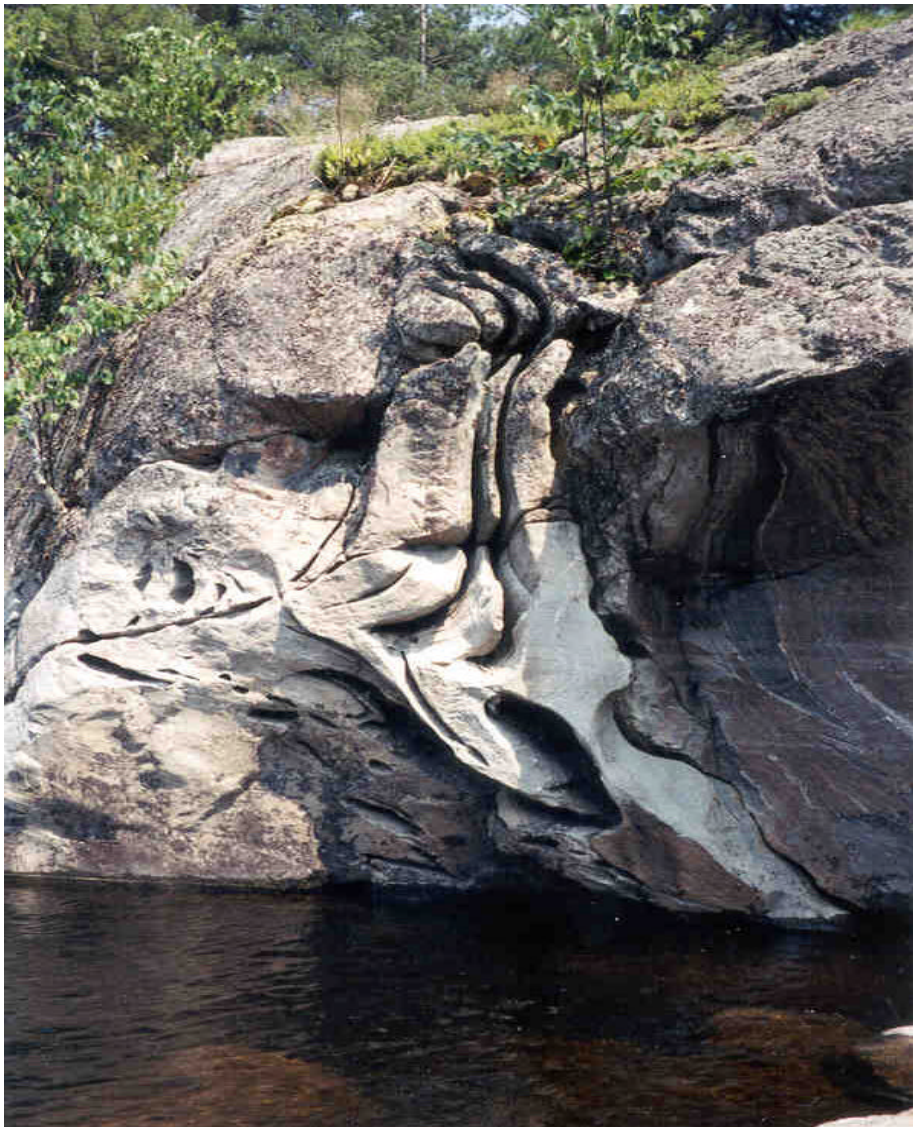
[3] Pearsall, Judy (ed.). The New Oxford English Dictionary. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. p.2111.

…the reader sees [her]self invited to understand, then to grasp what [s]he has understood. [S]He follows a double path and twice receives the chance to be equal to the task of reading. A language, devoted to a frozen analysis, suddenly allows itself to be tempted by song.

… a stable outline denies the structure of water.

(Maurice Blanchot)

Writing Wild



June 23, 2002

We were scheduled to leave today, however the planning and packing aren't quite finished so we've postponed our departure for a couple of days. This has given me time to talk to some people and today I had a wonderful conversation with Ralph, a long-time resident of South River. Since Ralph has lived in South River most of his life, I thought I would ask him about his thoughts of this place. However, several years ago there was a terrible accident and Ralph suffered an injury to his brain. He told me that it is difficult now for him to focus and to address such a broad inquiry, that I must be specific and ask precise and pointed questions. When I asked if it would be alright for him to share some stories, some experiences he remembers on the South River, he agreed saying that he had many, some personal and others that he shares with other people. And so I sat back to listen as Ralph described "the flume". Before your generation, he began, the dam in South River was used to generate electricity. He went on to explain that there was a long wooden structure, cylindrical in shape, that would carry the water down into the generating station. This dark, lumber structure was raised above the ground and had many seams, some of which allowed water to escape. In the winter, these leaks would freeze and long fingers of ice would extend to the ground creating beautiful ice sculptures. Ralph said he could remember walking across the top of the ice-covered flume. He

I never imagined that this would be my next adventure, that I would extend a personal tradition of wilderness expedition and investigation into the pages of a novel, academic literature, or by way of a computer screen. Yet here I am embarking upon a writing journey and a literary encounter with wilderness. It is an important starting place, a natural point from which to begin a writing journey from and toward the "wild". Although such written/writing encounters seem to extend outward, at least in part, toward an exterior nature, it is inside (yet with the window widely ajar) that this particular journey takes place. To enter into an expedition of thought, into a Canadian wilderness, it seems only fitting to look at the act of writing, especially, although not exclusively, at Canadian literature and the presence of wilderness therein. And so I begin by moving towards that which others have written about Canadians and literature and wilderness, towards encounters that have occurred (imagined or real) and how these expressions may or may not speak to my own awareness and experiences of wilderness in Canada.

What is Canadian literature? In the so-called canon of Canadian writing,

never considered this dangerous because it was his own backyard, he knew it best.

After a long pause and mention of many good conversations by the river with friends on "lazy river days", Ralph then asked me, "what is the effect of Nature on people? How does it create an identity?" "Well, that's my question", I replied, trying to remember if I had mentioned it earlier in our conversation. After thinking for several minutes Ralph began to speak again. He described the earth as a womb, a sphere, a biosphere. Along similar thoughts, Ralph began to speak of the earth as a parent saying that just as there is a physical resemblance between a parent and a child, so there is a resemblance between the earth and human beings. After another moment of silence Ralph continued. "There is a human desire to parent, there is competition for a parenting role." He spoke of a tension between political boundaries and natural boundaries: between "lines" in the landscape and lines on maps, created by people. There was yet another lengthy pause before Ralph concluded his ideas: "Nature is our physical experience of God", he said, "that's my Christian perspective."

June 25, 2002

And the journey begins…from my own backyard. There was no huge send-off, just Mom and Dad rambling in the bush with a camera and a few thousand blackflies who had gathered for the occa-

as has been most notably defined through the work of Northrop Frye and Margaret Atwood, wilderness or nature has been given a particularly interesting role to play. Among other things, this "canonization" was instrumental in bringing a narrow, very particular interpretation of wilderness to a national scene, evoking images of a unified and negative cultural response to the natural landscape of Canada. Eventually brought together under the title "survival theory", these ideas first emerged in 1965 with an essay by Northrop Frye published in Carl Klinck's Literary History of Canada and later reprinted in The Bush Garden, Frye's own collection of essays on the Canadian Imagination. In his essays, Frye suggests that the development of the Canadian Imagination began in small and isolated communities surrounded by physical and/or psychological boundaries, environments which nurtured a "garrison mentality" toward a terrible, threatening, overwhelming, natural setting.[1] Frye, in response to a wealth of negative nature images in contemporary poetry at the time, reiterates a homogenous Canadian experience of natural landscapes insisting that nature in Canadian poetry is "consistently sinister and menacing" with a central tragic theme of

sion and who have so kindly kept us company ever since. The South River is not well known or well traveled and from the east side of town it appears to be a long narrow lake, flooded by a concrete dam built in 1974, the year before I was born. But, a trip down the river reveals so much more and as I sit now beside a raging set of rapids with the sounds filling my head and chest I feel that this river has many stories to tell. We haven't seen a single person since we left this morning and although this is not a remote wilderness, I'm not terribly surprised. It is clear that there are few visitors – there are no portages or if there are they are thickly overgrown and nearly impossible to follow. The water is high, higher than I have ever seen, and the abundance of spring rain has left everything green and lush. Five minutes from home I no longer recognized the river and although we're only a few miles from where we began it seems other-worldly, remote and pristine…and sometimes dangerous. As we were lining the canoe through a particularly treacherous section of rapids today Eric grinned and asked, "What's your perspective now?" Waist-deep in rapidly moving water with clouds of insects above my head I didn't answer – just grinned back.

Below our first campsite is another set of rapids, not very long but with some height. It's an old high school hangout I fondly remember as the Hog's Trough. When the water levels were low enough we used to hike in and slide down the rocks into the swirling current. The rocky riverbank

nature's indifference to human values.[2]

Margaret Atwood's book Survival, published in 1972, was a landmark in Canadian literary criticism whose memorable title now represents the theory made famous by Frye. Written under the subtitle: "A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature", Survival discusses several patterns in Canadian writing all under a uniting cultural theme of "victimhood" and an all-pervasive struggle to survive. Through an accessible, instructing, almost conversational voice, Atwood brings her ideas (including extended lists of Canadian literature to support her thesis) to a wide audience of readers. The notion of "Nature the Monster" is placed prominently at the beginning of her book positioning nature in a literary context, as indifferent, hostile or dead, leaving humans alienated and threatened.[3] Among the many Canadian poets quoted by Atwood is Earle Birney, who in his poem "Bushed" reveals a sensation of fear developing for the protagonist toward his surroundings which come to be written as an unknown, united, fierce, antagonistic nature:

slopes gradually upward on both sides in a trough-like shape. Although I visited the spot regularly as a teenager I was always afraid to swim there. I'd watch as the others would jump into the foaming water and of course I'd join in but just a little further from the falls where the current wasn't quite as strong. And it wasn't until quite recently that I made the connection between the Hog's Trough and another popular swimming spot at the South River dam. Some of the highschool kids would walk the tracks from the school to the dam in the late spring to play hooky, to drink beer and smoke drugs, at least according to rumour. But one day the unthinkable happened. A group of kids were hanging out, supposedly drinking beer at the river and one of them jumped or fell or was pushed from the train bridge that crosses the river above the dam. He never came up again. As in any small town, the story changes each time it's told and sounds less like the original with every telling, but that's the version I heard – 23rd hand or so. This story was filed away in my own memory and in the memories of the surrounding communities, confirming ideas of the river as dangerous, menacing and unpredictable. Yet, this same South River runs into the Hog's Trough; these two places are part of one river even though they were separate in the way we spoke about them and visited them: always by car, accessed via roads or sometimes on foot by trails.

Having now traveled along the river from the South River dam we are only a few minutes

> But the moon carved unknown totems
> out of the lakeshore
> owls in the beardusky woods derided him
> moosehorned cedars circled his swamps and tossed
> their antlers up to the stars
> Then he knew though the mountain slept the winds
> were shaping its peak to an arrowhead
> poised
> ...
> And now he could only
> bar himself in and wait
> for the great flint to come singing into his heart[4]

This notion of death-by-nature is offered by Atwood as an event of startling frequency in Canadian literature where a dead or indifferent nature results in an alienated man and a hostile nature results in death or at the very least threatens a fatal outcome.[5]

As late as 1991, Atwood continued to proclaim the survival thesis through a series of lectures delivered at Oxford University and later published under the title: Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature. Presenting

away from the other old highschool haunt. We'll have to go swimming in the morning for memory's sake.

June 26, 2002

It's incredible that I could live nearly nineteen years next to this river and know so little about it. The contrasts between still, smooth water, roaring rapids, hydroelectric dams partially or completely blocking the river, great waterfalls only a few miles from town that I'm now seeing for the first time. It's difficult not to sit and write lists of the creatures I've seen: a huge hawk chased by three angry blue jays, a doe at the riverbank scolding us from behind her shelter of trees, ducks feigning injury to draw us away from their little ones and beavers loudly slapping their tails, startled by our silent approach. Our presence is certainly felt here and despite the quiet progress of our canoe we never go unnoticed.

Many - perhaps the majority - of people who live near the South River have never experienced it by canoe. Part of the reason for this, I am sure, is that this is not an entirely navigable river, a fact we have now come to realize. There are difficult and dangerous rapids and many dams. Early this evening we passed a small campground where the trailers have been built up like permanent seasonal residences. This was the first indication of human-built homes along the river since we left the town

particular images of "the wild" as influencing and perpetuating defining characteristics of Canadian writing, Atwood discusses what she calls "cliché images": representations of Canada's northern landscapes based on present or past historical findings and necessarily applied by Canadian art and literature. Through these images northern "wilderness" is defined as a place with shifting boundaries, a state of mind, a sinister, female presence. Although awe-inspiring and alluring, this Canadian North is also hostile, dangerous, and has the ability to drive you crazy. Some of the clichés discussed by Atwood include a "Grey Owl Syndrome": a wish to "go native" that is ingrained in Canadian culture and is depicted as a longing for authenticity through an identification with wilderness and a certain idea of what a native person should be.[6] Using the story of Wendigo, taken from Ojibwe tradition, Atwood presents another cliché of the North in Canadian literature as a location of madness. The Wendigo (a manifestation of northern wilderness) is thought to possess individuals and drive them to insanity, even cannibalism. It turns humans into "victims of landscape" showing the ability of the literary North to possess and destroy.[7] In her lecture on

of South River. Here we met a man from Stratford who had just arrived from Stratford to spend the summer in his trailer. He spoke to us briefly about fishing on the river. Pickerel are the best for eating, he said, but the bass are fun to catch. Pound for pound they put up a good fight, he told us. We spoke about the river and I learned that the water levels here fluctuate drastically. The nearby dam is opened and closed intermittently and those living on the river never know what they will wake to find each morning. However, this place is a haven, an escape from the heat and noise of southern cities, a place of quiet and relaxation for this man. And as we pulled away and said our good-byes he rose and started a noisy lawnmower to trim the little green square of lawn in front of his camper.

The river widened into a lake before the dam and we stopped at a little beach before unloading and portaging. A group of local young girls was swimming there as we paddled in. They didn't know the name of the place where they were nor did they realize that it was part of a river. It was water and a beach and that is all that mattered to them. We pulled away just as one of the girls asked with a sly smile: "Hey, you guys wanna go swimming?"

Once the darkness arrived the grassy field where we are camped filled with thousands of fireflies and lightening is now flashing in the distant sky. There is no wind. In the stillness there are glimpses and flashes of light, shadow and movement, a silent dance. If it weren't for the thickest

women re-writing wilderness, Atwood chose to use the title "Linoleum Caves" (from Alice Munro's Lives of Girls and Women). With this title she presents the image of a thin domestic covering over a "natural, wild abyss" and despite alternative perspectives of the women authors discussed, the linoleum cover is not quite thick enough to disguise the hostile environment that manages to leak through.[8] Perhaps rather than reveal the insidious presence of a hostile wilderness beneath these women's writings, this notion suggests the narrowness of the survival thesis, its position in a predominantly male-centered perception and its obvious cultural singularity.

In Surfacing, Atwood's self-described "woman in the woods" novel, a strikingly similar natural landscape is revealed in addition to a very clear anti-American sentiment. Although the narrator's relationship with the natural environment seems to challenge images of hostility and indifference, in the end the reader is left with an impression that while nature is perhaps the source of truth, it is also a site of insanity. Echoes of Wendigo and Grey Owl can be seen in the text alongside hints of an indifferent wilderness, separated from humanity

clouds of mosquitoes that I have ever seen (or felt), this could be an extraordinarily sublime experience.

June 27, 2002

I don't imagine that it should come as any great surprise that if we went to bed among clouds of mosquitoes we would wake up to the same. But, I remember thinking just before I opened my eyes that perhaps they would be gone or at least fewer in number. Such wishful thinking. To say that packing up and breakfast were anything less than torturous would be an outright lie but the moment we were back on the river with a slight breeze to cool us it became a beautiful place again. A sudden and loud flapping of wings introduced an owl who swooped down out of a tree on my left and across the river. I think that was the first owl I have ever seen and I smiled as I thought of the plastic one on the balcony across from my apartment in Toronto, a sort of pigeon scarecrow, a far cry from the wild original.

I saw a flume today. It is the third I have seen so far. These enormous structures are just as Ralph described them. Running down from the dammed reservoir to the generating facility, this particular flume looked to be approximately a kilometre long. Made of dark wooden slats encircled by adjustable metal rings, it makes a detour straight to the generating station while the natural

by the constructs of language. The story concludes with the dissolving of boundaries between woman and nature and the protagonist briefly begins to embody the wilderness that surrounds her. This union, however, fails as her "sanity" eventually wins her over. The reader is left to ponder the tension between self and Other, humanity and wilderness; the imperviousness of human/nature boundaries and the risk involved in attempting to challenge or explore these established barriers: the threat of a lost self.

The survival thesis was further explored in Gaile McGregor's comprehensive, academic study of written representations of Canadian landscape entitled: The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Langscape. As she investigates the reasons for this postulated garrison mentality, McGregor examines several examples of Canadian writing suggesting that themes within many Canadian literary works portray a very particular relationship to nature. She refers to a Canadian mode of response as "recoil from otherness", an involuntary isolation where self is perceived in overt opposition to a diffuse and alien Other.[9] This contrasts sharply with her observations of a "quasi-mysticism" used in American

path of the river curves around and drops to the right over a magnificent set of falls splitting into two sections around a small island and rejoining again at the bottom. The giant, wooden cylinder has several leaks in one spot where the river escapes through seams in the structure. I tried to imagine it in winter, as Ralph had described a similar one in South River, with long, ice fingers reaching down to the ground below. I carried my heavy pack along the trail next to the flume and I listened to the river rushing against the sides of this massive construction.

We reached the bottom of the dam and paddled a short distance only to discover the longest and most treacherous set of rapids we had yet encountered. Rocks were scattered along the riverbed, dangerously close to the surface of the water. In the absence of portages we had no choice but to wade in the rushing water, occasionally hopping in the canoe and ferrying to the opposite side to avoid deep and dangerous sections near the river's edge where lining was impossible. Luckily, it was only our canoe that sustained some damage. I don't think I'll soon forget this place.

The waters boiled, bubbled and then calmed at the base of the rapids and we quietly paddled toward Nipissing, the first town site on our route. It is only a few houses, a convenience store and a museum but according to Joe Steel, curator of the town's museum, it used to be much more. He told us stories of hotels, rooming houses, two churches and a jail. He showed us photo-

literature to normalize or expropriate the otherness of the environment.[10] Such complete withdrawal from the landscape, McGregor insists, created, for the most part, a "demythicized" and invisible Canadian wilderness which escaped the debilitating sentimentality of the nineteenth century. As a result, this invisible nature thus becomes "a far more flexible aesthetic tool" for contemporary writers than an American wilderness.[11] McGregor does not deny a familiar presence of threatening landscapes in Canadian literature, rather she suggests that contemporary Canadian writers invoke a negative symbolism while, generally speaking, making it quite clear that nature in itself is indifferent, devoid of human morals and consequently can be neither hostile nor benevolent. Generally speaking, any evil associated with the landscape can be attributed to the protagonist and not the writer:

> As long as the distinction between subjective and objective is sustained, the Canadian fear of the environment may be aesthetically distanced, *used* instead of merely reflected, a manoeuvre that is effective on the level of both technique and theme.[12]

graphs from the 1920s of people fishing in the river and a tour boat arriving at Chapman's Landing (the last stop before the mouth of the river) from Lake Nipissing. Joe doesn't spend time on the river, hasn't been on it for years, he said, and when we asked about the final set of rapids - Chapman's Chute - he became quite concerned for our safety. Joe insisted that the river was an extremely dangerous place and told us of someone who went over the falls and a family who backed a boat trailer into the river and got the car stuck in the muddy bank. The entire family was sucked into the water and drowned. If you were a member of my family, he said quite sincerely, I'd tell you not to go. We thanked him for his concern and his kindness: a ride to the landing to see the location where his stories took place, the use of his phone and some cold spring water from a fridge in his office. It wasn't long before we reached the infamous Chapman's Chute and decided to portage around the little falls. While we were scouting, a pair of fishermen at the base of the falls beckoned to us in caution. Echoes of previous warnings were playing over in my mind, from Joe and from others we had met in the town's general store.

The two fishermen, we soon discovered, were from West Virginia and were regretfully concluding their holiday with one final day on the river fishing for small-mouth bass (one day before the season opened). The man in the stern of the boat was quite impressed by our trip and our appearance, or

The Canadian literary landscape has, in McGregor's opinion, been "re-cognized as a psycho-setting", like a useable language that is resistant to determined and permanent meanings:

> The very value of the psycho-setting resides in its ability to *swallow* divergent realities, something substantially more important than the accretion of *extra* meaning by a verbal construct through, say, simple metaphor or irony.[13]

The value that McGregor attributes to this kind of nature is found in its resistance to simplistic visual, tangible or symbolic solutions to expressions of the human experience. It is this freedom that allows for individual expression:

> a demythicized landscape says that anything is possible...at least 'inside'.[14]

McGregor seems to suggest that a relationship of fear toward the natural environment continues to exist although unlike the survival thesis, this fear does not

so it seemed as he snapped several photos for his scrapbook. I never did ask him the name of the scrapbook, nor what section we would feature in, something about Canadian wildlife perhaps. Passing by us a few moments later they called out to inform us that we paddled at an impressive speed. They slowed down for one last photo before speeding off, leaving behind a dead fish and a broken plastic container in their wake, not to mention two confused canoeists. Is this what it's like to feel a part of the landscape, to be gazed at, added to the photo album to enrich or at least record someone's holiday experience?

As the mouth of the South River opened before us the landscape changed dramatically and we paddled into the South Bay of Lake Nipissing. We had officially arrived on the "Voyageur Route" that begins (or ends) in Lachine, Quebec and extends westward to Thunder Bay. Guiding the canoe toward some islands to make camp, I breathed the open air, bid farewell to the blackflies and thought of the generations of people who paddled these waters long before the voyageurs, the memory of their presence erased in one simple name.

The island we chose to camp on appeared to be uninhabited but a visit from two young men alerted us to the fact that this was not at all the case. They informed us that we were on private land and after Eric mentioned our journey and our destination of Thunder Bay one of the two replied

necessarily result from a common response to an aggressive, malicious nature. Rather, the environment exists independently of intent; it is objectified and as such, separated from the subject-author. Does this understanding of wilderness grant an authority to writers attempting to represent human experiences of nature? Is there a danger in understanding landscape as completely useable in a literary sense? It does not seem as though the attitude allowing such a commodification of the natural world has far to go before becoming extendable to human-nature relationships at large.

The Canadian wilderness however, was not, nor ever will be an empty landscape and approaching the land as completely useable or available in a literary sense seems to ignore the presence of others. Aboriginal peoples for whom the "wilderness" has, traditionally speaking, always been home, settlers, new immigrants, first, second, third or fourth generation Canadians, not to mention plants, animals, the land itself, each of these others an integral part of the wilderness, avoided, appropriated or ignored in the writing of the land.

Although McGregor is somewhat critical of the survival tradition, certain

"Where's that at?" with a distinctly American accent. Before leaving to ask their grandfather whether we could stay, they firmly established that there were to be absolutely no fires and a brief twenty minutes later they sped by in their boat and shouted toward us that we would have to leave. Grandfather had said no. So, we were sent off the island, just as the sun began to set, by American landowners. We had emerged from a meandering, unpredictable, somewhat unknown river, filled with wildlife and friendly villagers. We had arrived at Lake Nipissing, a land of tourists, speedboats, private property: KEEP OUT.

June 29, 2002

We've now entered the French River and to my surprise there are many cottages and homes here although the area is not directly accessible by road. Heaps of scrap metal, old tires and abandoned boats greeted us. The lack of road access would undoubtedly make removal of garbage quite expensive. So there it sits, a monument welcoming us to this National Heritage River.

The river is very wide here where the water enters from Lake Nipissing and we traveled along the southern edge close to the shore. We passed three people out patching their dock and Eric called out hello and, how's the beer? Next thing we knew we were sitting in the porch of a beautiful old cottage sharing stories with the Hobson family who had owned the cottage since their family

aspects of this theory seem to be retained in her work. She challenges a uniform experience of wilderness, an essentialized, hostile and dangerous landscape, however the Canadian wilderness continues to appear in her discussion as an empty and objectified Other. Like Atwood and Frye, McGregor continues the tradition of presenting Canadian literature against American literature and carefully depicts the differences next to which "survival" fears are expressed. Human relationships with wilderness, in the American imagination, are described by McGregor as linear and dynamic, conceived in terms of polar states: civilization and wilderness. Canadian perceptions of human-nature relations on the other hand, are described as circular and static, an opposition between self and Other.[15] Here, in the Canadian imagination, McGregor suggests the denial of a reconciliation of opposites and compares this with an American ambivalence in which a desolate wasteland and a paradisial nature coexist, although in tension.[16] Citing a different historical context of colonization in each country as well as varying cultural expectations, McGregor argues that there was a negative experience of "frontier" for early Canadians, which differs dramatically from an

had built it in 1926. Grant, who had grown up in this area and now lives with his family in Barrie, gave us the grand tour. He spoke to us about the French River and the families who lived along it, how he felt that it was his great privilege to have been able to spend so much time here. Grant believes that it has shaped who he is. Learning how to use a compass, spending time in the forest without any fears, running the boats and fishing have given him a confidence that he has carried with him throughout his life and continues to carry. This revelation brought laughter and mockery from the rest of the family and friends who joked that Grant must have had two beers because he was getting deep on us. The Hobson cottage is inside the boundaries that were designated as Provincial Park land ten years ago so the land surrounding the cottage is now protected from development, preserved.

Later in the afternoon, following Grant's suggestion, we paddled toward the Dokis native reserve on Okikendawt Island where there was a pow-wow being held. We arrived at Bayview Cottages and Marina a few minutes later. Leonard Dokis, who runs the marina, used to be chief of the Dokis band and has lived on the island his whole life. His daughter kindly offered us a ride to the reserve where the pow-wow was going to resume in half an hour. When we arrived we slowly visited the booths and talked to a man from North Bay who carves masks and makes drums and rattles. Moving on to

American experience and thus explains the divergent approaches and perceptions of nature that followed. For Americans, McGregor describes the western frontier as the "limit of knowledge" or "limit of control", an impermanent boundary that can be overcome: a culturally defined border. Canadians, in contrast, were faced with a northern frontier, which signifies a "limit of endurance", an intangible yet permanent divide between self and Other: an existential boundary.[17]

McGregor, Atwood and Frye present very particular, somewhat static ideas of nature, an understandable nature at one's fingertips, to be put into writing for one's personal use. Attempts to define Canadian Literature through overarching theories consistently exclude the work of many Canadian writers. The assumption that patterns defining a national literature – frequently leading to conclusions about cultural identity - could be derived from characteristics of the Canadian landscape, suggests a homogeneous experience of the land and ignores the geographical, historical, cultural and experiential diversity within Canadian society. If the existence of a national body of literature is to be discussed in

a booth selling food we met Marjorie who served us a delicious, salty-tasting corn soup that she told us would clear our bodies of any parasites that might be present. She too had been on a canoe trip in Killarney Provincial Park for her studies in eco-tourism. There, students were taught to read maps, guide trips and prepare food for a group of campers. I explained my project and journal writing to Marjorie who then told me that she was doing some writing as well. Marjorie was writing to lawyers and judges to tell them an important story, a story she then shared with us. Her niece was killed. She was beautiful, a young teenage girl with dreams of being a model and she was taken away from her family by C.A.S. (Children's Aid Society). Bitterly unhappy with her new surroundings she decided to run away so she and a friend from "the white nation" took off in a car and were killed in a head-on collision before making it home. Marjorie looked into my eyes and repeated several times that her niece had been such a beautiful girl, so beautiful. She then spoke to me of another young girl, 13 years old, who was also "stolen away" by C.A.S. only this time the girl managed to make it home safely after a journey of many miles. Marjorie smiled sadly and told us that she wanted this story to be told so she was writing it down and hoping to be published.

We also talked about the wilderness and the earth which Marjorie described as "Mother" while telling us that the animals were closer to the creator because they were created first. I'm not a

terms of identifying features, there are many other writers and experiences that must be taken into account. Atwood and Frye, in their effort to define the Canadian literary imagination, have depicted an essentialized wilderness that is highly uniform and empty, always cold and threatening. A Canadian literature emerges from their theories as a monolithic and anti-American body of work. Nevertheless, many established and new Canadian writers, published and unpublished, continue to challenge the survival paradigm and if the idea of a national literature is possible, it must include these voices. Not to mention, these theories do not resonate with my own experiences. As a writer, granted a novice one, my words and relations with Canadian wilderness simply do not fit within the narrow confines of a survival paradigm, nor do they lend support to notions of an empty object-nature. The thoughts and words of many others also indicate a similar disjunction between these well-known theories of national literature and a good deal of the literature itself. Here perhaps, a little side journey is in order, a closer examination of the exercise of writing and the role of language, particularly poetic language, in creating wilderness representations.

God person, she said, we all have to find our spirituality in our own way. Marjorie then wondered aloud about the need for icons when the earth is so beautiful. We shared our stories of paddling and of life and as the dancing began Eric and I moved to sit on the grass near the eastern door of the circle. After the first dance a prayer was offered in Anishnaabe to give thanks to the Creator, to celebrate the place where we were sitting and others were dancing, to honour everyone who had gathered together. One man who was directing the dancers was carrying a big stick and using it to indicate where the dancers should be. His name was Gerard; he lives near Peterborough and he was eager to share some of his stories of the pow-wow with us. Pow-wow, according to Gerard, began as entertainment for white people who would provide alcohol for the native people and then sit in a circle and watch them dance around. But, at these times, when others were distracted, the elders were able to sit back in the teepees and smoke the peace pipe together. In this way, they were able to preserve their culture. Gerard then told us that "pow-wow-gun" meant to smoke the peace pipe and the dance has since come to be called pow-wow. Before long Gerard was back in the circle again, leading the dancers, pointing with his curved stick. He seemed pleased when I asked if I could write about the things he had shared with us. He simply said, "It's about time".

We jogged back to the marina and arrived just after closing time. Leonard Dokis, his wife and

An interesting consideration in the context of the survival tradition is found in Canadian writer and poet Don McKay, who looks at language and more specifically at poetry with respect to wilderness. He adds another dimension to this discussion of literature by defining wilderness broadly as the autonomy, rawness or "alien being" of an object or thing, McKay suggests that through the defamiliarizing abilities of art, the mind's categories can be sidestepped and an object's wilderness be encountered.[18] Such wilderness can therefore be present in human-constructed forms and objects as well as in non-human life and natural settings. A recognition of, or encounter with these forms of wilderness occurs through the subversion or circumvention of a mind's preconceived categories. There is a recognition here of the participation of the individual as well as the action of the object or form of wilderness itself.

Looking at nature poets in particular and making the distinction between a state of mind termed "poetic attention" and romantic inspiration, McKay attempts to show the difference between Romanticism's deep desire for unity and the recognition and valuing of an Other's wildness. Although aware of the diffi-

two of their friends from Connecticut were waiting, watching our things and they were full of many questions about the journey ahead of us. Mr. Dokis directed us toward a perfect island campsite and he made some suggestions for our route along the French River. I looked over my shoulder to wave goodbye as we pulled away from the marina and then turned to face the sculpted silhouettes of white pines and rocky shoreline. The sun, stretched and intensely red, descended slowly toward the horizon and spread into the sky as the sounds of drumming and singing were carried over the forest and out across the water.

June 30, 2002

We decided to follow Mr. Dokis' advice and are now on the Little French River which will take us around approximately two thirds of Okikendawt Island and later out into the Main Channel. At our first set of rapids, known on our map as the free flowing channel, we met two men fishing. They were from Pennsylvania and had come to the French River for a vacation to get away from it all, they said. When we began talking about the land it was mostly in terms of fishing: the species, number, size of fish caught in various places along the river. The conversation then turned to the perceived friendliness of Canadians, their openness and willingness to share stories, to converse. Of course we were standing in a clear, bright, warm and powerful natural landscape; what appeared to be hun-

culty in applying terminology to a state of mind, McKay uses "poetic attention" to describe a writer's ability to create a nature poetry that performs a simultaneous grasp and gift which he calls "home-making". Despite language's ubiquity and its infiltration into all forms of perception, McKay offers poetic attention as a readiness or longing without a desire to possess.[19] This openness is presented as a celebration of wilderness, a translation rather than a trace of a disappearing or absent Other.

> To think of language as apparatus, to *use it and inhabit it* with an awareness of residual wilderness is to be conscious of ourselves as translators of the world, wielders of a technology *that remains visible*.[20]

However, the danger of placing humans as translators of the world is that it not only suggests a capability to detect, perceive and observe a raw, original wilderness but also the capacity to understand and transform it into a comprehensible, perhaps more palatable or domestic form. While this does not seem to be McKay's intention, assuming the role of translator suggests a particular approach

dreds of dragonflies were floating, swooping and diving over our heads keeping the deer flies in check. Who wouldn't love Canadians on a vacation day like this?

The fishers names were Dan and Eric and the larger of the two, Dan, spoke a great deal and in a very loud, booming voice about how peaceful it is here. His friend Eric agreed, but much more quietly. Dan admitted that he had no idea what to expect before experiencing this "northern" landscape but he was quick to add that it was nothing like what he had imagined it would be: nothing like what you see on fishing shows. There was a pause and Eric began to share his impressions of the French River landscape. He drew our attention to the rocky shoreline and began to speak about the rock masking something and then Dan interrupted with a loud, forceful declaration of the peacefulness of this place, and his companion grew quiet again.

The rock here leaves an enduring impression. Its forms, colours and textures are complicated, always changing and distractingly beautiful. While paddling and portaging through this intricate array of waterways that make up part of the French River system, I have become sensitive to the river as revealed by the rock. What I mean to say is, I have become aware of time and water, the intricate and flowing markings upon the rocks. The steady and persistent communication between water and granite continually creates the landscape: rock becomes river and river becomes rock and

to wilderness placing the author in the position of mediator between reader and reality, and relying heavily on the tools of language to accomplish this enormous task. Nevertheless, by using the concept of translation, there is the assumption that there must first be some kind of interaction and relationship with the original "text", and it is this association that interests me for it is here where a pre-linguistic encounter with what has been labelled wilderness occurs. Interestingly, an awareness of the limitations of language is not considered by McKay to be an obstacle to representing wilderness. In fact, it is through a simultaneous realization of the necessity of language as well as its inadequacy that McKay suggests one may sense an unknowable wilderness in all of its enormity, a wilderness that humans both long for and fear.[21] By employing the apparently opposing emotions of longing and fear McKay alludes to a complexity and perhaps mystery of human-nature relations.

One important and potentially powerful means of description in literature is metaphor. In a move toward encountering and representing wilderness a writer has the opportunity to be creative, to exercise her freedom while providing

I follow the flowing patterns with my eye, with my body. It is always changing. And in this participation, this dialogue, I think the word: beauty. I find myself faced with the challenge of attempting to render in words what is lived here. It is an impossible task. If I were to take a photo of the place I sit now it could never capture the sounds of a rippling stream, the melody of a bird's song sung in several different pitches, the powerful hum of the dragonfly wings that brush past my ear as this wonderful creature gobbles a mosquito that had been poised to attack. Nor does a photo include the light breeze on my skin, the gentle warmth of a setting sun, the changing light, the dancing shadows. However, a photo can offer a small glimpse of this moment and so I write hoping that my words might provide some small window into this place: my presence here in this land.

I must note, however, that the last half-hour or so I have had the pleasure of at least three large deer flies, and perhaps one or two horse flies, flying circles around my head. So, anything written here should be read with that in mind. Perhaps they're telling me it's time to move on.

July 1, 2002

It is Canada Day. I woke up this morning remembering that two nights ago at the pow-wow the first dance was delayed because they couldn't find anyone to carry the Canadian flag. There was a call for volunteers to which no one responded, at least for several minutes. A few light-hearted remarks

ideas and sensations for the reader that will potentially meet with each one differently. Using metaphors creates, for McKay, an opportunity to allow the "injection of wilderness into language".[22] He positions wilderness as the other of language declaring metaphor as able to generate an oscillation between particular recollections and the enormity of memory itself. Here the natural movement of a sentence is interrupted and a space is created within, a place where one becomes aware of a wildness existing outside of the sentence. This realization evokes a sadness for McKay as he recognizes the inadequacy of language and its inability to reach a world existing beyond words. However, the place that is inscribed by the "back-and-forthing" of metaphor becomes a place for dreaming, what McKay calls "the listening post of poetry" where meaning making encounters wilderness and there is a sudden awareness of the constructed sentence itself: an old and imperfect tool.[23] Interestingly, he portrays the use of metaphor, with all of its challenges and difficulties, as a gift to the world. It is an opportunity to anthropomorphize and in so doing use the same types of descriptors in reference to aspects of both non-human and human worlds that point

were made with reference to the nearness of Canada Day and finally someone came forward and held the flag high: red and white, two stripes enclosing a maple leaf, two thirds of which was covered by the image of a powerful and distinguished looking native chief. Happy Canada Day.

Today, on July 1, 2002 I've experienced a Canadian landscape that is energizing, challenging, even at times frightening. It is a place that engages all of my senses and demands nearly all of my physical potential.

Gradually, I am learning to interpret the river. I understand the paddle strokes, how to execute them and the effects they will create (at least most of the time). But I am unfamiliar with the water. I cannot yet see what Eric, through his experience, is able to see, the path that we should take. All that I see are waves and foam and churning water and danger. I once took a course in whitewater paddling where instructors and students discussed and named different strokes and specific terms to describe movements and positions of the canoe on the river. Eric doesn't use this language. He talks about the river, the movement of the water. Once we can interpret the river, our movements follow naturally. Each time we approach a set of rapids he explains: Look for the tongue, the path that most of the water takes. I can imagine a river creature spitting us out as we run our canoe down the centre of its tongue, bouncing off its watery teeth in the standing waves below.

beyond language. As an act of creativity I can conceive the use of metaphors as a gift to others who will encounter them, a means of sharing personal wilderness encounters and relationships, an opportunity to facilitate or enrich another's experiences. However, I hesitate to think that this gift may reach much further beyond the realm of human language. Linguistic structures or tools do not have the capacity to enrich the non-literate, non-human, or non-linguistic Other's experience of the world, thus the gift of metaphor can be received only by a very small few.

In his observations, McKay employs the term "anthropomorphic play" and suggests that this practice be understood as a gracious gift to the Other. There is a certain imbalance within an idea that suggests "humanizing" wilderness through metaphor is an act of grace, while ignoring the likelihood of metaphors limiting and confining the being of wilderness within more understandable, immediate or emotionally significant terms. It seems to lack a sense of humility and risks associating the many unambiguous images of wilderness created through authoritative language, cliché images and metaphors, with notions of a

Elevated spring water levels have made the rapids runnable. With no obstacles to worry about it is the perfect learning environment. Paddling the rapids just ahead of us was a group of girls from a nearby summer camp called Camp Manitou. We stopped to scout our path at one set of rapids and watched the girls take their canoes down. The second last canoe held three girls, two of whom were wide-eyed with fear and instead of paddling they merely held on to the gunwales and screamed. Disaster was imminent. A third of the way down their boat began to turn sideways, came dangerously close to a flat rock in the centre of the river and then veered sharply to the right and flipped over. Girls and bags and boat were sent in several different trajectories downstream. Apparently, there hadn't been much rehearsal of the rescue routine and everyone seemed quite grateful for Eric's help. When we talked to them later, safe and dry on the rocky bank one of the more dramatic of the group kept repeating "you saved my life!" This was the first whitewater experience for most of the girls. I told them about our journey and my interest in different relationships with the landscape and some of the girls were eager to share their own ideas. Julia told me that she defined herself as a Canadian, particularly when she was here on the French River. She had spent a lot of time camping and near water with her family and felt that being "up north" was an important part of a Canadian's life. Many of the other girls nodded in agreement as Julia identified the river as a place

gracious and giving writer.

The survival theorists, for whom relationships between wilderness and literature present a window into the Canadian psyche, rely heavily on the ability of language to convey personal experiences and consistently and inherently malevolent characteristics of natural environments in Canada. A careful look at language itself is thus an important component of an investigation into the survival tradition. Literary critic Maurice Blanchot, in a collection of essays titled: Faux Pas, discusses, among other things, the art of writing with reference to several different authors and literary works. He describes the art a writer uses as: "an art in which perfect success and complete failure must appear at once".[24] According to Blanchot, the meaning that is attached to language is linked to chance and as a result, although whatever is written has the greatest meaning for the writer, it is also "non-meaning". He thus draws attention to the role, perceptions and limitations of the reader as well as the writer, and the inability of language, despite the author's efforts, to arrive at a goal or limit where complete meaning is achieved. Language is portrayed as unable to reach or receive

where people learn to work together. She also expressed an important appreciation for Canada's "resources" and mentioned something about living off the land as group leaders began to unpack ready-made lunches. Rosie, who had come from England and had spent only two full days in Canada, was overwhelmed by the river. She was covered from head to foot in blackfly and mosquito bites but didn't seem to notice as she dove from the rocks and tread water near the bow of our canoe. England just doesn't compare to this, she said.

July 2, 2002

The river grew wider today as we paddled through an area with many bays and channels. We rounded Four-Mile Island and headed toward the bridge where highway #69 crosses the river. Just before the highway was in sight we spotted three people on top of a massive rock with their red canoe moored down below. They called out to us asking if we were heading home and so we began our story of the 60 days that lay ahead of us on our challenging journey through some of Ontario's wilderness and among the people we find here. Ian, Barry and Andrew invited us up to join them on the rock and introduced themselves. Barry is an artist and a high school teacher in Waterloo, Andrew is his teenage son and Ian works in graphics and printing. As I spoke to Barry he described himself as a

its meaning yet, according to Blanchot, it keeps a little of its meaning as a result.[25] I wonder if within this idea there is perhaps a sense of autonomy within language alongside its inadequacy that could be described, to use McKay's terms, as a "wilderness"? In Blanchot's words:

> Language must renounce being at once the expression of obvious certainty and the expression of the universal; there is no continuity between sensation and words...certain important moments of life or experiences that are perhaps essential...find much more fitting correspondences in silence than in discourse.[26]

Problematizing language and writing is an important exercise when one considers the claims made by the survival theory to represent a national body of literature and thus a widespread understanding and experience of a hostile wilderness. Blanchot writes the following observation concerning experiential writing:

> [Literature of experience] is itself a means for metamorphosis, an instrument whose use leaves the author other than he was and perhaps other than he thought he should be... Literature aims for

true Canadian. A watercolour painter, he shows his art only in Canada, he paints only the Canadian landscape. He told me that his heart is here. Having always lived near water, it features strongly in Barry's work and as he gazed out over the French River he spoke of layers created by water and a high sky above, "like a sandwich" and the opportunity that this provides to play with subject matter in between. Barry paints in series focusing on one type of subject, water lilies for example (until they became cliché), then icebergs, which he painted on visits to Newfoundland from a home in Cape Breton (until they too, became cliché). Barry said that he has been everywhere in Canada except for British Columbia where he is planning to visit this year, the "last frontier" he called it.

We talked about light and shadow and one particular tree that Barry had his eye on. You can't do much with this light, he said as he motioned around himself in the bright afternoon sunshine. What was important was variety, shadows, the interplay between darkness and light that can reveal the details of the land. He spoke of trying to capture a moment, a feeling, the essence of the landscape. It's about power, he said. Barry's canvasses are what he describes as big: seven by eight feet. When I asked why, he answered simply. "To get people's attention, everybody's got to have their shtick. This is mine."

Barry believes that Canadians are balanced, adaptable people and that we owe this to the

> an effect that must resound through the entire being. Not only does it tend, like primitive poetry, magically to modify the universe but it also modifies the one who produces it. In the hands of a very conscious author it is an exercise that calls into question what it is and offers it a new condition.[27]

Here literature is as much a journey for the author and the subject as it is for the reader. There is an awareness of language and literature in Blanchot's ideas as well as an attitude of humility as he problematizes language itself and claims the necessity of a writer's openness to transformations of self. There is a suggestion that literature can extend beyond a simple recording of thoughts and experiences to a journey through which neither writer nor wilderness will remain the same. To present literature in this way calls into question the role of a writer and the capacity of language to exist as an accurate interpreter, to work as a communicator with its own inherent power, or to function in some other way. Like McKay, the apparatus of language remains visible as an instrument called into question; yet for Blanchot, the author has the potential to occupy a role beyond that of translator as a participating, changing, metamorphosing self:

landscape and climate of the country. The varying seasons and constant change in the weather require flexibility and adaptability and this, according to Barry, is reflected in Canadians. He stressed the importance of change and balance in life, the yin and the yang, he said. You need both.

As our conversation started to wind down I began to realize why we were perched on such a high rock. Barry, Andrew and Ian were not just here to enjoy the sunshine. They had discovered the perfect rock for cliff jumping. One by one they resumed their afternoon fun plummeting into the river several feet below. Eric joined them and I held the camera. I'm not overly fond of heights.

July 3, 2002

I slept and woke to the uninterrupted noise of rushing water tumbling over Recollet falls, named after the Recollet fathers. These were Jesuit priests who traveled here on their way to what was then known as Huronia, the region between Lake Simcoe and southern Georgian Bay that was inhabited by First Nations peoples. According to our map, this set of falls was so named after several Recollet priests died at this site. Setting out through the boiling, churning current at the base of the falls this morning I felt the strong resistance of the river against my paddle and understood the ease with which a canoe could be drawn beneath the falling water. I thought about the Recollet and other priests who are remembered by names and monuments all along this river. What would

> ...the only author who stays the same is the one for whom writing is not a means of calling himself into question.[28]

Unlike images cast by the survival theory and garrison motif, this portrayal of literature suggests a complicated and personal relationship between writer, wilderness and words, a relationship that challenges simplistic dualisms and cause and effect relationships. McKay, despite his suggestions of a translator-text relationship between humans and the natural world, provides an interesting analogy for a much more complex human/nature interaction with respect to poetry specifically. Quoting Heidegger, he begins by suggesting that poetry, for a long time before it becomes a speaking, is only a listening:

> I think this listening involves hearkening both with and beyond language, in somewhat the same way a paddle attends to the river and conveys its energy to your wrist, even as it helps you across.[29]

There appears to be an interaction between words and wilderness for both McKay

compel these men to travel such a distance, through such danger to bring their beliefs to this land and its people? Perhaps these priests did not understand the power of this landscape or they counted the dangers as insignificant with regard to the importance of their work. What bitter irony that they should perish in this magnificent river whose creator, they believed, they had come here to serve.

Travelling away from the falls we paddled past granite shoreline on water that appeared completely still, unmoving. I watched the riverbank on my left, then on my right, to see the shoreline reflected flawlessly in the motionless water. I followed the waterline with my eyes while the patterns created by the rocks above and their reflections below created a myriad of shapes and forms, sharp edges, curved lines. Like a spinal cord the waterline and its surroundings appeared as intricate, interlocking vertebrae of some enormous creature stretching out along the riverbank as far as I could see. This great river creature lay very still, in wait, and as we rounded a bend in the river with the morning sun warm on our backs, I looked upward into the sky and realized what it had been anticipating. The sky suddenly darkened, clouds began to move and take shape while before us unfurled an astounding display of darkness and light. Great dark mountains approached from the distance; their summits were snow-covered, some rounded others sharp and angular. To my right

and Blanchot, such that there is wildness present in language as an inherent power and autonomy, as well as an inadequacy, and disconnection. This wildness makes itself known as language presents a structure to the wild Other; language is moved while moving writer and wilderness, water and paddler to another place.

Hélène Cixous, in her essay, "Coming To Writing", takes up the complicated subject of the difficulties and intricacies of language and writing in her unique and powerful poetic voice:

> How do you make meaning circulate when what comes forth is the signifier, the scene, the unfurling of hallucinating carnal sounds? Who surges up in your throat, through your muscles?
>
> All that I can say is that this "coming" to language is a fusion, a flowing into fusion; if there is "intervention" on my part, it's in a sort of "position" of activity – passive, as if I were inciting myself: "Let yourself go, let the writing flow, let yourself steep; bathe, relax, become the river, let everything go, open up, unwind, open the floodgates, let yourself roll..."[30]

appeared massive waves as the sky became an ocean; great, dark swells rose up with foaming whitecaps curling over each wave. Directly above our canoe, which rested quietly in the windless calm, the clouds continued to move. Suddenly, a shape began to appear and I drew my breath in sharply as the clouds, the light and shadow assumed the form of a powerful bird. Its head was lifted high like a Great Blue Heron and its wings reached out across the expanse of the sky. The curve of its long neck, every feather-like ripple in its wings, its long and prominent beak, all were poised to descend upon us. We moved slowly, silently. The vision began to fade and the river creature began to stir with the arrival of the wind. Just as the first raindrops fell and lightning flashed in the distance we scrambled ashore. A gentle rain began to fall.

Surprisingly, the storm was little more than a quick shower and despite the dramatic events beforehand the sun was shining brightly only a few minutes later. Minutes later a cottage came into view, the first we had seen for some time. It stood out starkly from its surroundings with its multiple lawn ornaments, flower gardens and a large, yellow '1954' painted on the rocks near the water's edge. A woman came out of the front door just as we slowed down for a better look and she called out asking us if we needed advice on the rapids about a hundred metres ahead. Before we could answer she disappeared inside and out came her father whose name we were soon to learn was Fern.

Cixous doesn't ignore the near absurdity of language in attempts to make meaning; rather she embraces language and positions herself so that she becomes or embodies language itself. She portrays a passive activity, an abandonment to language and subject. In the absence of cliché and other attempts to define, capture and control, and within the cadence and rhythm of her written voice I can, in some small way, participate in the flow, the music of her words. I am drawn to a space that is created within her text, a place where author and reader have room to move, to follow the river and perhaps eventually become the water. There is an attitude explicit in Cixous' writing, which she describes as a "getting to know things by letting ourselves be known by them". In order to bring this sensibility and inter-subjectivity to writing and wilderness in Canada one must move out of the realm of the garrison mentality and the victimized Canadian, seeking and creating many different writings that can and do exist.

There are several writers that I have encountered, many Canadian and some American, who have each presented a means of writing wilderness that stretches beyond narrow notions of a knowable landscape and an essentialist

He invited us in to meet the rest of the family - his wife Beth, daughter Dina, her husband Ron and their son Alex - but first we were introduced to his very colourful front yard and newly blossomed Sweet Williams. Upon entering the house we were greeted with a cold beer despite the morning hour, a bottle each of the strong stuff. More bang for your buck, said Ron with a chuckle. We were led into the sitting room as the electricity generator was "fired up" and two fans turned on to keep us cool. Have a seat here, Dina motioned to the two most comfortable chairs in the room. The walls were cluttered with numerous plaques and wall hangings, old baseball caps, bookshelves and other memorabilia. Inside, the cottage appeared more cluttered and colourful than the yard outside, each an almost alarming contrast to the surrounding landscape. The entire family gathered around and spoke to us about our journey and the river. Fern and Beth spend every summer here enjoying the quiet solitude and welcoming the occasional passer-by; their silence is broken only by the hum of the generator, the roar of the gas lawnmower, the chatter of the TV and the loud and hilarious conversation between family and friends. Life here however is not without frustration and Fern openly shared his opinions about life on the river. The dams located at the head of the river to control water levels in Lake Nipissing are, in Fern's opinion, terribly mismanaged. You've got the federal and provincial guys in there and nobody knows what the hell they're doing, he informed us in

identity borne out of one's natural surroundings. Dionne Brand is a Canadian poet whose collection of poems called Land to Light On includes writings of the Canadian landscape. Although these appear in a personal, context they address the reader in such a way as to invite others to share in a relation where wilderness exists as an enormous, unknowable mystery; a relation in which the reader is given the opportunity to see something of themselves. Although she writes herself within, immersed in her surroundings, Brand does not attempt to conflate her identity with an incomprehensible land; rather she draws attention to its enormity and unavoidability with a powerful sense of uncertainty:

> maybe this wide country just stretches your life to a thinness
> just trying to take it in, trying to calculate in it what you must
> do, the airy bay at its head scatters your thoughts like someone
> going mad from science and birds pulling your hair, ice invades
> your nostrils in chunks, land fills your throat, you are so
> busy getting a handle to steady you to this place you get blown
> into bays and lakes and fissures you have yet to see... It
> always takes long to come to what you have to say, you have to
> sweep this stretch of land up around your feet and point to the

his thick French-Canadian accent. As a result the water levels in the river fluctuate dramatically and motioning out the window Fern assured us that there was way too much water for this time of year. Beth was very quiet but often nodded in agreement.

The conversation included thoughtful warnings about possible dangers we might encounter on our travels: bears were mentioned of course, but also Massassauga rattlesnakes which have begun to move further up the French River from Georgian Bay. Dina also mentioned a Science North presentation she had seen about the French River dock spider whose bite was ten times more powerful than the rattlesnake's and could kill a person! Fern was not at all convinced.

Over a tray of fresh vegetables (for which we were extremely grateful) Fern gave us advice about our route and although he did not own a map of the river his knowledge was detailed and impressive. Stay away from the Bad River, was his first piece of advice. The Bad River is one of the many outlets leading to Georgian Bay and when we found it on the map we noticed several sets of rapids. Dina suggested to her father that he should buy a map like ours but Ron quickly interjected: "He doesn't need one of those he's got it all in his head."

We said our goodbyes as Fern led us through the yard, past an old, metallic aeroplane lawn ornament, over a series of black pipes drawing river water up to a red pump behind the house, and

> signs, pleat whole histories with pins in your mouth and guess
> at the fall of words.[31]

She abandons any suggestion of a national model for belonging/identifying with the land, writing from her own individuality, her own cultural experience wherein a relationship with Canadian landscape is as to a diaspora, a foreign land, rather than a coming home. Brand's words express an important and intimate experience in the face of a landscape-image that is so often granted power (through narrow understandings, definitions and associations) to define and determine, to dissolve difference.

> I'm going my way, going my way gleaning shade, burnt
> meridians, dropping carets, flung latitudes, inattention,
> screeching looks. I'm trying to put my tongue on dawns
> now, I'm busy licking dusk away, tracking deep twittering
> silences. You come to this, here's the marrow of it, not
> moving, not standing, it's too much to hold up, what I
> really want to say is, I don't want no fucking country, here
> or there and all the way back, I don't like it, none of it,
> easy as that. I'm giving up on land to light on, and why not,
> I can't perfect my own shadow, my violent sorrow, my

into his vegetable garden. We walked down the path while Fern indicated each plant: green onions, crawling beans, tomatoes, radishes, cucumbers. Slowly we made our way toward the dock along a path of rocks and what seemed to be sections of blue tarpaulin. Stepping lightly onto the dock, eyes fixed on the wooden surface searching for any indication of spider-like movement, I briefly turned to look back at the cottage. It seemed entirely contrary to its surroundings, a little island of "civilization" in the midst of water, wind and white pine forests. From this cluttered castle however, there were particular relationships with the land. We like it. It's very nice, were the words Beth used and Dina told me that they come here every year, it's a big part of who we are, she admitted.

Watch out for that rock there, called Fern with a wave of his hand as we paddled downstream toward the recommended Western outlet and the Voyageur Channel. In late afternoon the wind came up and our bodies were growing very tired so the search for a campsite began. The next designated site on the official park map was much further down river so we decided to stop as soon as we found a spot that was suitable. There was a small inlet to our left and as we paddled toward it a cormorant burst out from under the water just in front of our bow and flew downstream. I stared after it, heart pounding, mouth agape. Only a few minutes later we pulled up to the rocky shore and I climbed the steep bank in search of a campsite. When I reached the top of a rocky ledge

individual wrists.[32]

Another Canadian poet, George Elliot Clark, challenges the idea of translating wilderness and reveals a frustration with the impossible task of representing the wild landscape. Like Brand, Clark does not offer the land as a location of self-discovery, which is poignantly evident in his poem "Primitivism":

He could not escape
the wilderness. Bark
encrusted his wine bottles.
His pencils grew fur
and howled. Sentences
became wild eagles
that flew predatory patterns,
swooping out of a white sky-
page to tear apart field
mice-images, scurrying
for meaning. ...
...he could
not poeticize

something blue caught my eye and there just a few metres ahead of me was a small pine tree with several pieces of blue fabric tied to its branches. I stopped in my tracks. My first thought was that this spot must be sacred, a memory of someone lost or an important place of ritual. Turning around to return to the canoe I noticed a beach further down and to my left with a fire pit and a perfect tent site. I wondered if we were disturbing someone's secret place but after looking around I discovered the tell-tale sign of a provincial park campsite: the standard wooden box latrine and a well-worn trail leading to it. I wonder why this site, absent on the park map and very well hidden, is so well used. The mystery of the tree with the blue ribbons also remains.

July 4, 2002

There is something about the morning. I try to avoid romantic notions of "morning's perfection", the idea that it is a time of spiritual purity, or many other notions frequently attributed to daybreak. But, the morning is most often a time of calm waters and there is a dance between light and shadow that is unique to the early hours. Not long after sunrise this morning we pulled out from our campsite and paddled past four tents and four canoes. Just past the sleeping camp, the morning sunlight was reflected onto a rock face from the water below. It travelled and danced in curved, circular patterns complimenting colours, shades, lines and surface textures of the rock. The river on

> the country
> and not become it...[33]

The wilderness is undeniably, inescapably present in Clark's words. One is made strongly aware of the struggle within a poet who is unable to ignore the wild as subject and yet experiences an inability, a powerlessness in any attempts to render wilderness in written form. At the same time the reader is left with images of wild eagle sentences and field mice-images as language itself becomes the wild Other and wilderness, an active agent, fills the poems, fills the writer's world. It is a dangerous, predatory wilderness that neither exists separately from the poet and his art, nor truly identifies with either one.

Beth Brant, is a native Canadian writer from the Mississauga nation who, in her collection of short stories called Food and Spirits, writes the natural landscape in a very personal way within the lives of her characters. She uses a flowing, conversational style to present wilderness as integrated, woven within human tales of home, hardship, loss, death, self-discovery, and healing. The natural world, as written by Brant, seems to be given the role of a character

the face of the rock, worn by the waves, drawn by the light.

We headed for the Voyageur Channel, which is a narrow passageway barely visible from a distance. Despite Fern's insistence that water levels were abnormally high, the small channel seemed as though it would have been impassable in water levels that were even slightly lower. There was a smoothness and gentleness to the flow of water even through a few small sets of rapids. In one particular section however, the channel suddenly dropped in height, narrowed dramatically and curved to the left. Walls of granite rose ten or more metres on either side. A large volume of water was forced through the small opening and it began to speed up considerably. Since the base of the rapids was not visible from the top, Eric went to scout things out while I waited with the canoe. Beneath the water surface were the stems of aquatic plants covered in filamentous algae, waving in the current, motioning downstream toward the rushing water. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of tiny, black tadpoles approached the bow of the canoe, waiting, heads pointed toward the boat but keeping their distance, five centimetres or so from the hull. Underneath them swam a small school of minnows, circling back and forth near the bow, also waiting, anticipating. Eric returned shortly with an enthusiastic grin and a quick remark about paddling as hard as we can in the bottom section, and the details of river life disappeared as the bow swung around and I "zoomed out" to focus

within her narrative where it exists as a source of power, wisdom and life. Her story "Swimming Upstream" begins with the protagonist, Anna May, arriving at a motel after driving along the highway for several hours, oblivious to the familiar, autumn landscape of the Bruce Peninsula. She is in a state of profound grief. Anna May is mourning the recent loss of her young son and has taken a bottle of wine to the wilderness (fighting a constant, interior argument) to drink and to think after seven years of sobriety. She is an impoverished woman seeking solace and comfort. Stopping along the road at a place called Sauble Falls she stumbles upon an unexpected scene: spawning salmon are working their way upstream from Lake Huron. Standing in the river on a flat slab of rock, Anna May watches the struggling salmon in silence. Focussing on one fish in particular, one with a torn dorsal fin, she watches him attempt to cross the final barrier:

> Anna May opened her eyes and saw him, another jump before being pushed back. She held her hands together, her body willing Torn Fin to move, to push, to jump, to fly! Her body rocked forward and

on the task before us. As it turns out the bottom section was a large area of standing waves where the water left the narrow opening. Some of the waves were at least a metre high and the canoe, heavy with gear, food and two people, rose and crashed, the bow shooting into the air: No room for error in the tiny, high-walled channel. Waves swamped the bow, dousing me and most of our gear and then, suddenly, it was over and we were paddling through the ever-present swirls and boils at the end of the rapids. It was fabulous! It was fear and excitement, surprise and respect, working with the river, following the path of the water, learning its language, anticipating its power.

The rock is changing. The sharp angles and complex, geometric shapes I have seen along the French River are disappearing as we approach the bay. There are instead rounded forms, smooth islands like groups of sea lions hauled out on a beach or humpback whales breaching the ocean's surface, arching their enormous spines before descending to the deep world below. And there it is. The great wide open. The land of the horizon has disappeared; in the distance there is only water and sky. Wind and waves greet us and paddling has become a new challenge. My body feels an immensity, a great potential in this dramatically different landscape that meets us. We have reached Georgian Bay!

> back, her heart beating madly inside her chest. She rocked, she shouted, "Make it, damn it, make it!"...She rocked and whispered the name of her son into the water, "Simon, Simon."...as if the very name of her son was magic and could move the salmon to his final place
>
> "*Simon!*" Torn Fin slapped his tail one last time and was gone, the dark body swimming home. She thought...she thought she saw her son's face, his black hair streaming behind him, a look of joy transfixed on his little face before the image disappeared.[34]

The protagonist and the reader are offered a serendipitous wilderness encounter that inspires each to pay attention to the surrounding nature, to look, listen, smell, taste and touch. Interaction with the land allows healing to begin and creates an awareness of a possible connection that remains undefined: a bond that could be merely the protagonist's imagination, but could transcend boundaries of self and Other and move beyond time and place.

In the writings of two American authors there appears to be little disruption between writer and wild as both approach wilderness on their own personal terms. Barry Lopez, in his fiction, poetry and natural history writes the land in

such a way that he, often through his characters, is present within it, at times almost inseparable, such that emotions, questions, behaviours are reflected in, responded to, inspired by, or even present within the land. Like Brant, there is little distance in his writing, as he portrays a bond between human selves and wilderness that is somehow created without a definite sense of knowing or having defined, or named:

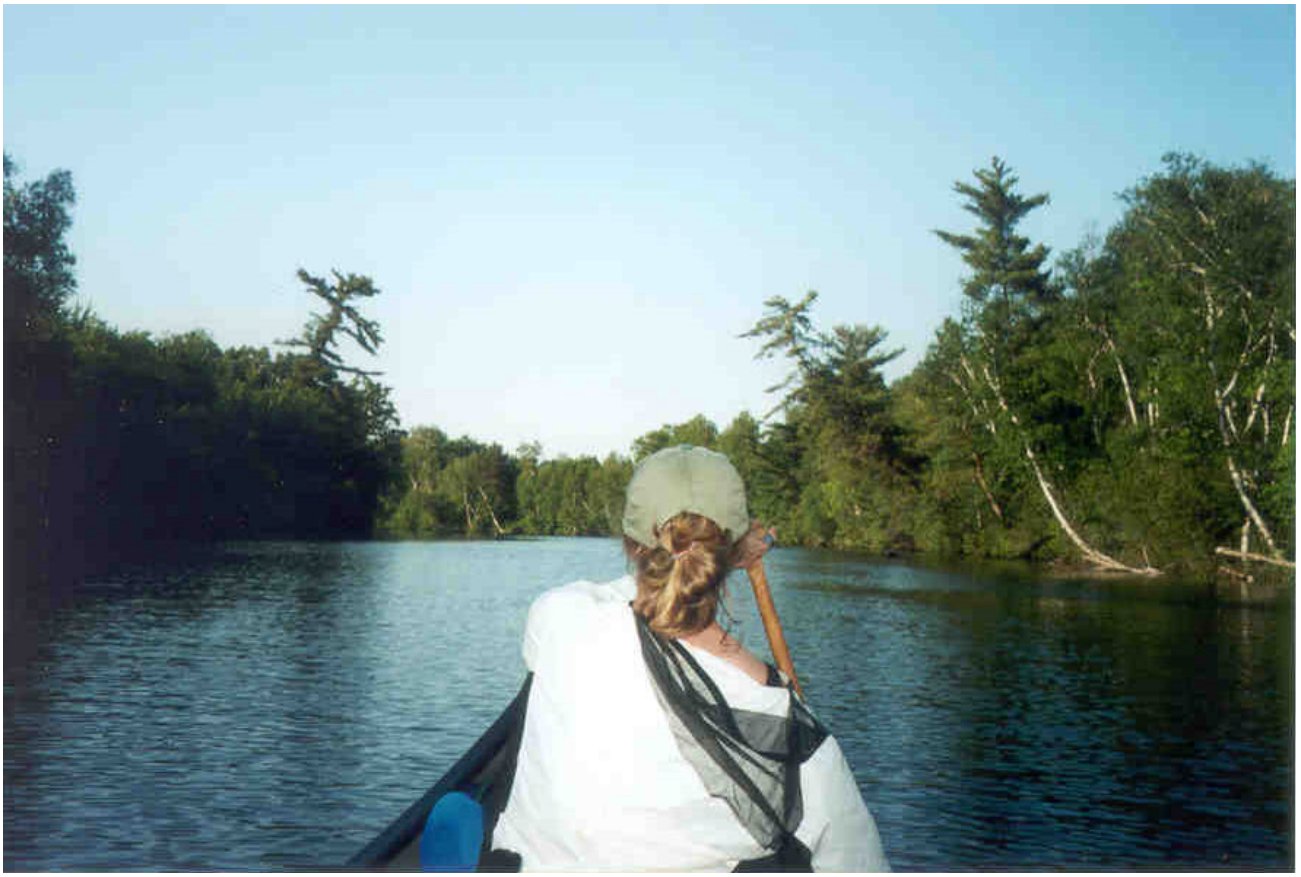
> I have lost, as I have said, some sense of myself. I no longer require as much. And though I am hopeful of recovery, an adjustment as smooth as the way the river lies against the earth at this point, this is no longer the issue with me. I am more interested in this: from above, to a hawk, the bend must appear only natural and I for the moment inseparably a part, like salmon or a flower. I cannot say well enough how this single perception has dismantled my loneliness.[35]

Lopez seems to write with a sense of abandonment; resisting constraints of the mechanism of language or the distance of the Other as he deliberately, unapologetically leads the reader into his world, a wilderness defined by his own

experiences and desires, at times movingly beautiful yet very much his own:

> It is possible I am wrong. It is impossible to speak with certainty about very much....When you awake, if you follow the river into the trees I will be somewhere ahead or beyond, like a flight of crows. When you are suddenly overwhelmed with a compassion that staggers you and you begin to run along the bank, at a moment when your fingers brush the soft skin of a deer-head orchid and you see sun-drenched bears stretching in an open field like young men, you will know a loss of guile and that the journey has begun.[36]

Kathleen Dean Moore's book River Walking is a collection of essays which detail several personal river journeys and experiences. While she writes of the rivers, her physical interactions with and perceptions of the land, she shares insights and inspirations that have grown out of these wilderness encounters. There is a dialogue in Moore's writing between herself and her wilderness that also includes her family and other relationships, the coming together of many existences and lives and the active presence of wilderness in each of these encounters. The insightfulness and familiarity with which Moore writes her per-



ceptions of and relationships with the landscape are visible in her text:

> Water is an agent of distortion and change, forcing a person to see things in new ways. Each turn of the river opens out a new landscape, something no one has ever seen before and will never see again. The landscape reveals itself in glimpses. The river hides itself in motion. It holds layers of meaning, and so it adds mystery to the landscape, a sense of complexity and risk, a sense that the important facts are hidden from view. [37]

Moore, like Lopez, expresses a deep desire for the land, a longing to experience it through an openness and receptiveness in which she is present, her life, her own personal circumstances and history alongside the wilderness in its subjectivity and autonomy, its past and present time and space.

> I want to be able to see *clearly* in both senses of the word. To see clearly in the modern sense: to stop a moment, stock still, and to see through the moment to the landscape as it is, unobstructed,

> undimmed, each edge sharp, each surface brightly colored, each detail defined, separate, certain, fixed in time and place...But also, every once in awhile, to see a landscape with ancient clarity: to see a river fluttering, gleaming with light that moves through time and space, filtered through my own mind, connected to my life and to what came before and to what will come next, infused with meaning, living, luminous, dangerous, lighted from within.[38]

Despite her yearning for an unhindered wilderness experience, Moore also desires a land "infused with meaning", her own personal meaning. These two apparently opposing wishes provoke questions about the author's presence in seemingly empty images of the wilderness she writes. Does the autonomous wilderness that Moore longs for remain intact in a meeting with her imagination or can it even be gestured toward by her words? Perhaps only in the acceptance and awareness of self within wilderness and the knowledge that one can only represent one's own limited personal encounter with the dynamic, unknowable Others of wilderness, can attempts toward recognizing an autonomy, agency or wildness in literature be realized.

Refusing to portray an unambiguous wilderness and rejecting the conflation or dissolving of self within a knowable landscape image prevents the promotion of one essentialist identity. It opens up possibilities for different relationships and, in terms of the art of writing, resists a framework that has been presented under the guise of a definable, authentic, exclusive national body of literature. McGregor's claims of American tendencies toward "quasi-mysticism" and a resulting normalized wilderness juxtaposed with nature in Canada as indifferent and a flexible aesthetic tool, face a challenge in both the American and Canadian writers I have noted here. These writers offer through their use of language, their own unique relationships to wilderness, moving beyond survival notions of empty, cold, hostile and essentialized natural environments. There are ideas that surface in most or many of these texts, contradictory notions of an unknowable yet familiar nature, intensely desirable for some, much less so for others. There is for some, a sense of connection and communication, a raw tangibility often mixed with conflicting feelings of inaccessibility and separation. Rather than displaying established themes and patterns these authors seem to

write within the limitations of a structured language while confronting (or at least conscious of) its boundaries and their work inspires several questions about individual human relationships to natural landscapes.

As these writers examine and represent personal wilderness encounters there are efforts to avoid compromising the agency of both writer and written subject as each author strives to find a balance between an imagining of the nature that they inhabit and the movement of wilderness at the place from which each is writing. Assigning a set of themes to these texts in order to categorize and define them does not seem appropriate. Perhaps the only observable similarity or characteristic project of this literature is a call to ambiguity or imprecision, a recognition of the mystery of wilderness and the adventurous journey that writing wild can be. In gathering together these and many more writers who continually challenge their understandings of self, Other and language, I can now take a large step away from a "survival" body of Canadian literature yet I must keep it in sight. It is a prevailing example of a particular, cultural, colonial response to understandings of wilderness and the harmful potential of fear as a response to any Other. From this point I can continue and consider, more deeply, the realm of human/nature relations: the perceptions and inspirations embedded within varying representations of the natural world.

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[1] Northrop Frye. The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination. Toronto: House of Anansi, 1971. p. 225.
[2] Ibid. p. 171.
[3] Atwood, Margaret. Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature. Toronto: House of Anansi, 1972. p. 54.
[4] Ibid. p.56.
[5] Ibid. p.54.
[6] Atwood Margaret. Strange Things: The Malevolent North in Canadian Literature. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. p. 60.
[7] Ibid. pp. 62-86.
[8] Ibid. pp. 87-116.
[9] McGregor, Gaile. The Wacousta Syndrome: Explorations in the Canadian Langscape. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985. p.83.
[10] Ibid. p.27.
[11] Ibid. p.72.
[12] Ibid. p.73.
[13] Ibid. p.74.
[14] Ibid. p.90.
[15] Ibid. p.5.
[16] Ibid. p.20.
[17] Ibid. p.59.

Human-Nature Relations

July 6, 2002

We're in the town of Killarney, surrounded by pleasure boats, yachts, floatplanes and quite likely more tourists than townspeople. The town is home to 350 residents, according to a shop owner who spends seven months a year here and the coldest winter months in his home in Toronto. At first glance this place seems to be just that: seasonal, set up for tourists, where even the shopkeepers are imported. Sitting now in a pub at the Sportsman's Inn, surrounded by the taxidermy trophies of tourists gone-by, I am sharply aware of a dividing contrast between this environment and the bay just minutes away.

As we left the shelter of Collins Inlet this morning I was amazed by the silence, the complete stillness of the scene. Gulls, terns and cormorants were noiselessly flying overhead or watching quietly from their island perches. Smooth, enormous slabs of rock were visible through the clarity of the blue-green water. I paddled and watched as the floor of the bay approached and receded with varying depths as though it were undulating, rising to meet us, and withdrawing again. Only through such calm waters could we have experienced these contours, the hidden details of the land beneath the waters of the bay. And then, abruptly, we arrived amidst the startling white of pleasure boats and yachts that glared under the bright morning sun and we pulled our canoe up to the only empty

A friend once said, everyone has a story and although all stories have already been told in one form or another, what is important is to be able to tell, to communicate one's own story. Relationships between humans and wilderness are an important part of my story. For me, growing up in rural Ontario literally surrounded by forests, lakes, rivers and provincial parks, wilderness (as it is perhaps popularly understood in Canada) was an unavoidable part of daily life. Since that time, I have lived in a few different places, some rural others urban, and wilderness in and of these places has remained an important aspect of my life. I have spent time observing the behaviour of others, contemplating the multiplicity of human relationships with the natural world and considering the presence of particular, often disturbing trends and assumptions within many of these relations.

> *Relationship*: the way in which two or more concepts, objects, or people are connected, or the state of being connected.[1]

Contemporary social understandings of nature underlie human behaviours

space, a leaning, shabby, old dock through a visible film of gasoline.

As it turns out, there is much more to Killarney than was first apparent. A visit to a small log cabin that houses the town museum introduced us to several rusty old household articles and tools from the booming logging and fishing industries of the late 1800s. In our conversation with the curator I learned that most of the employment for town residents is now either in tourism or quartz mining at the quarry on nearby Badgely Island. Our conversation was then directed toward the subject of bears whose population has also increased dramatically due to the cancellation of an annual spring bear hunt just a few years ago. Needless to say the townspeople are very cautious and make efforts to reduce the amount of garbage they produce. Summer, however, brings the tourists who, according to the curator, generally have little regard for, or comprehension of, the bears and the danger they could present. She shared with us stories of tourists hand-feeding young bears and provincial park and MNR officials capturing so-called nuisance bears in the park boundaries and releasing them on a road not far from town, big yellow "nuisance" tags stuck to their ears.

On my way out of the museum, I noticed a large plaque next to an old log building labelled: the old jailhouse. Written on the plaque was the story of the "beginning" of Killarney, founded in 1820

and attitudes toward the natural world. An important investigation of the emergence of the concept of "nature" is found in Neil Evernden's book, The Social Creation of Nature. He describes Nature as a constructed noun of fixed meaning that, in addition to describing an object, denotes a particular relationship. Here, an inherent assumption in popular portrayals of wilderness like those found within environmental or scientific literature is presented. Simply put, such texts presuppose a "thing" called nature requiring human help. The development of this idea from human history brings with it not only a formula of power and control over a nature-object but also, in the words of Evernden, a "conceptual imprisonment".[2] An awareness of such assumptions resting, unwittingly or not, beneath relationships with the natural world, brings context to current behaviours both inside and outside the environmental movement. Environmental management procedures, in addition to the notion of management itself, emerge from a position of human dominance over nature. Because nature has been created as a definable noun, in order to problematize current definitions and understandings Evernden insists that all forms of control be abandoned begin-

by the first white settler here, Etienne Rocbert de la Morandière. Inside the old jailhouse I met Adele, who has always lived in Killarney; she told me that all the permanent residents of the town are able to trace their roots back to Native or Métis ancestry. Although she left for school to complete a Master's degree in History, Adele returned to this little village because she felt called by the land and the people. She recognized an opportunity to help this struggling little community that is bordered on one side by water, and on the other by a provincial park that is steadily widening its borders and diverting revenue from the village. With no space to expand, the community's means of survival are becoming increasingly limited and nearly completely dependent on tourism and mining.

I learned that Killarney used to be known by its Ojibwe name *Shebahonaning*, which means "safe passage". According to Adele it was an important Ojibwe site long before 1820. It was a meeting place for Ojibwe clans, a place where arranged marriages and other important meetings would take place. I thought about our journey to this place, its position in the bay, the shelter it provides to those travelling by water. The land told this story. It is a perfect meeting place. Travellers came and went by water and ice roads until July 20th 1962 when the road to Killarney was officially opened. One year later, Killarney Provincial Park was on the map.

According to Adele, this small community still has a strong relationship with the land, one

ning at the level of thought and language. If the mystery, novelty and wildness of nature are to be preserved and presented, Evernden suggests we must begin by discarding clichés and domesticating, technical language and thereby removing a significant obstacle preventing encounters with nature's wildness:

> ...in a sense, Nature is also a mode of concealment, a cloak of abstractions which obscures that discomforting wildness that defies our paranoid urge to delineate the boundaries of Being.[3]

This discomforting wildness, if encounterable through language as Evernden suggests, reveals the availability of an interaction, a dynamic relation through language, the very tool, which has so often constructed and perpetuated the silencing and appropriation of wilderness. I am drawn to this "paranoid urge", this apparent fear-driven desire to demarcate self/Other boundaries, to establish the borders between human and non-human, wild and civilized. The involvement of language within this fearful impulse to name and control, and longing to understand and connect, reinforces the importance of a discussion and

that shapes their lifestyles and themselves. Above and beyond attracting many summer tourists, this land sustains some who live within it, who continue to hunt for their meat supply through winter, who work in the sugar bush making maple syrup in the spring, who continue to gather sweetgrass. Before leaving Adele handed me her free newsletter called *Minjmendaan*, Ojibwe for to keep in mind, to remember.

July 9, 2002

This has been our longest paddling day yet – approximately 50km! Storm clouds were overhead when we woke and took down camp, but the sun was just beginning to break through as we paddled away from Great La Cloche Island. The waters were relatively calm so we decided to venture straight across the width of the North Channel to the northern shoreline which was sheltered by several islands. Unexpectedly, halfway across the channel the wind and water came up to meet us. Waves curled over the bow, white edges spilling inside the canoe. The bow rose and fell heavily over each crest and trough making great crashing sounds, sending spray far out ahead of us. Responding to the increasing wind we paddled with all our force, aware with one glance toward the horizon that we were not making any forward movement. All of our effort was required just to keep us in one place. My heart was pounding and my muscles burning when we finally reached the closest island

consideration of literature as well as dialogue and recognizes the presence of relationships within the folds of spoken language and writing.

Encountering the wildness of nature through "undomesticated" language calls attention to relationships or a rapport with wilderness either through words or in the intentional absence of language. In these instances there is a search for meaning in wilderness encounters as individuals endeavour to express personal experiences. It is a search for meaning that can result in narrow, authoritative depictions of a nature-noun; however, there are also efforts of meaning-making that strive toward honesty, openness and humility. The challenge is to be able to recognize the difference, an attempt that may begin with careful writing and reading practices. There is necessarily a historical experience of nature for each individual that colours impressions, guides thought and language and upon which notions of wilderness often rest. I think specifically of the words of Di Brandt, a writer whose great grandparents arrived as Mennonite settlers on the Canadian prairies:

and the waters began to calm in the shelter of the land. The sun emerged from behind a cloud and I glanced behind me to the channel we had just struggled to cross. The water was still again, a benign, green calm under the morning sunshine. I laughed. I was exhausted. The lesson was well learned. Unlike the rivers, we cannot so easily predict the behaviour of big waters. Our limitations and weaknesses are now more carefully understood.

As we turned to travel west along the north shore we were thrilled to realize that today was a rare and very welcome day: the winds were blowing from the north-east, at our backs. Although today's travelling was not easy by any means, our efforts were well rewarded.

Some motion drew my attention. Silently flying in a perfectly straight line was a flock of at least twenty-five cormorants, their bellies and wing tips just inches from the water. Moments later another flock appeared. I hadn't noticed their approach until they were right next to us. As large as the first, this second group moved swiftly through the air, swooping without a sound down to the water's surface, drawing close together then farther apart. Rising, falling, arching, undulating, flying as one large creature, each individual responding to the movements of the one just ahead. Silent. Mineral oil is apparently the latest strategy against the booming population of cormorants in Ontario. Spraying their eggs with mineral oil prevents oxygen exchange through the porous shell. The

> There is regret in me, regret I feel deeply, sharply, here, in my belly, sometimes, so I can hardly breathe, for this slow dying prairie, how she lost her stupendous wildness, forever, around the time my great grandparents came to settle the dispossessed Native territories, to break them, to plant their rich farms and gardens, that I am so grateful for, so sad about. It is why I cannot write *the land* because I am torn inside over it, my implication in its demise as lawful/unlawful heir to it, dispossessed, in exile....[4]

Brandt does not write a landscape description of purely external detail but instead writes her emotions, her self within the land. There is a sense of desperation, of longing for connection and for the past, as well as an awareness of personal impact on the wilderness, irreversible change. Nevertheless, in her search for meaning in the land there are echoes of Evernden's helpless nature "thing" in need of human help, a victimized nature with no remnants of remaining wildness. The meaning here is centred on the writer and her relationship with the wild which is tied to a complex about her family, her heritage, and is firmly grounded in feelings of responsibility and regret.

Meaning, in the poetry of Chrystos, is written in such a way as to be in-

chicks suffocate but the eggs remain, so no additional eggs are laid to replace the lost chicks. At least that is the story I've heard.

We headed upward into Boomcamp Bay toward the town of Spanish where Mary, a dear friend originally from South River, and her husband Richard were expecting a phone call. A small tour boat passed as were exiting a passageway between two islands called Little Detroit and the two tourists on board stood side by side staring as we passed. There was no movement, no reaction, as though we were an indistinct part of the landscape but our waving broke the trance as we received an enthusiastic response.

Mary soon arrived at the Spanish Marina to take us to her home in Massey. As we drove out of the marina, two large, looming, stone buildings came into view; one on either side of the road. They were box-shaped, with many rectangular windows, evenly spaced, no longer glassed in, some covered with boards, others left open, gaping. Those are the old residential schools where they brought the native children, Mary told us, one for the boys and one for the girls. We were all silent for a long moment and the images of those hollow buildings burned deeply into my memory.

July 11, 2002

It has been another long day. We woke later than usual as the wind was beginning to pick up. But

separable from the land, from her words, from her relationships. In her collection of poems Not Vanishing, she has written a poem called "Water" in which the reader is brought into the grieving mind of a woman reliving past conflicts and present disagreements with her lovers:

> ...Their frustration with her would infuriate her further Speaking different languages they knew no sign They fought about words concepts about all you couldn't see or grasp or cook with They wanted something more which belonged to sky to earth to first buds of spring They wanted her spirit to obey them She couldn't wear those kinds of shoes...[5]

In a poem about love and conflict in human relationships, Chrystos reveals an intimate, spiritual connection with the natural landscape: an apparently unchanging presence that is not described nor defined. A sense of mystery and wildness is here in her words and in the absence, the spaces, the silences of a poem that positions the writer relationally within the text, next to lovers, next to wilderness. As she moves toward making meaning Chrystos writes the land by

the sky was clear - not a cloud was visible, so we packed up quickly and paddled the 25 km to Blind River. We passed many sandy beaches, a vacationer's dream, but each was deserted, neither tourist nor local in sight. There was the occasional cluster of cottages along the shoreline and the only sounds were those of wind, waves, gulls, terns and loons and Eric's intermittent additions of 1980's pop tunes. He tells me he's saving Gordon Lightfoot for Lake Superior.

Downtown Blind River is more or less one street lined with shop fronts, many of which we noticed were empty, deserted. In the town library I met Lise the librarian who seemed surprised that I was interested in speaking with her about this journey. She insisted that she was not the best person to talk to about relationships to the land. This reaction is one I am growing more familiar with as I meet and talk to the people here and elsewhere. After some encouragement, Lise began to list all the things that she doesn't do, activities that many others in the town enjoy: fishing, hunting, boating. The town, she told me, began as a logging town but once the amount of trees grew dramatically fewer in number, a large uranium mine was built. The mine employed many townspeople and since its closure the town has really felt the effects. Lise then began to speak of canoeing and how she and her family appreciated being able to literally step out of the house and be right at the water's edge. She spoke very fondly of a closeness to the land and water that was made possible

extending beyond definitive nature images. She reveals aspects of her history, culture and beliefs while avoiding explanations and descriptions. In the midst of a wilderness that retains its mystery and exists as unknowable, ungraspable, Chrystos offers an honest depiction of personal ideas and experiences without a desire to control or name.

If one were to follow Evernden's suggestion and abandon all forms of control over nature in hopes of achieving an appropriate relationship with wilderness, the question of survival necessarily surfaces. At the risk of using a term that has previously been assigned to the appearance of a hostile wilderness within a narrow representation of Canadian literature, I will make use of the expression "home-making" as discussed by Don McKay and Ian Angus. Home making is a basic relational interaction between humans and the natural environment: the meeting of one's essential needs and the establishment of oneself with and through the material world. For McKay, it is the action of an inner life finding an outer form and is portrayed as the "fundamental move that possesses the other", making it possible to translate the Other as one's interior (I think of Di

by a canoe. Interestingly, after sharing this with me she began apologizing again, insisting that she wasn't the best person to talk to.

Near the entrance of the town on the trans-Canada highway was a building shared by a number of offices including the North Shore Tribal Council. As we walked past the building through the parking lot we bumped into Dean who was leaving the council offices. He told us that he lives on the Sagamok reserve not far from Espanola and that the north shore, along which we are paddling, has been known as the Robinson-Huron Treaty Area, since around 1850 (he wasn't exactly sure about the date). This is the home of the Ojibwe people, as you've probably figured out, he said. He talked about hunting and fishing, the land sustaining the people, providing food and clothing. Some of this still takes place although on a much smaller scale and the making of clothing and beadwork has become craftwork. I'm sure you've seen some of those trading posts around, Dean said with a wry smile. Logging is now very important for the First Nations people in this area he told us. It helps brings some money into the communities. Dean admitted that in the past, while living in Thunder Bay, he used to spend a lot of time on the water, fishing and boating. Having just recently returned to this area, his original home, Dean told us he was still getting settled but hoped to spend more time on the land.

Brandt's prairie). However McKay, building upon the ideas of Levinas, insists that home often seems much more than a concretization of the self. He describes it as a place from which the self is poured out into the world, a place from which interiority opens itself to material expression, where wilderness is turned into an interior and an interiority is also presented to the wilderness.[6] McKay provides an interesting context within a discussion of self and other as he moves beyond dualistic relations portrayed in notions of hostility and victimhood. McKay's model however, is only a beginning and is predominantly human-centred in so far as the presentation and concretization of self is offered as solely a human act made possible through the use of an instrument that is wilderness. Is there room for reciprocity, participation or conversation in McKay's concept of inhabiting wild spaces?

The following story of home making in the wilderness inspires these same questions. It is the story of a woman by the name of Ada Annie Rae-Arthur who, accompanied by her husband Willie, three children and a cow tethered upside down, landed in a dugout canoe from a steamer into Boat Basin in Hesquiat

When I told Dean about this journey he began to chuckle, saying we were just like the McGuffins: a well-known couple who have published several photographic books on their many paddling adventures in Canada's lakes and rivers. We learned that they are canoeing the same route as we are but in the opposite direction. They are travelling with their three-year-old daughter and a large husky dog. They will journey from the Pigeon River, west of Thunder Bay to Georgian Bay, in order to promote the Great Lakes Heritage Coast, a designation, under the umbrella of something called Ontario's Living Legacy. The GLHC, as it is called, has been initiated by the provincial government in order to protect the land and to regulate the activities that take place on these shores. It apparently gives government ministries more control over the northern shores of certain Great Lakes which, Dean told us, is obviously a contentious issue right now. Because, he asked, who the hell are they to tell us what we can do with our land. A large proportion of the shoreline that we have experienced here on the north shore of Lake Huron belongs to First Nations people and looking at our maps there are many reserves along the north shore of Lake Superior as well. This is an important issue for indigenous people living in this part of Ontario.

July 14, 2002

Harbour in 1915. They had arrived to fulfill the settlers' dream of pre-empting land on the west coast of Vancouver Island to create "English fields and meadows in the deep forest".[7] In her account of this story, Cougar Annie's Garden, Margaret Horsfield portrays an intriguing relationship between a woman and the land in which she built her home as she attempts to control and create the landscape through her garden and a business importing, reproducing and selling exotic plants and flowers. Cougar Annie transformed a small piece of the coastal forest, creating a domestic corner within a wild environment. What is particularly interesting is the dynamic that Horsfield describes between Annie and the land. What appears, for the most part, to be a strictly controlling and dominating relationship (Cougar Annie got her name from the fact that she was an excellent sharpshooter who lured and killed the astonishing number of cougars who came near her homestead) and a lifelong struggle against the forces of nature, are also given another dimension. The garden's presence seems to exist inside Annie as well as Horsfield tells of an aged, housebound woman, "completely possessed" by her garden, barking orders to her helpers, envisioning and sus-

I think I saw a swan do a belly-flop this morning. Emerging blurry-eyed from the tent at 7:00 am, I saw a bird in the distance, noticeably larger than the surrounding gulls, spread its wings right before my eyes and land belly first into the water with a loud splash. I had heard that some Trumpeter Swans have been "introduced" somewhere near this area and I definitely heard a different sort of call, similar to a Canada goose. Maybe it was a very large and slightly clumsy gull, but it was difficult to be sure from such a distance.

There was absolutely no wind as we left camp and paddled the still water toward Bruce Mines. Upon our arrival at the marina two and a half hours later, we met a young university student who chatted with us about the town and a large sign calling for the boiling of all drinking water. There's too much turbidity, she told us, referring to the water. She then mentioned something about inadequate funding to resolve the problem that has now plagued the little town for over three years with apparently no immediate solution in sight.

Outside on the stairs leading up to an old Presbyterian church, built in 1895, I noticed some beautiful stones composed of different colours, white quartz and deep reds and browns. Inside the building was a little museum where we met a woman named Paula who told us that this stone, jasper conglomerate, is unique to the Bruce Mines – St. Joseph Island area. Early Cornish settlers named

taining the garden within her imagination. Her caregivers found her sleepwalking, on more than one occasion, frail and blind, moving through the garden by successfully following the pathways in her mind.[8]

The bush garden is a familiar symbol in writings of the Canadian imagination, especially for Frye, Atwood and other survival theorists. According to Horsfield, establishing such a garden was a driving ambition for countless settlers who sought to create a private Eden far from civilization. However, it was too difficult for most, and Horsfield describes those who did manage to stay for any length of time in dramatic terms of heroism or insanity.

Within the story of Cougar Annie's garden I can imagine a location, a place where "wilderness" has been altered, has become in some way a reflection of Annie, a place that occupies her mind but also exists as an expression of herself. But I also wonder about the boundaries of this garden, the trail leading to the beach, the perimeter of the homestead and the forest beyond where cougars roam freely, threatening (while at the same time producing) the order of the garden. Multiple presences of wild others creates a complicated dynamic be-

it "pudding stone" because of its resemblance to boiled suet pudding with cherries and currants.

When I first asked Paula about her relationship to this land she, like so many others, was reluctant to comment and suggested that there were many others who would be better to speak with. As we continued our conversation however, Paula told us that she had moved to this tiny town of 600 from Sault Ste. Marie seven years ago in order to raise her daughter in a better environment. Paula spoke of feelings of freedom here, on streets with no street lights and dirt roads with no speed limits. Open spaces were very important to her as well as the presence of "the bush". As she spoke, Paula relived fond autumn memories of great hardwood trees forming canopies over old gravel roads, blazing reds, and yellows, casting long shadows in the late afternoon. I love it here, I just love it, she said with a wide, beaming smile.

Across from the museum was the Bruce Mines Mine Tour where we met a very friendly woman by the name of Joyce and two working summer students, Megan and Liam. We began with a tour of the old mine site during which Megan introduced us to the old mining techniques and work environments of the Cornish miners. After the tour, Joyce was waiting to answer any and every question. I learned the chronology of the mining history of this town named after the British-appointed then-Governor General of Canada: James Bruce, beginning in 1864. Joyce breezed through the history of

tween Annie and the land, one in which she works diligently, tirelessly, with the land and soil to create her home, present her own interiority. In her desire to change the land there is a relationship of dominance and control that lends strength to the notion of survival and the hostility of the wild Other.

Cougar Annie's pioneer homestead still remains in the Clayoquot Sound region, a region that was not always considered an uninhabitable wild. According to Horsfield's sources, over 500 people lived in and around Hesquiat Harbour in the late 19th century the people of the Hesquiat band can trace their ancestors to five small, distinct local groups each with its own ancestral and family structures and traditional territory. The number of people in these groups fluctuated with alliances, marriages, warfare and illness as well as food availability and weather.[9] For these ancient people the "wilderness" of Hesquiat Harbour was home and an particular relationship to the land is portrayed by Horsfield as she notes traditional place names, describing them as ancient and gentle in tone, giving character and history to boulders, sandy beaches, rivers and streams:

the area revealing her love and enthusiasm for the stories behind her town. She had a gift for remembering dates and names, all of which seemed to come together as many groups and individuals searching for wealth in the land. They dug deeply then deeper into the earth but the large veins of copper that all had hoped for were never discovered and local mining history lasted a mere thirty years. The Bruce Mines were eventually closed for good but the town remained dependent on the land through agriculture and nearby logging operations.

Joyce's family, eleven children in total, had lived on a farm not far from town and she kept the house for as long as she could afford to. Farming was hard work, she told me, as she recalled a time when they grew all of their food except flour and sugar which was purchased in town. Watching and listening, I saw Joyce begin to transform as she spoke. Her fond memories of the past played in her voice and on her face and she spoke of large festivals in Thessalon, a tiny, tired-looking town we had visited a few days ago. So many of the farms are deserted now, Joyce said sadly, we're losing our homes. Although the soil was infertile and could not now sustain a family, the farm was very important to Joyce. She and her family are attached to the land, to their home, and her eyes lit up as she described the gently sloping hill behind the house and countless nights that she had spent lying against the ground gazing at the night sky. Late summer would always bring showers of shooting

> With each name comes a story. The name for the village site of Hesquiat comes from the word *hiishhiisha* which describes the sound of eating herring roe on sea-grass, the sound made by running this grass through teeth and lips to remove the eggs.[10]

Through this language there is a glimpse into a very different relation to the land as one word tells an entire story or more. The long history of First Nations peoples on western Vancouver Island indicates the real possibility of reciprocal relationships with the land. It reveals the existence of long term, participatory relations with a wilderness home yet not without hardship and loss, not without danger and death on both sides. Struggle and survival exist in this context without a simplified construction of a hostile nature-object. Instead wilderness is multiple and animate, allowing infinite possibilities for human relationships to wild, each leaving their mark, some clearly destructive, others leaving little trace. The presence of the land is embodied within its inhabitants, within gardens of the mind and through a language and culture that evolve from a lifetime in the land.

Placing humans and wilderness within a relational vocabulary requires step-

stars that were so often watched there. We don't know what will happen to all this land, Joyce said finally.

July 15, 2002

St. Joseph's Channel runs along the north shore of St Joseph's Island and as we paddled today I noticed a light current flowing from west to east. We left our island camp this morning while a chattering, buzzing cottage world of the previous night was still fast asleep and we slipped quietly, unnoticed, out into the channel.

Flags were flapping everywhere in the afternoon breeze, Canadian, American, Ontario flags in various combinations. It was like travelling alongside a still parade. It seems quite bizarre. I have noticed it since the South River: this sudden show of patriotism (if that's what it is) that comes out at the cottage and suggests that this land-and-waterscape plays a part in quite a variety of stories. Perhaps there is a need or desire to show some kind of appreciation, or to stake one's claim over the natural landscape. Or perhaps it has more to do with a phenomenon mentioned a few days ago by Stu (a paddler we had met two days before): that more and more American people are buying cottage property on Canadian soil and it has become a simple means of identification. Whatever the case may be, today was another day of flags, on cottages, docks, boats, sometimes all three.

ping outside of a world-view defined by modern science, mathematics and Cartesian geometry, an understanding that reduces the non-human world to numerical formulas and empirical truths. My own experiences within formal education (an undergraduate degree in biology, environmental and ecological sciences) and employment as a field biologist on commercial fishing vessels in Alaska have, at times, placed me in very particular relationships with the non-human, natural world. Animals and other living organisms existed as material, in both theory and practice. Pathways to information and knowledge were realized through the bodies of non-human life. Examinations of these bodies, investigations of eco/systems, water, earth, air, revealed ecological history, human interference, provided me with a vocabulary for loss, destruction, degradation, remediation. Yet, the cultural and social foundations for our human, and specifically scientific relationships with the natural world were never questioned. Neither were the aesthetic, spiritual, nor physical experiences and presences of wilderness included in the listed variables that were elements of our research procedures and results. Ecosystems were defined through sets of problems, series of threats

This afternoon we were approaching Echo Bay where Stu and his wife Jean live. So, as we paddled near to East Neebish Island, we stayed to the right and ducked into a bay hoping to find a phone in a little community marked on the map as Neebish. By the time we had drawn quite close to the shore we realized that there was no community other than a group of cottages. A boat sped past us and the driver jokingly asked if we wanted a ride. I laughed and shook my head but we followed them to their dock where Eric asked if they knew where we might find a payphone. They kindly offered us the use of their mobile phone as we walked down the long, weathered and precarious looking dock built with various scrap pieces of wood. The planks were burning hot under our feet so we skipped back down to the boat, plugged in the phone and called Stu and Jean. They were happy to hear from us and we made arrangements to meet at Dobie Point, about an hour's paddle away. Before the conversation had finished another boat arrived at the crowded dock bringing the boat total up to six (not including our canoe).

Inside the approaching boat one of three men called out and asked me to move the canoe, they seemed in a hurry as they lightly bumped the stern before I had a chance to move it completely out of the way. I'm Mike, he said. I own this place although I sometimes forget, he joked as he motioned to the boats surrounding the dock, apparently not all his own. Who are you guys? He

and statistical analyses of such problems. There are many ways to think about ecology, many pathways of thought described by this one word. The underlying concepts of what has been termed "deep ecology" differ from my previous scientific instruction and approach in that they are not human-centred but in fact place humans within a multitude of relationships with all beings. In the seventh chapter of his book A Border Within, Ian Angus addresses this perception as he writes about an "ecological relationship" with the world. He suggests that human life is radically decentred in the ecological movement wherein non-human life becomes important in its own right.[11] Thus, ecological thought must fundamentally question the industrial system of modern society and the thought and reflection upon which it has been built and now exists. This is something that ecological science seldom seems to do.

Challenging industrialism through phenomenological descriptions of self/world relations is a common and important step according to Angus, but he points out that inherent within this approach are the assumptions that there exists a self who is "at home in the world" and that through the disruption of

asked before I had a chance to introduce myself. Just as I began to explain our journey Mike interrupted with warnings of the dangers of Lake Superior. He spoke quickly, constantly in motion as he tied up the boat and introduced his companions. Having worked his summers as a university student on commercial fishing vessels, Mike told us he was familiar with Lake Superior. He had also worked performed search and rescue on the lake and he admitted to having retrieved bodies that *had* been canoeists. I'm not trying to scare you, he repeated several times, but please be careful. He spoke of riding on a 70-foot vessel in 40-foot waves insisting that the lake was not only dangerous but unpredictable. However, when I asked about the landscape, Mike's tone and facial expression noticeably changed. It's beautiful, he said, suggesting that there is no other place like it in the world. He mentioned the rock and crystal clear water, unique but very dangerous, he insisted.

Boats were tethered only along the furthest half of the dock since the water was too shallow closer toward the beach. When I asked about the water levels in the lake Mike quickly assured me the lake was on a regular, fifteen year cycle of rising and falling water levels. He referred to MNR data supporting this fact and offered to send me some information. I sensed that I was stepping into a controversial conversation. Since my knowledge of water level fluctuation in the Great Lakes is quite limited, I decided I would leave things as they were, just a simple question

industrialism this "being at home" can be realized.[12] Angus describes a history of belonging in English Canadian society and landscape:

> Within the assumption of a primordial being-at-home, we can discern a mutually confirming relation between interpretation of our current situation, implications for action and philosophical insight....External disruptions of our history of belonging motivate a conservative reflection that pushes away the disruption and terminates in a recovery of being-at-home.[13]

Following Heidegger, Angus calls this reflection an "interpretive circle of the Same" because it brings the seen and the saved together by temporarily interrupting a seeing that excludes itself.[14] The disruptions and devastation caused by industrialism can be understood as external threats within this imagined being-at-home; however, Angus insists that they also be recognized as internal. Inhabiting Canada, rather than being understood as being-at-home, should thus be conceived as a "construction" of home in the wilderness, an act of domestication through which an interpretive circle of the Same occurs. Wilderness, there-

posed.

Once in Lake George the water lost some of its clarity and we passed massive cottages along the shoreline to our right. Some of these buildings, built high up on the steep shore, had elaborate dock structures extending into the water with enormous decks, one sporting a permanent beer cooler fixed to the wooden platform. Wind and waves were against us on this open water so we leaned heavily into our paddles, concerned that we would keep Stu and Jean waiting. Less than an hour later as we rounded Pumpkin Point, we saw our welcoming party: Stu and his daughter Maarje waving from the beach. We arrived in Echo Bay after a short drive and joined Jean and Maarje's fiancé Kelvin. We were treated like family, fed a wonderful dinner, given a bed to sleep in and a much appreciated hot shower. Despite the fact that they are planning to leave on their own paddling journey in Lake Superior Provincial Park tomorrow, our hosts kindly spent the entire evening with us talking about this northern country they all love so much.

During our conversations I recognized that Stu, Jean and Maarje all held concern for the fact that an increasing number of American people were purchasing property around the north shore. Stu told us about a tax that used to add an additional 20% to the price paid by non-Canadians purchasing recreational property in Canada. The tax was later removed by the Ontario

fore, is excess; it cannot be captured and Angus suggests that this "ineradicable" wilderness be brought inside to where belonging takes place. This means accepting a kind of "abjection" or abandonment of the world where one belongs which Angus illustrates with the image of a border drawn in the wilderness. Rather than an act of domestication, the establishment of this border would function as the embrace of wild order beneath human intentions.[15] Ecological thought according to Angus must therefore be centred on the relationship between belonging and abjection, where belonging is understood as a multitude of varieties of being-at-home in the world and abjection is the loss of belonging and the pain and pleasure caused by this loss. He writes:

> [T]he future will be a struggle between those who locate the other within the assertion of self and those who accept the Other in order to discover themselves.[16]

As Angus speaks of multitudes of varieties of "being-at-home", this multiplicity in a perceived binary of belonging and abjection suggests various means of establishing a home, an assortment of encounters that encompass both belong-

government. Stu then told us a story about a hotel that had been for sale just outside of Sault Ste. Marie, near the shore of Lake Superior. It had been for sale for a long time but no Canadians had offered to buy it. Finally, an American couple purchased the hotel and the surrounding land which included a place known locally as "the bluffs", a favourite swimming spot for many in the Sault. Stu described what followed as an uproar in the community and many protests went out to the city for selling the land that was so important to so many for such a long time. Stu thought that the Americans had left shortly afterward but he wasn't sure about the details. No Canadians bought the hotel, he said again.

Among the many stories of land ownership that were shared this evening was one about the Algoma Central Railway, quite possibly the largest private landowner in Ontario. Through Stu's stories I learned that land was given to the company through government grants for the purpose of developing the railway. Much of this land, according to Stu, has since been sold to American and other non-Canadian buyers. One of these sales apparently encompassed an entire township, which now that it is privately owned, is susceptible to logging and other development. Stu and Jean insisted that foreign land owners don't hold the same kind of respect for the landscape as do permanent residents and cottagers in particular, spend only their holidays here so relatively little

ing and loss simultaneously. Here there seems to be room for a participatory relationship, a give and take on all sides, a conversation. Nevertheless, the limitations are ever present as in an "ecological relationship" abjection becomes inseparable from belonging itself. It is the untraversable distance between self and Other, whether that Other be wilderness or language, another Being, human or non-human. Despite the frustration created through the realization of this distance, particularly in the context of the basic human desire for belonging, an awareness of abjection as it flavours, colours, joins with a belonging, helps me to recognize (sometimes painfully, other times with feelings of comfort) a powerful existence beyond myself. This creative, gracious, sometimes frightening existence is neither completely separate from me nor entirely assimilable. Here there is possibility for unique, personal experiences through mutual encounters between an individual self and an Other as well as an opportunity to enhance experiences of an Other via one's own increased self-awareness. This would further problematize universalizing representations of a wilderness Other and human-nature relationships as denoted by narrow definitions and cliché

money goes into the surrounding communities.

July 16, 2002

We were back on the water by 7:00am this morning, after breakfast, and coffee(!) and many thanks to our very gracious hosts. Lake George was still, calm and murky and we paddled slowly, methodically to the opposite shore. Stu had mentioned a spot not far from the point where highway #17 borders the lake. Here there is an old wooden door poking out of the water that looks like an island complete with trees, grasses and bushes. It apparently was once a door from the Sault locks that long ago came into contact with the hull of a large boat which blasted it off its hinges and sent it floating downstream. Now it sits here, slowly being reclaimed by the local fauna, moss and trees growing from its wooden surface, thick iron spikes protruding from each end.

The sun was still high in the sky when we arrived at Bell's Point campground on the edge of the Garden River native reserve. The entire campground was a stand of enormous white pines, each one sculpted in a unique form. Massive trunks grew at sharp angles or twisted, sometimes splitting into two or more directions. All lower branches had either fallen or, once dead, had been removed leaving a sort of grand pine canopy with giant supporting posts. It was a very quiet place with a few tents and trailers parked between these impressive trees, a perfect place for writing and napping. Three

images. The experience of this space, this silent mystery, awakens me to an idea of the sacredness of life and the potential as well as the limitations of relationships, the unknowability of every Other including oneself.

A consideration of relationships between self and wilderness often culminates in emergences and transformations of oneself. There is an ineradicable tension that exists between self and other, a tension described by Angus through the terms belonging and abjection, mentioned by McKay as a simultaneous experience of fear and longing, encountered through my own experiences as freedom within constraint and in less dualistic terms: an interplay and dynamic of intimacy and intensity.

> encounters
> relationships between self and wilderness Other(s)
> building awareness of what?
> beginning with notions of self on journeys toward places within,
> outside, alongside worlds
> beginning wild with an Other
> entering in at a point of exchange
> simultaneous connections

young boys were playing in the water not far away, screaming, splashing and racing each other in rented kayaks. One of the three, the oldest, had caught a snake in the water and was parading around with it triumphantly, its small head squeezed tightly between his fingers. He proceeded to shove it into the faces of horrified family members, one of whom remarked that she definitely wouldn't be swimming now that she had seen a snake.

July 17, 2002

Sault Ste. Marie was approximately an hour's paddle from Bell's Point campground. Fortunately, the channel running along the right side of Sugar Island, which we decided to follow, was shared with only a few small boats. On the opposite side of the island the channel is a passageway for giant freighter ships. We could see them coming and going from a long distance and as the two channels converged where St, Mary's River passes the two cities (Sault Ste. Marie Ontario to our right and Sault Ste. Marie Michigan to our left), we could see an enormous freighter, at least 800 feet long, slowly coming towards us. This giant steel creature made virtually no sound at all! By merely diverting my gaze I could easily forget about its steady approach. Shouts from a small inlet to our left distracted my attention and I saw a group of young boys in sailboats, shrieking as two boats nearly collided, hands fumbling with sails and rudders. Suddenly, we heard the roar of a small motorboat

self - Other
otherselves

> I struggle to write in sentences when considering self because any emergence of psyche or spirit is never so structured, organized, but rather unexpected, ill-timed and often anguished as it is eventually, inevitably reduced to language, squeezed into an arbitrary set of sounds, a series of words.

I have not experienced, nor do I conceive of an emergence of self as beginning or originating inside a static space. Rather it is the result of relations, relationships; it is in contemplation of, interaction with an Other that self appears, becomes relevant, and an awareness of self begins. McKay, speaking of wilderness and the act of making a home within the natural world, refers to Emmanuel Levinas' philosophy concerning self and Other. According to McKay, consciousness for Levinas, begins with the Other, out of which "I" crystallizes through a process of remembering and representation. The self is "made of the other".[17] In a problematization of constructions of an object-nature there can often be support for a subjective perspective, a tendency of environmental writing

and two young women, one driving the other armed with an extremely powerful water pistol, weaved in and out between the panicked sailors dousing them with water and leaving their boats careening in the powerboat's wake. A canoe and two kayaks, apparently also a part of the group, escaped the shooting but struggled to maintain their course in the stirred and choppy waters.

And the enormous rust-coloured monster continued its stealthy approach.

Knowing there was a marina near the downtown centre of the city, we continued to paddle against the gentle current, always keeping the large ships in view. There was one large boat, part of the Algoma fleet, and we became acutely aware of our dimensions, the openness of our boat as we paddled past this docked freighter thousands of times our size. We kept a steady pace, always aware of the stealthy giant at our backs. I was relieved a few minutes later when we spotted the Roberta Bondar Marina, and we steered ourselves into one of their slips, into safety. A few minutes later the metallic beast passed, silently, nonchalantly pulling its massive weight toward the American locks. We had made it unscathed, at least this time.

The marina was very quiet in the late afternoon. Darcy, one of the staff, was feeding some ducks and Greg, the other staff member, seemed to be wandering around aimlessly. After shopping at a nearby grocery store we spread our food out on the dock and proceeded to break it down and

to extol the value and importance of the natural world in its own right and to avoid anthropocentric notions of a wild Other. This consideration of self and Other, while recognizing and placing value on difference, must not abandon the existing connection and relation between selves and others. Like Angus' insistence of a simultaneous belonging and abjection, the emergence of self(s) and connections with Other(s) do not occur independently of one another. Hélène Cixous, writing of the theme of subjectivity, claims that the subject, here the human self, is often confused with exclusive concepts of individualism:

> ...there is confusion – and this is a pity for everyone – between the infinite domain of the human subject, which is, of course the primary territory of every artist and every creature blessed with the difficult happiness of being alive, and stupid, egotistic, restrictive, exclusive behaviour which excludes the other. Whereas subjectivity is the wealth we have in common and, by definition, the subject is a non-closed mix of self/s and others...No I without you ever or more precisely no I's without you's.[18]

In the transgression of boundaries between self and other, "restrictive, exclusive

to discard any unnecessary packaging. This attracted some attention from a few people passing by, most of whom inquired about our journey, where we had come from and where we were going. The reactions to our answers were all very similar: surprise at the distance, amazement that we would consider paddling Lake Superior in an open canoe. A man from Michigan must have had some sort of argument with his friends because when we spoke of our destination he grinned triumphantly and exclaimed loudly: See, I told you guys they were going far! Two other individuals approached us at separate times, both admitting to having paddled in the past, each insisting they had grown too old for it now. They both seemed regretful saying they wished they had taken such a trip when they had the chance. One soft-spoken man with a distinct German accent had done some sailing on Lake Superior and came to speak with us and warn us specifically about the fog. He told us that he was from Alberta but had spent a considerable amount of time on Lake Superior. He advised that we stay very near to shore so as not to be lost in the fog, which could appear very quickly without warning. The man was accompanied by a woman who later met up with Eric in the doorway of the marina. As he stepped aside to let her pass she shook her head. Anyone paddling to Thunder Bay deserves the right of way, she said.

Later on, while speaking with Darcy, I met a man named Jim from Traverse City, Michigan who

behaviour" appears absurd and I am drawn to question human behaviour toward and within what is often considered the ultimate Other: the presumably pristine wilderness environment of wilderness reservations and particularly the desire to preserve this "otherness".

In his an essay "The Incarceration of Wildness: Wilderness Areas as Prisons" Thomas Birch investigates the ethical foundations for the preservation of wilderness in American society. The focus of his paper, in his own words, is "to expose the bad faith tainting mainstream justifications for wilderness preservation and to sting us out of it toward a *more ethical* relationship with wild nature, with wilderness and thereby one another.[19] Birch insists that Western culture's approach to the otherness of wilderness tends to be one of imperialistic control and appropriation. Wilderness reservations are not designated locations of anarchy within a fabric of domination, but rather entities in which law has been brought to wildness and, as a result, the "imperium" has successfully incarcerated nature: wild nature has been locked into a management system in which the governing power has the authority to "invade, declassify, abolish, and

was travelling through on his sailboat. He was also very interested in our trip and spoke with passionate appreciation for Lake Superior. I've sailed all over the world, he said, through the Atlantic and Pacific oceans as well as all the Great Lakes. But, he insisted that there was no equal to Superior in any of these other places. Jim also warned us of dangers, of storms that move in faster than in any other places he has sailed. Nevertheless, he spoke about a calming power of the lake, its ability to purify. With the way you're going, you'll be completely cleansed by the time you're finished, he said with a grin.

Jim snapped our picture a few minutes later as we paddled away in the direction of the locks and Lake Superior. The sun was dropping closer to the horizon and the daylight was growing a deep yellow-orange. St. Mary's River boiled with current as we drew near to the locks where a tour boat was just emerging. One man waved and a woman gave us her applause and a "thumbs-up". Once we were near the door of the locks, Eric searched for our radio to call the lockmaster, wrinkling his forehead as he tried to remember the radio protocol we had learned a month ago. Unfortunately, in the stress of the moment, VDX23 (the call sign for the lockmaster) became PDX and terms like OVER or DO YOU COPY were abandoned for uh…we'd like to go up to Superior? Luckily, the lockmaster understood and replied back saying there would be a twenty-minute wait since another

desanctify the legal wildland entities it has created."[20]

There are certain fundamental presuppositions that Birch names as at the centre of a justification for such wilderness preservation. Most notably is the understanding of the differences and divergences of the Other as antagonistic, or in Birch's words: adversarial; an image that he insists is "part and product of Western culture's imperialistic mythology of law bringing...".[21] But, Birch also draws attention to the persistent and subversive voice of the Other suggesting that the integrity of this Otherness can be preserved by maintaining a "radical openness" or "sheer spontaneity and continuous participation in the emergence of novelty".[22] He insists that if any Other is to preserve its identity in relation to another person, creature, society, then the acceptance of any final identity must be avoided altogether:

> A finalization of the identification of the other is a (self-deceived) absorption or ingestion of the other into the subjectivity of the self, or, on the social level, into the "system". Such an absorption is also a finalization of self or of system definition that takes self or system out of the world into a state of alienation. Self-becoming in and out

tour boat was on its way through.

The second tour boat began to appear as the lock doors slowly opened in front of us. The tour guide motioned toward us with a broad smile and spoke into his microphone. I couldn't hear what he was saying over the roar of the engine but the tourists responded with laughter and some waved while others stared: just like TV. After paddling into the locks we were told to move to the side and hold onto thick cables that were running down the concrete wall and anchored at the top, they were covered with a dark brown, cool slime, which spread over my palm and knuckles. Two other boats soon joined us: a small outboard and a US Coast Guard boat. Once all were inside the doors began to close and a little family of ducks that had followed us in quickly swam out to safety. A few people had gathered on the walkway over the set of doors in front of us including the German-Canadian couple who waved enthusiastically. After the doors were closed the water began to roll and boil in the centre of the lock and only a few minutes later we were sitting approximately twenty-six feet higher than before. Priority was given to the coast guard vessel which moved out ahead of us, accelerated abruptly, ignoring the "no wake" signs, and then cut back its motor to continue slowly through the exit channel. The waves created by their wake bounced back and forth between the walls beyond the lock making our exit amongst the reflecting waves somewhat more challenging than

> of dialectical response to others and other-becoming is then no longer possible.[23]

By absorbing the identity of a wilderness Other into the system of national park-land there exists a form of constraint as human experiences and relations with wilderness are regulated and controlled within the park system. However, the wildness that still exists in wilderness reserves, independently of management efforts, is claimed by Birch as "ground" for the subversion of imperial domination. Wilderness is identified through the context of its subversive potential as it is brought into the language of social power structures and resistance.

To further examine images of nature and encounters with the natural world within Canadian efforts of wilderness preservation, I turn to Pukaskwa National Park. Connected by navigable lake and river waterways to my own hometown, this area is described in Parks Canada literature as "Ontario's only (national) wilderness Park, 1880km^2 of rugged terrain and frigid water halfway between Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay."[24] In the literature that has been created to promote Park usage and preservation efforts, there are promoted certain appro-

we had anticipated. Nevertheless, we made it through as the couple from the walkway followed along the wall and called out their best wishes for no fog.

A few metres ahead a swing train bridge was moving out over the water and we passed underneath just as it was bolted in place across the water. The whirring, creaking and metallic knocking sounds directly over our heads gave me an eerie shivery feeling down my spine, a perfect introduction to the scene that lay ahead. The sun, a bright orange globe hanging above the horizon, illuminated a shockingly contrasting panorama of industrial land. Lake Superior Power Generators, Algoma Steel and what looked like a pulp and paper mill filled my entire frame of view. Black heaps of slag, iron ore, coal, large stacks smoking, steaming or breathing fire, the same blazing orange as the setting sun. We could see mammoth-size freighters on a point off to the left, in the distance. The only sounds, besides the waves and our paddles, were coming from these ships as trucks travelled to and from, loading, unloading. The rest of the scene was surprisingly quiet, just a low hum and a smoky, metallic smell, not exactly choking but decidedly present. Everything was black, shades of black, as though we had emerged from the locks into a completely different world, another kind of northern landscape.

July 18, 2002

priate relationships between humans and wilderness with an accompanying language and phraseology that is used to facilitate and communicate these encounters. While in some respects this rhetoric may be very useful for the promotion of responsible activities and the regulation and prevention of potentially destructive behaviours within park property, it also seems to engender and perpetuate a particular idea of wilderness that envelops the land in a very specific type of mystery. For example, the title page of the 1995 Management Plan summary report for Pukaskwa reads: "A haunted spirit shrouds this vast and wild park...a spirit of wilderness that frightens and fascinates men."[25] In his guide to paddling Pukaskwa National Park's coastal waters, Teasing the Spirit, Craig Zimmerman (former Park interpreter for Pukaskwa) leads the reader through step by step paddling instructions. His warnings include recommendations for the optimum months to paddle in Lake Superior, reminders of the lake's "fickle temperament" and statements like: "Remember, Lake Superior kills quickly."[26] In addition to many detailed anecdotal accounts of Lake Superior's danger, Zimmerman also appeals to a desire for connections with the land that extend

We have arrived in Lake Superior! Immediately our bodies felt the change in the landscape, the expanse of the lake as Whitefish Bay opened up and we rode the gentle swells. These swells were larger than anything we had paddled on before and much further apart. They sent our canoe into a new rhythm, movements through which we could feel the enormity of the lake. The rocky shoreline had changed dramatically from the gentle shoreline and flat sandy beaches bordering the river. The rock was now dark black, no longer smooth but broken, jagged, tiny ledges and sharp edges, pointed corners, straight lines creating a rough, prickly surface. Bright orange and green lichens appeared splashed along the dark shore, delicate purple, yellow, and white flowers were visible growing from the bare, harsh-looking surface. The water, unlike the river, was completely clear, blue-greenish in colour. Brilliant white ribbons of quartz cut through the black shore rocks extending down beneath the water, clearly visible from above.

Although it was still early, we discovered a perfect cove and a cobble beach ideal for camping. The beach faced west toward a breathtaking sunset in an almost clear sky. The only clouds, not far above the horizon, had sketched a single white pine on the edge of a rocky point, Group of Seven style, and the setting sun painted it a brilliant, glowing orange while waves breathed rhythmically, lapping against the beach stones.

beyond physical interactions. He frequently uses ancient Ojibwe beliefs and stories in an attempt to offer a spiritual encounter between paddlers and park:

> Ten kilometres distant Pointe La Canadienne looms above the Superior sea. Make a stop at Tagouche Creek and watch as water cascades into the Lake. Paddling around a small peninsula, flanked by small offshore islands, you enter the gateway to a sacred place. Leave a small offering of tobacco close to the point. Smile and befriend the Great Spirit.[27]

The use of such particularized language by this guide and Parks Canada literature, in an attempt to reflect or evoke the wildness of Pukaskwa, recalls questions of the purposes and possibilities of writing itself. Blanchot, among others, claims that there is a disjuncture between sensation and words such that language cannot be a fixed expression or convey a universal experience. Interestingly, he cites literature itself as a tool with which these assumed properties of language may be withdrawn:

July 19, 2002

We had an exciting start to the day as I tried to hold the canoe steady in the surf just offshore to prevent crashing on the rocks or the entry of the curling waves. Eric loaded the packs, wading out through rough water and over slippery rocks to the canoe. However, once we were away from the shore and into deeper waters the waves were no longer breaking, the swells became gentle and the movements of the canoe smoothly responded to the lake.

Exiting Goulais Bay and moving just around the point of land, we met with waves that were larger than any either of us had ever canoed in. The boat sunk and rose in giant swells and at one point the water suddenly dropped out from beneath us. Canoe and bodies fell to meet the lake and the wave rose up to greet us just underneath the boat, sounding a thump that sent shudders through the craft and our bodies. By this time the sun had disappeared behind thick clouds and the water was a metallic grey. A stone-coloured wall of water rose to our left and Eric quickly steered our bow towards it. We climbed, perhaps two metres, only to drop quickly into the next trough. Seated behind me, Eric was thoroughly enjoying himself, singing and laughing. I, on the other hand, was silently soaking in the power of the waves and breathing an intense sigh of relief that we were still on top of the water. The next swell was much smaller than the one before but still impres-

> [literature] wants to return language to what it thinks is its true destiny, which is to communicate silence through words and to express *freedom through constraint* or to evoke itself as being destroyed by the circumstances that make it what it is.[28]

By returning to a discussion and problematization of language in the context of Parks Canada literature I am reminded of the limitations as well as the potential of language in an expression of wilderness. If the purpose of language is to express "freedom through constraint" then perhaps this very nature of language resonates with the possibility for a corresponding lived experience of self-Other relations. The fragility or destructibility of language is also an important consideration when, as in Park literature, it is placed as the authoritative communicator of Canadian wilderness to the literate public.

Pukaskwa National Park states as its mandate the education of the public such that the Park may encourage an "understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of its heritage so as to leave it unimpaired for future generations."[29] The Park is thus presented as the mediator between humans and wilderness, an educator and facilitator of relationships between humans and the wild other.

sive in size and as we were carried to its crest a wave kicked back under the canoe with a loud slap, almost like a playful gesture. The next wave bumped just under the port gunwale and thrust us sideways: a hip check, Eric said with a laugh as he steered us toward the distant point. I reminded him that the skies looked like rain and a thunderstorm had been forecast so we instead turned toward shore in search of a campsite, not an easy task in this cottage-filled area. What we did find was a piece of land cleared and prepared for a new cottage, so we brought the canoe into shallow water, jumped out before the surf dragged us over the rocks, unloaded our now, water-filled boat and carried it to shore.

July 20, 2002

We crossed Batchawana Bay today over water that was smooth, without a ripple, viscous like oil or thick syrup. Small swells and some rolling movement failed to break the continuity of the water's surface. There were virtually no sounds, except for the dipping of our paddles, and the whine of a chainsaw far in the distance. I felt the thickness of the still water in my working back and arms.

The next bay we entered was Pancake Bay, home to a Provincial Park and miles of white, sandy beach. Around the point and into the bay we noticed some rock forms that we hadn't yet seen. Flat, thin layers of black, stacked high, one upon the other. This bay apparently got its current

Human-nature encounters within Pukaskwa Park boundaries are advertised as "special" wilderness experiences of "high quality".[30] Through this authoritative voice I learn that the Park claims as its function the maintenance of the integrity of the wilderness and in some cases an enhancement of its integrity. Using somewhat arbitrary designations based on the perceived scarcity and quality of unique representative species, zones have been established, ranging in levels of importance and need. A model of wilderness has been applied to a conceptual framework and broken down into four descriptive categories: "frontcountry" and three types of "backcountry" (semi-primitive, primitive and wildlands). Allowable activities within these zones (the types and frequencies of human-wilderness encounters) are decided upon by the Park,

The act of law-bringing to the land of Pukaskwa Park seems to lead in the direction of an all-encompassing grasp of wilderness. Unlike McKay's home-making however, there is an absence of a gift or presentation of self(s) but instead, echoing Birch's observations, a finalization of the identities of Wilderness and Canadians:

name as the last stop on the voyageur route before Sault Ste. Marie. It became a tradition to hold a large feast of pancakes on this beach as supplies would be replenished upon an arrival in the Sault. Today, as we entered, the clear water sparkled, changing colour from greens to deep blues with increasing depths. Although it would have been much faster to cut across to the far point, we were enticed by the bay's beauty and decided to explore the shoreline.

We parked the canoe at Pancake Bay Provincial Park, found a phone to make a quick call and had a look through the park store and office. The store was filled with promotional merchandise including several books, one of which was a large, glossy, provincial government publication about the Great Lakes Heritage Coast (GLHC), a topic I have discussed with several of the people we have met so far. From this book I learned that the GLHC reaches from Port Severn in Georgian Bay to the Pigeon River at the western end of Lake Superior: a distance of approximately 2900km. The area includes 7.1 million hectares of Crown lands and waters. New and existing parks would eventually encompass 750 000 hectares of this land. Also, forestry and mineral "exploration activities" will take place in certain enhanced management areas, while respecting the conservation objectives of the Heritage Coast. A section in the back of the book included text and photos and lists of all the First Nation communities whose reserve lands rested within the boundaries of the GHLC. The

> Pukaskwa National Park is a symbol of our Canadian identity because this site contributes to the physical beauty of Canada. It helps the public visually define and better understand what makes us unique and different. ...The Park represents one of the best opportunities in Ontario for a wilderness experience.[31]

By couching "wild" in rhetoric, descriptions of wilderness and instructions on how to appropriately encounter it, perhaps there is an attempt to eliminate disruptions to belonging that are internal to wilderness. Angus asserts that if it is possible to have ecological thought that doesn't force identity through the assertion of self against wilderness, there must be no more of the Same. The Park structure and its static definition of wilderness could be conceived as functioning to eliminate any disruptions to a notion of belonging. Instead of embracing a wild order beneath human intentions, the park monitors and attempts to control, or "maintain the integrity" of a particular natural environment as well as impede inappropriate human encounters with Park land. Here, and I think now particularly of Craig Zimmerman's guide to Pukaskwa, a wilderness Other is located

Ministry of Natural Resources and the First Nation communities were portrayed as having similar, compatible objectives, a very different impression than the one I had been given in my conversation with Dean in Blind River.

July 22, 2002

Today was a day of caves and waves, the latter coming, at one point, from at least four directions as they echoed back from the cliff walls we passed. The canoe bounced up and down, from side to side, a chaotic rhythm, an erratic pulse. The shoreline dipped into a shallow bay and the echo ceased, the waves rolled steadily from one direction again. Off in the distance the horizon loomed: giant, rounded hills, blue-green, unmoving.

Alona Bay, so named on our map, opened up in front of us, its rocky cliffs towering on the far side. We could see a long cobble beach and no apparent sign of buildings so we pointed our boat towards the back of the bay. It wasn't until we were only a few metres away that we began to see staircases: wooden, grey, emerging from the forest and descending to the beach. Cottages. The buildings were hidden behind a barrier of trees as many cottages seem to be on this great lake. It was too late in the day to venture out around the point into another bay so we squeezed into the

through an assertion of self in that an emphasis is placed on warnings, dangers and the required knowledge to survive a journey through Pukaskwa. Could a visit to Pukaskwa National Park equally provide opportunity for an acceptance of a wilderness Other (including experiences of abjection, as well as belonging) which could in turn allow a discovery of self(s)?

The embodied garden of Cougar Annie's imagination provides an interesting contrast to the management plans of Pukaskwa. In her engagement with her garden Annie transformed and created the land and was herself changed in the process. She gained an intimate knowledge of native plants and animals as well as the imported varieties she brought to the landscape. By bringing herself to the land in this way through diligent, day-by-day encounters she cultivated her own unique relationship with the land which was in some ways perhaps nurturing but also destructive and controlling. Her land was her livelihood and she carefully maintained the boundaries to her garden, killing the wild animals that would venture near or cross these barriers. The management plan of Pukaskwa National Park creates a seemingly finalized definition of wilderness and desig-

far corner of the beach, next to the cliff wall. Some people appeared far down along the beach but no one approached or seemed to be bothered by our presence.

July 23, 2002

We've landed in paradise, or at least the postcard version: a small inlet in Agawa Bay. There are steep cliffs to one side, smooth, large rocks towering on the opposite side. In between is a white sand beach and a mixed forest in behind. The inlet is no more than a hundred metres wide; the water is perfectly clear in varying intensities of blue and green. Recent human presence is unmistakably obvious in discarded plastic objects, a brightly coloured contrast to the white sand, and a carefully stacked collection of beer bottles placed strategically behind a giant piece of driftwood, hiding them from one side. However, despite the site's apparent popularity we are the only people here today. The inlet opens out toward the west just along the path of the setting sun, which has been glowing purples, pinks and oranges in the clear sky.

Our paddling day began with a challenging start as the waves rolled in to the rocky, cottaged beach. Around the first point of land we entered the large Agawa Bay and our first stop was in Montreal River Harbour where a campground was indicated on our map. From the beach we

nates a highly controlled human interaction with this wilderness. For the most part, the objective of park plans is to preserve the wilderness untouched, in its "natural" state. If the park property is to be altered at all for the purposes of "enhancing its integrity" it is under highly regulated circumstances. Park visitors are welcomed to experience the land but in such a manner as to leave no trace, leave nothing of themselves behind. (Interestingly, some the most sought after park experiences, as promoted by park pamphlets and cited by campers, are visits to ancient, sacred Aboriginal sites such as Pukaskwa pits and pictographs – evidence of human relationships with the land.)

Despite what it may seem I would not want to suggest that the role played by national parks is simply negative. The many laws and controls in these areas have prevented industrial development of large portions of land and attempt to protect these lands from further degradation. The Park also allows access to land that, if privately owned, would be impossible. However, it is important to make the distinction between the rhetoric of Park advertising and individual experiences of this type of wilderness. Park regulations are not capable of com-

noticed a deep channel: the mouth of the Montreal River emptying into Lake Superior. Waves from the lake were meeting the river current and large standing waves formed in the centre of the small harbour. Eric, forever curious about rivers, suggested that we paddle upstream. After approximately three full minutes of heavy paddling without moving so much as a centimetre, I was convinced we'd never prove to be stronger than the current. (I of course expressed this thought in several different ways during the entire three minutes, which incidentally seemed to be twice that length of time.) But, eventually we began to advance very slowly and finally turned into a little harbour used to moor boats at the base of the lodge. After resting for a brief moment we then turned around, this time working with the current and shot back out the river mouth, just to the left of the steep, two metre standing waves, deep blue and breaking, frothing white. The meeting of the river and the lake: a lively conversation.

I witnessed several other interactions today, between water and rock. But, I think my favourite is the music. Dips, holes and caverns at the base of large cliffs or along rocky shoals lie silent in still waters but with the movement of the waves comes a sound from each location, a different tone, a unique pitch. Deep caverns sounding bass, mistaken for thunder in the distance. The music is altered by the speed of the waves, never the same note twice: Aeolian harps within and upon every surface, sounding rhythms like drum beats and accompanied by loons, the chatter of

pletely controlling the land and map-drawn boundaries between "wilderness" and surrounding private property do not prevent the arrival and departure of animals, plants, weather systems, people and of course, pollutants. Although undeveloped, this land is not untouched or pristine, a belief that was reinforced by my own discovery of human litter on some campsites and in the water as I paddled its length. Nor is the Park empty of other human life, but rather in season is visited by many paddlers and hikers. It is such a popular piece of wilderness that in my own experience I found myself sharing most campsites with other paddlers.

The promotion/presentation of wilderness through National and Provincial Parks, culminating in the attempted finalization of wilderness and Canadian identities is quite often imagined and enacted through the human-wilderness encounter of a canoe journey. Postulated as an authentic wilderness experience for Canadians, allowing and enhancing experiences of the national landscape, the ideology of the canoe is often adopted and administered by mainstream culture. Daniel Francis writes of the canoe expedition in his book National Dreams:

gulls, the wind.

July 24, 2002

We stopped shortly after we had begun paddling this morning to make some phone calls at the Agawa Bay campground in Lake Superior Provincial Park. A man was walking along the beach so we paddled toward him hoping to ask where we might find a phone. Arriving at the beach, Eric, myself, and the man, all stopped and stared at each other. There was an awkward moment of silence and then Eric's voice sounded out from the back of the canoe. "Is that Bob?" A few seconds later both identities had been determined: Eric was once Bob's physiotherapist. After a short conversation Bob insisted that we come and visit at the campsite where he and his wife Suzanne were staying.

Bob and Suzanne were thrilled with our journey and asked us many questions about the places we had seen and the people we had met. After lunch we moved to a sunny spot on the beach and we began to discuss a very different subject: extreme sports. This was the lifestyle of Bob and Suzanne's son: snowboarding in the winter and white-water kayaking in the summer. He lives a fast-paced life which his parents somehow related to our paddling journey. Bob mentioned a book called: "Last Breath" which he found fascinating. It details the seconds that pass before death by drowning, by avalanche, hypothermia, hyperthermia, essentially death by wilderness, or environment, or

Myth, Memory and Canadian History:

> This excursion seems to have become for Canadians a metaphorical voyage: the canoe carries us out of our European past deep into the wilderness where we are reborn as citizens of the New World. The canoe emerges as the mother image of our national dream life, the symbol of our oneness with a rugged northern landscape, the vessel in which we are recreated as Canadians. As much as the beaver or the Canada goose or the maple leaf, the canoe is presented as our link to the land, to the past, to our Aboriginal forbears, and to our spiritual roots.[32]

Through individuals such as Governor George Simpson of the Hudson Bay Co., member artists of the Group of Seven, Grey Owl and former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, Francis presents the canoe trip in its recent past and present as a tool of bureaucratic tyranny, an opportunity to "go native", to gain a sense of spiritual and physical excitement, a means of encountering a history and a historical land, and a pathway to the essence of a Canadian national identity as the northern landscape is characterized by writers and artists as the location of

something to that effect. He told us that the physiological effects of each death experience were listed in detail throughout the pages of this book. I failed to see the connection between our journey and these types of thrill-seeking outdoor sports but Bob and Suzanne both insisted that our adventure was wild, daring and extreme.

Later on, as we were leaving and returning to our canoe, Suzanne mentioned the importance of realizing how few people experience or understand "this part" of Canadian life, referring of course to camping and spending time in "natural" landscapes. So many people have no desire to spend time here, she said. Or perhaps don't have the opportunity, I added. The people we meet in parks, are a particular slice of Canada, Suzanne said, insisting that many people do not identify with this land.

It was late afternoon, time to continue our voyage, so we set out toward Agawa Point at the end of the bay, paddling against a steady wind. As we reached the point, the winds subsided and we crossed calm waters to a cliff face labelled as Agawa Rock on our map. Here, painted in red ochre, are ancient pictographs, which our map described: "one of the largest collections of Indian rock art in Ontario" and a "representation of different aspects of the Indian cultures on Lake Superior". A man who had hiked a trail to the site was walking along the rock at the base of the cliff very carefully, although from my perspective on the water his path seemed quite wide and secure. It was a bizarre

nationality.

I would not dispute the claim that the canoe allows an important and intimate experience of the land, however, the exclusivity of the assumption that the canoe is a vehicle to carry all Canadians out of "our European past deep into the wilderness" is disturbing. There are some Canadians with the luxuries of time and money, a certain education, good physical health and who live in the right location, for whom the canoe journey is both desirable and possible. It would be unfair to group all Canadians together in this category or to assume that the canoe journey is in some way a more authentic experience of wilderness. Nevertheless, for Canadians who do seek an encounter with wilderness via the canoe journey it is important to consider the relationships that such an experience may facilitate and to question motivations behind such journeys.

James Whetung of the Mississauga Anishinaabe Nation, in his article "Refiguring the Image of Wilderness in the Northern Doorway", asks some very important questions about this quest for connection with the wilderness, revealing often unnoticed assumptions while in the meantime touching on his own

feeling, approaching the cliff in our canoe, such a beautiful, important and sacred site within the boundaries of a provincial park. Admission had been paid for many to park their cars and see the rare "art collection" while the people whose ancestors painted these rocks were nowhere to be seen, relegated to land removed from this place. The paintings are weathered, they wear the marks of time, some have disappeared as the rock has chipped, broken, eroded and slid into the lake. But what remains is mysteriously beautiful and hauntingly sad: a fading reminder of a once rich and flourishing culture.

Further along the shoreline, just a few minutes later, a face appeared in the rocky shore: hollow depressions for eyes and an elaborately carved mouth with crooked, jagged stone teeth. The mouth rested agape, just above the water line and as the moving water entered it, deep sounds were heard: the hollow thump of bass, the gurgling of receding water, each wave creating a new and different sound. The twisted body of a red pine stood out along the lakeshore and Eric saw in its form the image of a vertebral artery. As we paddled, watched and listened Eric turned to watch behind us and immediately he was taken with a completely different scene. We could take this same journey in the opposite direction and experience completely different things, an entirely different perspective, he said.

intimacy with the land:

> ...we nail down the rivers with topographical maps, a necessary survival tool. The routes are pre-planned, drop –off and pick-up points predestined; and yet we head out with a sense of discovery. What is this anticipation, what is the wonder for which we are driven to search?
>
> What are the rites we encounter and pass through along the route? Why must the routes be into the wilderness? And to what extremes must we go to create and sustain that wilderness, in an age of high technology?[33]
>
> For beneath the canoe routes and ... canoe trip permits are lake and river beds that link all the islands on the planet. This is part of the unconscious wonder that seeps to the surface as one sits on the lakeshore, with the water as mirror.[34]

Human-nature relations are played out in our day-to-day living practices and habits, in the languages we speak, in the stories we share. We cannot ignore the presence of the natural environment; it sustains us, challenges us, brings us pleasure, discomfort and sometimes pain. By investigating and ques-

July 25, 2002

We paddled past Bald Head Point today: a rounded, steep, rocky outcrop of land covered with trees, textured with sharply angled rocks, hardly bald looking at all. In the bay following Bald Head Point is the mouth of the Bald Head River, almost completely covered by a gravel bar leaving a narrow opening, concentrating the current. We decided to enter the river and stop for a rest in the calm waters. But, we underestimated the strength and direction of the water exiting the river and the power of the waves meeting the river from the wide expanse of the lake. As we entered the small opening, I felt the currents seize the canoe and twist it nearly sideways. We both leaned suddenly to one side as Eric strained his muscles to steer in the stern and by some miracle we made it through. There was an enormous, shared sigh of relief as we had barely avoided the worst: our canoe and bodies would have been dragged along the rocks in the shallow waters. Thankfully, we managed to stay upright and entered the calm water just past the river mouth. A couple camping close by had been watching the whole scene from a vantage point at the river's mouth, where they waved and applauded. Such was our dramatic entrance into the Bald Head River.

Four people were camped in the protected area behind the gravel bar, the first canoeists we had seen on this inland sea. Marg and John, retired teachers from Sault Ste. Marie, John's brother

tioning relationships to the natural world, I have come up against a recognizable effort to impose, reinforce and maintain boundaries between self and wild Other. Yet, at the same time, there is a search for meaning in wilderness that seems to originate in a longing, a desire for connection. An awareness of self within this sense of longing may generate a sense of the Other as formative of self in some way, and thus an acceptance of one's (and Others') transformational potential (and hence possibilities for becoming). The importance of reciprocity, participation and conversation in this dynamic relation becomes evident in light of the powerful presence and influence imposed by the specifics of histories, cultures and social constructions. The freedom to move beyond these, to embrace a personal relation – simple or complex, yet not exclusive – and discover new ways of making meaning for oneself through an engagement with the Other, seems to be realized by approaching the wild with honest, humble and respectful curiosity, in recognition of a powerful, potentially dangerous, yet fascinating, captivating natural world. There is included here a search for self, for the wonder, the wild and the sacred in the world and in ourselves.

Ron from Salt Spring Island, B.C. and their friend Doug were canoeing and camping for several days in Lake Superior Provincial Park. We spoke to them about our journey and their immediate response was that so few people know about this "treasure", referring to Lake Superior's northern coastline. They spoke of beauty and pristine wilderness and Marg shared her confidence in the purity of the lake's waters which they drank without filtering. They expressed no concern even after I told them that each campground we had visited had boil water advisories in effect. All four were very glad to speak with us, insisting that we were real adventurers and admitting that we were the first Canadians they had spoken to in the park.

By the time we were ready to leave, the waves had picked up and were breaking and rolling into shore. Very steep standing waves were forming where the roll and waves of the lake met with the exiting river current. As we made preparations to leave, John readied his camera and positioned himself among the boulders near our exit point. We waited patiently for the first set of waves to arrive and then paddled strongly and swiftly out of the river, straight through the standing waves, three or four very large ones. I remember being airborne as my body left the floor of the canoe and the edge of the seat, held in only by the spray deck. The waters calmed dramatically on the opposite side outside of the meeting place of lake and river. A quick glance over my shoulder

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[1] Pearsall, Judy (ed.). The New Oxford English Dictionary. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. p.1566.
[2] Evernden Neil. The Social Creation of Nature. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992. p.130.
[3] Ibid. p.132.
[4] Brant, Di. "This Land That I Love, This Wide, Wide Prairie" In: Borderlines. p.44.
[5] Chrystos. "Water". In: Not Vanishing. Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1988. p.97.
[6] McKay, Don. *Vis a Vis*: Field Notes on Poetry and Wilderness. Wolfville, Nova Scotia: Gaspereau Press, 2001. pp.22,23.

caught our four friends, cheering, arms raised in the air, thoroughly entertained by our thrilling exit.

July 26, 2002

There are strange noises at this campsite, somewhat like a zipper opening and closing, as though there were another tent pitched beside us. We've concluded that it must be coming from one of the trees, a particularly twisted, narrow white pine, the one on which we had hung our clothes to dry the evening before. How such noises could come from this tree however, is still a mystery.

We woke this morning to rain (the tail end of a storm that woke us several times throughout the night), and the happy chattering of a contented-sounding little rodent which I was convinced had managed to chew its way through our belongings. Eric opened the tent door and we watched the little red squirrel scamper away, apparently only curious since no holes were later discovered, no little teeth marks in our things. The rain stopped in the late morning but a thick fog began to descend so instead of preparing to leave we instead put on a pot of soup for lunch. A few moments later we heard thumping sounds from the other side of the tent. It was the morning visitor who had returned, climbed into our food barrel, helped herself to a chocolate bar (interesting choice considering the otherwise healthy and squirrel-friendly contents of the barrel) and tossed it out onto the ground. This squirrel had obviously been fed before and after I confiscated the chocolate bar, she waited expectantly at my feet, even standing on top of my shoes. As I tried to explain that chocolate was probably not good for squirrel digestion, she ran around the tent straight to the pot of

soup that we hadn't yet finished.

According to our map we were very close to an important site labelled as the Devil's Chair and described on our map as one of several important Ojibwe sites on the Lake Superior Coast. Here, Nanabozho - the giant who protected the Ojibwe - was said to have rested after jumping over the lake. I was saddened by the location of another important Aboriginal site outside of First Nations land, encompassed by the boundaries of a provincial park. I wondered about the name Devil's Chair and who was behind its designation. Did the name have anything to do with Ojibwe legend? As we approached the place we saw a dark black rock emerging from the water, its surface sharp and jagged. One portion was flat, nearly level with the water's surface, most likely submerged at times of higher water level. The rock then rose up in the centre, like the back of a chair. Years of waves and wind had formed two holes here in the upright portion, one round and small, the other larger and oval-shaped, like windows opening out across the open water. We came alongside and touched the black rock; its surface was pointed and prickly, its colour deep. I didn't see any other colours, plants, or lichens, only black, severely formed and sculpted in a dramatic upright shape.

The sky began to clear and the sunshine we had hoped for was with us once again, its light bringing colour to the landscape; bright salmon-red seams snaked along grey shoreline rocks. I was enjoying the warmth of the sun and the rhythm of paddling as we moved out from the bay around Cap Chaillon. These new cliffs that towered above us caught me by surprise, they stole my breath.

The quiet lake permitted close approaches to the wall, into caves and caverns where the sounds and echoes of moving water were constantly changing: a symphony of rhythm and sound, hollow, deep, shallow, higher-pitched, a steady, syncopated, chaotic beat. We paddled into a great amphitheatre, our voices echoed back from the walls and as I stretched my neck to peer far above I noticed a large piece of driftwood firmly wedged into a crevice in the rock wall several metres above us. Only a powerful and enormous wave could have placed it there and I turned to look out over the calm, wide expanse of this inland sea with the understanding that its power was well beyond my experience and comprehension. We continued on at a very slow pace, not wanting to miss any detail of this incredible place. I thought back to a conversation we had held on the French River with a girl who had asked: Don't you guys get bored? There have been several instances when people have remarked on the time and distance that we are travelling and the limitations of our craft. Here, though, I am aware of the speed we travel and the details that we will inevitably miss, the unending number of things we could learn from this place.

Suddenly, a large human-like face appeared at the base of the cliff front of us and as we approached, the body of a lion extended behind it, reclining at the cliff's base. Its massive, hulking, form was stretched out, relaxed, non-threatening and its tail rested quietly, curled slightly behind. There was no red arrow on our map, no story printed out, just an enormous stone human-lion basking in the warm afternoon sun, unmoved by our gaping mouths, expressions of awe and disbelief. We

searched for words to describe the things we were seeing, as I do now and were similarly struggling. We spoke about an interactive art gallery where beauty is experienced by every sense and is constantly changing, challenging our minds our bodies and our spirits. It all sounds pathetically Romantic or “Hallmark-ian” so I won’t ruin it with more words and descriptions that can only fall short.

Embodiment

July 27, 2002

We arrived in late morning at the head of a trail leading to the lake "belonging" to a friend of Eric's named Mike. Mike has claimed this lake as his own, calls it Advance Lake and has carved a secret trail to it from the shoreline of Superior. Since apparently only Mike and his close friends hike this trail, it is not well travelled or marked. We lost our way a couple of times but managed to find the trail again each time and after an hour or so of hiking we emerged from the forest at the edge of Advance Lake. Mike wasn't there but some belongings hanging securely in a tree confirmed that this was indeed the place we were looking for. The lake was perfectly still despite a light breeze and as Eric hiked around its edge to get a better view of the other side I waited near the trail on some rocks next to the water. This quiet little lake was a completely different world from the one we had just left. The water sounds were soft and gentle. The occasional light splash drew my attention to schools of tiny minnows swimming between and around the rocks in the shallow water. Like filmed city traffic played back at high speed they rushed along narrow channels, stopping at wider intersections as others would pass in perpendicular directions, then continue on at the same high speeds turning together, left, right, or passing straight through. The tiniest brown frog climbed out of the water, up onto a rock. It was smaller than most of the flying insects around us, fitting easily into

When I was young, growing up in a small, rural town my experience of landscape was mediated by an interesting set of rules. I understood place to be four-fold: home, church, school and outside. In each of these places there were forbidden or taboo spaces. There was a hole in our basement for the 'sump-pump' that my brother fell into once, and an old garage full of junk; there was the baptismal tank behind the preacher's pulpit; there was the boys' washroom, and the principal's office...and then there was the river. The river meant danger: "Stay away from the water"; "You can't swim in there"; "Beware of the current"; "That water is dirty"; "You don't want to hang out there, that's where the big kids go to drink". It became a place of fear and an act of rebellion to merely approach its banks. The river itself was forbidden, constructed as a threat; there was no conversation to be held, no engagement to be had. However, accompanying this intense, childhood fear of a dangerous, uncontrollable, unknowable place was the gnawing suspicion that there was more to this river than I had been led to believe. My first experiences of this place, although from a safe distance and highly controlled, had allowed me to glimpse something more, a certain presence

the space of my smallest fingernail. Here, just a short hike from Lake Superior, there was another world, quiet, still, very small, very busy.

July 28, 2002

We awoke this morning to thick, grey fog in Brulé Harbour: a little bay protected by an island that partly covers the bay's entrance. Like a separate little lake, sheltered from the offshore wind and waves, the harbour is a perfect place to camp. Last night had been very calm and relatively quiet, except for the sounds of Eric and me jumping from the gunwales of our canoe on a late night swim, and the occasional screaming of two Canada Geese who insisted on carrying out a recurring and apparently violent battle on the nearby shore of Entrance Island. Despite the thick fog we decided to head out, but we kept close to shore and before long the gentle, steady winds slowly cleared the skies to reveal a brilliant sun. With the open skies came heavier winds and larger waves but we were all moving in the same direction, much to our delight since we were feeling slightly ill, possibly due to our need to re-supply, more than likely a lack of fresh vegetables!

We surfed through deep blue waves and whitecaps into the mouth of the Michipicoten River and around to a little sandy beach on our left. We had arrived at the home of "Naturally Superior", a canoe and kayak outfitter. We browsed around the little store just as two other people entered

that was neither fearful nor antagonistic.

For the most part, I have lived my idea of place as detached, avoidable: a stage upon which my own and other bodies act both autonomously and collectively. Place for me, in the past, was unchanging, independent, certainly not devoid of power but separate. I behaved as though my surroundings existed independently of my interpretation. I lived as though it was possible to render a "true" representation of place, as though place could be experienced in the same way by each and every individual. I accepted another's understanding of place as truth, an unquestioned authority. However, as I have witnessed the engagement of others with natural spaces and have contemplated my own changing relationships to place, I have seen a wide variety of perceptions and relationships with land and water that have forced me to question the interpretations that have been passed to me through others. What is this experience of place that varies so drastically from one individual to another? How is place revealed and interpreted and how does one live a connection to the land?

and not long afterward we met the third member of their group. Dave, Gerard and Steve are leaving tomorrow for a one-week kayak trip along Superior's shoreline, westward from the mouth of the Michipicoten. Dave and Steve are from Ottawa and Gérard from Gatineau. All three were very interested in our trip, Steve in particular who had taken his own solo canoe trip from Ottawa to Thunder Bay. When he was asked his reasons for embarking on such a journey he said, quite simply, that he lived in Ottawa, went to university in Thunder Bay, and travelled back and forth by train. Each time he watched the landscape going by through the windows of the train he dreamed of one day taking the trip by canoe. So, in 1986 he did just that. Steve has a history of paddling: racing canoes and guiding kayak trips, so for him it was a way of life. When he spoke about his great journey he told us stories about wildest weather, biggest waves, longest distances paddled in a day, best camping sites. He offered answers to questions that we didn't ask but had been asked by many others. Time, speed, distance: these were the important details. Dave and Gérard on the other hand, were slightly less familiar with the sport but each had their own appreciation for the landscapes their kayaks helped them to see. Gérard told us that he was interested in capturing the land in photographs and recounted tales of paddling in the Saugenay region of the St. Lawrence River to watch whales jump over a sand bar. He would sit in his boat at this spot and wait, camera

Open Bodies

I was reminded of my first detached river relationship while reading Joseph Grange's phenomenological investigation: "Place, body and situation". Working from the premise that human beings and their surrounding environments are completely "enmeshed", Grange examines understandings of the body as "flesh" and the environment as an engaged situation with the body/flesh. Environment, as such, seems to enter this text as a separate, inanimate concept while through the language of a living, passionate body the reality of place is revealed. Grange says:

> If place is ever to be seen in its concreteness, the implicit, subconscious prose and poetry of human flesh requires specific articulation.[1]

Citing Merleau-Ponty, Grange offers posture, orientation, feel and comprehension as structures through which this articulation takes place. He claims, somewhat deterministically perhaps, that through an upright posture a phenomenon

poised, for just the right moment, the ideal picture.

Our only travelling tomorrow will be to a grocery store. Hopefully we'll find a ride into Wawa otherwise it's a ten kilometre hike.

July 30, 2002

There is iron ore along the shoreline here, oxidized, rust-coloured, appearing in veins within the rock: iron in its natural home. Gérard found a piece and brought it to the table where we had sat talking yesterday. He seemed impressed by its rawness, its naturalness, and the rare opportunity of seeing this substance, so often equated with industrial society, here in a natural setting. Since we spoke I have become more aware of its presence: rust coloured veins and sections of rock adding to the spectrum of colours that paint the cliffs and shores that we pass.

A sand bar came into view, attaching a small island to the beach on the mainland. Camped at this tombolo (a word we were to learn just a few minutes later) were a single kayak, a little yellow tent and a woman who waved from the beach. Upon landing we discovered that this woman was Heather, an artist whose paintings we had seen in the lodge at Naturally Superior. Heather invited us to join her on the beach and to look at her latest sketches. She was nearing the end of a four-week trip during which she travelled along the coastline of Pukaskwa National Park. Heather spoke

of distance and a sense of difference toward one's surroundings emerge. From posture flows orientation as bodies structure place through distance. According to Grange, a "healthy" body is experienced as an open space and the resonance of this seemingly empty body with its surroundings is depicted as creating the "feel" of a place. However, I question such an open experience of the body particularly in the context of an active engagement of space.

Resonance sounds like an attractive way to describe the experience of one's surroundings, it evokes ideas of unity, perhaps harmony. Nevertheless, in my own experiences of particular, physical interactions with natural environments, a term such as resonance seems somewhat idealistic. Some of my personal encounters with wilderness that have been lived out in the stern of a canoe for example, do indeed embrace a confluence of body and surroundings, however, the memories of such encounters include many different sensations not the least of which are blisters on my hands, sore, aching muscles and tired joints, the draining, stinging heat of a midday sun and the sharp bite of a deer fly on my shoulder. Here, my body is not felt or lived as empty. Instead, there is an in-

very matter-of-factly about her work, identifying each place by name as she leafed through her sketchbook, pointing out facts: good campsites, types of beaches, places to find shelter in rough weather. Place names in particular seemed of utmost importance and most of the drawings were passed over quickly as she called out the name of the harbour, inlet, cove or bay. After showing us her work she offered much advice and gave us several warnings about travelling in rough or stormy weather. Weather is everything, she said. It can make you hate or love the same place. Along with her advice, Heather pointed out things to look for in a travel brochure style. Arctic disjuncts, she told us with an almost official air, are plants found either only in the Arctic or here on Superior's north shore. She also mentioned Pukaskwa Pits. No one knows what they're for but you'll see them, she said matter of factly.

Heather spoke briefly about her journal writing, another part of her journey, and she told us what she had written about Superior the night before: It defies anticipation. She explained this statement by saying that so often plans to reach certain destinations or to follow planned schedules, were disrupted by Superior, by winds, waves and storms. The lake had become an obstacle to her agenda and although she was still an independent agent in this landscape, I had the impression that she felt she had come here to witness, to represent, to be acted upon, at the mercy of the

creased and at times rather uncomfortable awareness that occurs in a body with agency acting toward self-determination. Like a conversation, the natural environment and oneself are both acting and acted upon. Although possibilities for some level of perceived resonance may exist, for me it is not through completely open passivity but rather within the context of an increased awareness of self. Resonance, although conceivably possible on some level, is not a prerequisite or ideal; it can be fleeting, rare or even non-existent. It is also important not to depict these moments as essentially positive or benign experiences. What would it feel like to have one's body resonate with a violent earthquake or gale-force winds?

Comprehension, for Grange, is the bringing together of posture, orientation and feel into a unique whole which becomes meaning for an individual body. The singular quality of comprehension leads Grange to question human judgement of place; in so doing he challenges dominant methodologies of objectivism and subjectivism. Continuing with the idea of a passive, open self, Grange states that "it is the fundamental activity of the human body to feel the world and to

land. When I asked why she paints and travels here Heather confided that she loves this place, that by spending time here the land becomes part of you, it gets inside. She shared with us what she referred to as a bizarre feeling of going the wrong way each time she returns from Superior to her home in Ottawa. There is a certain sensation, Heather insisted, that she experiences only in the north. It begins for her on the drive westward, starting at Sault Ste. Marie and intensifies as she continues travelling north-west. She didn't describe this feeling beyond a strong affinity for the landscape, but she assured me that it has left her each time she has moved south-east of Sault Ste. Marie.

August 2, 2002

The winds finally began to subside in late afternoon today and we arrived in Floating Heart Bay, so named because there is an island in the bay supposedly shaped like a heart (I can't see it). As we prepared dinner on the fine, sandy beach something white caught Eric's attention. Just as I looked up a slender, white animal with a long tail jogged past our tent and into the forest behind giving us a casual glance as it passed. It may have been an albino mink or weasel. Immediately after it had disappeared a tiny bird, unlike any I had ever seen, appeared on a bush not far from where I was sitting. I motioned to Eric the location of the bird and on the hand I used to point with,

house the environment in our being."[2] Assigning meaning to the world via the resonance of an open body with an internalized environment, in addition to situating the exterior environment as an understandable, appropriable thing, seems to suggest there is a possibility of coming to a realization or liberation of self through an incorporation of the exterior environment. The idea of accommodating wilderness entirely within one's own being is difficult to imagine and is challenged by thinkers such as Robert P. Harrison in his paper "Toward a Philosophy of Nature":

> We are both inside and outside of nature: this is our dismay, that we come up against its insurmountable limit. We gain our freedom not by overcoming but by recognizing that limit ... [Freedom's] essence lies in acknowledgment.[3]
>
> Freedom means first and foremost being who or what one is.[4]

Grange's description of environment as situation presents the world as an "openness" within a closed conformation, similar to his depiction of the body/flesh yet

a bright green insect was resting. All three of these creatures were completely new to me, I had never seen anything like them before and they all paid us a visit at once. Within the span of thirty seconds my life was three creatures richer. We really are blessed.

August 3, 2002

Two gaping mouths appeared in the cliffs as we paddled today, one much larger than the other, neither with teeth. Stone uvulas dangled down from the centre of these caves whose oval cavities were not screaming mouths but were poised in long operatic notes, their song silently carried out over the water.

We have reached the Pukaskwa River the official boundary of Pukaskwa National Park, and we've camped on a large sandy beach not far from the river's mouth. There are two kayakers here who came and introduced themselves shortly after we had arrived. Tim and Charlie are both from Michigan and told us they were part of a whole group of people who visit Superior's north shore together every summer. We shared a fire with Tim and Charlie and as we cooked our dinner we talked about the land. Charlie was very quiet but Tim spent a lot of time talking and I learned that he had been visiting the north shore every year for the past thirteen years. However, he was new to the sport of kayaking and usually visited this place by canoe. Tim spoke about the lake and shoreline,

with a different form. He uses the term "roundedness" to describe a sense of envelopment by one's surroundings without a feeling of suffocation. Even so, this surrounding or enclosing environment is not entirely devoid of its own agency. Looking to the ancient Greek understanding of *phusis* (nature arising from a self-emerging power), Grange attempts to illustrate this quality of openness. He writes of the being of nature as revealed in giving, through an engagement in the busyness of grace and generosity. Here, a response of the openness of the human body to the openness of the natural environment allows place to be experienced, created and celebrated.[5] In the context of Harrison's portrayal of freedom, Grange's insistence on openness in person/landscape relations seems particularly important as it is through attempts at openness that persons and landscapes may have an opportunity to be who or what they are, to accept the generosity of the Other and to respond in generosity. Nevertheless, the presence and participation of all beings, living and non-living, is an integral part of self-determination and expression and the dynamic is extremely complicated, even in the very basic project of self-care and preservation.

telling us places to visit, pointing out which islands were home to Pukaskwa pits which he insisted had been dated to over 2000 years old. No one knows what they were for, he said as he speculated that they were used to store fish or something. Tim wore a baseball hat and jacket that were both inscribed with the words: Voyageur North Productions. He told us this was a side business to his career as a schoolteacher. He makes promotional videos for outfitters, wilderness trippers and outdoor gear manufacturers. As a result he has travelled to many places in the northern regions of North America. He spoke about Alaska, the Yukon and Northwest Territories as well as rivers like the Missinaibi in northern Ontario. However, Tim returns every year to Superior's north shore for the remoteness and uniqueness of this place, which he referred to several times as pristine. He spoke to us (as did Heather) about arctic disjuncts: a plant he called "saxafrage" that has been seen only in Arctic regions and here on the north shore of Lake Superior. Tim also talked about the vast amount of untouched land inside the park borders. Where else could you find this? he asked, as he shared his belief that it was the ruggedness of the land that had saved this place. The railroad couldn't be built along the shoreline because of the cliffs and mountainous terrain, and Tim repeated with certainty, like a Park guide on a promotional video, that the land had saved itself in its current pristine condition, only an eight-hour drive from Tim's home in Michigan.

The idea of my body within place as a contained openness resonating with a simultaneously enveloping and open environment presents a different means of taking up my surroundings as a particular, individual experience while at the same moment opening up my individuality to something shared, something common. It challenges the validity of established representations and/or judgements of place, of the assignment of concepts like "dangerous", or even "beautiful". Place is no longer simply exterior to the body but becomes something that although existing in some way, also arises through a body's participation in it. More than an understandable, definable physicality, place emerges through experience and is somehow unique to each body's encounter. As bodies change, being far from static objects, so do their perceptions of and relations with Others.

Growing older in my small hometown, I became more curious and abandoned some of my young fears. I drew closer to the river and the terms of our separation began to blur. Time went on and my body changed, the summers seemed to grow hotter and I became one of the big kids. My relationship to the river began to transform. The distance I had so carefully guarded between my

August 4, 2002

When I looked out of the tent this morning the world was completely white with fog. Distant shorelines had disappeared entirely, but Tim and Charlie were not discouraged and left the beach early just as we emerged from our tent. After a quick breakfast we also paddled into the fog, away from the Pukaskwa River into the next inlet: Imogene Cove. Here on the sandy beach, a large white pine log embedded with four plaques displaying words and pictures, a small clearing, and the remnants of old log buildings are all that remain of an old logging community of 400 people called Pukaskwa Depot. From 1917 to 1930 this town was the headquarters of the Lake Superior Paper Company's cutting operation, accessible by boat in the summer and by dogsled team over the frozen White River in the winter. The white pine log bearing the plaques that exhibited this information is the only evidence of white pine to be seen. It has been more than two weeks since we have seen their unique forms and shapes on the land. If it weren't for the few that I have seen standing along the highway I would never have imagined that they were once part of this forest.

August 6, 2002

We woke with the sun this morning and prepared to leave, hoping to paddle some distance before the winds returned. The northernmost shoreline of Lake Superior appeared in the distance, a rolling

body and the river one day disappeared and I entered its waters. I felt its current. It slowly became less alien, less dark, less dangerous. The coolness of the water was welcome on my skin and the laughing and joking of schoolmates nearby blended with the sounds of the water falling over the dam and down past the falls. However my fear, although diminished, remained while my bodily experience of the place changed, and the river itself was transformed in the process. A physical encounter with this natural space, a part of my home, seemed unavoidable. An open awareness of my surroundings began to develop, as did a desire to engage and become acquainted with my home, to make the river my home. I was nonetheless, still aware of a distance, a separation. My presence seemed defiant, transgressive and I felt this awareness as uneasiness, alertness to danger, to imagined currents or creatures tugging at my feet; I saw it in pieces of broken beer bottles scattered on the rocks and in the absence of other swimmers besides certain, more rebellious friends. I responded by creating strict boundaries for myself, a narrow swimming area very close to the bank. Even so, I marvelled at the behaviour of my friends and found myself although

blue horizon far ahead. It was an overwhelming feeling to think that we had travelled so far, all this way from South River by water, to think that my tiny hometown is connected to this dramatic landscape of sheer cliffs, rolling mountains, clear waters and crashing waves.

August 7, 2002

We began our day before the sun today: 5:00AM. The morning's peaceful silence lasted only a couple of hours before the loud and constant drone of a fishing tug reached our ears over the calm, quiet waters. I have heard that many who come to paddle on this part of Lake Superior are shuttled back and forth by fishing tugs so that they may spend their one or two week holiday deep inside the park. As the noise of this boat accompanied us for over an hour I wondered at the mindset of those who might be on board. Many kayakers we have met here have been opposed to power boating, travelling here in hopes of leaving such things behind. Such a trade-off for an experience of the park interior seems a strange compromise.

We rounded a point of land to see a sandy beach appear on our right and a sleepy camper emerge from his tent. When he called out a good morning we recognized that it was Adam, a kayaker from Schooner Wisconsin that we had met earlier on the Dog River, so we pulled over to the beach and he invited us for tea. We began to chat and tea became a full breakfast as Eric pulled

confused, desiring a similar, carefree rapport with the river.

Presence

A contemplation of my changing perceptions of, and relationships with, the natural world must consider the wider contexts in which these relations occur including, perhaps most notably, the growing, international environmental movement. Our natural surroundings, as discussed in Irene Klaver's article "Phenomenology on (the) Rocks", have become increasingly unavoidable in a global, "environmental" context. As we are confronted more and more with the global effects of human activities, nature has moved from a background position to a "field of significance".[6] Nature, here, is not outside of culture nor is it a purely social construction dependent upon humanity for its meaning and worth. Instead, Klaver frames the natural world within a particular body/nature dynamic and discusses human impact on the environment as moving from a position of local *concern* to encompassing the entire earth and all of humanity. She declares human responsibility toward a global natural environment, which thus

out the blueberries we had picked the day before. One-by-one, Adam cooked us pan-size blueberry pancakes and told us about his journey that had begun near the Apostle Islands and would take him around the entire lake. His plan was to write a book about the journey, perhaps a photo journal, and his tribe, he said, had supported his dream with the purchase of a kayak, a professional camera and the donation of money for his food. We talked about our first, brief meeting and our impressions of Denison Falls. I wish I had a thesaurus, Adam admitted as we struggled to describe this incredible place that we had seen and felt, smelled and heard. Before long, memories of yesterday's winds encouraged us back onto the water and we said our goodbyes to Adam with hopes that we would meet up again soon.

The mouth of the Willow River at the right edge of a long sandy beach, was, to Eric, an irresistible invitation and after quite a bit of convincing, I agreed to a little detour. As we entered the river the wind and waves were left behind and we found ourselves in a quiet, blue corridor, the green of the forest extending upward from the water's edge on either side. Around the first bend a suspension bridge came into view: part of the hiking trail that winds through the forest. A dark form just beyond the bridge caught our attention, and we paddled silently toward it. With our eyes fixed on the large animal we passed under the bridge: one single plank, two cables to grip and a wire mesh

appears as a helpless nature at the mercy of humankind. Klaver interprets this unavoidable material realm as having entered the domain of theory through a return of *presence* within diverse, dynamic relations. These relations include interactions between nature and culture, and between what Merleau-Ponty describes as the "sedimented" and the "reactivated".[7] Experiencing the fragility of the world through the knowledge of increasing environmental degradation on a global scale has, according to Klaver, caused a growing awareness of the natural world. As a result, the notion of reactivation is brought out of a neutral context to a position where it becomes steeped in a perception of a frail and damaged nature.

What is this return of presence that Klaver examines through Merleau-Ponty's theories of "co-constitution" and "operative intentionality" and that she applies to the supposedly most stable material element: stone?[8]

Interactions between sedimentation and reactivation are described as opposite movements that emerge within one move. They perpetually reshape and alter each other's boundaries with constitutive forces. These boundaries are the

from cable to plank on either side. The wind, at our backs, passed through the structure and the bridge responded in a monotonic song, audible only from a position directly underneath. The wind, then heavy with the scent of one man, one woman, a canoe and some other stuff, ran a course straight past the animal. It was not a bear as we had first thought (or perhaps hoped) and it lifted its great moose head and long legs from beneath the water and stepped gingerly up onto the riverbank. A sudden shake, reminiscent of a furry, family pet (or not), and the moose disappeared, silently carrying its massive form through the thick forest.

I once read a book in which the author contemplates snow and its ability to record the activities in a space through the imprints of creatures: hoofs, feet, claws, paws. Sand documents a similar story but includes a few different characters: the belly-print of a snake, the five points of contact made by a toad (fore and hind limbs and belly). Looking down the sandy dunes of the beach, the mouth of the Pic River was barely visible and between it and myself were the traces of more creatures than I could count, criss-crossed by the tracks of an ATV. I followed one set of feline-looking tracks that led to the edge of the forest. I waited, listened; there was a loud crash in the trees to my left and then silence. I returned the way I had come reading other stories in the sand: a meeting, an altercation, a sudden jump, a disappearing act. I must have lost track of time

locations of movement, of relations, where the concrete becomes the abstract and the abstract becomes the concrete, where culture becomes nature and nature becomes culture.[9] Within her text, Klaver draws upon Merleau-Ponty's recognition beyond traditional phenomenology of something more between nature's being and the immanence of thought and mind. This recognition places intentionality beyond the mind's attempt to take hold of a fundamental nature, to an operative intentionality: a way of being that encompasses the whole experience of things and is expressed in the unique properties of things.[10] Klaver uses the words of Merleau-Ponty as she states:

> The transcendental field has ceased to be simply the field of our thought and has become the field of the whole experience ...constitution becomes increasingly...the means of unveiling the back side of things that we have not constituted...It is a question of recognizing consciousness itself as a project of the world, meant for a world which it neither embraces nor possesses but toward which (*vers lequel*) it is perpetually directed.[11]

because when I arrived back at the canoe Eric was nowhere to be found. He emerged a few minutes later from behind the dunes, his face set with anxiety, convinced that I was lost or hurt or perhaps wrestling with a bear. I apologized. I had not considered this place to be dangerous and I had completely forgotten about time.

After a short paddle, only a few minutes from the beach, I noticed a sandy piece of land, like a large tombolo joining two rocky, higher sides. In between these heights, as far as we could see, were piles and piles of driftwood and then a glimpse of the lake beyond. White and weathered by water, wind and sand, the wood conjured images of a dinosaur graveyard as I gazed open-mouthed. Like the bones of mammoth elephants long ago laid to rest, branches extended skyward as enormous ribcages once picked clean by ravens, hawks and vultures. We soon found a grassy area on the other side of the narrow peninsula, facing westward toward a warm, orange setting sun: an ideal place to finish the day.

August 8, 2002

We arrived in Marathon today, its presence no great surprise as a pulp and paper production mill belches white smoke into the sky, takes the clarity from the water and burns our nostrils with its sweet and toxic scent. The entire waterfront is devoted to this industrial process. The noise was

Stones are examined in the interaction of sedimentation and reactivation. They become "im/permanent", incompatible, boundary objects, markers of transition. They reveal an ontology of "being-in-common" in which different forces operate on one another in unpredictable ways.[12] Klaver's im/permanence recognizes the specific materiality of particular elements of the natural world. She considers stone in particular and shows how the characteristics of this material element - its endurance and slowness to change - encourage certain practices and cultural expressions. Stones are silent witnesses of past and future, often perceived to be stable and unmoving and yet are always in motion as tectonic plates move by inches.[13] Im/permanence adds to the material world what Klaver refers to as an element of the present; when considered alongside Grange's emphasis on "openness" (the interiorization and resonance of an outside environment within oneself), this idea reveals an interesting relationship between the two. In im/permanence there is a certain, immediate participation of the natural world in its materiality that through movement meets with the worlds of

deafening as we entered the bay; we could no longer communicate. As we shouted back and forth about the best place to land, there was tension between us. The contrast was extreme. (I am particularly mindful of it now as I write on this paper.). Along the shoreline, just before the industrial scene was in full view, we paddled next to some of the smoothest rock formations I have probably seen thus far in Lake Superior. Gently curved, like smooth, black, breaching creatures, their dark surfaces radiated heat in contrast to the cool air and water, a fact that became all the more real to me when I stepped out from the boat onto the algae covered edge of the rock and swiftly (and of course ever so gracefully) disappeared beneath the canoe and into the water while splashing and scrambling to return to the warm rock. Once I finally came to rest on a solid spot I could take in the scene around me, the bright, white graffiti: simple, almost permanent marks perhaps symbolizing eternal love. A couple walked hand-in-hand on the beach nearby. We soon continued around the head of land before the bay leading into the town, to the red and white smokestack of Marathon's pulp and paper mill.

Later in the evening, after all our errands were completed, I was relieved to be able to sit down and talk to Eric about something other than what kind of granola we should buy. I asked him what surprised him most about this journey so far. I was expecting an answer about the landscape itself

other beings. This materiality predisposes certain ways of taking up the natural world; however this understanding of environment does not appear detached or inanimate. In Grange's insistence on openness, the natural world is presented as resonating in the human body, which is able to house this world within.

There is a sense that by maintaining openness and responding to, or resonating with, the openness of the world, it is possible to accept the world as it is. Im/permanence adds another level of complexity to these ideas by revealing potential for a multiplicity of cultural responses and body relationships to the world and perhaps, as a result, a diversity of possible worlds. Here there is an added sense of intricacy in body/landscape encounters that seems to go beyond, or at least resist the simplification of, ideas of a body resonating with the outside world. An ontology of im/permanence does not present the world and its inhabitants as easily grasped, nor unchanging. Conceiving of the natural world in this way presents an important challenge to concepts of openness and the desire for bodily connection and participation with the surrounding environment. It adds a perception of intricacy, resisting authoritative, unifying depictions or definitive

or our physical performance but instead Eric surprised me and spoke of something else. He could see that our journey was much more than a physical passage from one place to another and that it was developing more each day. The conversations we have held are a journey in themselves, building upon one another. We can see connections between the people we meet and ourselves, the communities and the land. I am regularly surprised at the number of people however, who seem confused at thoughts of a relationship with place, who draw an awkward silence from the very thought.

August 9, 2002

Another early morning. However, it wasn't the anticipation of being back on the water that pulled us from our sleeping bags but rather the fear of discovery. Just after lying down to sleep last night we heard the sound of an approaching vehicle. It was parked directly in front of our tent, its headlights blinding us as a woman's voice called out strongly to inform us that we would have to leave, we were on private property. We explained our situation and our reluctance to paddle open water in the dark as we attempted to shield our eyes from the blinding lights. The pulp and paper mill's security guard thought for a moment and then left to speak with her supervisor. A few minutes later she returned, the truck's headlights once again blasting into our little space. We've decided that you can stay, she said, and then proceeded with our instructions: we would have to leave before shift change

portrayals of human-nature experiences. The world instead appears as unknowable, at least in its entirety, suggesting that there is not only one experience to be had by all, nor even one per individual, but that there are several paths to follow.

My experience of natural places began in my hometown where one small river became the starting point for many other interactions with place. As I read and thought about Klaver's stones and their dynamic presence in the worlds of different beings, I was reminded of one of my own encounters with this very tangible element of place.

August 4, 2002 - Lake Superior

When I looked out of the tent this morning the world was white with fog. Distant shores and islands had disappeared completely but we were not discouraged and after breakfast we paddled into this white world away from the Pukaskwa River into the cove beyond. We watched carefully while we paddled, as had been recommended, for raised, ancient beaches on the islands that we passed. "That's where the pits are", we were told, "the Pukaskwa pits." Out of curiosity we stopped at a small island, pulled our

because the day supervisor who comes in at 7:00AM is not going to be informed of our presence; no garbage was to be left behind nor any fires lit; we were strictly forbidden to roam around the property. We agreed to abide by the rules and we set an alarm for 6:30AM before trying again to get some sleep. Marathon was not the most ideal place to run out of daylight. Five hours later, our tent was packed away and we were in desperate search for coffee before getting back into the canoe.

At the waterfront, several kayaks were visible on the rocks and surrounded by a group of people, one of whom was chasing a plastic bag at full speed while it tried to escape in a sudden gust of wind. The paddlers had just finished a trip from Rossport to Marathon and were returning to their homes in Sault Ste. Marie. We sat with them and had some lunch while they pulled out their maps and spoke to us about the route they had just travelled discussing each campsite in detail as they kindly suggested the best places to stop. One man named Mike shared with us some of his paddling experiences in other parts of Canada. He spoke first of the Saskatchewan River telling us that it was a remarkable place to visit because the river valley is one of the few places in the province that hasn't been cultivated for agricultural purposes. The result, according to Mike, is that it has become a wildlife corridor. He listed off all the animals that he had seen in only a few days,

canoe ashore and climbed the cobble levels until we reached the top – a final layer of rounded stones, darkened and coloured with lichens: green, black, white, bluish-grey. Among the stones in this place we found two deep depressions where top layers of rocks had been removed and piled around the sides. The man we had met on the beach yesterday claimed that these pits were most likely used for food storage, probably fish. He said they had been studied by anthropologists and carbon-dated to over 2000 years old. A few minutes later, on another island however, we stopped to examine another pit and I began to question our presence there, I felt like an intruder, irreverent, inappropriate. Rummaging through our things I came across a guidebook where I discovered a very different interpretation of these ancient stones. The book described them as sacred places, revered by the local Anishnaabe people, used in ancient and present times as focal points for spirit quests. Appropriate behaviour, as described by our guidebook, is to keep one's distance and offer a gift of tobacco out of respect for the place and its ancestors. So much for the fish pit story. In our ignorance and haste we had shown great disrespect for these places that are so sacred to others. As we paddled away from the island I wondered how many times previous to today that I have forgotten the importance

more perhaps than we will see this whole summer. Mike had also paddled the Mackenzie River from his son's home in Inuvik. His plan had been to paddle to Tuktoyaktuk, to the Beaufort Sea, but an injured arm had held him back. "I kept tasting the water to see if it was salty", he said, and then told us that he would really like to go back one day and finish what he'd started. Assuming that I considered the north to be a pristine landscape (which, in part, I think I did, or do), he assured me that the riverbanks of the Mackenzie are home to piles of garbage. He described the land as scattered with refuse and toxic waste, and he named the oil industry as a particularly significant source.

By the time we were paddling again Eric and I both had a pounding headache and Eric was convinced that it had something to do with our close proximity to the pulp and paper mill. He was so revolted by the odour that he insisted we attach the spray deck and cross to the far island instead of following the shoreline into the next bay. I was extremely reluctant. From my perspective, the waves in the distance were breaking and the swells looked enormous, at least three or four metres high. Nevertheless, despite my protests, we paddled toward the centre of the bay and toward the waves. I felt very small, very limited in strength, skill and wisdom; at the mercy of these enormous swells over which we travelled. The horizon disappeared as we descended deeply into each

of places, that I have just passed through with a quick glance around, maybe a token photograph. While these thoughts circled through my mind, the fog began to clear. The thick, white mist that had surrounded us since morning lifted and the world turned from shades of grey to full colour.

The stones of the "Pukaskwa pits", because of their relative permanence, attract the attention of different visitors, tourists and scholars. They are history. They are also an element of the present. They are sacred and they are commodity, a must-see on a boating vacation, listed in brochures and travel write-ups. They mark a porous boundary between past and future, between the living and the dead, between physical and spiritual, human, plant and animal worlds. They are culturally constructed, appropriated and adapted in multiple, often conflicting or paradoxical ways. They provide structure, shelter and support to lichens, insects. One had filled with earth and from its centre grew an alder tree. Through our own and a multiplicity of other encounters, the properties and arrangement of these stones resulted in different operant

trough, surrounded by walls of water, then reappeared over each crest. Eric's voice soon rose above the wind, sounding (rather uncharacteristically) uncertain, and suggested that perhaps we should paddle into the bay after all, and as we turned the canoe in the direction of the swells and waves, I felt the power of the lake through my entire body. Paddling became effortless, seemed almost ridiculous, as huge swells lifted us, propelled us as though completely weightless toward the shore. I felt a strange mixture of fear and delight. I was conscious of my weakness, my powerlessness but at the same time the movement of the boat and the water was invigorating and seemed almost gentle in their smoothness and power. The undulations of the giant, rolling swells were transferred through the canoe and into my body; I felt no wrath, no evil intent, just myself as very small, perhaps a little foolish, and in the presence of great power, of which today's waves were only a glimpse.

Shortly after our decision to ride with the waves, we landed in Sturdee Cove, a privately owned beach where campers are welcome. Behind the sandy beach was a large cleared area, thousands of ripening blueberries and a rabbit. We were building a fire to cook dinner when the rabbit first appeared and for some strange reason it stood directly in the path of the fire's smoke. After a few minutes it hopped away only to return a moment later and join us while we ate. It didn't seem bothered by our movement and watched us curiously, before hopping to a little spruce and munching

intentionalities, different constitutive effects.

Sensing

Perhaps the most basic place from which to examine one's perception of a wilderness Other is through a physical encounter, an experience by means of the five senses that comes before thought or reflection. Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception carefully examines the experience and behaviour of bodies in taking up and being taken up by the surrounding environment. Unlike empirical or intellectual notions of perception, Merleau-Ponty includes the perceiving subject in his analysis and examines perception as it is actually lived. Sensation, as a means of understanding one's surroundings, is argued to be a living dialogue between a subject body and its environment. In sensing there is a pre-reflexive co-existence or communication that occurs, an opening of oneself to something. Here the subject is no longer considered to be a transparent consciousness nor is the world presented as purely material. Rather, the sensing subject is a living body, pre-reflexive, pre-personal.[14] This body is also shaped by the world, by

on some foliage at the base of the tree. The rabbit stayed exactly in this spot and continued to eat for the rest of the evening. We went about our tasks: washed the dishes, packed up the food and took a stroll along the beach to follow a very large beaver that was dragging a sizeable tree branch along the entire length of the beach and up into the creek at the opposite side. The last of the sunlight has begun to fade and I've just said goodnight to the rabbit (who is still munching away), feeling very thankful that the wind and waves pushed us into this place.

August 11, 2002

The winds blew strongly today, from the west, and Eric was anxious to be out on the water but I suggested that our time might be better spent waiting, writing and enjoying the sunshine. We spent part of the morning gathering beach peas that were growing in large numbers along the white sandy beach. They were ripe and ready to be picked and would provide us with a few days of fresh vegetables.

We sat then, in silence, facing the water and wind, thinking and writing. I thought about my conversation with Ralph the day before this journey began. I remembered telling him about my desire to remain open, to have conversations with people, with the Creator, with the land; to not limit myself to a set of interview questions but to listen and let conversations develop, let ideas be

technologies, objects, other subjects etc.

Merleau-Ponty examines the inseparability of knowledge from perceptual experience and hence reveals sensation as a structure of one's "being-in-the-world", inseverable from spatiality. The experience of an object's qualities as ways of being is a "lived spatiality". In response to a beckoning world, the sensing subject responds by shaping herself accordingly "thereby absorbing [her]self to a greater or lesser degree in one of the senses."[15] Each sense is presented as having its own world yet is continually integrated into the phenomenal body, unified and working towards a combined sense experience. In her exegesis of Merleau-Ponty, Monika Langer describes this relationship among the senses as follows:

> The intercommunication of the senses in experience is based on "a project towards movement" which is inseparable from the very existence of the body itself as primordial expression.[16]

By responding to objects and adopting corresponding bodily attitudes, the world becomes embodied so that one might encounter it prior to any formulation or

revealed. I remember Ralph smiling as he said: Well, that's the opposite to Christianity, to apologetics. Christians decide what is true and then set out to prove it to other people. I thought about what Ralph had said as I considered my own background and culture and asked for wisdom and guidance. I saw a raven fly across my field of vision. It flew across the water following the line of the beach on a deliberate course toward the point of land to my right. When it reached the land its wings stopped moving, it glided, began to lose height. I expected some movement, at least one stroke of its wings, but as its body dropped faster and further toward the ground, an invisible gust of wind rising over the land lifted the bird's body. With each gust of wind the raven rose higher, its wings extended, prepared to receive.

The winds subsided somewhat, movement on the water had become easier and we decided to paddle until sunset to make up for our leisurely morning. Near the western limit of Ashburton Bay we rounded a point of land and discovered a couple and their kayaks on a small cobble beach. A woman walked toward the water to meet us and motioned toward a good place to pull in. Jeanne introduced herself and her partner Peter. They are on a 50-day trip around the perimeter of Lake Superior in celebration of their 50th birthdays. Both Peter and Jeanne each operate their own business in Ely, Minnesota. Peter builds kayaks and paddles (both of which they were using on this

conception. Merleau-Ponty's representation of sensing appears, here, as an "anonymous open-ended activity anterior to, and presupposed by, specifically personal existence."[17] Yet perhaps it is important to note the unique characteristics and idiosyncrasies of each individual body at the level of sensing. Clarity of vision, acuity of hearing, sensitivity of smell, taste and touch: each of these varies, sometimes dramatically from individual to individual. Can one speak of a pre-personal self that encounters the natural world through sensing?

Confusion

As I question my encounter with and perception of place, assumptions and structures that previously remained unchallenged and unworked begin to disintegrate. I am surprised to discover a partial return, at least conceptually, of feelings of separation and alienation in the midst of so many ideas of coexistence, co-constitution and communication. The natural world, particularly Ontario forests, lakes and rivers, have always been a familiar place and even an ideal (at

trip) and Jeanne builds canvas and wood canoes. Peter had paddled on Superior before, several short trips in all but two months of the year. He had stories of big winds, giant waves and glassy calm days which he recounted in a loud, excitable voice, visibly energized by his surroundings.

Peter and Jeanne were both very interested in our journey and Jeanne welcomed the opportunity to share her perceptions of the landscape. She began by telling the story of a college exchange program to Europe during which she admitted realizing that there were other realities outside of her own. She talked about her life and culture in the United States as "a little bubble" that she lived in, a bubble that was burst as she travelled and witnessed other experiences of the world. Jeanne admitted that this travel experience had made her feel very small and her eyes widened as she compared that feeling to the journey she was now undertaking. She was amazed that they had been travelling for days and days and yet were still on the same lake. This is unlike any other paddling journey she had ever taken before.

Jeanne then asked me to answer my own question: What's my relationship to this land, my perceptions of this place? What are my thoughts on identity as it pertains to the landscape? I wasn't prepared with a quick answer and I stumbled over my words, my thoughts. It's developing, I finally said, it's a process. But, I was dissatisfied with my response just as I became more aware of

least for me), a habitable environment. The more my knowledge of what "nature" was or is, is interrogated, definitions and "truths" (scientific as well as cultural perceptions) about the natural world fall away and are replaced by uncertainties, mysteries. When I face difficulty with expressing or conceiving a personal relationship with my surroundings I am left with a feeling of being bounded, separate from an exterior environment, a body/spirit within an unknowable world. And so I continue to challenge my own formation of concepts and ideas, to challenge thought itself.

In chapter eight of her book, Space, Time and Perversion, Elizabeth Grosz attempts to "dynamize thinking" through a reading of Gilles Deleuze and his theories on thought. Grosz presents texts (including non-linguistic texts, architecture in particular) as forms of action with short-term effects as opposed to representations of truth or knowledge. These texts disperse and reorder thoughts and create new connections. Using Deleuzian terms, Grosz describes such text or thought as "fundamentally moving, 'nomadological' or 'rhizomatic'".[18] Adapting Grosz's questions from the field of architecture to my own interests in

the difficulty of the questions I was asking. I will answer, or begin to answer Jeanne's questions and I will write things down and hopefully share them with her but I feel like I need more time, more time in this place, more time to be here.

August 12, 2002

We prepared for a windy day: up and ready to go at sunrise. Following a few hours of paddling we landed, hungry, on another beautiful sandy beach close to the town of Terrace Bay. We rested our tired backs against a ledge of rock at the eastern edge of the beach and unpacked some lunch. We could see three men approaching us along the beach. They soon arrived and told us of their plans to paddle out and camp along the shoreline and they were hoping to get some information from us about water conditions and whether or not it was safe to paddle today. We encouraged them to try provided they had enough skill and a good boat, both of which they assured us they had. A few minutes later they were walking a quick pace back down the beach toward their car and canoe, excited to begin their trip.

Before leaving the beach we decided to paddle up the Aguasabon to see what it was like and as we manoeuvred around the sandbar formed along the river mouth, we spied the three men from the beach standing next to an aluminum canoe fastened to the top of a mini van. You'd better get

natural environments, I have begun to wonder about the possibilities of *thinking* place differently, to *thinking* my bodily relationship to place differently, while avoiding standard ideas or scientific, empirical assumptions. This is difficult, as the ideas of being that are revealed by phenomenology do not necessarily represent a politically challenging mode of thinking. I attempted however to think beyond a subject-object discussion, beyond "subjectivity and signification".[19] Grosz warns of easy responses as mere obstructions to thought, and insists that questions be continually raised in defiance of comfortable answers and accepted terms. She also discusses the difficulty of using Deleuze's ideas to look at a specific "text", their resistance to the idea of application and the problem of losing, in transport, the disrupting outcomes of his analysis while merely retaining the terminology.[20] And so it is cautiously and with the intention of raising some questions that I look to Grosz and her reading of Deleuze in my thinking or rethinking of place.

Grosz presents Deleuze's work as being focused on the idea of the "outside" and the boundary between the inside and the outside. This boundary is

out there, Eric called, there's supposed to be a thunderstorm soon. As it turned out, the men were not preparing to leave but were, in fact, in the process of returning. We've already been out, one of the three exclaimed and then proceeded to describe their frightening experience of large waves crashing over the gunwales. "I got soaked", the younger man called out. The two older men introduced themselves as Doug, both of them. Doug Miller, who did most of the talking, was very animated and moved his arms and hands in all directions when he spoke. He asked us if there wasn't some "correlation" (gesturing quotation marks with motioning fingers) between the wavy waters on Superior and our presence behind the sandbar on the calm river.

We soon learned that Doug Miller was a self proclaimed "environment guy" and fifteen years ago he and a friend had begun the organization Environics. He is also president of the environmental organization Friends of the Earth Canada. This Doug very dramatically began by saying: Nature is our culture, it defines us as Canadians. He motioned around himself with broad sweeps of his arms and said: This is who we are. When I asked him about Lake Superior in particular, he told me about a cross-Canada road trip that he had taken for, what he called, his early retirement. Four places "spoke" to him during this journey and one of these places was the north shore of Lake Superior. They call me back, he said, speaking of the four places which he tries to visit as often as he can. He

portrayed as porous, constituted by movement and meant to be traversed. Rather than present the outside as binary opposite to the inside, Grosz calls it the "transmutability" or the "virtual condition" of the inside. Through her reading of Deleuze she shows this idea of the outside to be thought itself, carried out in the disjunction between speaking and seeing. It is in this space that the outside is active in the production of the inside through the creation, reordering, hesitation or interruption of thought.[21] Using the term "becoming", Grosz describes a process, an encounter between bodies/objects that allows something to be released and creates the possibility of transformation, makes the virtual real. She calls this process thought, bodily thought.

Reflecting upon my experience of place, of wilderness environments in particular, I am faced with the possibility that rethinking place in the terms presented by Deleuze and Grosz could have a disrupting effect on both my writing practices and my living practices in such places. Grosz insists that one must give thought back its ability to transform, to resist converting what is active into something reactive, to avoid the refusal of difference, and in short to "struggle

was quite obviously very excited to be back at Lake Superior. It feeds the soul, he said with another exaggerated gesture. Doug Miller was very interested in our journey and he confided in Eric saying that we are in environmental trouble and that my project was very important. We have to get on these things now because we're going to lose this place, he told us.

After speaking with the two Dougs we left the Aguasabon and soon found ourselves in some choppy water out in the bay. As our bow lifted and crashed over the waves I hoped that the three men hadn't been frightened away from the lake after their short experience. It was only up until the first point of land that the waves were slightly rough. The lake began its familiar, gentle roll just after we turned out of sight of the beach.

August 14, 2002

We returned to Rossport this morning from our campsite on a nearby island. We had some phone calls to make to inform our contacts that we were alive and well. The local outfitter, Dave, had opened for the morning to begin another day of renting kayaks and canoes and guiding paddling trips among the islands and along the shoreline. He was happy to share stories of some beautiful spots to visit and some recent history of this place. He mentioned Talbot Island and the "light-house of doom" where three lighthouse keepers had lost their lives. Two were drowned in stormy seas

against what, in discourse and practice, functions to prevent thought"[22]. Presupposing human-wilderness relations as singular, common, transferable experiences stifles creativity and prevents openness by insulating humans and wild Others in domesticating phraseology. Attitudes toward wilderness as a separate, inherently dangerous, ultimate Other, such that relations are prefaced and interwoven with fear and warnings, maintains a static conception of nature and prevents natural places from becoming something(s) other than they are now. Do I allow this to limit my own perceptions of, and engagements with, wilderness by refuting possibilities for traversing boundaries and allowing multiple becomings? In my relationships to idealized places such as national or provincial parks that are promoted as authentic, pristine, empty, wilderness areas, is there a risk of reducing place to terms of use and meaning or can I think of, and experience these places differently? Do places reside in me as much as I believe that I dwell or have dwelt in them? Is an experience of wilderness a purely individual encounter? How do I account for moments when I have found another in feeling the water touch our skin and the speed and direction of the current

and one died of illness during the winter, unable to reach the mainland for medical help. The wife of this last keeper, Dave told us, wrapped up her husband's body and placed it in a crevasse in the rocks since she was unable to dig a grave in the frozen ground. According to the current version of the story, after the winter had passed and boats could once again reach the island this poor woman was found in a state of what seemed to be permanent shock, her once dark hair had turned completely white.

Dave is a teacher in Schreiber during the winter months and has lived in Rossport for fifteen years. When I spoke about our journey and my project his eyes lit up; he smiled and became quite animated as he talked about human connections or relationships to landscape. He mentioned an art exhibit in Ottawa that he had recently visited: paintings by Tom Thompson of the Group of Seven. Since seeing the exhibit, Dave told us that he has spent some time thinking about this group of artists and their interpretation of the land. He mentioned the progression of their art, referring to a "learning curve" that he observed in Tom Thompson's work that developed as he spent more time on the land, painting and drawing. He spoke about other members of the group who followed Thompson, some of whom had painted the area around Rossport. Dave was struck with the enthusiasm of these artists. They must have had goosebumps when they looked at this landscape,

determining our movements and the rate of our pulses, or through the inclusion of the waves into our dialogue as part of our interior and exterior worlds?

In this contemplation I arrive at an intersection of mind, spirit and body where thinking and living, sensing, speaking and writing wild or natural places, become less and less a set of separable activities. Rosi Braidotti depicts Deleuze's philosophical nomadology in her book Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming, as requiring a high degree of self-reflexivity and focusing on the dismantling of the dominant model of subjectivity. Nomadology challenges the discourse of the Same, while shifting the balance of power from the mind onto the body such that a mind/body unity is promoted.[23] In stretching the boundaries of subjectivity Braidotti speaks of becoming-animal as "a kind of re-organization of one's sensory and perceptive field of action. It stands in direct opposition to the process of humanizing the drives, which is so central to psychoanalysis:[24]

> The theory of becoming aims to re-inscribe subversion at the heart of subjectivity and to make it operational. The becoming-animal

he said. I asked if he had goosebumps, even after fifteen years. Dave replied without hesitation: Yes!

We camped on Battle Island with two other paddlers: Rick and his daughter Caelli. They are from Minnesota where Rick is a teacher and Caelli a student and where they guide kayak trips during the summer holidays. They had come to Superior for a five-day trip to visit some of Rick's favourite parts of Superior's northern shoreline between Thunder Bay and Sault Ste. Marie. He has paddled here many times and now would like to show it to his twelve-year-old daughter before it is gone. The forest in particular attracted Rick, and he talked about how different it was from the shoreline in Minnesota. We mentioned the absence of white pine, speculating about great harvests of long ago, but Rick refused to entertain the thought. This is the boreal forest, he said, insisting that this forest was ancient, untouched, and he compared the tall, pointed spruce to cathedral spires, praising their beauty, their straight stature, erect, narrow forms. We also talked about our personal impact as campers on the land, then the impossibility of a "no-trace" existence. At one point Rick said sadly, well, we've ruined our land south of the border, now we're coming up here to ruin yours. I could sense his urgency in wanting to share this place with Caelli, never questioning his conviction that it wouldn't be here, like this, forever.

> undoes one of the major borders of the metaphysics of the self, scrambling the distinction between human and non-human...It not only engages in dialogue with the classical 'other' of Man...but it also frees the animal from the anthropocentric gaze altogether.[25]

> The process of becoming is a transformation in terms of a qualitative increase (in speed, intensity, perception or colour) that allows one to break into new fields of perception, affectivity, becoming; nothing short of a metamorphosis.[26]

While theories of becoming are attractive for many reasons, not the least of which is their denial of dualistic thought and openness to the traditionally silenced "others", I hesitate to embrace a total depersonalization of the subject as could be promoted with notions of metamorphosis. The loss of self, in the context of relationships with the natural world, removes the specific qualities and intricacies of self that are brought to all relationships with Others and hence eliminates the power of making meaning that belongs to the self. What remains is no longer a relationship but rather an absorption of the Other into oneself. It is through the particularities and peculiarities of the self that unique and mean-

August 16, 2002

We have arrived in Nirivia. It was Peter and Jeanne who had first mentioned this place and I am still not entirely sure of the boundaries but we are on an island that apparently belongs to the nation of Nirivia. During the 1970's, a group of people from the Thunder Bay / Nipigon area came to the conclusion that certain islands here, near Nipigon Bay, were not named on any existing land claims or treaties. So, these same people decided they would secede from Canada, claim these islands as their land and create a new nation: Nirivia. The name was allegedly decided on a camping trip after several drinks of scotch when one of the group attempted to suggest the name Nirvana, but his slurred speech or confused memory (or both) offered up "Nirivia" and the name stuck.

This afternoon I stood in front of a dome-shaped cabin with a brightly painted crest on its side that boasted bold, yellow letters: NIRIVIAN EMBASSY. When we opened the doors and peeked inside I discovered the embassy was actually a sauna. There were also two other cabins, built in similar hexagonal shapes. One had a magazine article pasted on the wall, a glossy, feature-length story about Nirivia in Lake Superior Magazine, an American publication. The cabins were immaculately clean and surrounded by raspberry bushes, full of berries, ripe and ready to be picked. We

ingful becomings may occur (which is not to suggest that an awareness and preservation of some form of self is fundamentally exclusive of the Other). Although it is through the reorganization of bodily sensations and perceptions that Braidotti illustrates the act of becoming, the self is still preserved as the source of these fields of action.

Becoming River

When I started out last summer on an 1800km canoe journey I really didn't know what to expect. It was to be the longest amount of time I had ever spent in a canoe or in the "wilderness". I had paddled before but on much shorter trips with lighter packs, less gear and probably much calmer waters. What troubled me the most I think was the white-water. My experience paddling in rapids was only over two short trips, one of which was with a completely incompetent partner; although no one was hurt, as far as paddling is concerned the trip was a disaster. I spent most of the time in the water and when in the canoe I was faced with the challenge of paddling against the current and against my partner as well. Although I was beginning a new trip with an accomplished paddler, it

stayed long enough to have some lunch and then continued on our way.

In our conversation with Peter and Jeanne, they had also mentioned a place called the CPR slip, not far from Nirivia, and a Canadian flag flying in the distance was the first indication that it was close by. Behind a constructed gravel bar there were four or five docks and two buildings: one cabin and one sauna. The place was deserted. We decided to stop and take a rest and used the opportunity to spread out our damp belongings to dry in the wind and sun. On my way to try out the sauna, I glimpsed the bow of a massive boat as it rounded the tip of the island and entered the slip. Soon after, another arrived and we introduced ourselves to John and Carol from Nipigon and Helge and Judy from Red Rock with their two grandchildren. They informed us that tomorrow's forecast is for high winds and that it is good that we are here, safe and sound in this place. We were invited for coffee around the fire after our sauna where we shared stories of our journey and told of our interests in this land. Helge then explained his story of the slip, here at the south-west tip of the island. It's really called Squaw Harbour, he said and it used to belong to the Canadian Pacific Railway. They came here for the rock, Helge told us as he gestured toward the ground. I had noticed the unique, almost porous appearance of the rock when we first arrived, its light weight in my hand was unlike any rock I had ever held. Helge said it had been used somehow in the building of train stations. The

was not without some apprehension that I entered the river on that first day.

As the days passed and the river's challenges came and went, my partner explained to me the skill of paddling white-water. Unlike the trips I had taken before, this time we didn't speak in the language of paddle strokes and technique but rather in terms of the river, the shape and colour of the flowing water, the movement of the waves. The orientation of our bodies responded to the flow of the water and when the canoe was appropriately positioned the water propelled us in the direction we needed to go. My initial instinct was to fight the current and resist the churning power of the water. This soon gave way to a careful reading of the river, an awareness of the path that it provided for us to follow and a cooperation/conversation with its current during which we directed ourselves and were directed downstream. By carefully watching each set of rapids that opened up before us we could see the direction of the greatest amount of water rolling out in a "v" or what my partner called a "black tongue". Here was our entry point. We ran along the tongue and were spat out of the rapid's mouth into the standing waves below always watching carefully for rocks, always paddling

slip, Helge also told us, was also once home to a fishing camp complete with a lodge and a full-time cook. Important executives with the CPR would be rowed through the Nipigon Strait out to the island for fishing trips. The island is now privately owned but it is open for boaters to use and the boaters themselves provide for any necessary maintenance of the property. I asked Helge how he thought this rock was first discovered on the far corner of this island. His first answer was: prospectors, as he assured me that there were lots of them "back then". After a pause he added: Well, the natives, they would have known all of this area. The fishing camp was closed permanently in the 1930's.

August 17, 2002

The boaters invited us on board for coffee this morning as we listened to the weather forecast: winds up to 70km/hr, gale-force the radio said. I was surprised to learn that there had been a heavy storm last night. Carol and Judy were talking about being awakened by the rain, rain that neither Eric nor I had heard inside the heavily insulated cabin. It was a very strange feeling to have been so detached from the world outside. Weeks and weeks of life in and out of a tent had made the weather such an integral part of my life. I suddenly felt removed, almost culture-shocked.

After breakfast we walked the short trail to look out over the open lake. Waves were crashing over shoals, whitecaps were breaking far into the distance. We began to realize that another full

with the current, increasing the speed and intensity of our strokes as the power of the current intensified.

The more rapids we ran the more comfortable I became, but the fear and excitement never disappeared. Every new set of rapids evoked a level of excitement as my entire body responded to the energy of the river. Looking back at this experience I think it would be possible, with a detailed map, to tell a story of my body as it traveled the river. More than a simple ride downstream, this journey was a response to the river and the river's response to me. At this moment we were not separate at all. The boundary between river and boat was continuously traversed as paddles and canoe shaped and carved the water. My body responded as the water's density, weight and resistance was carved into my flesh, the muscles of my arms and back wore traces of the river, the river on my back.

day would have to be spent here at the slip. Every weather system imaginable (except for snow) blew over the camp: rain, fog, brilliant sunshine. In one sunny moment John offered to take us on a hike so Eric and I joined him on an excursion up the mountain to a look out point where another Canadian flag was flying. On our way back through the forest (stopping often to pick and eat blueberries that were warm, sweet and plentiful) we walked through an empty cave, between thin spruce that were covered, choking under blankets of "old man's beard" lichens, and over spongy, mossy ground. I left John and Eric to speed ahead and then I tried to move slowly, silently, to listen to the forest. Although I saw no animals, I could hear them everywhere, scratching, stepping on dead branches. The trees creaked and whispered in the wind, many of them fallen, smothered by the lichens. There is so much to see, to experience, to smell, hear, taste, feel.

August 19, 2002

Just after sunrise, a loon arrived, positioned itself in front of our tent and there, from the water, gently called us into the day. Eric had spent most of the night crumpled up near the door of the tent, unable to prevent sliding along the slope of the rock beneath us. But, he didn't seem to mind too much as he unfolded himself stiffly and stepped from the tent into another clear, sunny day.

Leaving behind Otter Cove, we crossed Shesheeb Bay to find ourselves in the shelter of many islands again. Weaving in and out among them we found remnants of old logging camps and hidden

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[1] Grange, Joseph. *"Place, body and situation"* In: Mugerauer, R. and Seamon, D. (ed). Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World. Boston: Kluwer Academic, 1985. p.72.

[2] Ibid. p.72.

[3] Harrison, Robert P. "Toward a Philosophy of Nature". In: William Cronon (ed.). Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996. p.436.

[4] Ibid. p.435.

[5] Grange, Joseph. *"Place, body and situation"* In: Mugerauer, R. and Seamon, D. (ed). Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards a Phenomenology of Person and World. Boston: Kluwer Academic, 1985. pp.78-79.

saunas we had heard of from other paddlers and boaters. The winds came up again in the early afternoon and although paddling would not have been dangerous it most certainly would have been slow and completely exhausting so we decided to stop at an island with a sauna and a cabin while we waited for the winds to subside. In late afternoon we heard a voice say: "how's it going?" and Adam came walking up from the beach wet and dripping in full paddling gear.

Our conversations revolved around the summer and wilderness experiences. Have you ever seen a fox move through the forest? Adam asked. He described with awe the flattening of the fox's body, the smoothness of its movements, the speed at which it travels, silently, even in a dense forest. Adam then began to speak about his family and told me that he hadn't been brought up in his native culture but that he was interested to learn more. He told me that the more time he spent in wilderness landscapes like this, the more he was convinced that there was something more, a power beyond what we see. Searching through his belongings, Adam found a book which he lent me for the evening, a book of Ojibwe narratives told by three people who lived near the south shore of Lake Superior. Adam also shared a story with both Eric and me, of an experience he had as a young child that confirmed for him the power of his people's culture. He had fallen and badly injured his finger and was taken to see his grandfather who was a healer. Adam remembers his grandfather going into the forest, collecting some plants and making a bandage, which he then wrapped around the injured finger. He also remembers, very clearly, a pin being stuck into his finger, a sensation he said he will never forget! Then his grandfather smoked some tobacco with some others who were

there, said a few words, or prayers and in a few days Adam's finger was completely healed. There's not even a scar, he said as he held up his finger in the fading evening light. Abruptly, Adam changed the subject: I'm going to see if I can catch the sunset, he said and jogged into the trail leading to the west side of the island.

August 20, 2002

We were awake before the sun and packing our things in anticipation of yet another very windy afternoon. Adam, who was less concerned about the wind in his streamlined kayak, was also awake. He had left the comfort of his warm sleeping bag to make us a cup of coffee. He truly is a good friend!

The winds rose much earlier than we had expected and coming from a southeast direction they blew directly into our faces. A loon flew across our path, low, very close to us and to our canoe. Its body was beautifully aerodynamic; it swiftly and noiselessly cut through the path of the wind.

A few hours later, exhausted but fortunately with only one muscle strain, we arrived at Magnet Point Island, the home of a well-established fishing camp. A man named Ron came to greet us as we pulled up to the shore and when we asked where we could rest nearby he invited us to stop on his little island. Ron, his father, and his grandfather have fished on Lake Superior from this little rocky spot that Ron's grandfather had purchased after the war. We were introduced to Ron's wife Kim, their friend Kelly and a number of children, all a pleasure to speak with. There were several buildings or "camps" built on the island, which in addition to a fishing camp appeared to be a sum-

mer retreat. The kids swam, had saunas and played horseshoes while Kim did loads of laundry (even the washer had its own cabin) and hung them out to dry. Scattered around the buildings were several little gardens, one for carrots, another for beets and a greenhouse for tomatoes and cucumbers. Ron and Kim told us that they enjoy living off the land and insisted that one could never eat too much fish. However, they refuse to hunt, saying that they didn't believe in killing for sport nor do they enjoy the taste of wild game. (Although once Ron did try to eat a porcupine while stranded in the woods but does not describe it as an enjoyable experience by any means.) When asked about the quality of the water they both agreed: It's the best in the world. They have never filtered it nor treated it and they assured us that three generations of very healthy children had been raised in this place and the presence of industrial operations in nearby Thunder Bay did not seem to be of any concern.

Ron offered us his opinions on current efforts to protect the landscape of Lake Superior, such as the Great Lakes Heritage Coast designation. He insisted that it was no more than an attempt to control the land and the activities on it. Soon, Ron told us, everyone who uses the land will have to take a course, learn how to use it properly, register somewhere and pay some kind of fee. People won't be able to do what you're doing, he said, referring to paddling and camping freely on Crown land.

Like some other fishermen I have met, Ron was full of fascinating, and at times unbelievable stories. He shared with us a harrowing tale about being stranded on a rocky shoal on Lake Superior

in the middle of a storm. He and another man spent the entire night clinging to the rocks, burning boat fuel in a desperate attempt to keep warm. They were nearly blown off the rocks when a helicopter arrived, hovered and then left only to return (and almost blow them away again) and drop a bag of Oreo cookies (the only food the pilot had) until help could arrive. Ron, of course, tells the story much better (his rendition also lasts considerably longer).

Two boats had arrived shortly after we had, filled with Ron's brother and some friends coming for a visit. Before long, we were talking to Frank and Ellen, themselves enthusiastic canoeists who paddle Lake Nipigon every year. When I asked Ellen what attracts her to Lake Nipigon she told me it has everything Superior has, only fewer people. She began to list features like high cliffs, big water, sandy beaches and then as an aside she added the fact that they like to paddle nude and thus prefer a less populated location. Ellen, who is currently a primary school teacher, spoke passionately about wilderness environments and told me she thought she would like to be an activist when she retires. Ellen sighed dreamily and confided that if she had the choice she would be in a canoe everyday for the rest of her life. At that very moment I overheard Frank describing the shape of a white pine to Eric, complete with dramatic gestures and a contorted body posture to illustrate his words.

It was with some reluctance that I said goodbye to Magnet Point and got back into the canoe and onto much calmer waters. Once out in the light evening breeze however, I was happy to be moving again. We reached Edward Island and paddled around to the opposite side where, in the distance, we could clearly see the extraordinary cliffs on Sibley Peninsula: the Sleeping Giant! Just

the night before, Eric and Adam had shared stories they had heard about how the Sleeping Giant came to be. Adam's story went something like this: Nanabijhou, protector of the Ojibwe had instructed the Ojibwe people not to tell the white men that there was silver in the land. One day, Nanbijhou saw a boat with white men and some Sioux warriors inside. The Sioux, enemies of the Ojibwe, were taking the white men to the place where the silver was. In his fury, Nanbijhou called up a storm on the lake and giant waves swamped the boat, drowning the white men and the Sioux. Now, the thunderbirds were very angry that Nanbijhou had called up a storm to kill the Sioux and so to punish him they turned him to stone.

This was the first time I had seen the giant from this side. It is a powerfully beautiful place. The form of an enormous person lying on the horizon is unlike any cliffs or mountains that I have seen elsewhere. I have no words to describe this place.

August 21, 2002

All along our journey we have paddled several crossings, far from the shoreline, in order to avoid travelling into deep bays or to cross a channel from one side to the other. Nevertheless, none of these crossings was spoken of as much as the Black Bay crossing. Paddlers and non-paddlers alike warned us to be careful and spoke of rough waters, danger and high winds. So it was with some surprise and more than a little delight that we paddled into Black Bay this morning over some of the calmest, quietest water we have seen in two months. We stopped paddling several times so that we could listen to the silence: no wind, no waves, nothing. We waited. To the left and to the

right, too far away to be seen, there were loons. As they began to call we turned our heads in every direction in an attempt to see them. Their calls were so close, so clear, it was as though they were inside me calling out through my ears. Their voices changed. Short chirping sounds replaced their usual song, and then, silence. They never did appear.

We reached the Sibley Peninsula under murky skies and followed the shoreline past Finlay Point when a loud crashing sound from shore captured our attention. We stopped paddling. There on the cobble beach, wrestling madly with a berry-filled bush was a black bear! Oblivious to our presence (thanks to our near silent approach and the absence of wind to carry our scent) the bear continued to battle with the berries while we slowly glided toward her and the rocky shore. After what seemed like several intense minutes the bear looked up, directly at us, and hesitated for a moment. She then turned and waddled, slowly, noisily, deliberately back into the forest. Before going too far she stopped, turned, and peeked out at us from behind some bushes. We stayed where we were, watching as the bear retreated a little further into the woods until out of sight and then stopped, quietly waiting for our departure.

Silver Islet is a small community, of mostly seasonal residents with only three residents remaining all year long. The Silver Islet general store and adjoining tea room, for which the village is well known, are located in the original store building built in 1871. We unfortunately arrived on the only day in the week that everything is closed, but we found someone inside who was more than happy to let us in to buy some supplies. Bob, the son of the store's current owners, kindly showed us

to the coolers and pulled back the tarps that covered them to keep them cool. The town of Silver Islet has no electricity except for that which is generated through alternative power sources like wind, solar and propane or gas powered generators. The store was built three years after the discovery of silver and a plaque has been raised outside of it by the Ontario Archaeology and Historic Sites Board. Besides naming Thomas MacFarlane as the "discoverer" of silver, the plaque talks about mine operations and the purchase of the claim by someone named Sibley, a name now given to the entire peninsula. I was drawn to the words used to the describe the work of the mine captain W.B. Frue:

> Frue waged a constant battle against the lake which undermined extensive crib work used to bolster the restricted working space.

Although justifiably exploitable, nature is still afforded such self-conscious terms as "undermined". Was the pun intended?

Fog was beginning to roll in as we left Silver Islet and paddled into the next cove toward the Sea Lion. I had seen this narrow rock archway in photographs only and as we paddled beneath it I touched it lightly. I was amazed by its thinness and its fragile appearance. The black basalt is coloured with many lichens and at one time there was once a "head", a large piece that has since crumbled away. An old photo in the Silver Islet store showed the Sea Lion with its head: a massive male with an impressive mane. Now it stands as a narrow archway, the name no longer seems to apply. The fog became quite dense as we paddled from the Sea Lion toward a campsite, slid onto

the sand beach and looked up to see three deer run into the forest. Not long afterward, Eric called to me from a trail and I followed him to another beach. The fog was slowly lifting, revealing the feet of the Sleeping Giant, now so close, silhouetted in the early evening light. When I glanced back at Eric I noticed his eyes were looking upward into the large white pine tree at my side. I followed his gaze to the branches where a cluster of feathers had been hung from one of the branches. We quietly retreated from this sacred place.

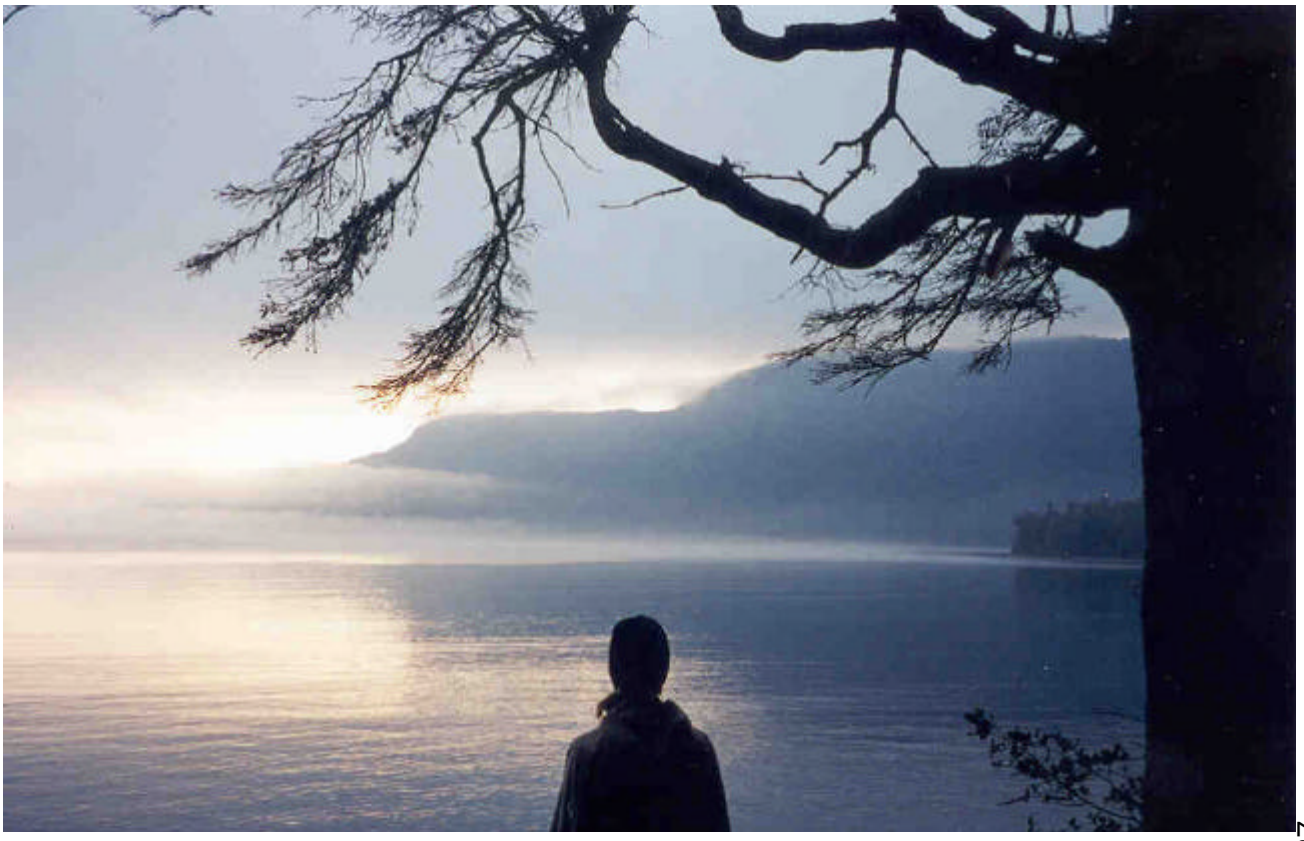
August 22, 2002

It wasn't the sunshine that woke us this morning, nor the sound of birds or waves. Instead, the prickly, scratchy sound of a porcupine's quills against tent fabric made Eric sit straight up and exclaim: Something just brushed up against my head! Although it had disappeared, the porcupine returned once we had finished packing the tent. Whether it was the discovery of juicy roots, or some other delight, the porcupine settled in to a comfortable spot just a few metres away and proceeded to eat, seemingly uninterested in either of us. We put together some breakfast and went to join our guest (perhaps we were the guests) who didn't seem to mind until Eric sat too close. Quills were raised and back turned while the porcupine began to slowly walk away until Eric relinquished his place and enough space was given. The porcupine then returned and quite comfortably settled back into his previous spot and continued eating.

The lake was just as calm as yesterday and the early morning sun was already warm. The tip of Sibley Peninsula, named on our map as Thunder Cape, was soon before us and as we rounded the

point I joked about meeting up with Mike (a paddler we had read about in the paper yesterday) on his journey along ancient fur trade routes from Lake Athabasca to Montreal. Sure enough, as we approached the cape I spotted a solo canoeist in the distance and once we were close I recognized him from his picture, it was Mike Lamothe! He had just finished crossing from Pie Island, a potentially dangerous trip but quick, smooth and pleasurable in today's quiet weather. We introduced ourselves and began to share stories of our journeys and Mike told us of beautiful rivers in Saskatchewan where surprised beavers had nearly jumped into his boat, and clear lakes in Quetico Provincial Park (a place he had imagined as remote but instead was filled with other paddlers). Mike spoke to us about solitude, an important part of his journey. He assured us that he wasn't necessarily antisocial but that he needed a place with no distractions in order to let what's inside out. It takes time, he told us.

We spoke about the weather, a common topic of conversation among paddlers, and as we praised the wonderful stillness of the day Mike admitted that he always preferred paddling in the morning. It is the time when I feel most connected, he said and then spoke of a linkage from his body, to his canoe, to the water, and ultimately to all his surroundings. Until the wind comes up and gives me something to think about, he added laughing. Once a teacher, Mike has also worked as a hunter, trapper and guide. His smile broadened as he told us about a cabin he had recently built on a remote lake in northern Manitoba. It takes several hours of paddling and portaging to reach this isolated place: Mike's paradise in solitude. Since he was planning to meet his son in Schreiber in only



a few days, and to reach Montreal by October, Mike didn't talk for too long knowing this was to be an excellent paddling day. And so we said our goodbyes and began our journey into Thunder Bay.

The cliffs of the giant loomed above us to our right and Eric told stories of an arduous hike to the highest summit. Through the calm waters we crossed to Caribou Island and found a place to camp along the opposite shoreline. I sat quietly in the evening sun, looking out over the water, realizing that our journey was coming to an end. This would be our last campsite, an overwhelmingly sad thought.

The moon rose full and huge and yellow-orange and Eric and I stood, bathed in its light, speaking in hushed voices about this incredible journey, the excitement, the adventure, the sadness, the bittersweetness, the taking for granted, the great forgetting. We were blessed with a memorable final evening.

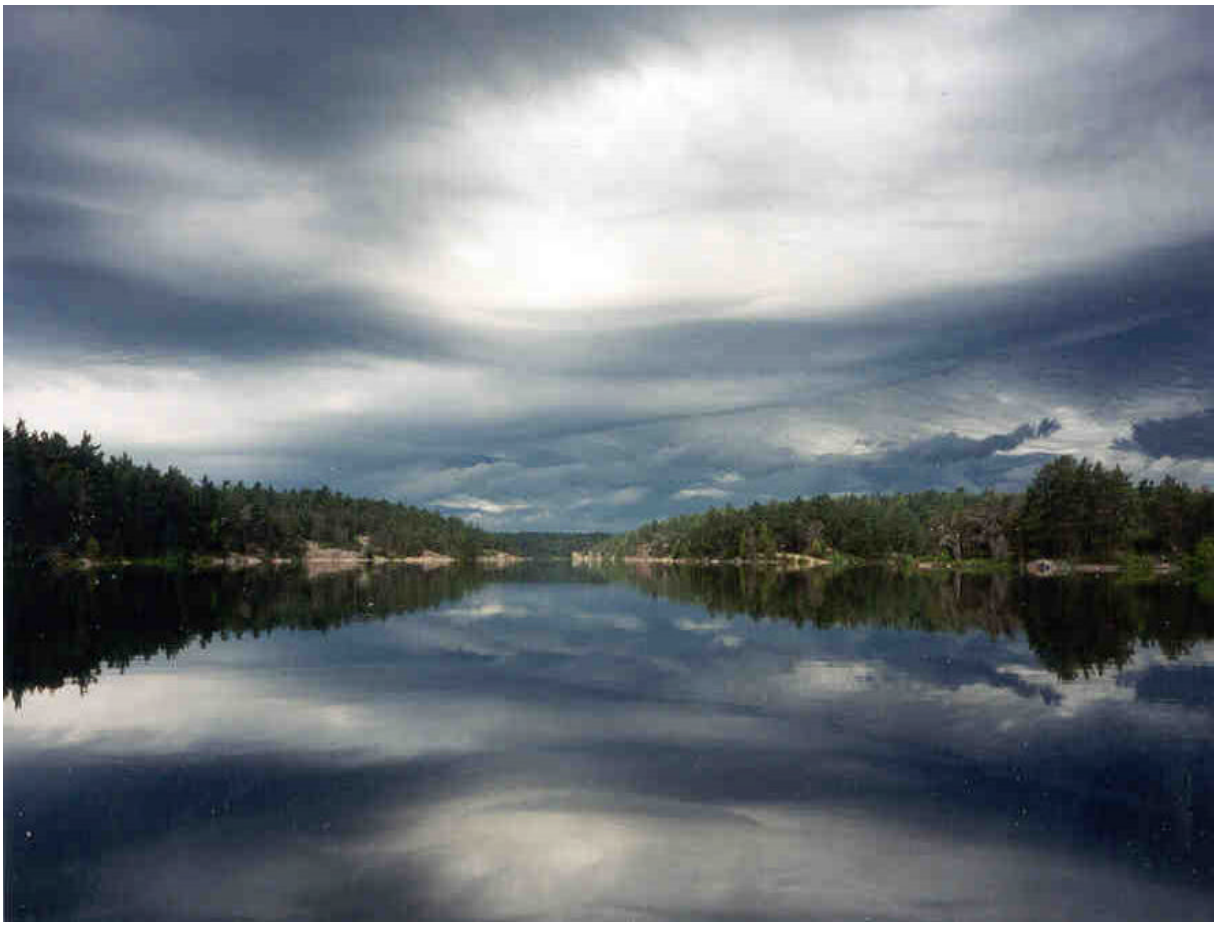
August 23, 2002

Today's paddle toward the city invoked both feelings of impatience and dread. The excitement of completing the journey was mixed with a sense of entering a place where I don't quite belong. As we passed the long break wall that separates the harbour from Lake Superior, an industrial landscape spread before our eyes. Massive grain elevators, a ship building yard, a pulp and paper plant somewhere in the distance, a lumber yard and closer to the city a tiny, green space: a park. In front of the park were thirty or more sailboats turning circles in the small area between the marina and the break wall. One boat made its way toward the opening, to the lake out on the other

side of the wall, but then turned 180 degrees, back toward the city.

We floated under a little bridge, leaving the industrial scene behind. A voice then called out: "Eric?" and there was Ian, Eric's friend and former graduate school professor, welcoming us to Thunder Bay.

Reflections / Refractions



As these excursions and travels draw to an end there is, as so often is the case, a sense of bitter-sweetness, a desire to continue alongside feelings of satisfaction or accomplishment in the wake of a completed expedition. However, there is also an awareness that a journey never really ends, its memory and its presence become a part of who I am and are in some way present in movements to come as well as in reflections on journeys that came before

My travels in Ontario, in the wild and perhaps not-so-wild, have left me with much to ponder, many themes which seem to have emerged, and some of which I would like to leave with you here.

The response of individuals to a two-month wilderness canoe journey was, for the most part, one of great surprise and was often accompanied by many warnings and advice. However, there was another experience, a reoccurring phenomenon of being watched, pointed at and photographed. My partner and I and our canoe were so often the subject of attention when we came in contact with camera-bearing tourists, individuals and groups on tour boats. We were part of the wilderness, we were filmed, we were the quintessential Canadians on an ideal excursion into the pristine wild. Is that what we were? Maybe it was more a question of entertainment, a vicarious wilderness experience, like reality TV. Many assured us we were crazy, or adventurous, others confessed their envy, their desire to share in our journey, their regret. I was struck by the thought that this same type of journey, carried out over history, in much less reliable craft and even by some who did not know how to swim (I think of stories of Jesuit priests) did not have the same connotation, that is history, mostly unquestioned, but today the same journey seems almost unthinkable by some. (Interestingly, there were a few who appeared uninterested and even unimpressed, who brushed us off or quickly changed the subject.)

I and my partner travelled through the homeland of many Canadians and we were touched by the sincere pride and great hospitality we received. I found that many local people seemed drawn to us because we shared something very precious: a

curiosity and deep appreciation for the land that these individuals know as home. The recognition of our respect for and fascination with the land was so often met with a welcoming attitude and an astounding generosity. It was a validating experience for ourselves and I think for our many hosts as well, as we struggled to express, with the rickety tools of language and our bodies, the essence of the places for which we shared a desire for connection, in which we all had different yet similar experiences. These places embodied personal and collective memories for all of us and in some way created a closeness between us, facilitating interpersonal links and relationships.

Among responses to a powerful wilderness there were at times unique reactions to the places and situations I encountered. Within a canoe, Eric and I experienced the same sunshine, storms, winds and waves and yet our impressions, in some cases, differed dramatically. In rushing rapids, wild and steely, grey waters I would cling to my paddle tightly, invigorated but terrified as Eric's voice would rise over the wind, calm, singing, laughing, he was entirely in his element. Our different experiences and knowledges, our separate voyages of the past and the resulting awareness of ourselves (or lack thereof) placed us in different relations to the land.

Speaking with others of personal relationships to the land, I discovered, is far more challenging a subject than I first realized. The reoccurring awkwardness that became so commonly a response to my questions and my interests first took me by surprise. I then began to realize how few people seem to make a habit of articulating or conceptualizing themselves in relation with their natural surroundings. Or perhaps do so in such personal terms as to make it difficult to discuss openly. I was unprepared for the insistence of inadequacy and lack of "legitimate" experience that was echoed by so many who directed me toward others, toward "outdoor people" (those who camped, fished, hunted) and contrarily, an authoritative attitude that I detected from more than one individual who had such particular, "valid" histories of experience on the water or familiarity with the land.

There is another assumption that I believe I shared, at least in part, with those whom I met in my travels: the absence of a large or visible human presence in wilderness areas was continually equated with a pristine, untouched wild. Many people that I spoke with ignored evidence of polluted water or ancient harvests of northern forests. I experienced a refusal to accept change as well as a fear of impending transformations, like the loss of land to privatization, the disappearance of forests and wildlife and the contamination of air and water. The apparent contradiction of these beliefs was not acknowledged in conversation, the land was threatened yet at the same time almost untouchable, a belief that appeared to be reinforced by the presence of national and provincial parks. I did not get a sense of our own presence as being a part of this conversation. Threats were external, impending yet preventable. They encompassed global and local environmental concerns, but also the apparently contentious issue of land ownership. Many expressed fears of an increasing presence of American landowners and the resulting loss of land for Canadians. Countless flags were flying in cottaged areas as though we were in the midst of a border war, or perhaps just a parade. There was tension among many over ownership issues, where southern Canadians and northern locals, Americans, other foreign landowners, Aboriginal peoples and government agencies all expressed different desires for the land.

In each of these journeys I have lived experiences of multiple Others, many of which have included a sense of the sacred and of mystery. Close contact with non-human living creatures, their vocalizations, unique orientations in space, manipulations of their surroundings, and their return of my gaze reinforced my consciousness of shared spaces and brought me out of self-centred reflections to embrace possibilities of the Other. Visions in the land and sky, formations of rock, clouds, the presence and absence of light, all of these combined with my particular perceptions and imagination and revealed intricacies and mysteries of my surroundings that were sometimes shared with my partner and other individuals, and other times glimpsed

only by myself. Stories, names and tangible evidence of human history on the land, both recent and very ancient histories, greatly enriched these journeys, put them and my home within a context of time that led to contemplations of my own past, my place on this land, the great forgettings of history.

There is an important theme in each of my journeys. It is one of careful observation, an engagement of all senses and an openness that allows oneself (independently or with others) to experience the intricacies of our natural surroundings, to live wilderness being revealed. I felt the shape and enormity and smallness of the land in movements and positions of my body, in the rolling and crashing of the canoe in the tossing waves, and as I walked, lightly bouncing over a spongy forest floor. I felt wilderness in the maddening presence of deer flies and mosquitoes, in the annoying shrieks of excited herring gulls, and as I shivered in a damp sleeping bag. I felt my surroundings in the incessantly burning and aching muscles in my back. I saw the land in people, in eyes that lit up with stories and descriptions and relived memories, on faces that beamed, or were creased with worry and a disheartened shake of one man's head. Boundaries were blurred as I saw water on rock and waves in the sky, ancient history painted on a cliff face or in a pile of stones. And as this journey continues (because it will never end entirely) I carry this openness with me, I see wilderness in places I've never seen it before, in cracks in the sidewalk, inside different worlds.

In discussions and gestures toward wilderness representations I have discovered along these journeys an often repeated theme of longing to capture the wild, whether in words, with a camera, in a sketchbook or on a canvas. The limitations of these tools have in some cases been recognized by those who wield them and in other instances not at all. However, relations with nature are a part of daily life. The natural world is often, perhaps always, present in the languages we speak, in the stories we share. Although I have come up against my own and others' efforts at constructing, reinforcing and maintaining boundaries between self and wilderness, I

have also witnessed a search for meaning and a desire for connection. As I begin to extend and investigate this longing with an embrace of the idea of Others shaping and contributing to the realization of myself, I have touched upon my own potential for transformation and have begun to recognize this possibility in all Others. The search for self(s) is an unending journey.

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Gear / Services:

Canoe	Paddles
Food (60 days worth)	Transportation:Thunder Bay to South River
Maps	Multiple map case
Canoe repair kits	Canoe spray deck
Lifejacket	Bailer
whistle	throw bag
Water filter	Thermarest + repair kit
Sleeping bags and compression sacs	Ground sheet
Canoe Pack and liner	Food barrel
Food Barrel	Knee pads
Paddling Gloves	Paddling jackets and pants
Stove (incl. fuel and windshield)	VHF radio and operator's course
Batteries for flashlight & VHF radio	Folding Saw / camp shovel
First Aid training & wilderness kit	cook set
grill	bug jackets
candle lantern	whetstone
toilet paper	camp towels
biodegradable camp soap	sturdy rope for tying up food barrel
lining rope for canoe	lighter/matches/firesticks
sunscreen	sunglasses
polypropylene undergarments	journal/pen