

# **The River Carries that which the Mountains Cannot Hold**

A Series of Geophilosophical Experiments  
with the Fraser River

by

**Christopher Iwestel Kinman**

M.Sc., Loma Linda University, 1991  
M.Div., Andrews University, 1986  
B.Th., Canadian Union College, 1981

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# Approval

**Name:** Christopher Kinman

**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

**Title:** The river carries that which the mountains cannot hold:  
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Fraser River

**Examining Committee:**

**Chair:** Laurie Anderson  
Executive Director, SFU Vancouver

**Heesoon Bai**  
Senior Supervisor  
Professor

**Allan MacKinnon**  
Supervisor  
Associate Professor

**Charles Scott**  
External Examiner  
Adjunct Professor

**Harlene Anderson**  
External Examiner  
Doctoral Dissertation Advisor  
Taos Institute PhD Program  
The Taos Institute

**Date Defended/Approved:** July 5, 2019

# Abstract

This dissertation is divided into two parts. In part I the argument is put forward that the ideas and practices informing life and work (with a special focus upon work within the human services industries, including education) must emerge from and find ways to return to the specific relational and ecological assemblages that include the land, air, and water with which we live and work. The term *geophilosophy* is explored to help unpack such an assemblage of land and thought, ecology and history. In Part II of this thesis the reader is invited into a succession of explorations with a geophilosophy. These explorations involve a kind of pilgrimage with a river, in particular with the Fraser River – a geological entity with which the author has close personal ties. In articulating the concept of geophilosophy, the author takes guidance from a diverse group of thinkers, such as: Deleuze and Guattari, Gregory Bateson, Lynn Hoffman, Jacques Derrida, Tompson Highway, John Kelley, Isabelle Stengers, Bruno Latour, Dianne Chisholm, Brian Massumi, Eduardo Galeano, and Bruce Alexander. Part II of this geophilosophical journey involves two forms of chapters. First, there is what the author calls the *Dérive-Prayer*, a process which requires travel with the river accompanied by a series of reflective essays focusing upon the relations that emerge between a specific location along the river and spiritual, political, and ecological realities that also come to life within the same area of the river. Secondly, there is a series of essays that the author describes as *Experiments* – these are geophilosophical experiments. Significant philosophical concepts are tied to the geographies connected with the river. This pilgrimage with the Fraser River watershed follows a particular path -- beginning at Sts'ailes First Nation and moving upstream along the Fraser's watershed, through Kamloops, the Thompson and the North Thompson Rivers, all the way to the Fraser's headwaters at the continental divide. The Fraser is then followed downstream through its Eastern reaches, past the Cariboo, past the town of Lillooet, through the Fraser Canyon and the Fraser Valley, rolling on through Vancouver and into the Salish Sea. This pilgrimage ends in the same place the river begins, far out in the cold waters of the Pacific. This study is seen as having an ontological focus in that it attempts to open-up possible worlds in which those who recognize their relations with these geographies can learn to live and take action. Such ontological unfoldings hold much diverse relevance for the assortments of living beings who reside with the river, and it holds particular relevance for those of us who work within the various human service industries connected with these lands. The author offers this work as a form of contemplative inquiry placed philosophically before the creation of ethical imperatives, yet after, or in the midst of, its ontological unfolding.

**Keywords:** geophilosophy; ecological philosophy; philosopher naturalist; contemplative inquiry; Fraser River; Stó:lō; rhizome; arborescence; ecology

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# Dedication

## To Mathew Hanusz and his Mother, Jennifer Kettenacker

This thesis is dedicated to a young man and his mother, both who I used to work with several years ago now. The young man's name is Mathew Hanusz, and his mother's name is Jennifer Kettenacker.

Mathew lived amidst an overwhelming experience of what is often called, using psychiatric language, Tourette syndrome. Swear words would repeatedly fly out of his mouth in staccato style. Mathew had no ability to be able to control the flow of profanities. Because of this situation Mathew would find himself isolated, even dislocated from the lands, places and contexts that most of us take for granted. Jennifer, as Mathew's mom would feel a similar sense of dislocation.

Mathew and I would often spend time going down to the Fraser River together. He found comfort with the river -- as did I.

Sometimes I would bring Mathew to workshops I was putting on. I would interview him and his mom during the course of the event. At the beginning I would always introduce Mathew to the group, explaining the situation he was facing with the Tourette syndrome. Through the day there would be a constant line of profanity spit into the air. However, in those workshops, participants were in a context where they were able to understand and accept him. Something strange happened in these situations, Mathew would start to display other unusual ticks. For example, sometimes he would blurt out, "Love you!" instead of curse words. A different ecological context and the ticks would begin to change.

It became evident to me that by taking an event that typically occurs in specific times and contexts, an ecological event, and by attempting to re-locate that event inside an individual body or mind, the event is thereby transformed into a *mental health* concern, an entity seen as separate from its contexts and open to being identified and remedied. However, with Mathew and his mother, it came

home to me that what we often think of as mental health or mental illness is undeniably tied to the relational/ecological contexts of the lands, waters and air that we all live and move within. From knowing Mathew and his mother I encountered an invitation to turn my eyes away from the internalized pathologies and remedies of mental health toward the living movements of the lands we jointly reside upon.

Mathew also discovered that the situation he was in worked just fine in the context of standup comedy. He became quite the comic. And, likewise, Mathew became a most lucid poet, having an ability to articulate the connection between our sufferings and the lands we move upon.

Over time Mathew became involved with illicit drugs and these often would get the best of him. I ran into him a few times when he was in these difficult circumstances. He was always happy to see me and would always talk of the good times we had in our meeting together and in the training events that he attended with me. In the spring of 2017 I received a message from Jennifer that, during the previous night, in Vancouver, Mathew had been found dead. His death was from what Jennifer quite accurately identified as “fentanyl poisoning,” rather than an overdose.

I discover and rediscover Mathew and Jennifer in every chapter of this thesis. They are inspirations for me, helping me to see the relations between the movements of the lands and waters and our communal well-being, as well as relations between the land and waters and that which we call mental health. Mathew also identified with the artwork of indigenous peoples -- he found himself at home in the movements of the water and the flowing lines of the land that the artwork repeatedly expressed. Mathew was often not at home amidst the human institutions that he had to interact with, but his relationship with the river, in my experience, was a different matter – he was home there.

I miss Mathew. But I am also grateful that I was able to know him while he walked upon these lands. I see Mathew and his mom in each chapter I have written for this thesis. I believe we still walk together upon these soils, we still sit together beside the river watching its water’s flow.

# A Note on How to Read this Thesis

I would like to suggest two possible ways for reading this document. 1) For those who are interested not only in the primary content of this research but also the history of how this project came to be, and the relations to the various philosophies and practices that are integral to this project, I suggest you read through the entire document, starting at the beginning. 2) However, for some readers, you might want to begin with the primary content, starting with *Dérive-Prayer -- #1*. The body of this document follows a journey I made along the Fraser river in the summer of 2018, so part of the fruitfulness of the reading will be found in flowing with the movements of that journey. Some readers have actually found it helpful to read the introduction upon having completed the primary body of this thesis. However, I suggest, regardless of how you choose to read this document, there is benefit in reading the chapters in the order that they are presented.

# Fraser River Drainage Basin

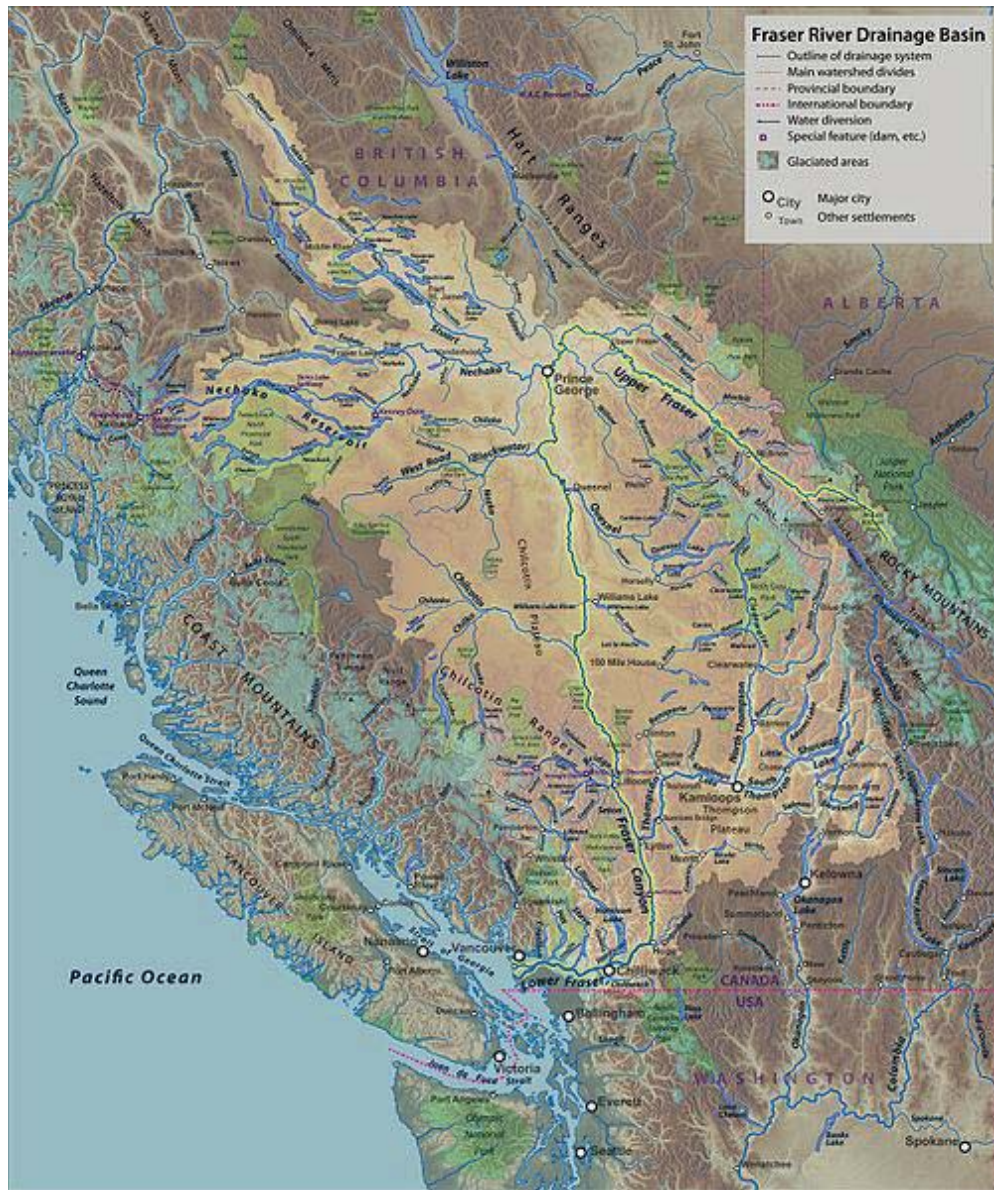


Figure 1<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Figure 1. Pfly. *Fraser River Drainage Basin*. 2015. From: Wikimedia Commons. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fraser\\_River\\_Basin\\_Map.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fraser_River_Basin_Map.jpg).

# Quotations

I was gripped by a mystery to which I felt sure there was an answer. But Where? What was it? How do you describe it? There was no language. I determined to make a career of my fascination.

Lynn Hoffman<sup>2</sup>

The damage is the taking apart. The sacredness is the coming together.

Gregory Bateson<sup>3</sup>

Men who do not keep the earth sacred create much sorrow.

Chief Dan George<sup>4</sup>

The current education system has been designed to completely eradicate who I am and to kill that Indian Mi'kmaq spirit that's in me. But I do know I need knowledge and I need education. But the kind of education I need has to be reflective of who I am as a Mi;kmaq... The kind of legacy that I want to leave my children in the future generations is one of which they will be able to excel, they will be able to compete without having to worry about is the education system going to further eradicate their selves.

Albert Marshall<sup>5</sup>

The creation of concepts in itself calls for a future form, for a new earth and people that do not yet exist.

Deleuze and Guattari<sup>6</sup>

The first principle of epistemology should be that the changeable, shifting aspects of our relations to nature are the primary topics for conscious observation... It requires advanced thought to fix attention on such fundamental operations.

Alfred N. Whitehead<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Christopher Kinman with Lynn Hoffman. *All Manner of Poetic Disobedience: Lynn Hoffman and the Rhizome Century*. YouTube Video, 1:09:04. Posted (09/2017). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjR3nP\\_VHR8&t=1660s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjR3nP_VHR8&t=1660s).

<sup>3</sup> Gregory Bateson and Rodney E. Donaldson. *A Sacred Unity: Further Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. HarperOne, 1991. 302.

<sup>4</sup> Chief Dan George and Helmut Hirschall. *My Spirit Soars*. Hancock House. 2000. 90.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. 2015. 197.

<sup>6</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *What is Philosophy*. Columbia University Press. 2014. 108.

<sup>7</sup> Whitehead, Alfred North, as quoted in: Isabelle Stengers. *Thinking with Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts*. Harvard University Press, 2011. 337.

# Part I

**The River Carries that which the Mountains Cannot Hold  
A Series of Geophilosophical Experiments with the Fraser River**

## Part I

# Introduction

Wake and listen!  
Verily, the earth shall yet be a source of recovery.

Friedrich Nietzsche<sup>8</sup>

Does knowing that knowledge cannot be guaranteed by a foundation not mean that we have already acquired a first fundamental knowledge? And should this not lead us to abandon the architectural metaphor, in which the term “foundation” assumes an indispensable meaning, in favor of a musical metaphor of construction in movement that transforms in its very movement the constitutive elements that form it? And might we not also consider the knowledge of knowledge as a construction in movement?

Edgar Morin<sup>9</sup>

The environment enters into the nature of each thing.

Alfred North Whitehead<sup>10</sup>

The document you are about to experience puts forward the argument that a philosophy of education (as well as any philosophy, for that matter) must be intimately entangled with the particularities of the land, including the ecological realities and unique histories moving upon this same land. It is also inclusive of the diverse human relations that are interwoven with these ecologies and histories. I, the author, have lived and worked in the Fraser Valley, in the Province of British Columbia for almost 30 years.<sup>11</sup> My research in this thesis attempts to flow with the powers of the great Fraser River, or, as it is called in Halq’emeylem, the Stó:lō. A philosophy of education is unfolded as I allow myself to follow the river’s watershed. A wisdom is created and shared as we attend to the river and the numerous ecologies and histories entwined with its flows.

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<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, Mildred Mary Bozman, and A. Tille. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Alex Catalogue, 1958.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in: Alfonso Montuori. "Foreword: Edgar Morin’s Path of Complexity." E. Morin, *On Complexity*. 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Alfred North Whitehead. *Modes of Thought*. Accessed April 1, 2018, [https://brocku.ca/MeadProject/Whitehead/Whitehead\\_1938/1938\\_07.html](https://brocku.ca/MeadProject/Whitehead/Whitehead_1938/1938_07.html).

<sup>11</sup> The terms *Fraser Valley* and *British Columbia* are names provided by the early British colonizing powers.



In this introduction, a number of concepts are presented that provide some background, or -- in keeping with the image of the river -- some flows of lineage. These are concepts that assist in bringing to light the significance, the desires, and the scope of this project. I introduce the reader to a series of *beginnings*, before we fully enter the journey. I begin with *educational beginnings*.

## Educational Beginnings

If the protests of children were heard in kindergarten, if their questions were attended to, it would be enough to explode the entire educational system.

Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze<sup>12</sup>

A quick story. A few years ago, I was teaching a university course on addictions. I suggested to the class that our interest must not be, first and foremost, the phenomenon itself that we might consider the addiction, but rather, whatever it is that may lie for a given person or persons on the other side of this addiction. I then asked them to go out into the city streets and observe whatever they can see that might, perhaps, lie on the other side of addiction and the worlds that addictions might flourish within. They went to the city streets, observed, and then returned. Some students found this task difficult, others reveled in the assignment. Many returned with astute observations and learnings. Later, I was informed by university leadership that I was not to engage in this type of exercise again – the formalities of education for these students should occur in the classroom context.

In a very different educator role, within this thesis, I now ask the reader to think carefully about what might constitute an education.

J. W. Cook wrote an essay titled, *Learning at the Edge of History*.<sup>13</sup> I choose to riff off this piece and present the idea of *learning at the edge of humanity*. That is, I wish to bring forth a discussion about learning that takes us beyond the referent of humanity, and more specifically, beyond the referent of western humanity which academia and education have leaned upon for generations.<sup>14</sup> In

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<sup>12</sup> Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. "Intellectuals and Power." *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*. DF Bouc hard, ed. and trans. 1977. 209.

<sup>13</sup> Justin W. Cook. "Learning at the Edge of History." *Sustainability, Human Well-Being, and the Future of Education*. Springer, 2018. 1-28.

<sup>14</sup> I am using the terms west/western or east/eastern in a manner that reflects the 1054 CE schism between the Latin speaking Catholic church of what we would today consider primarily Western Europe, and the Eastern Orthodox and Coptic churches of Eastern Europe, Russia, the Middle East and North Africa. This split continues in our language to this day as we talk about western and eastern influences and thought. See: "Great Schism", *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

this thesis I desire to not *lean upon* any sort of firm, predesignated foundation, rather I desire to *lean into* a living and moving world composed of innumerable flowing relations.<sup>15</sup> Leaning into relations that are necessarily material and abstract;<sup>16</sup> environmental and human/humane;<sup>17</sup> indigenous and newly arrived;<sup>18</sup> historical, current, and future;<sup>19</sup> relations that are always emerging-from and returning-to a living cosmos.<sup>20</sup>

In his essay, Cook discusses the thinking of one of the early and important influences in educational theory, John Dewey.<sup>21</sup> He presents Dewey's ideas, as they have been reworked by Philip Jackson, through a series of four intriguing and frank questions.<sup>22</sup>

1. What must anything whatever be to be worthy of the name education?
2. What is the nature of education with no qualifying adjectives prefixed?
3. What is education pure and simple?
4. What conditions have to be satisfied so that education may be a reality and not a name or a slogan?

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<sup>15</sup> I see a distinction between "leaning upon," and "leaning into." These are not clear-cut, absolute distinctions (as things are rarely clear-cut in philosophical matters) but rather differences of emphasis. Leaning upon – building upon predetermined and pre-existing foundations of thought. Leaning into – dependency upon realms of living and moving relations

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Grosz is one author who at length discusses the necessity of an ontology that entangles both the material and the incorporeal. Elizabeth Grosz. *The Incorporeal: Ontology, Ethics, and the Limits of Materialism*. Columbia University Press. 2017.

<sup>17</sup> The bringing together of mind and nature was one of the great passions of Gregory Bateson. See Gregory Bateson. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. University of Chicago, 1972; Gregory Bateson. *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. New York: Dutton. 1979; Gregory Bateson & Mary Catherine Bateson. *Angels Fear: Toward an Epistemology of the Sacred*. New York: Bantam, 1988.

<sup>18</sup> Finding ways to lean into relations upon this land that are inclusive of indigenous and new comers alike is certainly connected to the desires of the Truth and Reconciliation project in Canada. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation*, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba. <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php>. (accessed March 6, 2017); Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Deleuze, exploring Stoic thought, suggests that time is either 1) always moving between a past and a future, with a present that is constantly slipping and never actually locatable; or 2) always in a present – that is, even the past and the future are essentially part of a present world. Gilles Deleuze. *The Logic of Sense*. Continuum, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> I use the term 'cosmos' with respect for its use by Alexander von Humboldt. He utilized the term, cosmos, to suggest the living world's interconnections with a larger universe: Alexander von Humboldt. *Cosmos: Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe, vol. 2*. Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1849; And, Alexander Von Humboldt. *Cosmos: Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe, vol. 2*. Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1849. Humboldt was one of the earliest proponents of what I would call ecological thinking.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>22</sup> P. W. Jackson. *What is Education*. University of Chicago Press. 2016.

Clearly, one of the purposes of a philosophy of education would be to find response to such questions; and, in light of this thesis, to find response in ways that further a *leaning into* a living world.

With a desire to reply in some relevant way to these questions, I found response in the form of a further series of questions, or proposals, that came to me. These include:

1. Perhaps education does not have to be limited to the ninety-degree angles and four walls of a classroom or a school building?
2. Perhaps education does not have to be limited to quantitative and enumerated distinctions such as grades and levels?
3. Perhaps education might go beyond the hierarchical distinctions and dichotomies of teacher/student, administrator/student, administrator/teacher, leader/learner, primary/secondary/post-secondary/graduate?
4. And, perhaps education might be found where learner and world encounter each other?
5. Perhaps, education, at its best, creates contexts where encounters, engagements, and entanglements occur (perhaps learning can only occur in such contexts)?<sup>23</sup>

In acknowledging that these enquiries might carry some relevance for learning we ask: How might these questions/proposals invite us to think about the present state of education? For, at a quick glance, it appears that institutions of education continue to be primarily oriented toward right angles and walls (whether real or metaphorical); quantitative and numerical analysis; hierarchical distinctions of student/teacher, teacher/administrator, etc. Those who have spent their lives and careers searching for reinventions of the pedagogical (and there are many of us) do not find much hope in the outflow of these questions. For it seems that education is as embedded as ever in its modernist endeavours.<sup>24</sup>

However, despite this, my own hope for education is still alive and engaged. This hope becomes more tangible within the contexts of the fourth and fifth questions I proposed. For, despite the

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<sup>23</sup> Karen Barad uses the term entanglement to describe the complexities of relations that occur in the real world. Karen Barad. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University, 2007.

<sup>24</sup> I am using the concept of modernism/modernity in a similar way to the manner it is used by Zygmunt Bauman: Zygmunt Bauman. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cornell University Press, 2000. Bauman sees the holocaust as primarily a result of modernity itself, not simply a Jewish and a German phenomenon. With this understanding, and with the realization that the structures of modernity are still active in our world, modernity becomes a present-day reality and concern that must be attended to. I am also using *modern* in a manner akin to Bruno Latour's usage where the term tends to stand in opposition to all things ecological. Bruno Latour. *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*. Harvard University Press, 2013. 8.

entrenched institutionalism of education, every day, and in uncountable ways -- from within educational contexts, and from outside of the traditional walls of pedagogy -- encounters, engagements, and entanglements are occurring where learning connects with life and world. We discover many moments/events where there is a *leaning into* the relational complexities of our worlds.<sup>25</sup>

Perhaps this is close to what Deleuze and Guattari were referring to with the concept of *lines of flight*<sup>26</sup> -- the institutional containers of education cannot hold tight, for the hope, the light, the entanglements, break through, always leak out, like a long-captive bird finally rushing from its cage.

While the field of education, and particularly a philosophy of education, is not entirely foreign to the *work of relations* I am exploring within this thesis, the concept of the posthuman is rather new in educational realms.

With educators, Lave and Wenger:

(M)ost accounts of learning have ignored its quintessentially social character. To make the crucial step away from a solely epistemological account of the person, they propose that learning is a process of participation in communities of practice, participation that is at first legitimately peripheral but that increases gradually in engagement and complexity.<sup>27</sup>

I suggest in this project that the “social character” of such learning, and the increasing “engagement and complexity” to which Lave and Wenger refer, will go beyond our more obvious human relations and human organizations to include connections with land, water, and ecologies. And, in turn, this social element of learning will include connections with those people deeply tied to this same land, water, and ecologies. Even more, it will include relations to thoughts and ideas which are also connected to this

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<sup>25</sup> Gilles Deleuze repeatedly focused upon the relational form to life and world. From one of his earlier books: “Leibniz was right to say that the individual monad expresses a world according to the relation of other bodies with its own, as much as it expresses this relational according to the relation of the parts of its own body.” Gilles Deleuze. *The Logic of Sense*. Continuum, 2004. 126.

<sup>26</sup> *Lines of flight* are discussed in: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987. Guattari on his own also explored the concept of *lines of flight*: Felix Guattari. *Lines of Flight: For Another World of Possibilities*. Trans. Andrew Goffey. Bloomsbury. 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge university press, 1991, abstract.

land, water and ecologies. All of this could be called a posthuman move<sup>28</sup> -- learning that travels outside of our all-too-human conceptual and architectural edifices and connects to the specific geographical, ecological, historical, and philosophical relations which compose the very contexts where we live and work.<sup>29</sup>

This thesis endeavours to create a double movement, where encounters, engagements, and entanglements are themselves encountered, engaged with and found entangled within our worlds.<sup>30</sup> These encounters, in this document, occur in specific relational contexts that are connected to the Fraser River watershed, and as such, they evoke the posthuman. Such entanglements are also inescapably connected to my own life and the relations that compose this life, for it has become more than evident to me that a researcher can never be imagined as separate from his research.

This... is about entanglements. To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not pre-exist their interactions; rather individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating. Which is not to say that emergence happens once and for all, as an event or as a process that takes place according to some eternal measure of space and of time, but rather that time and space, like matter and meaning, come into existence, are iteratively reconfigured through each intra-action, thereby making it impossible to differentiate in any absolute sense between creation and renewal, beginning and returning, continuity and discontinuity, here and there, past and future.

Karen Barad<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> One of the primary voices discussing the posthuman these days is: Rosi Braidotti. "Posthuman, All Too human: Towards a New Process Ontology." *Theory, Culture & Society* 23, no. 7-8. 2006. 197-208.

<sup>29</sup> Noel Gough is one educator who discusses the concept of the posthuman and its place in the philosophy of education literature. See: Noel Gough, "RhizomANTically Becoming-Cyborg: Performing Posthuman Pedagogies." *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 36, no. 3 (2004): 253-265. Another discussion of the posthuman in education is: Helena Pedersen. "Is 'the Posthuman' Educable? On the Convergence of Educational Philosophy, Animal Studies, and Posthumanist Theory." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 31, no. 2. 2010. 237-250. And a piece looking at the relationship between the posthuman and curriculum studies: Nathan Snaza, Peter Appelbaum, Siân Bayne, Marla Morris, Nikki Rotas, Jennifer Sandlin, Jason Wallin, Dennis Carlson, and John Weaver. "Toward a Posthumanist Education." *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 30, no. 2. 2014.

<sup>30</sup> Arguably it is more than a double movement. Perhaps something like the Russian dolls where within each encounter, engagement, and entanglement are found further layers of encounter, engagement, and entanglement.

<sup>31</sup> Karen Barad. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press, 2007. ix

## Fluvial Beginnings -- Down by the Riverside

Fluvial: of or relating to or happening in a river.<sup>32</sup>

Deleuze opens us up to the idea (which I take as a contribution to ecological thought) that the elements of the different individuals we compose may be nonhuman *within* us. What we are capable of may partake of the wolf, the river, the stone in the river. One wonders, finally, whether Man is anything more than a territory, a set of boundaries, a limit of existence.

Robert Hurley, 1988.<sup>33</sup>

Sometime in the mid to late eighties I was down on the banks of the Fraser River near Abbotsford, British Columbia. I was there with my friend and mentor, family and communal therapy elder, Lynn Hoffman.<sup>34</sup> It was early June and the river was in full freshet. The river, powerful and swift, carried its muddy water and all that it had swept-up down to the sea. While there, a saying came to us. However, the saying did not come simply, for Lynn thought I created it, and I thought Lynn created it. The concept of ownership became strange in this context -- for we came to realize that somehow, in that moment, it came as a gift to us both, and it's an idea that continued to refuse submission to anyone's proprietary grasp. The saying that came to us that day is:

The river carries  
that which  
the mountains  
cannot hold.

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<sup>32</sup> Vocabulary.com. "Fluvial." March 11, 2019. <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/fluvial>.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Hurley, in preface to: Gilles Deleuze. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Robert Hurley. City Lights. 1988. lii.

<sup>34</sup>The following is a sample of Hoffman's work: Lynn Hoffman. *Foundations of Family Therapy: A Conceptual Framework for Systems Change*. Basic Books, 1981; Lynn Hoffman. *Exchanging Voices: A Collaborative Approach to Family Therapy*. Karnac Books, 1993; Lynn Hoffman. *Family Therapy: An Intimate History*. WW Norton & Company, 2002; Lynn Hoffman. "Gregory Bateson: Clairvoyant Philosopher." *Territories of the Alive: Explorations in the Rhizome Way, Blog by Christopher Kinman*, 2008. <http://christopherkinman.blogspot.ca/2008/01/gregory-bateson-clairvoyant-philosopher.html>; Lynn Hoffman. "Meeting Chris Kinman," *Territories of the Alive*, 2008b, <http://christopherkinman.blogspot.ca/2008/07/meeting-chris-kinman-by-lynn-hoffman.html> (accessed Feb. 28, 2017); Lynn Hoffman. "The Art of Witness: A New Bright Edge." *Systemics: Voices and Paths within Complexity*. <http://www.systemics.eu/2012/10/14,2012a>; Lynn Hoffman. *Lynn Hoffman: In Conversation with Christopher Kinman, Mary Olson, Lars Meyer*. Transcript of a conversation, April 2012, in Northampton, MA. Unpublished Document, 2012b; Lynn Hoffman. "Lynn Hoffman Videos." *Taos Institute*. Filmed by Christopher Kinman. Vimeo, 02:56. Posted Jan 2012. <https://www.taosinstitute.net/lynn-hoffman-videos>; Lynn Hoffman. "A Gee's Bend Quilt." *Taos Institute*. Filmed by Christopher Kinman, Jan 2012. Vimeo, 02:56. Posted Jan 2012. <https://vimeo.com/56385573>.

We both were taken with these words. They affixed to us. They recurred like a mantra.

Lynn died in December of 2017. I miss her deeply. However, the flows of water and the flows of thought and practice are still very much as if in the floods of spring. They still roll and push their way around the hills that intrude before us, sweep through the ferocities and insecurities of the rapids, and slow down for the calmer gradients of the valley floor. They still gather the runoff from all the varied streams along the river's journey. These flows of water and ideas still fracture boulders intruding in the path, sing through the rolling gravel on the river bottom, carry away grand old trees and anything that presumes to stand in its way. And, the mountains still rise before us, seemingly static, eternal, and reliable. Yet with enough time the water even carries them away. There are real, earthly powers in the floods of the river, in the flows of ideas, and the malleable coursing of our joint doing and practicing.

This thesis takes us on journeys with the varied flows of a watershed -- journeys with the actual flows of this river; as well as the philosophical, educational and even spiritual flows connected with the river and connected with our lived worlds.

I continue with our series of beginnings.

## Earthly, Relational and Indigenous Beginnings

This thesis is built upon a certain assumption. Though this assumption is already touched upon, to emphasize the various components of this assumption, I write it in now in poetic form.

Our ways of thinking and talking about work and life  
(personal, communal, institutional work and life),  
must be tied to  
and  
intimately composed of  
the many and varied relations  
that constitute  
the lands, waters, ecologies, and histories  
in which we are irreplaceably situated.

This means that as an educator, as a family therapist, as a learner, as a father, as an elder, as one who lives and moves amidst specific locations, I must be aware of, and come to terms with the varied relations that compose *this* land, *this* water, *this* air, and our own connections and histories with these elements of life. Such relations could be described in many ways -- geological, ecological, geographical, meteorological, historical, economic, political, narrative, poetic, lyrical, familial, conceptual, always inescapably personal, and always much more.

While a multiplicity of relations must be attended to, this study will focus upon relations that coalesce around a river, and more specifically, the Fraser River -- the Stó:lō -- and its larger watershed.

Also, this project will emphasize (though certainly not with an exclusive focus) the relations the First Peoples have historically held with the land. Indigenous relations are impossible to ignore for anyone who journeys along and with the Fraser River. I have come to believe that many of the dilemmas and challenges that our world currently faces -- particularly here in the territories we call Canada and British Columbia -- are navigated most productively and hopefully by attending to longstanding indigenous relations with the lands that we live and work upon. The importance of the wisdom of the First Peoples in moving forward together is spoken clearly by Elder Dave Courchene, in the *Traditional Knowledge Keepers Forum*, of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*:

We've arrived in a time of great change and great opportunity... we are the true leaders of our homeland and they cannot take that from us and they never will because our Creator put us here. This is our homeland and we have a sacred responsibility to teach all those that have come to our homeland how to be proper human beings because we have all been given original instructions on how to be a human being. We have great responsibilities as people to take care of the Earth, to speak on behalf of Mother Earth. That is our responsibility and that's the kind of leadership that we must reflect as a people.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. 2015. 356-357.



According to Tsilhqot'in Chief, Percy Guichon, this work for our earth must be done together, indigenous and nonindigenous alike. Such a "neighbourly" approach to our relations with this land is firmly embedded in the Tsilhqot'in thought and ethics.

We do live side-by-side and we need to work on a relationship to create or promote a common understanding among all our constituents... we need to find the best way forward to consult with each other, regardless of what legal obligations exist. I mean, that's just neighbourly, right? ... We share a lot of common interests in areas like resource development. We need to find ways to work together, to support one another on these difficult topics.<sup>36</sup>

These sacred relations between the land and people that the indigenous peoples have nurtured for thousands of years, now extend from them and beyond them, but still with them. They are calling upon all of us to find and enter our own unique land/people relations (indigenous perspectives must always be part of the relational mix which we learn to engage with).

## Geophilosophical Beginnings

### **A Philosophical Problem**

What keeps me together in one piece is a wonder, it would appear.

Walter Benjamin<sup>37</sup>

I would like to suggest that the problem I am addressing within this thesis is, first and foremost, an affective problem. It is a problem closely connected to *affects* a mathematician might experience when facing a mathematical problem. For experiences of curiosity, awe, and delight have spurred this research on, more than those disturbed and critical affects often experienced in social sciences and contemporary media contexts (while the critique is not removed from this dissertation, it is certainly not the primary focus). It is my hope that this joy and wonder may also be experienced by readers in their own encounters with this thesis.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 357.

<sup>37</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin's Archive: images, texts, signs*. Verso Books, 2015. Fig 6.4.

I wish that the problem explored within this thesis not be imagined as a negative to be eliminated, but rather as a gift to be received and responded to. This perspective is complementary to recent Deleuzian-influenced points of view taken by Bruno Latour, Isabelle Stengers, and Brian Massumi – where a certain critique of critique is itself undertaken.<sup>38 39</sup> I see it also as complimentary to a Nietzschean perspective where our joys and our powers are always close at hand and demanding acknowledgment.<sup>40</sup>

The problem in this discussion is related to the question of: How might a philosophy of education be practiced? I will define this problem in two forms, one more broad-sweeping, and the other related to specific interests in this thesis.

1. How might a philosophy of education be practiced if our research was defined as a geophilosophy (a term put forward by Deleuze and Guattari<sup>41</sup>)?<sup>42</sup> That is, how might a philosophy of education be practiced if educators were to consider the various relations they have with the geographies that compose the lands and waters they move upon -- as well as the

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<sup>38</sup> Bruno Latour, "Why has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern." *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2. 2004. 225-248; Isabelle Stengers, "Autonomy and the Intrusion of Gaia." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 116, no. 2. 2017. 381-400. Isabelle Stengers, "Experimenting with Refrains: Subjectivity and the Challenge of Escaping Modern Dualism." *Subjectivity* 22, no. 1. 2008. 38-59; Brian Massumi, "On critique." *Inflexions* 4, *Transversal Fields of Experience*. 2010. 337-340.

<sup>39</sup> I should emphasize that Latour distances himself from the language of a "critique of critique." Bruno Latour, *An Attempt at a Compositionist Manifesto*. Gato Negro. 2016.

<sup>40</sup> See, in this thesis, "Experiment #3 – Flights of Ecstasy and a Will to Power: Celebrations in the Heights."

<sup>41</sup> An entire chapter is devoted to the concept of geophilosophy in: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?* Columbia University Press, 2014.

<sup>42</sup> The idea of geophilosophy has been taken up in numerous disciplines in recent years. Including Laura Menatti, who uses the term to create a cross-over between philosophy and psychology -- Laura Menatti. "Geophilosophy: A New Approach to the Study of Nature and Landscape." *E. Chudoba and K. Wilkoszewska (Krakow: Libron)*. 2015. 13-22. Education with: Noel Gough. "Shaking the Tree, Making a Rhizome: Towards a Nomadic Geophilosophy of Science Education." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 38, no. 5. 2006.. 625-645; Michael A. Peters. "Geophilosophy, Education and the Pedagogy of the Concept." *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. 36, no. 3. 2004: Geophilosophy is an idea that has been explored in the field of education. Web and Gulson apply the concept directly to educational policy. Taylor P. Webb and Kalervo N. Gulson. *Policy, Geophilosophy and Education*. Springer, 2015. 217-226. Global Education -- Menatti, Laura. "A Rhizome of Landscapes: A Geophilosophical Perspective about Contemporary Global Spaces." in *Towards a New Baseline for Education in a Changing World. Landscape and Imagination. Conference, Paris*. 2013. 2-4. Political science: Ari Jerrems. "Mapping Global Landscapes: "Geophilosophy" and International Theory." *22nd World Congress of Political Science Madrid, July 8-12, 2002*.

ecologies and histories, inclusive of humans and other living beings, connected with these same geographies?

2. And, more specifically: How might a philosophy of education be imagined and practiced in a particular relational assemblage that includes: a) *me (the author)* and the interactions that connect me to the world; b) the innumerable and varied relations that compose what we now know as *the Fraser River* -- and what, for millennia, in the lower reaches of the river, has been called *the Stó:lō*<sup>43</sup> (this includes relations with the First Peoples connected with the river); c) *the worlds of education and human services*, in which so many of us are immersed on a daily basis; and d) *the lived experience of the reader*, a person who is, at this point in time, largely unknown to the writer? What form might a philosophy of education take in response to such an assemblage?

As mentioned before, I am describing here a type of problem that does not, first and foremost, enter a critique (though some of that will occur), but rather calls for an unfolding of something new that moves across the land and through souls and bodies. It invites a creativity, fresh impulses that not only discover but *invent*. In Deleuze's words: "As Nietzsche succeeded in making us understand, thought is creation, not will to truth."<sup>44</sup> And, as Rajchman succinctly stated: "It is about forces that we can't predict, with which we can only experiment – about what William James called 'things in the making.'"<sup>45</sup>

## Philosophy of Education as Acts of Experimentation

Philosophy is an experimental practice like physics, but it experiments on language, that is, it devises concepts that will have no meaning unless they succeed in bringing to existence those dimensions of experience that usual statements can ignore...

Isabelle Stengers<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *Stó:lō* is the Halq'eméylema name for both the river and the people of the river. See: Buker, *Ibid*.

<sup>44</sup> Deleuze, 2014. P. 54.

<sup>45</sup> John Rajchman, "A New Pragmatism?" *Anyhow*. ed. Cynthia D. Davidson. MIT Press, 1998. 212.

<sup>46</sup> Isabelle Stengers. *Thinking with Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts*. Harvard University Press, 2011. 248.

The problem description which I am putting forward leads toward acts of experimentation, exploration, and even forms of play with how a geophilosophy might be practiced. I *play with* the possibilities that emerge as I enter a geophilosophical study of the river, with the river, and with the various relations that make up the river, including our personal and collective histories with the river.

This thesis is composed of a series of geophilosophical experiments that involve the coming together of the particularity of the author and his world with the numerous particularities of the river. As these two realms meet, as relations become entangled, we engage with new and varied relations that emerge or come to life in response to these meetings.

## Towards a Method and Theoretical Perspective

'Methods'... refers to the various ways and modes in which philosophers of education think, read, write, speak and listen, that makes their work systematic, purposeful and responsive to past and present philosophical and educational concerns and conversations.

C. Ruitenberg<sup>47</sup>

I am using the term *method* here with a warning, carefully articulated by the philosopher of education, C. Ruitenberg, about a need, or even requirement, to discuss method...

without submitting to the paradigms and expectations of the social sciences – especially the emphasis on 'data,' technique, and the tripartite breakdown of method into data gathering, data analysis and data representation.<sup>48</sup>

She refers to such a process with a term that is haunted with Old Testament morality, a term she attributes to Alfred North Whitehead. That term is "methodolatry."<sup>49</sup> I will be using the language of method here with these warnings in mind.

The method and the theoretical perspective for this thesis are intricately tied together. I cannot talk about one without also talking about the other.

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<sup>47</sup> Claudia Ruitenberg, "Introduction: The Question of Method in Philosophy of Education." *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 43, no. 3. 2009. 316.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 316.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Regarding method, I see this project as connected to what Deleuze and Guattari call a *geophilosophy*. This is the term I use to describe what I am attempting to do within this thesis. Dianne Chisholm, from the University of Alberta, provides a helpful overview of the idea of geophilosophy:

Deleuze and Guattari, themselves, use the term "geophilosophy" to reorient philosophy away from transcendental ideas—ideas that are deduced and elaborated above and beyond the contingencies of terrestrial reality—to concepts of immanence, whose intuition is entirely contingent upon the complex processes of earthly life. In place of a top-down, vertical thinking that delineates being in higher to lower levels of categorical perfection, thinking becomes horizontal and experimental as Deleuze and Guattari articulate a virtually limitless connectivity between heterogeneous beings. Instead of specific genealogical lineages of origin, selection, reproduction, and evolution, they map a non-teleological and unpredictable network of symbiotic alliances, trans-species affiliations, symbiogenesis, and co-evolution.<sup>50</sup>

A geophilosophy, while not intended as a specific methodology, certainly moves toward, not just a method, but methods, which repeatedly participate in relational engagements. However, before we move further into the concept of geophilosophical methods, I wish to refocus for a moment on the river herself. For that is arguably what a geophilosophy is supposed to do -- to turn, and repeatedly return, to the specifics of geographies and ecologies.

I suggest that the river offers herself as an ideal place for a philosophy of education. For in many ways most of the concerns facing the contemporary world, are carried in some form within this river. By joining with her, by observing her, by listening to her tales, perhaps we can learn what is required for us to know for our time and place. If we attend, we will find that the river provides a methodology – she tells us how we can engage in a philosophy of education practice. And more, she provides us with an epistemology, revealing how we can access knowledge together with her. And she offers an ontology, or ontologies, composed of real-world flows, constantly forming and dissolving confluences, and exquisite liquid and ecological knots of relations.

According to the ontological principle there is nothing which flows into the world from nowhere.

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<sup>50</sup> Dianne Chisholm, "Rhizome, Ecology, Geophilosophy (A Map to this Issue)." *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge* 15. 2007.

Alfred N. Whitehead<sup>51</sup>

The river folds and unfolds her wisdom, constantly providing those of us who listen with renewed philosophies of education. The river is here as a gift, as a giver of gifts, offering her philosophical and educational understandings, providing both nurture and warning, and always calling for our response, our manifold response.

It must be emphasized that I am *certainly* not the first to draw attention to the wisdom of this river, and our need to rely upon her philosophical teachings. I create my thesis upon an important work that came before me, upon a previous Simon Fraser University doctoral thesis by a Stó:lō elder named *Lolehawk Laura Buker*.<sup>52</sup> Buker shows how the river and the people of the river are one. Her work is not the study of an independent entity called the river, nor is it a focus inward, as in an autoethnography or self-study, rather it is the study of relations between the river-Stó:lō and the people-Stó:lō (a vital ecological assemblage). It is a work that inescapably flows through the author and her own relations with the people and the river. It is also a story that involves the flows of language; particularly Halq'eméylema – the language of Buker's people. She puts forward Halq'eméylema as a living entity offering entry into the various relations that compose the people and river.<sup>53</sup>

While Buker does not use the word geophilosophy, I see her work as a particularly strong example of what could be termed geophilosophical research. I believe that my work must engage with her work, and flow with her previous achievements and the relations with people and river that she so viscerally reveals.

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<sup>51</sup> Alfred N. Whitehead. *Process and Reality*. Corrected Edition by D. R. Griffin and D. W. Sherburne. Free Press. 1979. 244.

<sup>52</sup> Buker. *Ibid*.

<sup>53</sup> Buker calls her language, Halq'eméylem -- a River of Stories.

## Related Methodological Concepts

There are a number of other ideas that could help unfold these geophilosophical methods.<sup>54</sup>

### **Guattari and Ecosophy<sup>55</sup>**

This work could also be called, following Felix Guattari, as a singular writer apart from his work with Deleuze, an *ecosophy*.<sup>56</sup> This is a method which involves the connection of three seemingly disparate ecological realms: social ecologies, mental ecologies, and environmental ecologies.<sup>57</sup> As is stated of *The Three Ecologies*:

Extending the definition of ecology to encompass social relations and human subjectivity as well as environmental concerns. *The Three Ecologies* argues that the ecological crises that threaten our planet are the direct result of the expansion of a new form of capitalism and that a new ecosophical approach must be found which respects the differences between all living systems. A powerful critique of capitalism and a manifesto for a new way of thinking...<sup>58</sup>

Guattari clearly announces that the work connected with the three ecologies, an ecosophical work, is rarely, if ever, generalizable, and will always be specific to the ecological contexts that it finds itself within. Guattari: "I do not think that a system of concepts can function with validity outside of its original environment, outside of the collective arrangements of enunciation which produced it."<sup>59</sup> The same could be said, not only about a system of concepts, but also about a *system of practices*. Speaking of *institutional psychiatry* (a form of practice that was important to Guattari), Guattari said: "Thus, the

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<sup>54</sup> There are numerous authors who have explored the importance of geography or place and its relationship to subjectivities and living. A thorough summary of these various thinkers can be found in: Eric Prieto. "Geocriticism, Geopoetics, Geophilosophy, and Beyond." In *Geocritical Explorations*. 13-27. Palgrave Macmillan. 2011.

<sup>55</sup> A quick note on heading formats. The level format required here by Chicago Style is not being used. The level format would require left justification, upper case first letter followed by lower case letters. I found such formatting difficult to read – the heading easily got lost from sight as a heading. Instead, for this level, in this document, I have chosen to use an indented and underlined form of heading, with upper and lower case letters.

<sup>56</sup> Felix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005.

<sup>57</sup> The concept of ecosophy has been brought into the discourses of education. See: Heather Greenhalgh-Spencer. "An Argument for Ecosophy: An Attention to Things and Place in Online Educational Spaces." *Philosophy of Education Archive*. 2014. 57-65; Hampson, Gary P. "Facilitating Eco-Logical Futures through Postformal Poetic Ecosophy." *Futures* 42, no. 10. 2010. 1064-1072.

<sup>58</sup> Guattari. *Ibid.* back cover.

<sup>59</sup> Felix Guattari. *Chaosophy: Texts and Interviews: 1972-1977*. Ed. Sylvere Lotringer. Trans. Francois Dosse. MIT Press. 2009. 154.

ideal situation would be one in which no two institutions were alike and no individual institution ever cease evolving in the course of time.”<sup>60</sup>

Guattari’s vision of practice was one that: endeavoured to always orient around specific ecological assemblages; was continually in the process of movement (in keeping with the river imagery, his vision of practice was a work always in flow); and, at the same time, was never limited to one isolated arena of involvement (the work was never about single concerns such as mental health, ecology, human rights, etc.). He called his work a process of *transversality*.<sup>61</sup>

Guattari’s own involvement with the institution, La Borde, demonstrated a practice that brought together the three ecologies.<sup>62</sup> As Guattari stated: “By working day to day with its hundred or so patients, La Borde gradually found itself involved in wider, global issues of health, pedagogy, prison conditions, femininity, architecture, urbanism.”<sup>63</sup> My own family therapy practice echoes Guattari’s interest in imagining the lives of individuals and families as connected in numerous and intimate ways to the varied ecological realms of a larger world, and to the flows of time, past, present and future.

### **Gregory Bateson, Abduction, and an Ecology of Mind**

We could also follow what Gregory Bateson might call, following the thinking of Pierce,<sup>64</sup> a logic of *abduction*, rather than the more typical logics of deduction or induction.<sup>65</sup> For abduction involves rhizome-like movements that constantly connect the dots, that expand and compose diverse sets of

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 194.

<sup>61</sup> Regarding Transversality, see Ibid. 142. Also, there is a whole book of essays by Guattari dedicated to exploring the relationship between transversality and psychoanalysis – Felix Guattari. *Psychoanalysis and Transversality: Texts and Interviews: 1955-1971*. Trans. Ames Hodges. Semiotext(E). 2003.

<sup>62</sup> A film was made about the work of La Borde (it was made after Guattari’s death, but the sense of transversality is certainly present in this beautiful production). Nicholas Philibert. “La Moindre des Choses (Every Little Thing).” 1996. Youtube Video. 1:39:47. June 9, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CKJp9JLqTkY>.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. 282.

<sup>64</sup> For a helpful discussion of Pierce’s use of abduction, see: Kuang T. Fann. *Peirce’s Theory of Abduction*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2012. 978-94.

<sup>65</sup> Gregory Bateson. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. University of Chicago Press, 1972. And, Gregory Bateson. *Mind and nature: A Necessary Unity*. Dutton, 1979.



relations, rather than leaning upon isolated, predetermined identities. Abduction, in Bateson's view, discovers and creates *patterns that connect*.<sup>66</sup> This is not a work that simplifies things to make them more accessible to traditional research methods. Rather, processes of abduction expand relations, always following various ecological lines of connection.

Bateson is also known for what he called an *ecology of mind*, in which he insists upon bringing together the movements of the living world with the movements of mental processes, arguably providing an effective dismantling of the Cartesian divide.

### **Nora Bateson and Warm Data**

Nora Bateson, Gregory Bateson's daughter, and an important contemporary thinker of ecologies, puts forward an idea she calls "warm data."<sup>67</sup> She defines warm data as: "Transcontextual information about the interrelationships that integrate a complex system."<sup>68</sup> She works toward the development of forms of language and engagement that can more appropriately hold the complexities, including the many double and multiple binds that are inherent in ecological realms.

Since Warm Data describes relational interdependencies it must also include the necessary contradictions, binds (double-binds and more), and inconsistencies that occur in interrelational processes over time. Warm Data is the delivery of these multiple descriptions in active comparison, usually in a form that permits and even encourages the subjectivity of the observer within which it is possible to make meta connections.<sup>69</sup>

### **Lynn Hoffman, John Shotter, and Witness**

Family therapy elder, Lynn Hoffman (who was deeply affected by both Bateson and Deleuze), with her insistence on accessible language, might have called this process a *witness practice*.<sup>70</sup> She

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<sup>66</sup> *Patterns that connect* is an important concept Bateson develops in, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> See Nora's recent book: Nora Bateson. *Small Arcs of Larger Circles: Framing through other Patterns*. Triarchy Press via PublishDrive. 2016.

<sup>68</sup> Nora Bateson. "Warm Data: Contextual Research and New Forms of Research." *Hackernoon*. May 28, 2017. <https://hackernoon.com/warm-data-9f0fcd2a828c>.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Hoffman talks of witness and aboutness in the film: *Lynn Hoffman, "All Manner of Poetic Disobedience: Lynn Hoffman and the Rhizome Century,"* YouTube video 1:09:04, posted by "rhizome network" Sept 21, 2017, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjR3nP\\_VHR8&t=1646s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjR3nP_VHR8&t=1646s). Some other works by Hoffman include: Lynn

received this idea initially from John Shotter.<sup>71</sup> By *witness*, Hoffman and Shotter mean forms of engagement where relations are honoured, composed and expanded upon, and where, rather than emphasizing a talking about people and things (*aboutness*), in some distanced way, we enter *with* the people, *with* the geographies and other living relations that compose our worlds. I suggest that *witness* can be conceived as a geophilosophical method where the constant focus of study is relations, and this study always occurs from within, in the midst of, the actual relations.

These *witness* relations to which we are inextricably connected are not things, nor an identity. They are not an individual person or a family, not a psyche or a brain, not a species, not a single geographic object, not a single idea, not a model or a concept. Rather, *witness* implies complex sets of relations moving in the midst of other complex sets of relations.

## Expanding Relations: A Necessary Clumsiness

A geophilosophical approach to research, where relations are always expanding, can seem strange and clumsy in the context of much modern research and academic life. A quick example of this clumsiness is found in a book by Jacques Derrida. There is a particular statement which opens up an assemblage of relations. According to Derrida: "Attention is the natural prayer of the soul."<sup>72</sup>

Immediately a set of relations emerges. Such relations include:

1. These words are attributed to Walter Benjamin, who was a great inspiration to Jacques Derrida and is an influence in my own life and work.
2. Benjamin is writing these words in response to the writing of Franz Kafka.
3. These words are quoted, in this context, by the poet, Paul Celan.
4. This quote is in a book by Jacques Derrida, exploring the poetics of Celan.
5. And, these words, and all these relations, grasped a hold of me, Christopher Iwestel Kinman...
6. In the context of a PhD thesis that I am offering to an assortment of known and unknown readers.

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Hoffman. *Foundations of family therapy: A conceptual framework for systems change*. Basic Books, 1981; and Lynn Hoffman. *Family therapy: An intimate history*. WW Norton & Company, 2002.

<sup>71</sup> John Shotter. *Getting it: Witness-Thinking and the Dialogical--in Practice*. New York: Hampton Press, 2011.

<sup>72</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*. No. 44. Fordham Univ Press, 2005. 182.

These relations, of course, don't stop at this point. These expanding relations are not only a challenge to academic research, they also make academic attribution a most difficult, if not, at times, impossible, task. For who is responsible for these words, if not *all* these relations. So, the idea of prayer as the giving of attention -- which is arguably the main idea of this statement -- becomes a concept that does not at all stand on its own but continues to flow through a cascade of relations.

My interest in this thesis is not directed to a static noun, like *river*, neither is it directed to a slightly more complex relation like *the-river-and-me*. Rather, my interest is in the flow of expanding relations that emerge in the context of the particular geophilosophical inquiry I am proposing. Of necessity, in this geophilosophical study (if not all geophilosophical studies), many relations will be acknowledged and examined.

This inherent leakage and expansion connected to relational work (like spilled milk upon a kitchen table) is what I am referring to as a clumsiness.

## Examples of Geophilosophy

Following are four examples of what I would call a geophilosophy.<sup>73</sup> None of these authors identified their work as such, but their work certainly is fitting with what I see to be a geophilosophy. The first, third and fourth examples are from literature and philosophy. The second example comes from the field of psychology and addiction studies (by engaging in a historical study, this work, in many

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<sup>73</sup> Geophilosophy becomes important within many contexts, not just education. For example, Dixon suggests that Deleuze and Guattari's idea of geophilosophy be considered as an appropriate concept for literary criticism, particularly of ecocriticism: Peter Dixon, "Ecocriticism, Geophilosophy and the Truth of Ecology." PhD Diss., University of Ottawa. 2011. Library and Archives Canada: ISBN: 978-0-494-86685-6. The concept has also influenced geography -- Keith Woodward. "Geophilosophy." *International Encyclopedia of Geography: People, the Earth, Environment and Technology*. 2016. 1-8; philosophy -- Shapiro, Gary. "World, Earth, Globe: Geophilosophy in Hegel, Nietzsche, and Rosenzweig." *Deleuze Studies* 10.4. 2016. 479-495; ecology -- B. Herzogenrath. "Nature | Geophilosophy | Machinics | Ecosophy." *Deleuze/Guattari & Ecology*. 2009. 1-22; gender studies -- Anna Hickey-Moody and Timothy Laurie. "Geophilosophies of Masculinity: Remapping Gender, Aesthetics and Knowledge." *Angelaki*, 20:1. 2017. 1-10.

ways, goes counter to the typical norms of psychological studies). All four of these examples have provided direction to this thesis regarding how I might engage in a geophilosophical practice.

### **Eduardo Galeano's Century of Fire**

I see a stunning literary example of a geophilosophy in Eduardo Galeano's Century of Fire trilogy.<sup>74</sup> In the three volumes Galeano walks the reader through the histories of the Americas, making short stops (usually less than a page in length) at different times and places. New knots of relations come to life with every stop. Each stop is marked by a specific location and a year – something that Deleuze and Guattari also did in their book *A Thousand Plateaus*.<sup>75</sup> Galeano struggled to find a language to describe such a work:

It is not an anthology but a literary creation, based on solid documentation but moving with complete freedom. The author does not know to what literary form the book belongs: narrative, essay, epic poem, chronical, testimony... Perhaps it belongs to all or to none. The author relates what has happened, the history of America, and above all, the history of Latin America; and he has sought to do it in such a way that the reader should feel that what has happened happens again when the author tells it.<sup>76</sup>

This is a form of exploration that I see as matching fittingly with the idea of geophilosophy.

### **Bruce Alexander's "Globalization of Addiction"**

The second example I wish to draw attention to is Bruce Alexander's research, *The Globalization of Addiction*.<sup>77</sup> Alexander draws attention to the concept of dislocation, rather than addiction, as a primary source of suffering in our modern times. This is dislocation from community, from spirituality, from family, from history, and from the land and waters which have sustained us. Alexander connects this dislocation, in contemporary times, to the actions of hyper-capitalism. In Alexander's words: "It is

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<sup>74</sup> The Memory of Fire Trilogy includes: Eduardo Galeano, "Memory of Fire, vol. 1." *Genesis*. 1985; Eduardo Galeano, "Memory of Fire, vol. 2." *Faces and Masks*. Open Road Media, 2014; Eduardo Galeano, "Memory of Fire, vol. 3." *Century of the Wind*. Open Road Media, 2014.

<sup>75</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. B. Massumi, Trans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1987.

<sup>76</sup> Eduardo Galeano. *Faces and Masks*. Ibid. 2014.

<sup>77</sup> Bruce Alexander, *The Globalization of Addiction: A Study in Poverty of the Spirit*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

not innate wickedness or stupidity that is destroying our planetary ecosystem, so much as it is the increasingly desperate response of countless people to the dislocation of their lives.”<sup>78</sup> And, “The most promising way of controlling addiction is not prevention of experimentation, but prevention of dislocation.”<sup>79</sup>

Alexander consistently examines the concept of addiction within historical and geographical contexts. His work is also always close to the ground, to real-world contexts. In the first chapter of his book he locates the question of addiction in the city of Vancouver, describing in detail the history of addiction – and, in turn, the history of dislocation -- as it has unfolded within the context of Vancouver (the city in which he lives).

In personal conversation with Alexander, we have talked about how connections with the environment, particularly with local, lived ecologies, and through the taking of action for these ecological realms, has assisted many in discovering that the hold of these addictions upon lives and communities can be significantly reduced. He talks of a move from dislocation to location, and to the specifics of locating ourselves into worlds plentiful in ecological (both human and natural) relations. In this thesis I explore this idea further. That is, I examine how our relations with the living world around us locate us, lessen the hold of dislocating powers, and bring a distancing to the influences of contemporary addictions.

### **Cecily Nicholson and Poplar Island**

In 2014 a fascinating book of poetry was published. It was titled, *From the Poplars*, and was written by Cecily Nicholson.<sup>80</sup> I consider this book to be a provocative and exquisite example of what we might chose to call a poetic geophilosophy.

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 252.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, 344.

<sup>80</sup> Cecily Nicholson. *From the Poplars*. Talonbooks. 2014.

Just upstream from the mouth of the Fraser is the city of New Westminster – an urban centre that at one time was the capital of British Columbia. There is a small island in the Fraser that is also within the city boundaries of New Westminster. It is called Poplar Island. It is currently uninhabited by people and it is easy for the average citizen to overlook. However, there is actually much history carried upon this island. Nicholson explores this history, and she does so through the medium of poetry. The stories that come forth in her writing are not old and irrelevant but, on the contrary, are cuttlingly prescient of current realities facing the urban river and its varied communities. Colonial histories, indigenous histories, geological histories, even medical histories become alive for Nicholson’s reader.

I see Nicholson’s book as an important example of what a geophilosophical orientation might be able to accomplish.

### **Walter Benjamin and the City**

And so I stuck to the usual meanders through the narrow, shady alleyways, in whose network one was never able to find the same hub more than once.<sup>81</sup>

Treading in two different ways: to touch one point of the earth – to touch the earth at one point. The first part is ours. When one sees Gothic decoration, one knows that the older epochs possessed the second form.<sup>82</sup>

A geophilosophy does not ignore the city.

Moving back to Europe prior to World War II, we meet the Jewish philosopher and writer, Walter Benjamin. There is not one particular work by Benjamin that I am referring to here where I would say he is creating a geophilosophy. Rather, I am suggesting that his whole body of work was

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<sup>81</sup> Found on an unnumbered page immediately after Fig 7.17, in: Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images, Texts, Signs*. Verso Books, 2015. These words also describe what I would call the rhizome way through which Benjamin tended to view life in the city.

<sup>82</sup> Found on an unnumbered page immediately after Fig 8.3, *Ibid*. Benjamin here describes a form of engagement with the earth that, he suggests, is mostly lost in the modern age – that is, where the earth is touched in a special location, in a most particular location. There was no sense in those previous, Gothic times of touching the earth just anywhere. However, Benjamin’s practice differs with his own thinking here, for his work always attempted to touch the earth in a specific place and in a specific manner.

directly tied to the geopolitical movements of European lands between the two world wars. Benjamin was predominantly attuned to the shifting life of the city, and with a unique fondness for Paris.

I wish to draw attention to one quote from Benjamin that, in turn, contains another quote by Baudelaire (another assemblage of thought). For in this quote, Benjamin, himself the consummate collector of city-things, focuses upon that which the city discards, and sees there, in the refuse, and in the gathering of the refuse, something of the kind of work that he appreciates. He sees this as a poetic work.

“Here we have a man whose job it is to gather the day’s refuse in the capital. Everything that the big city has thrown away, everything it has lost, everything it has scorned, everything it has crushed underfoot he catalogues and collects. He collates the annals of intemperance, the capharnaum of waste. He sorts things out and selects judiciously: he collects like a miser guarding a treasure, refuse which will assume the shape of useful or gratifying objects between the jaws of the goddess of Industry.” This description is one extended metaphor for the poetic method, as Baudelaire practiced it. Ragpicker and poet: both are concerned with refuse.<sup>83</sup>

Might not such a description of the collector and redeemer of refuse be seen as an act of geophilosophy? For Benjamin brings together his own thought, and that of the poet, Baudelaire, into the most mundane and typically unmentionable tasks of city life; and there, in that location, at that time, something of the poetic process is delineated, and a philosophy comes to life. And, much of Benjamin’s writing deals with such movements of city life. This, I argue, is something of what a geophilosophy might look like. And, to emphasize -- a geophilosophy must not ignore the relations that compose a city.

## Beyond Hegemonic Beginnings -- The Law of the Singular Event

The purpose of this study is not to delineate precise geophilosophical practices, not to create a geophilosophical “how-to” manual for education, but rather the purpose is to experiment with specific and local geophilosophical possibilities. A basic premise of geophilosophy (if there can be such a thing) is that it must take place within specific relational contexts, and that each context is and will be different

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<sup>83</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Vol 4: 1938-1940*. Edited by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. by Edmund Jephcott. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard. 2002. 48.

from all others. The forms of practice that emerge are not simply transferable to other times and places, but must always come to life, in their own ways, from real-life geographical and historical engagements. In other words, educational institutions, from classrooms to government, as well as individual educators within their own networks of relations, must discover how a geophilosophy might work within the uniqueness of their own relational contexts. While in some of the chapters in this thesis specific narratives will be shared where education and geophilosophy meet, these are not offered as practices ready to be captured and copied, but rather as inspiration, as invitation and encouragement with that which might be possible.

Derrida invents a lovely concept. He suggests that within such localized and contextual practices, there is a need to “invent the law of the singular event.”<sup>84</sup> Rather than attempting to make hegemonic rules and principles that would guide further research, the *law of the singular event* implies a constant requirement to invent, to reinvent, in response to specific, singular, ecological assemblages.

Elizabeth Grosz also writes of the need for a move away from what she describes as the ‘guarantee of universal viability’ toward a more located, specific, and always unique *logic of invention*, such as I am endeavouring to create within this geophilosophical study.

I spoke earlier about the need for a logic of invention. Instead of requiring logical certainty, the guarantee of universal validity, the capacity to provide rules for procedure independent of the particularities of space and time, such a logic would instead require ingenuity, experimentation, novelty, specification, and particularity as its key ingredients. It would not seek to be certain but rather to incite, to induce, to proliferate. Rather than direct itself to questions of consistency, coherence, and regularity, such a logic would focus on an intuition of uniqueness, the facing of each situation according to its specific exigencies, the openness to failure as much as to innovation.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Jacques Derrida. *Learning to Live Finally: The Last Interview*. Trans, Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Nass. Melville House. 2007. 1. I must emphasize that Derrida does not use the term *ecological* to describe his own work. It is a term that I use that was also used extensively by Bateson and Guattari.

<sup>85</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, “The Future of Space: Toward an Architecture of Invention.” *Anyhow*. Ed. Cynthia D. Davidson MIT Press. 1998. 250.



## Spiritual Beginnings

While the hardware of civilization – iron pots, blankets, guns – was welcomed by Native people, the software of Protestantism and Catholicism – original sin, universal damnation, atonement, and subligation – was not, and Europeans were perplexed, offended, and incensed that Native people had the temerity to take their goods and return their gods.

Thomas King<sup>86</sup>

There is another assumption that lies within this project which must be made evident. This assumption produces a spiritual challenge, as well as confronts our current and historical engagements with the land and the many relations that make up the land.

Part of my own history must be made clear here. During the first part of my career I worked in pastoral settings. I received both a Bachelor of Theology and a Master of Divinity degree, and I worked for about a decade as a pastor of Christian churches. Early in the nineties I purposely and publicly left the church, finding it overwhelmingly entrenched in what seemed to me like colonizing and dominion-producing impulses. I attempted to leave behind what Thomas King refers to as the “software of Protestantism and Catholicism.” However, I realized how difficult this was, for it became evident that these ideas were also the software of western civilization as a whole.<sup>87</sup> The secular institutions are clearly built upon and are eerily similar in thinking to our religious institutions. It became obvious to me that while we may choose to leave religious institutions, the secular institutions don’t often come with the same choice for opting-out.

With a nod to Nietzsche -- it seems that while God is dead, western civilization insists upon attempting to reinvent him in secular contexts. As Paul Ricoeur observed:

(T)he religious produced the institutional even outside of the ecclesiastical. The history of the Middle Ages shows perfectly that most of the great institutions were generated after the ecclesiastical model, whether it be the university, municipal government, markets or intellectual societies. As a consequence, it is not possible to imagine an extreme situation in which the

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<sup>86</sup> Thomas King. *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*. Doubleday Canada, 2017. 24.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

religious would have been totally eliminated from the self-understanding of cultures and from the modern nation state.<sup>88</sup>

And Jacques Derrida also saw the impossibility of thinking outside of our religious histories. He states that: “Nothing seems therefore more uncertain, more difficult to sustain, nothing seems here or there more imprudent than a self-assured discourse on the age of disenchantment, the era of secularization, the time of laicization, etc.”<sup>89</sup> It appears that the same colonizing, dominion-producing impulses that western religion has produced are all-too-alive in contemporary, secular institutions -- from governance, to business, to education.

Which leads to this other assumption I am making. That assumption is: we cannot talk about our relations with the land (in the same way we cannot also talk about our relations with the people, the institutions, and the various other entities that have occupied this same land) without also talking about our relations with religions and spiritualities. They are always connected -- even when the spiritualities might be hidden in secular institutional talk.

To some extent I will be acknowledging those Christian traditions that in the last couple of hundred years have migrated into these lands along the river. I will be exploring their colonizing movements, as well as some of the more liberating and life-giving impulses found in the same traditions. I will also explore some of the forms of spirituality that might appear to be out-of-sorts with the western Christian tradition.

One of these ideas – an out-of-sorts idea to western Christianity -- can be found in forms of thought that could be called animism and/or pantheism – where soul is seen to be present and alive in the most material and non-human elements of our world.<sup>90</sup> Such spiritualities can easily be identified in

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<sup>88</sup> Paul Ricoeur, François Azouvi, and Marc B. De Launay. *Critique and Conviction: Conversations with François Azouvi and Marc de Launay*. Columbia University Press. 1998. 136-137.

<sup>89</sup> Jacques Derrida, in: Jacques Derrida, Gianni Vattimo, and Thierry Marchaisse, eds. *Religion*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 1998.

<sup>90</sup> Isabelle Stengers wrote a piece with a particular interest in animism: Isabelle Stengers, *Reclaiming Animism*. na, 2012. Animism as a religious concept is also explored in a rather beautiful and personal manner by: Priscilla

indigenous thought; however, they can also be found within western thought itself. I see one of the primary concepts of this study to be connected to this animistic/pantheistic tradition. For I am treating the river – the Fraser River, the Stó:lō – not simply as a geographic feature, but as if it is alive, has agency, and is invested with both spiritual and material powers. This could be seen -- and should be seen -- as connected to the New Materialism of philosophers of science such as Isabel Stengers, Donna Haraway, Andrew Pickering, and Bruno Latour (perhaps, this is -- what Francois Chatelet might have called -- “a materialist irruption”<sup>91</sup>).<sup>92</sup> However, it is also clearly connected to lineages of spirituality. This animistic/pantheistic spirituality, and its history, has been articulated in its indigenous tradition by Tomson Highway.

[O]ne linguistic structure is monotheistic in architecture, with one god only, a god that is male, the other is pantheistic, a system where divine energy has not yet left nature, so that nature – trees, grass, air, even one drop of water, even the aforementioned ant – virtually bristles with divine energy. In this latter design, god is biology, womb, female, god is the land. Another way of putting it: structurally, one linguistic notion is phallic – a straight line; the other yonic, womb-like, a circle. So that one system defines existence on planet Earth as a curse from an angry male god – we are here to repent, to suffer; the other a blessing from a benevolent female god: we are here to laugh, we are here to celebrate... This pantheistic design, in any case, is the “map” that has steered our culture over the eons.<sup>93</sup>

Isabelle Stengers, who emerges from a solid tradition of western sciences and philosophy, came to also see the importance in reclaiming the idea of animism.

Reclaiming animism does not mean, then, that we have ever been animist. Nobody has ever been animist because one is never animist “in general,” only in terms of assemblages that generate metamorphic transformation in our capacity to affect and be affected -- and also to feel, think, and imagine. Animism may, however, be a name for reclaiming these assemblages, since it lures us into feeling that their efficacy is not ours to claim. Against the insistent poisoned

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Stuckey. "Being Known by a Birch Tree: Animist Refigurings of Western Epistemology." *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature & Culture* 4. no. 3. 2010.

<sup>91</sup> Francois Chatelet, as quote in: Felix Guattari, *Chaosophy: Texts and Interviews: 1972-1977*. Ed. Sylvere Lotringer. Trans. Francois Dosse. MIT Press. 2009. 76.

<sup>92</sup> Isabelle Stengers, "The Cosmopolitical Proposal." *Making things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*. 2005. Isabelle Stengers. "Wondering about Materialism." 2011; Donna Haraway. "A Cyborg Manifesto." Springer, 1991; Andrew Pickering, *The Mangle of Practice: Time, Agency, and Science*. University of Chicago Press. 2010; Bruno Latour. "Can We Get our Materialism Back, Please?." *Isis* 98, no. 1. 2007. 138-142.

<sup>93</sup> Tomson Highway, *From Oral to Written: A Celebration of Indigenous Literature in Canada, 1980-2010*. Talonbooks. 2017. xiv-xv.

passion of dismembering and demystifying, it affirms that which they all require in order not to enslave us: that we are not alone in the world.<sup>94</sup>

Animism, as an affirmation of what is required to not enslave us, and an affirmation that we are not alone in the world.<sup>95</sup>

## Literary and Lyrical Beginnings

There are many paths toward an unfolding of the worlds that rivers offer us; many ways to understand a river ontologically. We can study them scientifically – there are endless studies of rivers available to us. We can learn from them culturally, attempting to understand the significance of different rivers for different peoples. We can explore private and personal connections with a river. We can also approach rivers through literature and the arts. Within this thesis I often make reference to literary and other artistic expressions, and in particular, I make use of *lyrical* relations to the idea of the river and to the flow of this work.

An example of how literature and the river come into relationship.

There is Ernest Hemingway's short story, *Big Two Hearted River* -- a tale about an ex-soldier who finds consolation down by a river.<sup>96</sup> A world is unfolded in this story, a world quite devoid of the comfort and healing we typically hope to find within the realms of human communities. Yet Hemingway's world, in this story, is fully occupied with beings, it is just that they are non-human beings - there is a river, there are different flows within the river, there is a burned-out landscape, a bridge, the weather, night and day, there is the wetness of the morning dew, there are trout adjusting to the movements of the river. The world Hemingway creates hints at the profound suffering of a human soul.

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<sup>94</sup> Stengers, Isabelle. *Reclaiming Animism*. 2012. 9.

<sup>95</sup> Heesoon Bai sees animism as an important element of contemplative practices, producing significant political ramifications that assist in bringing peace into the relationship between living beings and the earth. See: Bai, Heesoon. *Peace with the Earth: Animism and Contemplative Ways*. 2015.

<sup>96</sup> Ernest Hemingway and Roger Steffens. *Big Two-Hearted River*. Contre Coup Press. 2011.

However, he presents a world that still offers solace. Not at all a solace provided by human company, but a solace provided by a river, and by the relational assemblage connected with that river.

Nick looked at the burned-over stretch of hillside, where he had expected to find the scattered houses of the town and then walked down the railroad track to the bridge over the river. The river was there. It swirled against the log spires of the bridge. Nick looked down into the clear, brown water, colored from the pebbly bottom, and watched the trout keeping themselves steady in the current with wavering fins. As he watched them they changed their positions by quick angles only to hold steady in the fast water again. Nick watched them a long time.<sup>97</sup>

The river offers a kind of posthuman healing for the ex-soldier, a healing intimately related to the river.

Of course, there are also poetic rivers, as well as rivers in paintings or photography or sculpture – many rivers flow within the arts. But there is one place that holds repeated and important value when it comes to my own understanding of the river, and that is the *lyrical*. Worlds repeatedly come to life through the connection between song and river. I call these relations, *lyrical ontologies* -- and such ontological unfoldings are significant to the work of this study<sup>98</sup>

There are two particular lines of tradition where I see the lyrical, the ontological, and the river flowing together. Both are American traditions: the African American spiritual, and the American folk tradition.

The first lyrical/river tradition I am exploring is the *spiritual*. As Michael Pratt observes, there is a call/response dynamic in the spiritual that calls for participants rather than listeners, singers rather than an audience. This call/response connects those involved to musical traditions originating back in Africa.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> There are a number of authors who address the idea of lyrical ontologies. They include: Jan Zwicky. *Lyric Philosophy*. Brush Education. 2014; William I. Wolff. ed. *Bruce Springsteen and Popular Music: Rhetoric, Social Consciousness, and Contemporary Culture*. Routledge. 2017; Orsolya Kalecz-Simon; “Western and Eastern Existentialism: Lyric Ontology of János Pilinszky and Slavko Mihalić.” <http://docplayer.net/100838059-Western-and-eastern-existentialism-lyric-ontology-of-janos-pilinszky-and-slavko-mihalic.html>.

<sup>99</sup> Michael Pratt. “The African-American Spiritual and its African Roots.” *Music for the Soul: Commentaries on Music that Move the Spirit*. Sept 3, 2009. <https://michaelpratt.wordpress.com/2009/09/03/the-african-american-spiritual-and-its-african-roots>.

Leader: *Swing low, sweet chariot*  
Chorus: *Coming for to carry me home*

Leader: *Swing low, sweet chariot*  
Chorus: *Coming for to carry me home*

Leader: *If you get there before I do*  
Chorus: *Coming for to carry me home*

Leader: *Tell all my friends, I'm coming too*  
Chorus: *Coming for to carry me home*<sup>100</sup>

A certain *home* is often evoked in the spiritual. This home is calling for the singer. It is a home beyond death. It is a home beyond slavery, and beyond the overwhelming troubles imposed upon people and community. It may be a home back in Africa. Often this home is connected to the river. Perhaps the river itself is home? Or perhaps it is a conduit to a home?

The river is integral within the communal dynamics of spirituals. For, the river brings forth and brings together both spiritual and political possibilities -- as if they are of the same impulse. For example, consider the song, *Michael Row the Boat Ashore*, a spiritual that I often sang as a child and youth in both church and secular contexts:

Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah

Sister help to trim the sails, hallelujah  
Sister help to trim the sails, hallelujah

Jordan's River is deep and wide, hallelujah  
And I've got a home on the other side, hallelujah

The river Jordon is chilly and cold, hallelujah  
It chill the body but not the soul, hallelujah

Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

Politics, religion, and the river intertwine in the lyrical event. The *River Jordan* repeatedly emerges as an important image in African American spirituals, evoking the specifics of the local, the Mississippi River, as well as liberating political and spiritual possibilities, and a promised, yet still unrealized, homecoming.

Sometimes the tradition of the spiritual comes to life from surprising places. For example, Paul Robeson, sings *Ol' Man River*, which was a show tune. But with Robeson's voice this song became inescapably a spiritual. The song is an event of pure power and truth that must be experienced. History, suffering, politics, economics, hope, survival, the Mississippi River, the Jordan River, and so much more, come into relation in this moment of song. Listen and watch, for talking about this lyrical occasion is simply inadequate.<sup>101</sup>

Ol' man river  
Dat ol' man river  
He mus'know sumpin'  
But don't say nuthin'  
He jes'keeps rollin'  
He keeps on rollin' along

He don' plant taters  
He don't plant cotton  
An' dem dat plants'em  
Is soon forgotten  
But ol'man river  
He jes keeps rollin'along

You an'me, we sweat an' strain  
Body all achin' an' racket wid pain  
Tote dat barge!  
Lif' dat bale!  
Git a little drunk  
An' you land in jail

Ah gits weary  
An' sick of tryin'  
Ah'm tired of livin'  
An' skeered of dyin'  
But ol' man river

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<sup>101</sup> Paul Robeson, "Paul Robeson - Ol' Man River (Showboat, 1936)." YouTube video. 01:19. Posted Oct 28, 2008. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eh9WayN7R-s>.

He jes'keeps rolling' along...

The spiritual tradition became an inspiration for a later tradition – American folk music. There are many lineages within the folk traditions. I wish to focus upon one lineage that includes singer/songwriters such as Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger. In their songs, they told stories of economic difficulties, of travels around the country necessitated by simple survival. They sang of the struggles of the poor, and the assumptive privileges of the rich. They sang of immigrants and migrants, of farmers and farm workers, of difficulties and resiliences. They also told stories about rivers.

Consider, *The River that Flows Both Ways*, by Pete Seeger, a song that captures, perhaps better than most, the lyrical river of the folk tradition.

Once the Sachems  
Told a story  
Of a land the great spirits blessed  
And the people followed the legend  
From the great waters in the West  
And they stopped where they found that the fishin' was good  
Earth was fertile  
And game ran in the woods

And now, I could be happy spending my days on the river that flows both ways  
I could be happy spending my days on the river that flows both ways

Writers and painters  
Have shown its beauty  
In its waters and on the shore  
While musicians  
Sing its praises  
Keep alive the rivers lure  
With the sunsetin' golden o'er the Palisades  
Afternoon ends  
The daylight fades...

And I could be happy spending my days on the river that flows both ways  
I could be happy spending my days on the river that flows both ways

N' Maybe its the moonshine  
Maybe its the starlight  
Reflected off good old Haverstraw Bay  
Maybe its the fog that rolls off the Catskill Mountains  
At the break of a brand new day



But apple cider and pumpkins  
Strawberries and corn  
Make the people of the river  
Glad they were born

And now I could be happy spending my days on the river that flows both ways  
I could be happy spending my days on the river that flows both ways  
I could be happy spending my days on the river that flows both ways<sup>102</sup>

This folk tradition, with the African American blues tradition, and various lineages of country and gospel music, gave birth to rock and roll. The river continues to be an influence in the rock and roll lyrical realm. Some highlights of this Rock and Roll/river lineage include: Joni Mitchell,<sup>103</sup> Neil Young,<sup>104</sup> The Doobie Brothers,<sup>105</sup> Elton John,<sup>106</sup> Garth Brooks,<sup>107</sup> among many others. And of course, Bruce Springsteen's iconic song, *The River* -- where the intimate, the political, the economic, the environmental, seamlessly entwined within a unique lyrical event.<sup>108</sup> The lyrical speaks best on its own...

I come from down in the valley  
where mister, when you're young  
They bring you up to do like your daddy done  
Me and Mary we met in high school  
when she was just seventeen  
We'd ride out of this valley down to where the fields were green

We'd go down to the river  
And into the river we'd dive  
Oh down to the river we'd ride

Then I got Mary pregnant  
and man that was all she wrote  
And for my nineteenth birthday I got a union card and a wedding coat  
We went down to the courthouse  
and the judge put it all to rest  
No wedding day smiles, no walk down the aisle  
No flowers no wedding dress

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<sup>102</sup> Pete Seeger. "The River that Flows Both Ways." Genius. <https://genius.com/Pete-seeger-the-river-that-flows-both-ways-lyrics>.

<sup>103</sup> Joni Mitchell. "River." *Blue*. Reprise. 1971.

<sup>104</sup> Neil Young. "Down by the River." *Everybody Knows This is Nowhere*. Reprise. 1969

<sup>105</sup> Patrick Simmons, The Doobie Brothers. "Black Water." *What were Once Vices are Now Habits*. Warner Bros. 1974.

<sup>106</sup> Elton John and Bernie Taupin. "Slow Rivers." *Leather Jackets*. Duet: Elton John with Cliff Richard. Geffen. 1986.

<sup>107</sup> Garth Brooks. "The River." *Ropin' the Wind*. Capital Records Nashville. 1992.

<sup>108</sup> Bruce Springsteen. "The River." *The River*. Columbia Records. 1980.

That night we went down to the river  
And into the river we'd dive  
Oh down to the river we did ride

I got a job working construction for the Johnstown Company  
But lately there ain't been much work on account of the economy  
Now all them things that seemed so important  
Well mister, they vanished right into the air  
Now I just act like I don't remember  
Mary acts like she don't care

But I remember us riding in my brother's car  
Her body tan and wet down at the reservoir  
At night on them banks I'd lie awake  
And pull her close just to feel each breath she'd take  
Now those memories come back to haunt me  
they haunt me like a curse  
Is a dream, a lie, if it don't come true  
Or is it something worse

That sends me down to the river  
though I know the river is dry  
That sends me down to the river tonight  
Down to the river  
my baby and I  
Oh down to the river we ride<sup>109</sup>

Extensive use is made of these lyrical traditions in this thesis. Interestingly, I could not find songs specifically connected to the Fraser River. For some reason, lyrical relations with this river do not seem to have been explored. However, despite the absence of such ties, the lyrical, is essential to this project – and I see it as essential to this project as a geophilosophical endeavour. The lyrical is, perhaps, one of the clearest points of access to introduce the kind of relational assemblage that I wish to explore within this thesis. The lyrical helps to focus upon webs of relations, seamlessly connecting people, ecologies, histories, and a river.

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<sup>109</sup> Bruce Springsteen. "The River." *Genius*. <https://genius.com/Bruce-springsteen-the-river-lyrics>.

## Contextual Beginnings – Why this Study is Important to the Author

Why am I invested in this geophilosophical study? And, why am I invested in the river, and the Fraser River, in particular? These questions invite a few stories.

### **Sts'ailes First Nation**

The land and the people are one.

Sts'ailes Elder<sup>110</sup>

First of all, a Sts'ailes Story. Back in 1993 I was asked to provide child, youth, and family therapy services through the Sts'ailes Community School, with Sts'ailes First Nation (It was known as Chehalis back then). Since that time, the community has embraced me, and I have been learning from and providing services to the families connected to the school and community. I have been engaged in a variety of different work projects since that time, but the work with Sts'ailes has remained constant and continues to this day. This is a work that touches my soul and forms my heart and my practice. In 2015, in ceremony, while I stood upon cedar boughs, the Sts'ailes elders gave me a new name. My name is *lwestel*, which is a Halq'eméylem name meaning “one who guides.” I include this name these days, as my middle name, in all academic work I am involved with. Some have asked me if I was interested in formally changing my name to include *lwestel*. My response is that I received my name formally already, through the protocols of Sts'ailes' traditions, and I did not need to subjugate this name to Canadian legal traditions.

The Sts'ailes Nation currently is centred at the confluence of the Harrison and Chehalis rivers (though historically their territory was much more extensive). These rivers are part of the Fraser River watershed. The salmon that the Sts'ailes people harvest through the late spring, summer and fall, all arrive via the Fraser. The Fraser River is part of the blood of the Sts'ailes people. And, this river is now an integral part of my life and thought as well.

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<sup>110</sup> Words spoken to me personally by a Sts'ailes elder in 2017.

### **My Mother, the People, the Land, and the Creatures**

My mother, Iris Frances Kinman, first taught me about respect for the indigenous peoples who are connected with the land. When I was six years old my parents moved our family from England to the province of Saskatchewan – which was a major culture shock for all of us. While my father, who was a medical health officer, would sometimes express what I experienced as racist sentiments, talking about the Cree people as “drunken Indians,” my mother would protest my father’s statements. She initiated the work of special education in her region of Saskatchewan, and she developed a deep appreciation for the Cree people and their ways of life. She respected their hunting, fishing, trapping trips into the forests, and the time the children had away from school, realizing the benefits that came to the children through these communal ventures. My mother showed deep respect and love for the indigenous children she taught, as well as their families; and she invited school leadership and other teachers to also show this respect.

My mother also taught me about the beauty of the land. She taught me the names of the local plants and animals. We collected wild flowers and plants together, we pressed them, making collections that we formally presented at our local summer fair and exhibition. She also nurtured my love for insects, frogs and salamanders, birds and fish, and other animals. Many which I kept as pets. She taught me the abundant educational benefit of creating connection with the living worlds we are part of.

### **Human Services and the Work of a Naturalist**

The first philosopher is a naturalist...

Gilles Deleuze<sup>111</sup>

When higher education began calling to me in my late high school years I very much wanted to go into science -- I wanted to become a naturalist. However, this dream did not become a reality, for I had a difficult struggle with mathematics at that time—a discipline that apparently was necessary for

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<sup>111</sup> Gilles Deleuze. *The Logic of Sense*. Continuum. 2004. 315.

the sciences. So, I took theological training and became a pastor, and I entered the living worlds that human beings (and divine beings) reside within. It was during these early pastoral years when I stumbled upon the work of Gregory Bateson, a scientist and anthropologist who saw no real distinction between the ecologies of nature and the ecologies of human living. I came to realize that I was still a naturalist, I was still a student of those relations, those ecologies that sustain living.

I eventually left pastoring and the church, obtaining a master's degree in marriage and family therapy. In 1991 I began a new career in British Columbia as a child, youth, and family therapist for an addictions counselling program. Since then my career has expanded in many directions, but there has always been this sense that my work was still the work of a naturalist (while others say I am still doing the work of a pastor).<sup>112</sup> That is, the ecological work of one who is fascinated by and goes out of the way to honour the relations that keep people, and other creatures, alive and well. Guattari describes such an *in vivo* work of a naturalist, or as he calls it, an ethologist:

Mechanistic approaches to human behaviour based, for example, on stimulus-response couplings, or rash psychogenetic explanations, ought to give way to *in vivo* studies, monographic descriptions that really do set out to enrich the information that we have rather than reducing it through simplification. And it must be acknowledged that considerable catching up in the observation, inventorying and classification of basic data of human ethology (in the domain of the most deterritorialised components of behaviour in particular) is needed. It is a long way from having as its disposal the stock of knowledge that the great naturalists bequeathed to modern biological sciences...<sup>113</sup>

The work of the naturalist still beckons. Today, I am just two years younger than my mother was when she died of breast cancer in 1986. I am currently practicing as a family/communal

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<sup>112</sup> Guattari suggested that we imagine our work as a practice of *ethology*, which, according to his articulation of this term, seems remarkably similar to what I call a naturalist. Felix Guattari. *Lines of Flight: For Another World of Possibilities*. Trans. Andrew Goffey. Bloomsbury. 2016. Isabelle Stengers also highlights the importance of the idea of practice as ethology. However, she goes on to ensure that we understand that an ethology can never be separated from an ecology, and vice-versa. The work of an ethologist, or the work of a naturalist, cannot exist in general, but only exists in the context of specific realms of real ecological relations: "Here it becomes clear why ecology must always be etho-ecology, why there can be no relevant ecology without a correlate ethology, and why there is no ethology independent of a particular ecology." Isabelle Stengers. "Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices." *Cultural Studies Review*. 11, no. 1. 2005. 187.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. 225-226. A quick note on method. Guattari uses the term, *in vivo*, to describe a form of research that emerges from in the midst of life. I like to think that this thesis project is a form of *in vivo* research.

therapist.<sup>114</sup> I am also a professor, teaching a new generation of counsellors. At this juncture of life, a fresh vision is before me. As part of a PhD program at Simon Fraser University, in a Philosophy of Education, I am engaging in a series of geophilosophical experiments that centre upon our (and my) connections with the varied relations that make up the watershed of the Fraser River. Now, as a mature person with a lifetime of experience begging to be engaged with, I see myself as still doing the work of a naturalist -- a geophilosophical work. Only this time the work will culminate with the creation of a thesis.

## A Community of Conversation

In many ways the work of this thesis did not begin with me, but rather was formed in the midst of a living flow of conversation. There is a community behind this work; there is always a community behind our work.

I am part of a web of people who have dedicated themselves to experimenting with *the art of conversation*, or, using a phrase I sometimes prefer, *the art of engagement*. Tom Andersen, the late Norwegian psychiatrist and family therapist, talking of this same idea, described it as *the art of creating social bonds* (I think Andersen, who talked often of his relation with his dog, would have loved to have taken this idea to a posthuman place where the bonds were much more than human).<sup>115</sup> This was a community to which Lynn Hoffman was also directly connected.

I share this passion for experimenting with the art of conversation, the art of engagement, or the art of creating social bonds with:

- the *collaborative practices* of Harlene Anderson, Galveston, Texas;<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Lynn Hoffman began using the term, "communal therapies," in our conversations together, to describe a form of practice that she felt we were involved in.

<sup>115</sup> Tom Andersen, personal conversation. Lynn Hoffman also often talked of Andersen's interest in the art of creating social bonds.

<sup>116</sup> Harlene Anderson and Harold A. Goolishian. "Human Systems as Linguistic Systems: Preliminary and Evolving Ideas about the Implications for Clinical Theory." *Family process* 27, no. 4 (1988): 371-393. Harlene Anderson, *Conversation, Language, and Possibilities: A Postmodern Approach to Therapy*. New York: Basic Books, 2008.

- the *reflecting practices* of the late Tom Andersen, Tromsø, Norway;<sup>117</sup>
- Imelda McCarthy, Nollaig Byrne, Philip Kearney, and their explorations of the *Irish Fifth Province*, Dublin (I see the work of the Irish Fifth Province group, as well as the aforementioned work of Tom Andersen, as two examples of what could be called geophilosophical practices emerging within the world of family therapy. They both make strong associations between the work they do, and the geographies, histories, and mythologies connected with the lands that they work upon);<sup>118</sup>
- the *dialogic practices* of Mary Olson, Massachusetts;<sup>119</sup>
- the *literate and “fight the power”* work of Colin Sanders, Vancouver;<sup>120</sup>
- the diverse and indigenous collaborative experimentations of Rocío Chaveste Gutiérrez and Papusa Molina, from the Kanankil Institute, Merida, Mexico;<sup>121</sup>
- the international envisionings of Helena Marujo and Luis Miguel Neto, Lisbon, Portugal;<sup>122</sup>
- the relational experimentations of the Narativ group from Brno, Czech Republic;
- the innovative *democratic practices* of Brian Gross and colleagues with Impact, Abbotsford, BC; Canada;<sup>123</sup>

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Harlene Anderson and Diane Gehart, eds. *Collaborative Therapy: Relationships and Conversations that Make a Difference*. Routledge. 2012.

<sup>117</sup> Tom Andersen. *The Reflecting Team: Dialogues and Dialogues about the Dialogues*. WW Norton & Co. 1991. It must be mentioned that Andersen often talked about or referred to his relationship with his dog (personal conversation with Andersen).

<sup>118</sup> Imelda C. McCarthy and Nollaig O'Reilly Byrne. "Mis-taken Love: Conversations on the Problem of Incest in an Irish Context." *Family Process* 27, no. 2. 1988. 181-199; Imelda C. McCarthy and Nollaig O'Reilly Byrne. "Marginal illuminations: A Fifth province approach to intracultural issues in an Irish context." *Re-visioning family therapy: Race, culture and gender in clinical practice*. 1998. 387-403; Imelda C. McCarthy and Nollaig O'Reilly Byrne. "A fifth province approach to intra-cultural issues in an Irish context: marginal illuminations." *Re-visioning family therapy: Race, class, culture and gender in clinical practice*. New York: Guildford, 2008. 327-343; Imelda C. McCarthy and Gail Simon, *Systemic Therapy as Transformative Practice*. Everything is Connected Press, 2016.

<sup>119</sup> Olson, Mary E., Aarno Laitila, Peter Rober, and Jaakko Seikkula. "The Shift from Monologue to Dialogue in a Couple Therapy Session: Dialogical Investigation of Change from the Therapists' Point of View." *Family Process* 51, no. 3. 2012. 420-435.

<sup>120</sup> Colin James Sanders. "Alan Watts and the Re-Visioning of Psychotherapy." *Self & Society* 45, no. 3-4 (2017): 244-255. Colin James Sanders. *Narrative Poetics of Resistance: Towards an Aesthetics of Engagement*. PhD Dissertation. Uitgever niet vastgesteld, 2014; Colin James Sanders. "Toward an Aesthetics of Engagement." in *Poststructural and Narrative Thinking in Family Therapy*, Springer, 2016. 61-81.

<sup>121</sup> Rocío Chaveste Gutiérrez, María Luisa "Papusa" Molina López and Christopher J. Kinman. "Rhizome and Exchange of Gifts."

<https://www.taosinstitute.net/Websites/taos/images/AboutRelationalResearchNetwork/Rhizome%20and%20Exchange%20of%20Gifts.pdf>; Gutiérrez, Rocío Chaveste. "Ya no me Llamo Vanilla, me Llamo Manuel: La Construcción de la Identidad en el Diálogo 8." *WorldShare Books* (2015).

<sup>122</sup> Helena Marujo and Luis Miguel Neto (Eds). *Positive Nations and Communities*. Springer. 2014.

<sup>123</sup> Gross is connected with the Matsqui Abbotsford Impact Society, an agency in Abbotsford, BC that is involved in a beautiful work that enables choice and agency to be made alive and real for some of the most marginalized of Canada's citizens. See their work with the: *Abbotsford Drug War Survivors*. <http://www.drugwarsurvivors.com/>; Dustin Godfrey. "Abbotsford Group Takes Hands-On Approach to Overdose Awareness Day." *The Abbotsford News*, Aug 30, 2018. <https://www.abbynews.com/news/abbotsford-group-taking-hands-on-approach-to-overdose-awareness-day>; D. J. Larkin. "Victory for Abbotsford Homeless As Court Rules in Favour of Access to Justice." *Abbotsford Today*. March 26, 2016. <http://archive.abbotsfordtoday.ca/city-apd-should-be-helping-homeless-not-fighting-them>. They also have a program that works particularly with youth who have been connected with the foster care system. *FLOH (Foster System, Life Promotion, Opioid Dialogue, Harm Reduction/Homelessness)*. <http://www.floh.foundation/60-2>.

- the systemic articulations and remembrances of New England family therapist, Dean Wolf;
- the pragmatic and communal approaches to medicine and psychiatry of Robin Routledge, Vancouver Island;
- the spiritual and trinitarian awakenings of Abbotsford's Ward Draper accompanied by a feeding of the hungry and a housing of the homeless;<sup>124</sup>
- the remarkable wisdoms from east of the 1054 ecclesiastical schism, as introduced to me by the Russian Orthodox deacon, seminarian, Symeon Donovan Price;
- among so many others.<sup>125</sup>

Conversations and rivers. Both move with similar flows. Both are treated within this thesis as concentrations of ecological relations.

## A Few More Beginnings

### A Dérive and a Prayer

In the summer of 2018, I took a road-trip that followed specific flows of the Fraser River watershed from Sts'ailes First Nation, to the headwaters of the Fraser, the Great Divide -- a geological event that splits the continent in two. And I returned, following this same watershed from the headwaters all the way out into the Salish Sea. I followed the flows of the mature salmon upstream to the limits of their spawning grounds near the Western edge of the Rocky Mountains, and then returned, following the movements of the young salmon all the way to the salt water.

This work of wandering through the lands connected to the river could be imagined, in the language of Guy Debord, as a *Dérive*, a kind of experimental, political, and poetic act that involves engaged movement (usually walking) through particular geographical contexts, a "technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances."<sup>126</sup> My dérive involved a road trip.

While I have done much of this trip in different times throughout my years, this time I followed the watershed in one trip. I made stops along the way to pay attention, to contemplate, to note-take, to

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<sup>124</sup> Ward Draper. *Huffington Post*. <https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/author/ward-draper>. Ward Draper. "When Will the Cries of Abbotsford's Homeless be Heard." *Huffington Post*. Feb 18, 2014. [https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/ward-draper/cries-abbotsford-homeless-be-heard\\_b\\_4811429.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/ward-draper/cries-abbotsford-homeless-be-heard_b_4811429.html).

<sup>125</sup> I apologize for all those I have missed.

<sup>126</sup> Guy Debord, "Theory of the Derive," *Bureau of Public Secrets (1958)*. [http://peterahall.com/mapping/background/Debord\\_Theory%20of%20the%20Derive.pdf](http://peterahall.com/mapping/background/Debord_Theory%20of%20the%20Derive.pdf).



visit community information centres, to visit memorials and museums, and to allow the rivers of the Fraser River watershed, its people and ecologies, to further influence me and my thought.

Repeating the quote by Walter Benjamin that I provided earlier in this document (where I also implicate Derrida, Celan, Kafka, and others) -- "Attention is the natural prayer of the soul."<sup>127</sup> I suggest that this *dérive* trip, in a way can be seen as a prayer – a form of recurring prayer that even a supposed "non-believer" like me, could be engaged with.<sup>128</sup> For this trip invites repeated attention to be given to the river, its watershed, and its myriad relations. Through this trip, I learned to pray, not a prayer to a transcendent God who is above and beyond all, but a *witness-prayer*, a prayer with the material and spiritual flows of the Fraser river and its watershed.

In this thesis, every chapter (or "experiment," as I will explain below) will be preceded and followed by a response to a portion of the *Dérive* trip. I will call each one of these segments a *Dérive Prayer*. They will typically be shorter (though not always) than the chapter, or experiment. They will engage with an actual portion of the river's geography or history, thereby ensuring that the study repeatedly remains connected to the real movements of the river.

### **Flow of Chapters**

This thesis is prepared as a manuscript thesis, in that each chapter is able to stand alone as a publishable document. Yet, as a whole document, all the chapters connect to the geophilosophical project I have described in this document. Notwithstanding being written in a manuscript style, because of the way this thesis connects with the flows of the Fraser River, I recommend a reading that moves with the current flow of the chapters.

Each chapter is not identified as a chapter, but rather is called an *Experiment*. I see this thesis as a collection of geophilosophical experiments connected to the Fraser River. Each experiment focuses

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<sup>127</sup> Jacques Derrida. 2005. 182.

<sup>128</sup> I describe myself as a *non-believer*, in the sense that I have difficulty holding onto, or believing in the concept of a material, individual, male God, distant from this world, yet ruling over this same world.

upon some set of relations connected to a particular section, or particular sections of the river. The river will always be present, with each experiment (though always in different ways).

As already mentioned, each experiment will be preceded and followed by, what I am calling, a *dérive prayer*.

### **Tentative Language – Perhaps?**

The possibility of failure must, in addition, not be an accidental edge of the condition, but its haunting.

Jacques Derrida<sup>129</sup>

The friendship of these friends, if there are any of this kind, should their friendship take place one fine day, in the chance of a moment, an instant, with no assurance of duration, without the firm constancy of an Aristotelian *philia* – this would be the condition of an improbable alliance in the thought of the *perhaps*.

Jacques Derrida<sup>130</sup>

Derrida, in his epic volume, *Politics of Friendship*, talks extensively about the idea of the *perhaps*.<sup>131</sup> He builds his thought, in part, on Nietzsche's use of the notion. The concept of *perhaps* is imbued throughout Derrida's writing. For Derrida's world is not composed of fixed entities. Instead of permanence, fixedness, and a sense of assurance, there is a lingering, doubting, spectral presence.

I have endeavoured to create a writing tone in this thesis that, encouraged by Derrida's *perhaps*, stays close to the tentative and the unsure. As with Derrida, I wish to write in a manner which is repeatedly haunted with the *perhaps*. Rather than projecting a confidence -- which I believe would typically be misplaced; yet often feels as though it should be the appropriate writing tone for an academic text -- I wish, just *perhaps*, if possible, to write within ontologies marked with uncertainty.

Derrida was certainly not the only one to write about the importance of maintaining a discomfort with the concept of confidence. Deleuze also: "For personal uncertainty is not a doubt

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<sup>129</sup> Jacques Derrida. *Politics of Friendship*. Verso, 2005. 218-219.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. 67.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

foreign to what is happening, but rather an objective structure of the event itself..."<sup>132</sup> And, in a most forceful statement: "death appears beneath every fixed idea."<sup>133</sup>

As Derrida states, boldly, yet with second thoughts, "Now, the thought of the 'perhaps' perhaps engages the only thought of the event..."<sup>134</sup> As if a thought must be proudly and profoundly put forward, and then immediately crossed out – maybe, perhaps.

## What this Thesis is Not Doing

I wish to reluctantly make a few statements here about what I am *not* doing in this thesis – "reluctantly", because I don't want to belittle or minimize the work that others are doing. These statements are not at all intended to put down other forms of thought and practice, but rather, they are stated to make clear articulations of differences in thought and practice, that I feel are useful to distinguish.

First of all, I want to discuss place-based education.

### **Place-Based Education**

In the field of a philosophy of education there has been much discussion about place-based education.<sup>135</sup> I deeply respect and am grateful for this movement, and don't in any way want to dismiss the important work being done in the context of place-based work. However, even though there are a great many similarities, in this study I am following a different lineage of thought than that which much place-based education comes from. I am connected to a lineage that includes the ecological work of

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<sup>132</sup> Gilles Deleuze. *The Logic of Sense*. Continuum. 2004. 5.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. 364.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid. 29.

<sup>135</sup> An important review of place-based education is found in the following compilation: David A. Gruenewald, "Place-Based Education: Grounding Culturally Responsive Teaching in Geographical Diversity." In *Place-Based Education in the Global Age*, pp. 161-178. Routledge. 2014. I also want to honour the work of Cynthia Chambers, a Canadian curriculum scholar who has a deep appreciation for indigenous perspectives in education: Cynthia Chambers. "Where are We? Finding Common Ground in a Curriculum of Place." *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies* 6, no. 2. 2008; Cynthia Chambers. "'The Land is the Best Teacher I Have Ever Had': Places as Pedagogy for Precarious Times." *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 22, no. 3. 2006. 27-39.

Gregory Bateson, the geophilosophical approaches of Deleuze and Guattari, the decolonizing and post-human philosophies of Jacques Derrida, the unique literate and communal practices of Lynn Hoffman, the living histories of local indigenous nations associated with the Fraser River, among many other important inspirations. My work also comes, in part, in response to, and from discourses around, family and communal therapies. These varied sources of thought and practice come together in a new lineage, and, I believe it is important that, within this thesis, this lineage play itself out, without being forced into hegemonies of other forms of language.

### **Economic Language**

Whether it be Pascal's gambling man or Leibniz's chess-playing God, the game is explicitly taken as a model only because it has implicit models which are not games: the moral model of the Good or the Best, the economic model of causes and effects, or of means and ends.

Gilles Deleuze<sup>136</sup>

There is an overwhelming tendency these days to describe the various workings of life and world by means of economic language. This is quickly evidenced in the use of common terms such as net-worth, self-worth, value, inputs, outcomes, measurables, etc. (I would even argue that a term such as "evidenced-based" is inescapably knotted with economically-oriented ontological perspectives). Human lives, as with other forms of life, are repeatedly scrutinized and evaluated by numerical means. In fact, every possible thing that can be distinguished can expect to be subjected to statistical assessments that are determined to assign value. A distinct effort has been made in this thesis to stay away from such economic descriptions.<sup>137</sup> I believe that, to present an ecological or geophilosophical approach to phenomena of life, part of the work that is required is a determination to limit the influence

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<sup>136</sup> Gilles Deleuze. *The Logic of Sense*. Continuum. 2004. 70.

<sup>137</sup> Many writers share this concern. For example: Professor Rob Kaulfuss explores such concerns, as evidenced in his blog: Rob Kaulfuss. *Beyond Economics: The End of Growth and the Time of a New Era*. <https://beyondeconomics.org>. Another example, this time in the field of adult literacy: Keiko Yasukawa and Stephen Black (Eds.). *Beyond Economic Interests: Critical Perspectives on Adult Literacy and Numeracy in a Globalised World*. Springer. 2016. Also, a feminist approach to this topic: Marianne A. Ferber and Julie A. Nelson, eds. *Beyond Economic Man: Feminist Theory and Economics*. University of Chicago Press. 2009.

of economic language. For, it seems to me, that without such resolve, economic descriptions become the fallback perspective. Economic language easily becomes hegemonic in the world today.

### **Psychological Language**

Guattari, emphasizing a work that approaches that of a naturalist or an ethologist, states a limit he sees in psychology: "With what the psychology and psychoanalysis has represented of 'universals' one almost has to start from the beginning all over again with the question of feeling and thinking."<sup>138</sup> Guattari follows up on this question of "feeling and thinking" by engaging in a form of non-psychological study -- he focuses his research upon literature (particularly, in this context, upon Proust).<sup>139</sup>

I approach psychological language in a similar manner to the way I approach economic language. Much of the work I am connected with (such as family therapist, or professor for a Master of Counselling program) has traditionally been described through use of psychological languages. I endeavour, within this thesis, to minimize such languages. I wish to find ways to talk about our lives and our relations with the world around us in forms that do not rely upon the internalizations and categorizations so commonly found in psychological work.

I realize that there is some important work made within the discipline of psychology to escape such language -- I do wish to honour such work.<sup>140</sup>

### **Influences of Asian Spiritualities**

Periodically, when in conversation about the ideas within this thesis, some suggest that these thoughts are similar to ideas that come from Asian traditions, such as Buddhism, Taoism, or Yoga. While I hold such traditions in high esteem, the ideas in this project did not grow from engagement with these

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<sup>138</sup> Guattari, *Ibid.* 2016. 226.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> I am particularly struck with the de-psychologizing work of psychologist, Tom Strong. See: Tom Strong. "Constructivist Ethics? Let's Talk about Them: An Introduction to the Special Issue on Ethics and Constructivist Psychology." *Journal of Constructivist psychology* 18, no. 2. 2005. 89-102; Tom Strong and Olga Sutherland. "Conversational Ethics in Psychological Dialogues: Discursive and Collaborative Considerations." *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne* 48, no. 2. 2007. 94.

traditions. I encourage the reader to appreciate the development of these thoughts in this document through the traditions and lineages presented in this thesis.

### **Academic Labeling**

There are some terms that are often used to describe some of the thinkers and ideas that I have learned to appreciate (some have endeavoured to use these terms to describe my own work). These terms include, but are not limited to, *postmodern* or *postmodernism*, as well as *poststructural* and *poststructuralism*. Interestingly, writers such as Deleuze and Derrida (who are often associated with these terms) did not use this language to describe their work (Derrida once mentioned the term, *postmodern*, to discuss its history coming from Lyotard – he used the term in a short commemorative piece following Lyotard’s death).<sup>141</sup>

While I can understand the impetus behind such words, I attempt to minimize the use of such language within this document. With Guattari: “We will not propose them as a model, as our second and final axiom consists in refusing all references to a model or to a transcendent and universal system of categories.”<sup>142</sup> I believe that the work of writers such as Deleuze and Derrida (among many others) must be able to move and flow according to the rationality of their own writing, without being somehow propped up by a static entity or an overarching and singular hegemonic crutch of language.

I do, on occasion, use the term *posthuman*. I use this language to connect with a relatively new lineage of thinking that uses the term *posthuman* to move the discussion away from solely human perspectives to concerns inclusive of the diversities of a larger world, and often of non-human entities. However, I want to acknowledge that, despite my use of this terminology, I do find a certain sense of discomfort with the actual language of the *posthuman*.

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<sup>141</sup> Jacques Derrida. *The Work of Mourning*. University of Chicago Press. 2003.

<sup>142</sup> Guattari. *Ibid.* 2016. 37.

## An Experiment in Contemplative Inquiry

According to Heesoon Bai, the work of contemplative inquiry places itself between the two philosophical tasks of: 1) ontology, which unfolds a particular world or realm of ecological relations; and 2) ethics, which calls for how-to responses to the ontological.<sup>143</sup> That is, contemplative inquiry creates an in-between space, a necessary intermediary zone, imagined as prior to the unfolding of an ethical response yet subsequent to (and often coinciding with) the ontological task of producing a world. Contemplative inquiry offers a space to reflect, to think, to pause, before pushing towards an ethical action. The worlds that are distinguished in the ontological task are therefore given time and space for careful contemplation. I see the current thesis as, in part, fulfilling this role; that is, I am attempting to awaken contemplative spaces for reflection upon the ontologies that are unfolding within this work – and this is offered prior to what can often be experienced these days as an overwhelming demand for immediate ethical action. This contemplative space is provided in hope of limiting the possibility that there might be a push toward a premature judgment or a rush to remedy. I am operating on the assumption that ethics (and particularly contemporary ethics) demands a prior act of something approaching contemplative inquiry.

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<sup>143</sup> Heesoon Bai communicated this idea of contemplative inquiry as situation between the ontological and the ethical -- she communicated this via personal conversation. Some of Bai's works on contemplative inquiry include: Heesoon Bai. "Peace with the Earth: Animism and Contemplative Ways." *Cultural Studies of Science Education*. 10, no 1. 2015. 135-147; Heesoon Bai. "Zen and the Art of Intrinsic Perception: A Case of Haiku." *Canadian Review of Art Education*. 28, no 1. 2001. 1-24; Heesoon Bai and Avraham Cohen. (2014). "Zen and the Art of Storytelling." *Studies in Philosophy and Education*. 33, no 6. 597-608; Heesoon Bai and Charles Scott. "The Primacy of Consciousness in Education: A Role for Contemplative Practices in Education." *The Korean Journal of Philosophy of Education*. 33, no 4. 2011. 129-145; Heesoon Bai and Greg Scutt. "Touching the Earth with the Heart of Enlightened Mind: The Buddhist Practice of Mindfulness for Environmental Education." *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*. 14, no 1. 2009. 92-106.

## Concluding the Beginnings

In concluding these beginnings, I now invite you, the reader, on a journey that includes my own physical sojourning with the Fraser River and its confluences, as well as the numerous ideas, affects, and creative tributaries that feed into this series of geophilosophical experiments.

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We are River People<sup>144</sup>  
Nesaika Mitlite Liver Tillicums (Chinook Jargon)

Tom Hetherington, July 2018<sup>145</sup>

We are River People, red, white, yellow, brown and black,  
*Nesaika Liver tillicums, pil, t'kope, kawkawah, kawkawah-pil, pe klale,*

A many spirited, past, present and future people, a new rainbow tribe upon the land.  
*Hiyu sagalie, lahly alki, alta, alki tillicums, hiyu coloured tillicums kopa illahie.*

We are Cascadia beings, the flying ones, the swimming ones, the four-legged ones,  
*Nesaika Chinook Illahie tillicums, mowitchs, kalakala, pish, lakit lajam,*

With people and rooted ones, we drink water that flows from mountains to the sea,  
*Kunamoxt, tillicums, stiks pe mowitchs muckamuck chuck kaltawa lamonti kopa saltchuck,*

One body with many parts, breathing together in a homeland of abundance,  
*Ixt illahlie kopa hyus livers, konaway wind kunamoxt kopa shookum house illahie,*

Now and forever, we are River people. Join us!  
*Alta pe kwansum, nesaika Liver tillicums. Mitlite kunamoxt!*

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<sup>144</sup> This poem is connected to the Fraser River; or, as it is known in its lower reaches, in the Halq'emeylem language, the Stó:lō. This name embodies an important philosophical gesture. The word *Stó:lō* refers to both the river and the people. This double-meaning is ontologically consequential for the peoples who live along this river, for it emphasizes that *the river and the people are one*, they are not separable. See Buker, *Ibid*.

<sup>145</sup> This poem was created by Tom Hetherington and is written in both English and the Chinook jargon.<sup>145</sup> Chinook had been the long-standing language of trade amidst the peoples of the northwestern lands of this continent – it is a language now in danger of extinction (Hetherington has gone out of his way to learn the Chinook jargon).



# Part II

**The River Carries that which the Mountains Cannot Hold  
A Series of Geophilosophical Experiments with the Fraser River**

# Dérive-Prayer #1 -- Sts'ailes, Rivers, Forests, and Ancestors

Here was a vision that went back centuries, perhaps even to times before the Bible was written. Here was a narrative tradition that went back to the beginnings of human consciousness not only in North America but on this planet. Here was a storytelling tradition that defined a land whose power was as seminal as the first cell that took root on Earth to spawn, eons later, a land so beautiful it made men weep to see it.

Tomson Highway<sup>146</sup>

A place is a while we walk on the bones of all time

Cecily Nicholson<sup>147</sup>

Who you are is where you are.

Cecily Nicholson<sup>148</sup>

This is the beginning of a journey, a particular journey that I undertook in June of 2018. As part of my thesis experience I decided to make a trip – a far too limited trip – along some of the various rivers that make up the Fraser River watershed. This journey starts, not at the supposed beginnings of the Fraser River, far away, high on the Western slopes of the Rocky Mountains (that encounter comes later), but at a place that is more familiar to me, a place that through the years has become almost home, a place that many years ago now I was invited into. I begin on the lands of the Sts'ailes people, a people for whom I have worked for well over two decades, a place and a people I have learned to love and respect. These same people several years ago gave me a new name. That name is Iwestel -- meaning one who guides. But today, I am guided -- by a river, a watershed, and a people.

This day I am sitting on a log in a forest. Down below me, but out of sight, is a small lake that empties into a stream that, in turn, empties into the Harrison River, which then flows its clear, cold and

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<sup>146</sup> Thomson Highway. *Ibid.* 2017. xxiv.

<sup>147</sup> Cecily Nicholson. *From the Poplars*. Talonbooks, 2014. 11.

<sup>148</sup> Nicholson. 67.

productive waters, and all that accompanies these waters, into the Fraser. In this forest I am well-aware of the land-people connections, for this very spot is marked with historical people-forest relations, and these marks are all around me. I must add that I am not alone, I am working with a young man from the Sts'ailes school. We both sit on this log, and we listen to whatever the forest wants to offer us. We hear wind in the trees on the hill just north of us. There are songbirds all around, in every direction, singing their spring tunes and claiming their own territories. And, there are also insects, buzzing all-too intimately around our bodies.

We listen, but we also look, and it is in this looking that the marks appear – marks of past people-forest relations. Sts'ailes people have always made extensive use of Cedar bark. They make baskets, hats, clothing, containers, and other items from this bark. When they harvest the bark, they do not cut the trees down, but rather slice a short, horizontal line in the tree near the ground, and then pull up on that bark as it releases itself from the tree into a long strip. They only harvest the bark once from a given tree, and they remove just one strip of the tree's bark. Anthropologists call these *culturally modified trees*.<sup>149</sup> As we look around, we see some marks on the Cedar trees where harvesting has taken place in recent times. As we continue to look we see marks on other trees, marks that are clearly much older. And, as we observe carefully and patiently, we see a very large and old cedar. It too has a scar on it. This scar has been grown over, and it no longer looks like a scar, it looks like it is just part of the character of the tree herself. The tree has grown around the scar, held the scar near, it bulges around the old harvesting narrative, holding its stories close. This one old cedar, and its mark, must be, and I am just guessing, over one hundred years old. Which means that in times past there were people on this spot. They were harvesting the cedar bark, and they were, in all likelihood, related to people

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<sup>149</sup> British Columbia. Archaeology Branch, and Resources Inventory Committee (Canada). *Culturally Modified Trees of British Columbia: A Handbook for the Identification and Recording of Culturally Modified Trees*. 2001.

that I know and work with on a regular basis. They may well have been ancestors to the boy that I share this moment with.

My mind wanders, and wonders, and I find myself thinking of a dear friend of mine, the late Lynn Hoffman, who left us several months before this moment in the forest. Why think of my friend at this time? Perhaps for a number of reasons. However, we eventually come to realize that grief needs no reasons... and this grief, at this time, seeks no explanation, it just pushes for its presence to be acknowledged.

So, let me say a few words that connect Lynn Hoffman with this moment in the forest. First of all, Lynn loved forests. She particularly loved those rhizome worlds underneath, in the forest soil, which hold all that is living in the forest together.<sup>150</sup> She was captured by this earthly birthplace of embedded and connected life. We often talked about rhizomes, and in ways that were certainly more than just therapeutic metaphors, we talked about them for the love of them. Lynn also was pulled toward those stories that showed how people were connected-to or were indigenous-to a particular place. As people and place came together in conversation with Lynn Hoffman, the stories always multiplied, and they thickened. They surprised and delighted, and sometimes disturbed.

I remember, for example, Lynn talking about Gees Bend quilts,<sup>151</sup> about an African American community in the Southern USA, situated at the bend of a river (Lynn always mentioned that they lived at the bend of a river). The women of this community took their old pieces of clothing and other fabrics, and, together, they made exquisite quilts out of these used fragments.<sup>152</sup> These remarkable quilts were

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<sup>150</sup> Rhizome became an important image to Lynn Hoffman and me. We both talk about this importance of this idea in the documentary film I made about her – Christopher Kinman with Lynn Hoffman. *All Manner of Poetic Disobedience: Lynn Hoffman and the Rhizome Century*. YouTube Video, 1:09:04. Posted (09/2017). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjR3nP\\_VHR8&t=1660s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WjR3nP_VHR8&t=1660s). Rhizome is an image of underground lines and nodes connecting a world together. The Rhizome undoes any illusion of singularity or independence, leaving everything as tied to complex worlds of relation.

<sup>151</sup> See Hoffman "A Gee's Bend Quilt." *Taos Institute*. Filmed by Christopher Kinman, Jan 2012. Vimeo, 02:56. Posted Jan 2012. <https://vimeo.com/56385573>.

<sup>152</sup> "Gees Bend Quiltmakers," *Souls Grown Deep*. <http://www.soulsgrowndeep.org/gees-bend-quiltmakers>.

composed of stories upon stories, relations upon relations, collaborations upon collaborations, all made of bits and pieces. I think Lynn saw everyone as embedded into such connected lives, amidst real geographies, in a real world. These old scarred cedar trees, like the Gee's Bend quilts, continue to tell stories. They are sacred stories, always sacred stories. Stories about people and their ongoing relations to a place. This is certainly a Sts'ailes story, but it also ties to a remembering that is ongoing far beyond Sts'ailes. For me this forest is of necessity tied to Lynn Hoffman's story. Rhizome lines often surprise in the connections that they create.

It appears that grief is usually a multiple narrative, rarely, if ever, telling just one story. So, I must mention that my father also died, and just a few weeks prior to this event in this forest. It now seems indecipherable as to where this grief should rest. Perhaps grief and love share this characteristic – perhaps, in fact, they are the same thing. I cannot think of my father's death without also thinking of Lynn, and, not just Lynn, but also her beloved partner, Ed, who, in his own grief, died just a few weeks after Lynn passed on. And, perhaps such grief and remembering, as uncomfortable as it may be, is where the world needs to meet at this point in life and history. It is clear, when someone who is loved passes on, there is a hole left in the daily movements of those who loved that person. I want to suggest that this hole is a sacred and necessary space, an emptiness that cannot and must not be escaped. I am very aware of this empty space today. It is strangely filling and emptying at the same time. And it is certainly connecting.

I don't want to leave this space, for it is there, it is here, in these most empty of spaces that, perhaps, something beautiful can emerge, re-emerge, something of those we have lost that can find a continuance. I may be able to find ways to become reacquainted with my dear friend, Lynn, to re-engage with my father, and also to re-meet this forest, these waterways, and these peoples who have lived with, and nurtured, this very land for millennium. It may appear strange, but it seems that with loss a world of abundance waits to gather around.

I'll wait no more for you like a daughter,  
That part of our life together is over  
But I will wait for you, forever  
Like a river

In the river I know I will find the key  
And your voice will rise like the spray  
In the moment of knowing  
The tide will wash away my doubt  
Cause you're already home...

I'll never leave, always just a dream away...  
The moon will hide, the tree will bend  
I'm right beside you  
I'll never turn away

Carly Simon<sup>153</sup>

Anyone come to see me this day  
Tell them I'll be gone for the day  
I'll be down by the river  
Waiting for the good Lord to pass my way  
Oh yeah, I'll be down by the river  
Singing songs of joy on this lovely day

Neil Young<sup>154</sup>

After a morning/mourning at Sts'ailes I eagerly set on my journey. We grieve and begin. The next stop will be Kamloops. But before we arrive there, a certain experiment with circles and flows, ecologies and curricula.

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<sup>153</sup> Carly Simon, "Like a River." *Letters Never Sent*. Arista. 1994.

<sup>154</sup> Neil Young, "Down by the River." *Everybody Knows this is Nowhere*. Reprise. 1969.

# Experiment #1 -- John Kelly's Injunction: Entering the Circle with Jacques Derrida.

## Introduction

And remember, this time we are all in the same circle. We live or die together.

John Kelly<sup>155</sup>

Prior to this move, whether Christianized (as most of us were at one point) or unilingual in English (as most of us are), Indigenous people still functioned, at a fundamental level of their inner consciousness, in circles: the drum, the round dance, the sun dance, the four directions, the four seasons, the tepee, the sweat lodge, the circle of Elders and councilors that governed a village, the "roundness" of Earth as mother goddess, the endless circle of life and death, consensus (as opposed to choice by election) as circle, time as a cycle, even the languages – Cree, Blackfoot, Dene – which define life in, and as, a circle.

Tomson Highway<sup>156</sup>

The Aboriginal idea of society as a great circle works here. It is a mechanism of inclusion that absorbs new members, adjusting as it does so. It explains how we function. It explains why we seek balance rather than clarity. The balance is not stand-alone human talent. Witsaskewin. Living together on the land. Seeking balance. Seeking a broader harmony. Accepting that this can only be multi-dimensional.

John Ralston Saul<sup>157</sup>

As the twentieth century was drawing toward a close, Canadian author, Michael Ondaatje published a compilation book which attended to, as he said, "stories that in some way mapped the geographical, emotional and literary range of the country."<sup>158</sup> The book collected short stories from some of Canada's most well-known writers, including Alistair Macleod, Mordecai Richler, Stephen Leacock, Carol Shields, Alice Munroe, Glenn Gould, Margaret Atwood, among others. In the midst of

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<sup>155</sup> John Kelly. "We are All in the Ojibway Circle." *Ink Lake: Canadian Stories Selected by Michael Ondaatje*. Edited by Michael Ondaatje. 579-590. Vintage Canada. 1995.

<sup>156</sup> Highway. *Ibid.* xix-xx.

<sup>157</sup> John Ralston Saul. *A Fair Country: Telling Truths about Canada*. Viking. 2008. 280.

<sup>158</sup> Michael Ondaatje. *Ibid.* XV.

this book there is a chapter written by an Ojibway man named John Kelly<sup>159</sup> -- not a well-recognized name when it comes to the category of Canadian literature. Kelly, also known as Tobasonakwut Kaagagewanakweb Peter Kinew,<sup>160</sup> was born on his father's trap line on Lake of the Woods in 1936. Later in life he became a leader of his people, serving twice as Grand Chief of Grand Council Treaty 3, as well as holding numerous other leadership roles.

It is because of Kelly's relationship with Grand Council Treaty 3 that he is tied to Ondaatje's book (and tied to my own work in this thesis); for, back in the 1970s, in response to repeated experiences of provincial and federal government bungling of Treaty 3, Kelly wrote a piece titled, "We are All in the Ojibway Circle." This document -- composed of thought thoroughly woven with his own heart, land, and people, and which was first written as a letter and injunction to government leadership -- also becomes a chapter in Ondaatje's book. In turn, Kelly's letter becomes recognized not only as a crucial historical and political work for this country and for indigenous peoples, but also as a significant event in Canadian literature. I also propose that this essay by Kelly can be viewed as a ground from which we in Canada, and beyond, are able to examine our own historical and contemporary relations with the various ecologies and peoples that make us who we are, today.

The import of Kelly's piece becomes apparent within an injunction that he gives the reader. This injunction begins with a call to take the movements of history seriously; that is, the often ignored or silenced histories pertaining to the land and its people: "But it is your duty to look behind the good intentions and understand the long historical process of which we are merely part".<sup>161</sup> Later in the chapter he places this injunction in the context of a larger picture, one where the peoples of this land, indigenous and new-comers alike, are all caught up in the same *circle* (the Ojibway circle); a circle always

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<sup>159</sup> John Kelly, Ibid. 579-590.

<sup>160</sup> "Tobasonakwut Kaagagewanakweb Peter Kinew (Kelly), date of passing Dec 23, 2012" Obituary. Winnipeg Free Press, Dec. 27, 2012. A sketch of Kelly's story is laid out in John Kelly's 2012 obituary; the details presented here come from this obituary.

<sup>161</sup> Kelly. p. 580.



inclusive of and emerging from the land itself. It is in the midst of this circle where we all, according to Kelly, find ourselves uniquely located; and where, always in relation to land, ecologies, and peoples of the circle, we find our own capacities to respond. In Kelly's words:

Mr. Commissioner, it seems to me that the stranger from the sunrise beyond the lakes just keeps coming back. Each time he promises us perpetual repose and gluttony, and leaves us with famine and disease. It also appears that, as the years go by, the circle of the Ojibway gets bigger and bigger. Canadians of all colours and religions are entering into that circle. You might feel that you have roots somewhere else, but in reality, you are right here with us. I do not know if you feel the throbbing of the land in your chest, and if you feel the bear is your brother with a spirit purer and stronger than yours, or if the elk is on a higher level of life than is man. You may not share my spiritual anguish as I see the earth ravaged by the stranger, but you can no longer escape my fate as the soil turns barren and the rivers poison. Much against my will, and probably yours, time and circumstance have put us together in the same circle. And so I come not to plead with you to save me from the monstrous stranger of capitalist greed and technology. I come to inform you that my danger is your danger too. My genocide is your genocide.<sup>162</sup>

What is John Kelly's injunction? My words could never explain it more beautifully and forcefully than his words do. However, I will try and provide a re-articulation. From in the midst of this circle, inclusive of people, ecologies, and land (a circle in which we too are included), and from the midst of the flows of history that move upon these same lands, we are called to find response; and, in that response hopefully discover ways whereby we can together escape what Kelly describes as a coming genocide. This is something close to John Kelly's injunction.

## Education, the Circle, and a Curriculum

"Curriculum... from *currere* (see *current*...)"<sup>163</sup>

I propose that the field of education, in its various forms, can open to new and renewed possibilities as it also finds response to Kelly's injunction. Perhaps the response, this educational response, might take the form of a curricula. Not curriculum as we might traditionally understand it, but a curriculum that is in accordance with the word's Latin roots: a *currere*. That is, a current, a flow, a

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<sup>162</sup> Kelly. 585.

<sup>163</sup> Online Etymological Dictionary, s.v. "Curriculum." <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=curriculum>.

journeying that includes a coming-together, a confluence. As I travel along the Fraser, and the rivers and streams which are connected to the Fraser, these flows, these liquid curricula, become much more than metaphor – education and rivers become inescapably connected.

My intent is not to provide specific directions, policies, or curricula details for an educational response to Kelly's injunction. Rather I wish to open the reader, and myself, to the complexities of this injunction as it might be able to join with the diverse flows of education. I wish to place his injunction upon the lands and waters that we move upon, within the varied ecological relations we are engaged with, as well as from the midst of our own diverse educational, political and personal worlds. And, in the context of this thesis, I wish to place his injunction upon the very flows of the Fraser River watershed, and to connect Kelly's injunction with the peoples and ecologies that are tied to this watershed.

The importance of this experiment, in my mind, is not in the development of an explicit, single course of action, but rather, in the discursive and ecological spaces it can open for us.

I pose a few questions -- actually, an assemblage of questions -- which hopefully can set the stage for a curricula-circle conversation. The following are questions that call for thought – they are not summoning quick and easy answers.

- How might we, from within the histories of western thought, of which education is inescapably connected, find acceptable and helpful responses to Kelly's injunction?
- What forms of thought, practice and connection might we, from within the field of education, bring forward in our attempts to answer the call that Kelly and his circle are putting before us?
- How can we find response to John Kelly's injunction without attempting to seize and commandeer those very wisdoms and ways of life that for Kelly are integral to the wellbeing of his people and lands?
- How can we respond without acquiescence to those capitalist impulses which are so hard to escape?<sup>164</sup> Impulses that are certainly inherent in educational thought. Impulses which appropriate, which grasp and claim, which always seek a gain, a profit, an outcome or benefit. Impulses which are primarily oriented toward competition and a specific vision of success. Impulses which find ways to diminish and devalue the very peoples, thoughts, lands and ecological relations that we are here hoping to come into communications with?

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<sup>164</sup> Kelly implicates *capitalism* in the ongoing assault on land and people – “the monstrous stranger of capitalist greed and technology.” Kelly. Ibid. 585.

- And, how can we create responses which are not rigid and singular? How can we create responses suitable for *curricula*, responses that are able to flow and shift with the particularities of land and peoples, like the movements of a river?

Perhaps it is an obligation for those of us in the field of education to find response to Kelly and his circle. Always remembering, as Kelly so pointedly reminded us, that our responses must in no way be acts of charity for Kelly, his people and land. Rather, our responses must be for all of us. Our responses must lead toward a joint and continuing survival and well-being. And there is an intensity and compulsion behind the responses we are called to make, for, as Kelly emphasizes, it is through our mutual responses that we may find hope for escaping an approaching ecological *genocide* that would descend on all within the circle.

## Finding Response with Jacques Derrida

At this point I wish to explore possible response to John Kelly's injunction through an engagement with the thought of Jacques Derrida.

Why Jacques Derrida? For it can be argued there might be an intrinsic challenge in suggesting that Derrida -- who may typically be imagined as a European, Continental, and French philosopher -- might have something meaningful to say to contemporary Canadian, indigenous and ecological contexts. I wish to respond to this challenge, and to do so in two ways.

### **Derrida: Child of North African Judaism**

First, to suggest that Derrida is primarily a European, Continental, French thinker neglects his own history. Derrida was born into a Jewish family in Algeria, where the Jewish people have resided since, at least, the first century AD.<sup>165</sup> In 1870, in an act of pure colonization, the French government in Paris determined that Algerian Jews should be brought into French citizenship, even though few of them had ever been to France and their day-to-day worlds had for innumerable generations been connected

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<sup>165</sup> Derrida's history in North Africa is beautifully articulated in his book -- Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*. Stanford University Press. 2005.

to North Africa.<sup>166</sup> Then, during the early period of World War II, the French government removed this citizenship from all Jews in Algeria. As a child, Derrida and his family had suddenly become citizens of no-country. He understood in most personal, familial, cultural and political ways the forces of colonial thought descending upon land and people. He also understood what it was like to be removed from the “circle” of land/people that for centuries had sustained communities in North Africa. The ecological relations that had held people and place together had been removed -- Derrida and his family were dislocated from the lands and relations that had been their home for innumerable generations.

Also, Derrida’s ideas themselves repeatedly go to the heart of western rationality. This is the same rationality that produced the feverish actions of colonization, of which both Derrida and North American indigenous peoples have known all-too-well. It is also the same rationality that formed the field of education as we know it today. Therefore, I suggest that Derrida’s work might actually be well-suited (philosophically and historically) for helping those of us who are inescapably steeped in western thought to find meaningful response to John Kelly’s injunction.

### **Personal Engagement with the Thinking of Jacques Derrida**

Secondly, reading Derrida became a life-changing encounter for me in both personal and work relations. For in Derrida I found assistance in navigating a certain *double-bind*<sup>167</sup> in which I recurrently found myself entangled. There are two modern contexts that often appear in irretractable conflict, and it is in the encounter between these contexts where I find the double-bind. It involves, first of all, the *institutions* with which we are forced to interact,<sup>168</sup> and secondly, the *ecological worlds*, or those realms of relations wherein life (human and non-human) is composed and sustained. These two worlds often

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<sup>166</sup> See: “Algeria.” The Virtual Jewish World. <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Algeria.html>.

<sup>167</sup> Gregory Bateson brought forward the rather complex notion of the double-bind. He set the stage in, Gregory Bateson. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. University of Chicago, 1972. He further developed the concept in, Gregory Bateson. *A Sacred Unity: Further Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. HarperOne. 1991.

<sup>168</sup> It was John Caputo who claimed that Derrida’s deconstruction was a philosophy of and for the institution. See: John Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: Religion without Religion*. Indiana University Press. 1997.

seem seriously at-odds with each other. I sense the pull of this double-bind daily, and often intensely. I particularly sense this double-bind in the contexts of education and the therapeutic professions.

In attending to Derrida's thought, I am not suggesting that he provides specific, detailed ideas and plans that might apply to Kelly's injunction, or more broadly to indigenous and environmental issues related to the context of the Americas. I believe that such specified responses must always be generated in response to particular contexts or ecologies; not as commodified, repeatable generalities -- this is an idea that was also important to Derrida himself. Rather I wish to unfold forms of thinking that would help expose us to the complexities that make up this circle; and, from within these complexities, help us begin to find our own unique, contextual responses.

There are three elements of Derrida's thought that I wish to explore: first of all, his idea of the *watching animal*; followed by the concept of *spacing* and its connection to difference; and finally, I wish to experiment with his thinking on the *overture*.

## A Reversal: The Watching Animal, the Watching Circle -- Response #1

To set the context, a quick revisiting of John Kelly's words. Kelly said: "I do not know if you feel... the bear is your brother with a spirit purer and stronger than yours, or if the elk is on a higher level of life than is man." The animals, which are part of the land, part of the circle, are here, according to Kelly, as purer, stronger, and higher than we the people are.<sup>169</sup> They must be attended to, they must be taken seriously.

And Derrida states: "Animals are my concern. Whether in the form of a figure or not. They multiply, lunging more and more wildly in my face..."<sup>170</sup>

With both Kelly and Derrida, let us talk about the animal.

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<sup>169</sup> Kelly describes these animals as higher/purer than human beings, but he does not provide reasons as to why this would be the case. However, what Kelly is doing is offering a clear inversion of European-Western thought. And, we are invited to pay attention to this inversion. Kelly. *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am*. Fordham University Press. 2008. 35.

In Derrida's essay, "The Animal that Therefore I Am," he begins in an unusual place.<sup>171</sup> He talks about finding himself naked before the eyes of his cat and feeling shame in his nakedness. This is a double-shame, for he is, first, ashamed in front of his cat; and then, secondarily, he is ashamed that he is ashamed in front of his cat.

I have trouble repressing a reflex of shame. Trouble keeping silent within me a protest against the indecency. Against the impropriety that can come of finding oneself naked, one's sex exposed, stark naked before a cat that looks at you without moving, just to see.... but also ashamed for being ashamed.<sup>172</sup>

He goes on to talk about how, in the tradition of western philosophy and literature, the animal is almost exclusively conceived-of through the eyes of *man*. That is:

- man the human as opposed to animal;
- man the gender as opposed to woman, and, as opposed to all those who pull away from either side of this binary;
- man of European ancestry as opposed to the indigenous person, the African, the Arab, the Jew, etc.;
- man the hierarchical-being as opposed to the ecological person;
- educated man as opposed to the "simple" or "illiterate" person;
- economically-privileged man, and as opposed to the working-class or poor person;
- man the individual as opposed to the communal and/or ecological body;
- and man the adult as opposed to the child.

Such a man is found in a specific location; he is in a place above and separate-from the world. He is watching and analyzing the animal (as well as women, children, and a host of other supposed *lower* entities) from a place detached from a lived-ecology. And, from the perspective of this man, this watching does certainly not happen the other way around – that is, there is no sense for this man that the animal may be watching him.

According to Derrida, the idea of the animal watching man, through animal eyes, was never addressed within the history of western philosophical thought: "Kant, Heidegger, Lacan, and Levinas... Their discourses are sound and profound, but everything in them goes on as if they themselves had

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. 4.

never been looked at, and especially not naked, by an animal that addressed them.”<sup>173</sup> And, again, speaking of the idea of being addressed by the animal, from within a certain nakedness of thought:

I as yet know of no *statutory representation* of it, that is to say, no subject who does so as theoretical, philosophical, or juridical man, or even as citizen. I have found no such representative, but it is in that very place that I find myself, here and now, in the process of searching.<sup>174</sup>

Jacques Derrida, a philosopher who purposefully works within the western traditions of thought, finds himself acknowledging that he is being stared at through the eyes of a cat. He, the man, has come to appreciate that he is under some form of assessment within the penetrating gaze of an animal.

### **Education and the Animal**

Again, from Derrida, “The animal looks at us, and we are naked before it. Thinking perhaps begins there.”<sup>175</sup>

In education, how do we think of the animal? Perhaps through the patronizing eyes of the *man*, looking down-upon, engaging in an evaluating act? Perhaps, as objects of study -- as part of a curriculum, a course? Perhaps in biology? Perhaps an object of study in literature? Perhaps, we encounter animals in the context of current events, social studies, or political science, where we hear about salmon stocks in decline, or the illegal trafficking of animal parts? But where, in education, do we find the animal looking at us? Where in the educational endeavour, do we experience the shame, or perhaps the joy, of being scrutinized and monitored by the eyes of the animal?

Derrida, in thinking about the animal watching us, throws us all into an empty space, a sea with no water, nothing to cushion the fall; for where in education, as in philosophy, is there even a hint of the animal seeing us, in our nakedness?

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. 29.

In the context of this educational-emptiness we experience, is it possible, just perhaps, that we can come to find the animal watching us is in art? The animal, or as Deleuze and Guattari would say, the *becoming-animal*,<sup>176</sup> becoming from the eyes and hands of *children* (I am certain that children do understand the idea of animals watching them). Just perhaps it is possible that we can encounter the animal watching us there, through the children, in their creative activities? But, I have some doubts, for, while the children may, in their artistic expressions, find room for the watching-animal, this is certainly not the typical point of interest for the modern educational enterprise; it is not what the typical *educational-man* would be able to distinguish.

But I may be mistaken, for, perhaps, in some corner of education, perhaps even in a few corners, the animal may indeed be watching us? Perhaps I (and we) have a tendency to be blind to such encounters? Perhaps, first of all, we ourselves need to find eyes that are able to distinguish the animal observing us, even in education?

When I carefully think about it, I do, perhaps, know where I find the animal watching us. I encounter such animals every week. I discover these animals watching us at Sts'ailes First Nation, and the community's school, where I work as a contract family therapist. These animals appear in creations we sometimes call indigenous art. The animals are certainly there in the art of the Sts'ailes people – and these animals are watching us. These animals are painted on surfaces, sculptured in cedar and fir, woven with cedar bark and mountain goat wool, imaged on film, inscribed upon paper, uploaded to the web, sung in song, awoken through drumming, eaten with the salmon and the deer, spoken through the elders. The animals are consistently there, guarding our comings and goings. They are watching us, and their gaze penetrates with great strength.

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<sup>176</sup> Becoming animal is concept carefully developed in: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. University of Minnesota Press. 1983. The *becoming of becoming animal* suggests a movement toward the animal, without ever arriving, without ever *being* the animal.



There are two struggling corners of Canadian education, therefore, where we may be able to discover this reversal which Derrida is calling for, that is, where we can discover that the animal is in the process of watching and evaluating us. These two corners of education include: 1) those places where indigenous thought and creative actions encounter education; and 2) those educational contexts where artistic expression of children is itself cherished. Both indigenous thought and the arts themselves have been subjected to many years of economic and ideological devaluing in educational circles. It seems that *the-man-watching-and-evaluating-the-lower-other* is still a predominant point of view in contemporary educational practice; but, it certainly seems to be now under challenge.

However, there is something more than just the animals watching us going on here. For we are being watched by the peoples (the living and the ancestors) of the circle also. They are observing us. Yet, I imagine, as it is with the animals, so also with the people. Most of us do not consider that the people of the circle may also be watching us. I doubt that most of us often experience the shame, or, alternatively, the connections and possibilities that emerge, as we come to realize that the first peoples, and in my context, the Sts'ailes peoples, are also watching us. The animals, and the people who through centuries have learned to live with the animals, are watching us, and they see our nakedness, the austerity of our thought. Perhaps sometimes they laugh at such non-self-aware nakedness; perhaps other times they sigh; but I believe they are watching.

Derrida continues his thoughts, expanding beyond distinctions of individual animals and people, suggesting that there is much more than a single creature looking at us; and, there is even more than the people of the circle observing us. Rather, he suggests that there is a complex set of relations, inclusive of animals, people, plants, non-living things, and beyond – and it is this unit, this ecology, that is watching us.

Rather than “The Animal” or “Animal Life” there is already a heterogeneous multiplicity of the living, or more precisely (since to say “the living” is already to say too much or not enough), a multiplicity of organizations of relations between living and dead, relations of organization or lack of organization among realms that are more and more difficult to dissociate by means of

the figures of the organic and inorganic, of life and/or death. These relations are at once intertwined and abyssal, and they can never be totally objectified. They do not leave room for any simple exteriority of one term with respect to another.<sup>177</sup>

Even the concept of *freedom* is extended, by Derrida, to the fullness of such a multiplicity described above. He talks of a freedom that spills out far beyond that which typical western thought associates with the word freedom. Derrida's freedom overflows beyond the man, beyond the human, outside of the subjectivity of an individual, far beyond the thought that colonizes, somewhere even beyond the communal (and beyond any "simple exteriority"), towards a complex realm of diversities, events and relations that begin to resemble John Kelly's circle.

Freedom is not understood simply as the "I can" of a free will, the power of a voluntary subject, of a subject assumed to be in charge, to be *master (maître)*, one or countable, and thus measurable... No, freedom is extended to everything that appears in the open. It is extended to the event of everything in the world – and first of all in the "there is" of the world – that comes to presence, including whatever comes in the free form of nonhuman living being and of the "thing" in general, whether living or not.<sup>178</sup>

Derrida, who began with his cat, a single animal watching him in his nakedness, ends with a multiplicity of living and non-living entities engaging in varied and innumerable relations with each other. He opens up a complex ecology of relations, composed of endless things and animals and peoples, and the relations that connect them. And, it is this *ecology* (a word that I am using, not a word that Derrida uses), in its variety and its indecomposable entirety, that we find watching us.

A Sts'ailes elder recently told me that they see the land and people as one, they are not separate. It is this entity, composed of diverse relations, a non-singular-singularity, that is observing us, even in our educational endeavours. In John Kelly's words, it is the circle, with all that composes it, that is engaged in the observing.

However, with Kelly, this assemblage or circle also comes with an attending warning – and it is a dire warning. For, according to Kelly, if we don't attend to this circle it will eventually turn toward us

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<sup>177</sup> Derrida. *Ibid.* 31.

<sup>178</sup> Jacques Derrida. *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*. Stanford University Press. 2005. 53-54.

with violences that will distinguish no status, nor species, nor privileges. Therefore, I propose, for those of us connected to education, and for all of us, it is imperative that we must seek appropriate responses to John Kelly's injunction.

## Spacing in the Circle -- Response #2

There is another idea of Derrida's that I think is helpful as we attempt to negotiate responses to the double-bind of being both within and without Kelly's circle. That idea is the concept of *spacing*.<sup>179</sup>

What is Spacing? Derrida states that the idea of spacing has been significant to him from his early days of writing.

That is why, let me repeat, the theme of spacing, the theme of the interval or the gap, of the trace as gap... of the becoming-space of time or the becoming-time of space, plays such an important role as early as *Of Grammatology* and "Difference."<sup>180</sup>

One can find this idea at work in Derrida's writings with topics as diverse as: the animal,<sup>181</sup> gender and sexuality,<sup>182</sup> immigration,<sup>183</sup> Islam,<sup>184</sup> the friend,<sup>185</sup> and the gift.<sup>186</sup>

There are several important nuances associated with the idea of Spacing that I would like to emphasize:

- Spacing is an idea that, while acknowledging connections and relationships amongst various entities, also recognizes that these connections can only be discovered through the ground of *difference*.<sup>187</sup> Therefore, there is always at play, among and between all things, a space, an

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<sup>179</sup>Derrida articulates this concept in, *Ibid.*

<sup>180</sup>*Ibid.* 38.

<sup>181</sup> Derrida. *Ibid.* 2008.

<sup>182</sup> See: Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, "The Newly Born Woman", trans. Betsy Wang. *Theory and History of Literature*, Volume 24. University of Minnesota Press. 1986.

<sup>183</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Hospitality, Justice and Responsibility: A Dialogue with Jacques Derrida" in R Kearney and M Dooley (eds), *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy*. Routledge. 1998.

<sup>184</sup> **A summary of Derrida's approach to Islam can be found in a blog posting by M. Machowski: Matthew Machowski. "Derrida and the Other Islam: In What Ways If at All, Does Derrida Provide for a New Perception of Islam in the West Post 9/11?" <http://www.matthewmachowski.com/2010/09/derrida-islam-9-11.html>, 2010 (Accessed Dec 1, 2016).**

<sup>185</sup> Jacques Derrida. *Politics of Friendship*. Verso. 2005.

<sup>186</sup> Jacques Derrida. *The Gift of Death: Literature in Secret*. U. of Chicago Press. 1995.

<sup>187</sup> The concept of "difference" was certainly a cornerstone to Derrida's thought throughout his career. See: Jacques Derrida. "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences." *A Postmodern Reader*. 1993. 223-242.

interval, a gap – difference. Certainty of identities and categories lose their hold with Derrida’s spacing – for differences always emerge and proliferate.

- This space is not so much a thing as it is a *process*. It is spacing -- in continual movement, persistently creating and recreating difference, always in need of being revisited.
- There is a *love* inherent in the idea of spacing. In Derrida’s thinking we are invited to acknowledge that every entity (thing, idea, person, or collective) we encounter is always, of necessity, a singularity – in the sense that it can never be identical to any other. It is irreplaceable. Perhaps, we can conceive the coming of love as a singular event that is pulled toward some form of a singular other, who is like no other.
- Along with love – *grief*. A particular entity we encounter will have never come before in time, and, with its passing, will never come again. When such a singularity passes-on, a tremor radiates from within the web of relations that held this singularity into life, an inevitable loss is to be contended with. Grief is always close to the bone with the movements of spacing, as with the movements of love. Grief becomes an unescapable element of the structure of life in Derrida’s spacing world.<sup>188</sup>
- Spacing is laden with *political, economic* and *institutional* implications. For example, the concept of spacing is in opposition to the sameness that must be produced for the commodification procedures of *capitalism* -- those requisite equivalences, corresponding labels and accounting measures that enable the organizing and stocking of the shelves of corporatism and its educational counterparts.
- Spacing involves combinations of *place and time*. Spacing necessitates both a) geographic and geologic awareness (acknowledgement of differences between things, relations, places, people, etc.), and b) awareness of histories, difference arising in and between events and flows of time.
- Spacing is a concept that we can hold close in our discourses about *community* and *ecologies*. Remember that spacing is the playing out of difference. The task of spacing is not to simply split the world into discrete units essentially separated from each other. Rather, spacing calls forth complex origins from which relations, community, and ecologies are created. In Derrida, this is a theme that repeats throughout his writings – connectedness in the world comes to life from the very sources of difference, and never from attempts at erasing dissimilarities and divergences, and simplifying complexities.

There may be wisdom in approaching Kelly’s injunction with an awareness of, and appreciation for, spacing? Perhaps we can begin by acknowledging, and even celebrating the differences that emerge within the world of the circle? Perhaps, also, we can acknowledge those differences, often vital differences, that move throughout western thought itself; differences that might help us find a location, even from within western thought, where we can more fittingly encounter and engage with the unfamiliarity, the foreignness we may encounter in Kelly’s circle?

A couple of ideas about spacing that repeatedly informs my own life and work.

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<sup>188</sup> Derrida wrote a book about the griefs he has encountered: Jacques Derrida. *The Work of Mourning*. University of Chicago Press. 2003.

I find that the idea of spacing invites me to listen, to attend to what others are offering; for I can be certain of one thing, there will always be something of difference in what is given – and that difference may be crucial. As Gregory Bateson said, it is the “difference which makes a difference,” that is the very “elementary unit of information.”<sup>189</sup> I must listen, and listen intensively, and therein encounter such difference.

Spacing also leads me to a kind of speech which postmodern psychotherapist, Lois Shawver, calls TIOTOL -- Talking-In-Order-To-Listen.<sup>190</sup> That is, a putting forward in speech or writing (or other forms of expression) one’s own responses to encounters with difference. This places us into spiraling conversations, increased opportunities to listen, encounter, and comprehend. Bruno Latour calls such movements the “zigzag,”<sup>191</sup> and within these zigzags and oscillations others are further encountered, differences proliferate, and events are created that surprise, delight, and awaken. Our acts of speech or writing, as well as our works of art and science, can become spacing-events, inviting a special kind of listening.

Spacing and difference opens us to the moist earth from where admittances into the circle are germinated, initiated; geographies and territories from wherein new forces, new connections travel into the world.

### A Conclusion and an Overture -- Response #3

A concluding concept from Derrida which I wish to bring to the context of Kelly’s injunction is the *overture*. An overture is always a beginning – even when used as an ending (as it is here). Derrida offers a musical concept, a musical beginning, a musical gesture of welcome – the overture.

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<sup>189</sup> Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution and Epistemology*. University of Chicago Press. 1972. 465.

<sup>190</sup> Lois Shawver, “Talking to Listen: Its Pre-history, Invention, and Future in the Field of Psychotherapy.” In Andy Lock and Tom Strong (Eds.) *Discursive Perspectives in Therapeutic Practice*. Oxford University Press. 2012. 23-44.

<sup>191</sup> Bruno Latour. *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*. Harvard University Press. 2013. 217.

Without... suturing a system of formalizable rules. It is always an opening and an overture... both in the sense of a non-closed system, of the opening left to the freedom of the other, but also in the sense of overture, advance or invitation made to the other... It must remain something one cannot anticipate.<sup>192</sup>

A few thoughts about this idea of the overture.

- The overture begins. It may come in the context of an ending, but it is *never a closure*. For example, we never see overtures as opportunities to develop identities or categories upon which we can stop, rest and count on. The overture opens, it breaks our categories and holds no interest in closings.
- As we encounter Kelly's injunction and the circle of which he, and we, are a part, and as we encounter the ecologies and webs of relations that encompass the word around us, we are invited to consider these *moments of encounter* as overtures, as beginnings.
- The overture introduces us to the reality that there are unknown possibilities, *unimagined configurations* of melodies, tones, themes and affects. It is only within our encounters that these possibilities can in any way be realized.
- The overture is nothing like a prediction or a plan imposing into a future. For the overture offers hope beyond all prediction and planning, beyond everything we can now anticipate or calculate regarding what is to come. The overture *lays bare the nakedness of future-knowledges*.

We continue to open-up this overture. In accordance with Derrida's Jewish heritage, the overture holds a messianic place, in that it insists upon a world of movement that is in the process of unfolding... and always, yet to come.

The effectivity or actuality of the democratic promise... will always keep within it, and it must do so, this absolutely undetermined messianic hope at its heart, this eschatological relation (i.e. the relation to the final event or last judgment) to the to-come of an event *and* of a singularity, of an alterity that cannot be anticipated.<sup>193</sup>

Derrida connects the idea of the messianic in part to the work of Walter Benjamin.<sup>194</sup> A Jewish thinker, like Derrida, Benjamin calls forth a messianism that respects the lines of history, and which refuses to succumb to the "soothsayers" who claim to predict a future. Both Derrida and Benjamin

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<sup>192</sup> Jacques Derrida, in Ewald, Francis. Interview with Jacques Derrida. "A Certain 'Madness' must Watch over Thinking: Refusing to Build a Philosophical System, Derrida Privileges Experience and Writes out of 'Compulsion'. A Dialogue around Traces and Deconstructions, Derrida and Education." In *Derrida and Education*, edited by Gert, J. J. Biestra and Denise Egea-Kuehne. Routledge. 2005. 63.

<sup>193</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. Routledge. 1994. 65.

<sup>194</sup> Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*. 2009. 389.  
[http://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/books/Concept\\_History\\_Benjamin.pdf](http://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/books/Concept_History_Benjamin.pdf)

warn of those who attempt to manipulate and manage that which is to come, and who, through these very efforts, close off all messianic possibility. Benjamin states:

Surely the time of the soothsayers, who divined what lay hidden in the lap of the future, was experienced neither as homogenous nor as empty. Whoever keeps this in mind will perhaps have an idea of how past time was experienced as remembrance: namely, just the same way. It is well-known that the Jews were forbidden to look into the future. The Torah and the prayers instructed them, by contrast, in remembrance. This disenchanted those who fell prey to the future, who sought advice from the soothsayers. For that reason the future did not, however, turn into a homogenous and empty time for the Jews. For in it every second was the narrow gate, through which the Messiah could enter.<sup>195</sup>

This messianic space, this “narrow gate,” this overture, is connected to our numerous conjoining histories, and it is in this same space where unknown and never calculable futures become possible. It is within our encounters, within our coming-together (the coming-together amidst our very differences) where we release ourselves to unknown messianic prospects. Such futures can never be generated through mechanistic and managerial means, they cannot be planned, they are not the product of policy and procedure, they cannot be determined by carefully implemented research procedures; rather we await their births from in the middle of our encounters. This is the messianic nature of the overture.

However, we are anything but helpless here, there is creative action we can take, and must take. For we can create – that is, co-create – the overtures. We can create contexts where invitations are forwarded; where we can gather before the potentials of radical beginnings; where we can connect, converse, listen, encounter; where we can together compose new overtures, emboldening new symphonic possibilities.

To me, this creation of the overture is precisely what happens when an event of learning comes to a classroom. Far from rare, experiences of the overture come close to us, and often, in education. They come in events and moments. I believe that such overtures must be acknowledged and cherished, no matter how domestic, ephemeral, or insignificant they might seem.

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

Clearly, the idea of the overture can assist us, even in educational contexts, to discover and generate meaningful and creative openings for communication, for engagement, within the numerous spaces of difference that make up the various realms of our educational world.

It is at this point where we realize that John Kelly's injunction itself is a form of overture – an overture to the people of Canada and beyond; and, I suggest, an overture to the field of education.

### **Revisiting and Re-Envisioning the Injunction**

A final thought. While John Kelly's injunction is from the 1970s it certainly contains a timelessness and relevance to this day. However, there is a new and expanded injunction that has been put before us in recent years, and its circle, of necessity, is more expansive than that which was described by John Kelly. This new injunction has been put forward, in part, by the movement, *Idle No More*.<sup>196</sup> It proposes an original form of entity that includes people and the land, as did the circle that Kelly described, but it also includes more. "Idle No More is a waking to all the people of this land," said Samson Cree Elder Cecil Nepoose.<sup>197</sup> And, from the Star (Toronto):

Erica Lee, 22, is a University of Saskatchewan student who has been an activist for most of her life. People like Lee, young and tech-savvy, are the face of this movement. And social media is the tool that's allowing them to speak, she said.

"Traditionally, it's the chiefs and the people in power that have the ability to speak to the media, whereas now, people like me — university students who have been involved in this kind of stuff — are getting interviewed," Lee said.

"Social media allows the people who are actually directly involved and impacted by these kinds of movements . . . to have their voices heard."<sup>198</sup>

A new vision of the circle forms that explicitly includes the movements and powers of youth, along with the various connecting technologies that they are so familiar with. The circle includes

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<sup>196</sup>On the front page of the Idle No More website are the following words: "Join in a peaceful revolution to honour indigenous sovereignty and to protect the land and the water." To learn the history of this movement see: *Idle No More*, [www.idlenomore.ca](http://www.idlenomore.ca), accessed Nov 16, 2016.

<sup>197</sup> Shari Narine Sweetgrass, "Social media drive in Idle No More Movement," *Windspeaker, the Aboriginal Multimedia Society*, Volume 30, Issue 11. 2013. <http://www.ammsa.com/publications/windspeaker/social-media-major-driver-idle-no-more-movement>.

<sup>198</sup> Karissa Donkin, "Social Media Helps Drive Idle No More Movement," *The Star*. Jan 11, 2013. [https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2013/01/11/social\\_media\\_helps\\_drive\\_idle\\_no\\_more\\_movement.htm](https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2013/01/11/social_media_helps_drive_idle_no_more_movement.htm).



geographies; landscapes; ecologies; animals, plants and trees; fungi, bacteria and viruses; people and land; seasons and weather; elders and young people; ancestors; newcomers; allies; broken down hierarchies; modes of transportation; the speeds and accessibilities of social media technologies; the immediacies of face-to-face encounters and physical encampments; a varied and unlimitable collection of local and international connections. This is the kind of circle to which Idle No More, and so many indigenous youths are now calling for us to find response.

For the people of Canada and beyond, and for the field of education, a new circle, a renewed circle -- inclusive of John Kelly's circle and the assemblages called forth by Idle No More -- becomes a reality to which we must find response. It comes to us as an overture.

Details to come... always to come...

# Dérive.Prayer #2 -- Kamloops, Persisting Confluences

Between a brown flat on the west and the bare mound of Mount Paul on the east, the two Thompsons come together in peaceful confluence, very different from the violent, two-colored union of the Thompson and the Fraser...

In the early days the fur brigades moved out of Oregon Territory, through the Okanagan Valley and, leaving the watershed of the Columbia, reached the Fraser system at Kamloops... The fort was built in 1812 on the north bank of the Thompson and on the West bank of its northern tributary. The modern town of Kamloops has spread across this flat where the fort stood.

From Bruce Hutchison, in 1950<sup>199</sup>

I purposely chose accommodation in Kamloops next to the water. I wanted to spend time beside the river, for the flows have tales to tell, and I wanted to listen. This hotel sits above the banks of the South Thompson River – a clear and tranquil flow, interrupted by the occasional rising trout, the drop of a hunting osprey, and the roar of the sporadic jet boat. Just a short distance downstream from the hotel the South Thompson River joins with the North Thompson River, becoming the Thompson River.<sup>200</sup> And then again, a bit further, past this confluence, the Thompson expands, becoming Kamloops lake. Emptying from the lake, it becomes the Thompson River again and transforms once more, this time into one of the most terrifying stretches of water in North America. Its violent movements continue until, at the town of Lytton, it loses itself into the more immense brown-water crush of the Fraser Canyon.

These two stretches of water – the Thompson and the Fraser Canyon – have always inspired dread with those who encountered them. Even Simon Fraser stated: “I have been for a long period among the Rocky Mountains but I have never seen anything to equal this country, for I cannot find

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<sup>199</sup> Bruce Hutchison, *Rivers of America: The Fraser*. Clarke, Irwin & Co. Ltd. 1950. 275.

<sup>200</sup> The title, “Thompson,” was assigned to the river by Simon Fraser, who named it after David Thompson, a previous explorer. See Simon Fraser’s journal, in: Kaye, W. Lamb (ed.). *The Letters and Journals of Simon Fraser, 1806-1808*. Vol. 6. 2007. The name stuck.

words to describe our situation at times. We had to pass where no human should venture.”<sup>201</sup> This was no land for a traveling Scotsman, indeed, it appeared to be no country for any kind of warm-blooded mammal. Yet Fraser was constantly encountering indigenous communities who had made their home, or fishing/hunting encampments, all along the canyon area.<sup>202</sup> The area was remarkably populated. Beyond these peoples, the Thompson and the Fraser Canyon seem only hospitable for migrating salmon (their travels through these terrains is a miracle in itself), ravens, vultures, and the occasional eagle. But, let me return to Kamloops.

Kamloops is a place where confluences and transformations are born. Rivers come together, they change shape and become other flows. It currently is also a highway point of confluence, where travelers coming from the prairies, the West coast, the Okanagan country to the East, and lands to the North. Here people meet and find a temporary resting place. Kamloops is where, historically, relations form, and, in turn, where possibilities latently await, hoping for emergence. And this is a story that includes much more than rivers and roads.

On August 25, 1910 a meeting occurred in Kamloops that included the Chiefs of the Shuswap, Okanagan and Couteau Tribes, and Sir Wilfred Laurier, the Prime Minister of Canada. This meeting, this confluence of human powers, should have represented a turning point in the history of Canada; it offered the potential to create a different kind of national confederation, but, alas, the opportunity came and went. The chiefs had prepared a document titled: “To Sir Wilfred Laurier, Premier of the Dominion of Canada.”<sup>203</sup> The message was given orally to James Teit, a Scottish ethnologist and long-time ally, based out of Spences Bridge on the Thompson. The chiefs called him their secretary.

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<sup>201</sup> Waite. 7.

<sup>202</sup> Lamb. Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> This document can be found at: [Kanakabarband.ca](http://www.kanakabarband.ca) “The Memorial to Wilfred Laurier: Celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1910 – 2010.” <http://www.kanakabarband.ca/downloads/memorial-to-sir-wilfred-laurier.pdf>.

The document that was created describes the history of this land from long before European contact. It describes forms of government, established for innumerable generations and firmly entrenched in the very lands and waters of this area. This document talks of the coming of the fur traders, mostly French Canadian, whom they called the “real whites.” The chiefs talk about how they experienced the traders as coming in good faith, respected the indigenous ways, and all profited as a result. And, then they talked about the coming of “the other whites:”

We were friendly and helped these whites also, for had we not learned the first whites had done us no harm? Only when some of them killed us we revenged on them. Then we thought there are some bad ones among them, but surely on the whole they must be good. Besides they are the queen’s people. And we had already heard great things about the queen from the "real whites." We expected her subjects would do us no harm, but rather improve us by giving us knowledge, and enabling us to do some of the wonderful things they could do. At first they looked only for gold. We know the latter was our property, but as we did not use it much nor need it to live by we did not object to their searching for it. They told us, "Your country is rich and you will be made wealthy by our coming. We wish just to pass over your lands in quest of gold." Soon they saw the country was good, and some of them made up their minds, to settle it. They commenced to take up pieces of land here and there. They told us they wanted only the use of these pieces of land for a few years, and then would hand them back to us in an improved condition; meanwhile they would give us some of the products they raised for the loan of our land. Thus they commenced to enter our "houses," or live on our "ranches." With us when a person enters our house he becomes our guest, and we must treat him hospitably as long as he shows no hostile intentions. At the same time we expect him to return to us equal treatment for what he receives. Some of our Chiefs said, "These people wish to be partners with us in our country. We must, therefore, be the same as brothers to them, and live as one family. We will share equally in everything—half and half—in land, water and timber, etc. What is ours will be theirs, and what is theirs will be ours. We will help each other to be great and good."<sup>204</sup>

The chiefs went on to outline the tragic consequences that fell upon their people as result of ongoing and escalating violations from the miners, the settlers and the government officials towards the people who were indigenous to these lands. Therefore, in this meeting in Kamloops the chiefs called upon the Prime Minister of Canada to rectify the situation.

For the accomplishment of this end we and other Indian tribes of this country are now uniting and we ask the help of yourself and government in this fight for our rights. We believe it is not the desire nor policy of your government that these conditions should exist. We demand that our land question be settled, and ask that treaties be made between the government and each of our tribes, in the same manner as accomplished with the Indian tribes of the other provinces

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<sup>204</sup>Ibid.

of Canada, and in the neighboring parts of the United States. We desire that every matter of importance to each tribe be a subject of treaty, so we may have a definite understanding with the government on all questions of moment between us and them. In a declaration made last month, and signed by twenty-four of our chiefs (a copy of which has been sent to your Indian department) we have stated our position on these matters. Now we sincerely hope you will carefully consider everything we have herewith brought before you and that you will recognize the disadvantages we labor under, and the darkness of the outlook for us if these questions are not speedily settled.<sup>205</sup>

Apparently, Laurier listened to the message from the chiefs. He seemed intent on acting on their concerns, but, he lost the election and a conservative government took over, a government which seemed to hold no interest in the concerns of these chiefs.<sup>206</sup>

I suggest that the document created by these chiefs, along with the essay written by John Kelly, described in a previous chapter, should become required-reading for all Canadians, a staple in the educational curricula.<sup>207</sup> For a different kind of coming-together, of confluence, is put forward for this country of Canada, a coming-together that includes all of the people who move upon the land; and a coming together that, as John Kelly so aptly describes, also includes the animals, the fish, the birds and insects, and all other beings that move upon this land.

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It is evening, and I sit in a chair just outside my Kamloops hotel room watching the South Thompson River flow. Much life happens in this moment. A peregrine falcon flies over, all the other birds quietly disappear for the moment as she passes by. A little later, a goshawk is chased across the river by a quick, loud, cacophonous cooperation of crows and magpies. Redwing blackbirds and starlings, always alert, keep me company. The life of a river moves before me. The confluences of water and history associated with that river stay with me, haunting my work, my political leanings, my

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> John Kelly. 1995.

educational and therapeutic endeavours. Even my philosophical and spiritual loves and curiosities become much clearer in that moment. All is influenced by these confluences, here in Kamloops.

Speech acts wrested from  
Born by the river

Cecily Nicholson<sup>208</sup>

But now, a visit to the forest...

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<sup>208</sup> Nicholson. Ibid. 63.

# Experiment #2 – Ontologies of Forests: Arborescence, Rhizomes, and Two Women.

The Fraser's forest, within the range of the coastal rainfall, is a spectacle of energy and power as appalling as the river itself. Mindless it moves with sure purpose. Voiceless, it murmurs perpetually with the sound of shredded wind in the treetops and the hum of insects in the underbrush. Sightless, it discovers every open space, every cranny between the rocks where it can anchor its roots. Helpless before man's machines, it surges again the day after he has passed.

So it will always surge – dark at noonday, dank in the rain of winter, dry and crackling in the summer drought, panting under the smoke of autumn fire, forever whispering around you its dismal secrets.

From Bruce Hutchison, 1950.<sup>209</sup>

Freedom is not just freedom of the mind but also the rhizomatic play that can appear at the level of any of the components of the assemblage.

Felix Guattari<sup>210</sup>

If Your Soul Should Choose a Tree.

Chief Dan George.<sup>211</sup>

Hutchison, at least in part, was coming from a society and a time that placed significance on that which was thought of as human progress. Perhaps, if we listen beyond such ideas, we will discover that the forest is indeed not voiceless, as Hutchison claims, but instead contains uncountable voices. Often powerful voices (Hutchison did acknowledge the power of the forest). At times overwhelming voices. Perhaps something akin to the voices that might emerge from the Gaia talked about by Stengers and Latour;<sup>212</sup> voices emerging from earthly powers far beyond the influence of all human tinkering and

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<sup>209</sup> Bruce Hutchison, *Rivers of America: the Fraser*. Clarke, Irwin & Co. 1950. 202.

<sup>210</sup> Felix Guattari. *Lines of Flight: For Another World of Possibilities*. Trans. Andrew Goffey. Bloomsbury. 2016. 205.

<sup>211</sup> This is the title to a poem by Chief Dan George: Chief Dan George and Helmut Hirschall, *My Spirit Soars*. Hancock House. 2000. 56.

<sup>212</sup> Bruno Latour, in -- "Waiting for Gaia. Composing the Common World through Arts and Politics." *Equilibri* (16, no. 3, 2012); Bruno Latour. "Why Gaia is Not a God of Totality." *Theory, Culture & Society* 34, no. 2-3. 2017. 61-81; along with Isabelle Stengers -- "Gaia, the Urgency to Think (and Feel)." *Palestra no olóqui Os mil nomes de gaia: do Antropoceno à Idade da Terra. Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa* (2014). <http://arena-attachments.s3.amazonaws.com/318801/1b425e9ead662cac506077f9fd998318.pdf>, present a unique take on the

dreams of control, and far beyond what Bateson referred to as *conscious purpose*.<sup>213</sup> If we listen, perhaps we will hear this forest speak of powers, of influences, and of things far more alive than what Hutchison called, *dismal secrets*.

The title of this chapter, *Ontologies of Forests*, suggests that, in relation with the very forests of the Fraser River watershed, we just might be able to enter a conversation around possible worlds that come into being through our engagements with these arboreal realms. I propose that these forests, and our connections with these forests, can open new and unforeseen assemblages of life -- and potentials for life – for those who dare to linger and listen.

But first, a quick stop to consider an idea presented by Deleuze and Guattari. This is an idea that had a profound influence upon my own therapeutic and educational work.

## The Tree and the Rhizome

Make a rhizome. But you don't know what you can make a rhizome with, you don't know which subterranean stem is going to make a rhizome, or enter a becoming, people your desert. So experiment.

Deleuze and Guattari<sup>214</sup>

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari make a distinction between images of the *tree* and the *rhizome*.<sup>215</sup>

Beginning with the tree, they see forms of thought and social relations that are hierarchical and categorical in structure. Deleuze and Guattari make strong comments about the tree, they state:

We are tired of the tree. We must no longer put our faith in trees, roots, or radicels; we have suffered enough from them. The whole arborescent culture is founded on them, from biology to

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concept of Gaia. They suggest that the earth is not so much a mother earth, with inclinations to look after us, but rather she is the goddess, Gaia, who represents the powers of earth and the heavens, those powers that, if we don't learn to live with them, will turn against us and destroy us. Gaia, according to Latour and Stengers, is the set of forces connected with a living earth that has no respect for our all-too-human confidence and belief in our own influences.

<sup>213</sup> Gregory Bateson. 1979.

<sup>214</sup> Deleuze, Guattari, Massumi. 1987. 246.

<sup>215</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Brian Massumi. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia Vol. 2*: Trans. Brian Massumi. University of Minnesota Press. 1987.



linguistics. On the contrary, only underground stems and aerial roots, the adventitious and the rhizome are truly beautiful, loving or political.<sup>216</sup>

And Deleuze, this time with Parnet, articulates the image of the tree.

You set about opposing the rhizome to trees. And trees are not a metaphor at all, but an image of thought, a functioning, a whole apparatus that is planted in thought in order to make it go in a straight line and produce the famous correct ideas. There are all kinds of characteristics in the tree: there is a point of origin, seed, or centre; it is a binary machine or principle of dichotomy, with its perpetually divided and reproduced branchings, its points of arborescence; it is an axis of rotation which organizes things in a circle, and the circles round the centre; it is a structure, a system of points and positions which fix all of the possible within a grid, a hierarchical system or transmission of orders... it has a future and a past, roots and a peak, a whole history, an evolution, a development... Now there is no doubt that trees are planted in our heads: the tree of life, the tree of knowledge, etc. The whole world demands roots. Power is arborescent.<sup>217</sup>

For Guattari, the tree image becomes conceptualized into the term “arborescence. He provides an assemblage of arborescent words describing oppressive practices that lie firmly within the movements of contemporary capitalism. Such an assemblage of tree/arborescent words and terms includes: “arborescencing, finalization, ‘causalisation,’ gridding, limiting and anticipation of everything that claims to escape from dictatorship of signifying substance.”<sup>218</sup> Such an assemblage of grids, causation, completion, etc., is most certainly embedded in the institutions of education, on all levels.

In my own work, influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, I have linked the image of a tree to institutional thought and action. I have suggested that both the tree and the institution:

- are concerned with power and centrality -- trees and institutions both operate from a central core, with arms that branch off yet are always securely fastened to the central structure.
- are concerned with hierarchy and structure -- In both trees and institutions things ideally move up only one cell at a time, and things move down also one cell at a time. This form of cellular transmission bears resemblance to the lines of a well-structured flow-chart.
- focus upon upward growth and progress -- According to English legal traditions, institutions are treated as if they are persons. However, a person will be born, will live her life, and, in the end will die. Death is inescapable in her world. However, this is not so in the realms of institutions: successful institutions hold the promise of possibly living for many generations, if not potentially forever. Institutions are supposed to be resolute upon upward movement, upon progress.

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet. *Dialogues*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson & Barbara Habberjam. Columbia University Press. 1987. 24.

<sup>218</sup> Felix Guattari. *Lines of Flight: For Another World of Possibilities*. Trans. Andrew Goffey. Bloomsbury. 2016. 186.

- Institutional structures hold a seeming overpowering influence in the current world. They certainly must be taken into consideration within our movements within communal lives.<sup>219</sup>

The image of the tree is then compared, by Deleuze and Guattari, with the image of the *rhizome*.

In the same document I quoted above, I also described the rhizome:

This image connects us to realms that are tied to the communal.

- The rhizome is also a botanical image. It describes a certain kind of assemblage that connects together through networks of nodes and lines.
- Think potatoes, grass, poplar trees -- Many believe that the largest trees in the world are not sequoia or redwoods but rather poplar trees, for poplars are rhizomes. In the foothills of the Rocky Mountains one will notice that, in the fall, a large section of a hill will turn yellow, while the other sections are still green. These patches of poplar trees are actually one genetic organism, one large rhizome assemblage.
- Think weeds – almost every weed in your garden -- Rhizomes are productive spaces, enabling effective and flourishing movement through terrain and barriers often seen as impenetrable and impossible.
- Think of human creations such as telephone systems, the internet, and, to some extent, the power grid -- Human creations, even institutional creations are not always institutional in structure, sometimes they appear in rhizome form. This is especially true of some human creations that involve many diverse and loosely connected players.
- Rhizomes are typically found underground. They are not usually conspicuous -- If one opens the paper or turns on the evening news, one is primarily given stories and information pertinent to institutional life. Rhizome life is not usually considered news-worthy. Rhizome movements are powerful but are not as easily visible.
- Rhizomes are made of nodes and lines that connect the nodes -- Nodes connected with numerous lines which in turn connect to other nodes and line. Think the American interstate system. Think prairie dog towns. Imagine the ‘communal’ not as relations with local institutions, not as a realm of service institutions, but rather as rhizome connections, as lines connecting with people, places, animals, things. Think of our communal worlds as rhizome abundances.
- Rhizomes have no practical beginning, ending or centrality -- Imagine that one wanted to get rid of the crab grass in one’s lawn. The idea of going after the beginning grass, the one that started it all; or the latest frontiers of crab grass; or the crab grass, the boss– this type of thinking is insanity in the worlds of rhizomes. Rhizomes are not influenced by such linear and rank-oriented interests. Military-type might is notoriously ineffective at influencing rhizome community.
- Rhizomes are extremely difficult to destroy -- Rhizome in nature, or the communal rhizome– it is all most difficult to destroy. We must stop thinking of rhizome-like things as if they were vulnerable.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Christopher J. Kinman. "Two images: Rhizome and Gift-Exchange in Life and Service." *Positive Nations and Communities*. Springer Netherlands. 2014. 5.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid. 6-7.

For me, the rhizome became an epistemological and ontological guide through the work that I was doing with families and communities.<sup>221</sup> As an epistemological guide it gave direction as to where I should be looking for insight and assistance in my work with people and communities – I should be following people, and all living creatures, into the webs of relations that sustain their lives. As an ontological guide, the rhizome showed me a type of world that I was to acknowledge and move within, a world composed of innumerable lines of relationship, with these lines giving me and those I work with a sense of meaning and direction.

Deleuze and Guattari extolled the humble grass as the ultimate image of the rhizome -- an image of life growing *between* things, instead of being the point of singular, directed focus; an image of life as always *in the middle*; and an image of life never engrossed with apexes of power and hierarchy. They looked toward American writers such as Walt Whitman, whose book of poetry kept expanding throughout his lifetime, and whose book was always in the middle and never reached a culmination point. Whitman's book was called "Leaves of Grass."<sup>222</sup> They also looked toward Henry Miller, whom they quote as saying, "Grass is the only way out... it grows between and among things. The lily is beautiful, the cabbage is provender, the poppy is maddening – but the weed is rank growth..."<sup>223</sup> For Miller, the grass and the weeds both perform the same in-the-middle, in-between, burgeoning rhizome functions.

One never commences; one never has a tabular rasa; one slips in, enters in the middle...

Gilles Deleuze<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> The concept of rhizome was also important to other's practice. See: for research -- Gerrit Loots, Kathleen Coppens, and Jasmina Sermijn. "Practising a Rhizomatic Perspective in Narrative Research." *Doing Narrative Research* 2. 2013. 108-125; management -- M. Reardon, L. Sanzogni, and A. Poropat. "Towards a Rhizomatic Method for Knowledge Management." *International Journal of the Management* 5, no. 5. 2005. 159-168; global education -- Menatti, Laura. "A Rhizome of Landscapes: A Geophilosophical Perspective about Contemporary Global Spaces." In *Towards a New Baseline for Education in a Changing World. Landscape and Imagination. Conference, Paris*. 2013. 2-4.

<sup>222</sup> Walt Whitman. *Leaves of Grass*. Airmont Publishing Company. 1965.

<sup>223</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. 1987. 19.

<sup>224</sup> Gilles Deleuze. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Robert Hurley. City Lights. 1988. 123.

## Suzanne Simard, Trees and Fungi

However, I now believe that Deleuze and Guattari -- and I also, in my previous writing -- have perhaps missed a subtle but vital thought when it comes to rhizomes and trees. It took a woman forester from the University of British Columbia named Suzanne Simard to clearly articulate this idea. Simard didn't talk of Deleuze and Guattari at all, but she did present an important and nuanced picture of the relations that enable a tree to be able to live in a forest (and her emphasis was on the very forests of British Columbia with which I am now engaging with). It began for me in 2011 when a video of Simard was uploaded to YouTube.<sup>225</sup>

In that short film, Simard suggests that the trees of the forest are themselves dependent upon the numerous webs of fungal lines that move through the forest soils. She puts forward a forest that is invested with endless rhizome connections – the fungi in the forest floor perform these rhizome functions. The trees are not at all standing alone, every one of them is interconnected with the other trees, and with the other plants of the forest, and these connections are made through vast underground fungal channels.

She also talks about how the largest of trees within the forest, through these lines of fungi, pass on to the other trees and to the other lives of the forest, various nutrients, such as carbon and nitrogen. She calls these larger trees, “mother trees,” thereby providing a concept that displaces common, modern ideas about authority and leadership. She moves from leaders to mother trees, from hierarchical instruction and higher inspiration, to the passing on of nutrients within underground webs of relationship. This is similar to thinking I have encountered within indigenous communities about elders -- they must be honoured and attended to, not because of some authority they may intrinsically hold, but because they are indeed the carriers of the knowledges that are required for living with the

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<sup>225</sup> Suzanne Simard. “Mother Tree”. YouTube Video. 4:40. Posted (12/2011). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8SORM4dYG8&t=112s>.

land. The elders and the mother trees both, within their own ecological soils, pass on nutrients into the continuing communal/rhizome life.

In one short video Simard re-contextualizes the life of a tree, and the tree of life – for the tree no longer stands alone and separate; it no longer offers itself primarily as an object of hierarchy, institution and leadership; rather it sits resolutely within the complexities of rhizome worlds. The important warning inherent in the image of the tree, with Simard's vision of the forest, is not so much the relations to power and authority that the image can connote, and which Deleuze and Guattari draw our attention to -- though that is an important distinction. Rather, in Simard's forest vision, the single tree, standing on its own, finds itself removed from its life-giving relations, from its ecological settings, and becomes vulnerable and endangered. Therefore, I propose that the opposite of rhizome, in accordance with Simard's perspective, does not have to be the tree, as an image of unilateral authority. Rather, the opposite of the rhizome could be seen as the single entity, the single creature, the isolated organism (any organism or any thing), removed from its webs of life and nourishment. The opposite of rhizome is not just an image of supremacy and governance, as in Deleuze and Guattari's tree, it is also an image of an approaching death that comes through aloneness and separation.

It seems to me that Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the rhizome is beautifully expanded upon within Simard's vision, for, with this forest image -- rather than individual tree -- the connectivity of the rhizome moves beyond a single organism, and even beyond a single species, and occurs now through interspecies relations. The rhizome is no longer imagined primarily as a single genus, as it is assumed with the grass, but rather the rhizome is now performed through the connections between species, between fungi and trees, and all the other plants of the forest. It is *performed* through many lines of interspecies dependencies. The rhizome, therefore, becomes an essential and active force in the diversified ecologies of forest as it is also with human communities.

We are, therefore, no longer talking about a *tree of life*, instead we are talking about a *forest of life*; that is, a rhizome forest, an ecology inclusive of countless trees, the innumerable connecting lines of fungi, and all the other living relations attached within this arboreal realm. A kind of complex underworld, called into language by Canadian curriculum scholar and poet, Shirley Turner:

Opening  
to another environment  
a subterranean fungal ecosystem  
cultivation in a different tone  
a new melody  
dancing seeds to life  
where the rainforest rules.<sup>226</sup>

And a rhizome – though discussed in other words -- from Rilke. He presents a divinity composed of something akin to rhizome relations.

When I lean over the chasm of myself –  
it seems  
my God is dark  
and like a web: a hundred roots  
silently drinking.

This is the ferment I grow out of.

Rainer Maria Rilke<sup>227</sup>

## Diana Beresford-Kroeger and a World-Giving Forest

Another woman appears on the scene. Her name is Diana Beresford-Kroeger.<sup>228</sup> Like Simard, she also is a forester. Born in Ireland, an orphan, raised by foster parents who called her “the last child of our ancient Gaelic world.”<sup>229</sup> These caregivers passed on to her the necessary relations that further

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<sup>226</sup> Shirley Turner. "Dwelling in Poiesis." *Canadian Curriculum Studies: A Métissage of Inspiration/Imagination/Interconnection*. 2018. 216.

<sup>227</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, *A Year with Rilke: Daily Readings from the Best of Rainer Maria Rilke*. Trans/Ed. Joanna Macy & Anita Barrows. HarperOne. 2009.

<sup>228</sup> Diana Beresford-Kroeger. *Arboretum Borealis: A Lifeline of the Planet*. University of Michigan Press, 2010a; Diana Beresford-Kroeger. *The Global Forest*. Viking Press. 2010b.

<sup>229</sup> Beresford-Kroeger. 2010a. 1.

enabled her to understand the intricacies of the forest as well as to appreciate the living contexts of the people and other creatures she met and engaged with.

They taught me the ancient culture of their dying race amid the crowing of cocks and the clucking of laying hens. They taught me the cures and the survival tactics I would need for the future. They spoke of the Brehon Laws laid down by my own ancestors. They taught me the meaning of life and of love, a love that comes from the heart and encompasses nature with a passion. They told me about tears. They gave me their strength, their woolen hugs filled with the smells of milk and cream and honey.<sup>230</sup>

Beresford-Kroeger now lives in Canada and is well-respected as a scholar of forests.

The forests of British Columbia, according to Beresford-Kroeger -- including the forests that I am exploring within this thesis, those that lie within the Fraser watershed -- are part of a global system of forests surrounding the Northern part of the planet. This crown of trees around the North of the planet is called the *Boreal Forest*, named after the Greek god, Boreas, the “legendary god of the north wind...”<sup>231</sup> Beresford-Kroeger states that “These forests are seated upon the planet like a monk’s tonsure, trimmed, tight, and fully circumpolar.”<sup>232</sup>

Beresford-Kroeger discusses the tremendous earthly powers of the Boreal, claiming:

- It feeds the seas, making the waters around the Boreal forest incredibly rich and productive for all life – “The circumpolar runoff from the Boreal enriches the seas with nutrients in the spring. This fires up the invisible Cyanophyceae. These species are the foundations for all food.”
- The Boreal is a global cauldron of photosynthesis, “Nothing on earth compares to the evergreens of the Boreal Forests in managing the most efficient photosynthesis in the cold and on the leanest diet of light...”
- “Nothing compares to these forests in their ability to maintain billions, if not trillions, of tons of carbon dioxide bound in phenolic plant graves that lie on the forest floor.”
- “Nothing comes even close to the Boreal’s ability to maintain the thermal gradients of the saltwater conveyor belts of the great oceans of the world. It is on these moving saline belts that our global weather patterns depend.”
- “Finally, it is from this weather that atmospheric convection drips its water as fresh water for drinking, drop by drop, season by season. Indeed it is upon these global patterns of available moisture that our great civilizations of East and West have risen.”<sup>233</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid. 2.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid. 4-5.

These forests are therefore equipped with powers far beyond human abilities to truly comprehend, let alone for humans to adequately intervene. Not only is life created and supported through the rhizome fungal lines, as revealed by Simard (those lines which feed the specifics and intimacies of forest life and relationships), the forest-rhizome actively holds together diversities of worldly life through extensive global movements of air and water that the Boreal forests initiate. The Northern forests are vast webs of worldly generosity.

For Beresford-Kroeger, a person who holds firmly to the usefulness of scientific understanding, discovers a spirituality inherent in the movements of forest relations:

The forest is the environment that drives and fulfills the dream of each leaf in a vast rhythmic cycle called life. Nothing is outside. We are all of it in a unity that transcends the whole. Maybe, just maybe, this resonates of God. If that is so, then we are all His children, every earthworm, every virus, mammal, fish and whale, every fern, every tree, every man, woman, and child. One equal to another. Again and again.<sup>234</sup>

Ontologies of the forest? As we move through these great forests along the Fraser River watershed, new worlds open before us. Worlds connected by rhizome lines.

For those of us in the human services professions -- including education, healthcare, the therapeutic professions -- this suggests that the wellness, the possibilities, the learnings, the healings that we are searching for with those we work with are already present, moving in diverse rhizome realms, in the forests, other ecosystems, and the varied webs of human relations to which we, and those we are working with, are all connected. For none of us stand alone like the tree presented by Deleuze and Guattari. No, rather we are like Whitman's and Miller's grass, and Simard's interspecies fungi-forest relations, for we are all in the middle of living, in the middle of relationships, and we are all embedded in abundant rhizome worlds. Also, following Beresford-Kroeger, these webs of relations, these complex worlds that we find ourselves within, are capable of bringing health and healing, beauty and possibilities, to relations far beyond ourselves, far beyond the limits of our own bodies, minds, and

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<sup>234</sup> Beresford-Kroeger. 2010b. 5.



histories. Somehow, together we connect across the forests, and, through the flows of winds, streams and rivers, pass on health and wisdom to ecological relations far beyond anything we can now foresee; and relations far beyond our own vision and knowledges. And, in turn, we receive health and wisdom from other ecological contexts, from locations that may be distant from our present realms; from faraway and unknown places. Sets of relation that come along and touch our contemporary living relations, and, consequently, also our undisclosed futures.

These forests, therefore, propose for us a joint future – not a planned and executed world, but a future which we, at this point in time, cannot see or imagine. And, isn't that what a future is? If we knew in advance what the future would hold, it would be a present or a past, not a future. In the words of Elizabeth Grosz, "The task is not so much to plan for the future, organize our resources toward it, to envision it before it comes about, for this reduces the future to the present."<sup>235</sup> Perhaps, therefore, it is within these forests, these vast webs of relations, that we can discover, encounter, and become part of a future that is yet to come.

I close with the words of Snowber and Haytayan (two more Canadian curriculum scholars who are also poets), who explore possibilities – curriculum possibilities – that may come to life through our engagements with this very forest:

*What if our hands  
were our feet, touching  
bare naked the moss  
which welcomes us home  
as a creature among  
many micro-organisms?  
What would the world  
look like if we knew  
in the viscera, our place  
among the plant beings  
and they too  
were our teachers calling us*

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<sup>235</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely*. Duke, 2004. 261.

*not only to take care but be care.*<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Celeste Snowber and Tamar Haytayan. "Dwelling in Poiesis." *Canadian Curriculum Studies: A Métissage of Inspiration/Imagination/Interconnection*. 2018. 199.

# Dérive.Prayer -- #3: The North Thompson River Valley -- Kamloops to Valemount

dead tree standing sunned and whipped dry  
firewood lichen curls kindle

Cecily Nicholson<sup>237</sup>

How can we dance when our earth is turning?  
How do we sleep while our beds are burning?

Midnight Oil<sup>238</sup>

A question: What happens to the rhizome-world when this forest goes up in flames?

I leave the hotel in Kamloops early morning, heading north and east towards Valemount, about three and a half hours of driving. The road is wet from overnight showers, but the sky is clearing, the sun, here and there, breaks through. I follow the North Thompson River, which downstream, behind me, joins the Thompson and later becomes part of the Fraser. The name – North Thompson – is a remnant of early colonial days, but the river, it flows as it has for countless generations, no dams, few dikes. We follow upriver, a steady, easy drive – a joy of a drive.

About 40 – 45 mins into the trip we approach the town of Barrière. The land has transitioned from the dry, desert-like country around Kamloops into sparse ponderosa pine forests. These forests, in turn, transform into a terrain deeply scarred from previous years' forest fires. Dead, burned trees, still standing upright, surrounded, in a rather ironic manner, by the lush, green grasses and undergrowth that only a spring burn-site can offer.

A couple of memories return to me, as I pass through these burns – both memories of fire.

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<sup>237</sup> Nicholson. Ibid. 37.

<sup>238</sup> Rob Hirst, Jim Moginie, Peter Garrett, "Beds are Burning," *Diesel and Dust*. Sony/ATV Music. 1987.

## The First Memory

A few years ago, I was driving north and east from the Fraser Valley to the community of Lillooet. Once through the Fraser Canyon, at Lytton, I crossed over the clear waters of the Thompson River just before she enters the muddy Fraser. On the other side of the bridge, I was on Lytton First Nation territory. This was early-spring, the snow had recently melted, and there were men from the community purposely burning the dry grasses around their homes and community. Because there was still moisture in the soil from the winter snows, the surface grasses burned but the pines and other trees remained unscathed. I had heard rumours before about how, traditionally, the First Peoples of the interior of what is now called British Columbia used prescribed spring burns to protect their communities from the scorching fires that often moved over the land through the summer seasons. Fire – a respected friend and foe.

It was necessary for the people here at Lytton First Nation to work with fire in the spring time, to understand it and honour it as integral to the land itself, to make sure that they were working on the fire's side, and not operating against her. It was particularly important to establish relations with the fire after the snows had left, when she was amenable to being worked with, rather than waiting for the summer droughts when the fires would simply rage through, caring nothing for human well-being and planning. Sophisticated relations with the land, and with fire, were evident upon the land of the Lytton First Nation.

## The Second Memory

A few years ago, my father's home in Abbotsford, BC was being shut down in preparation for him moving to a nursing home. I had the bitter-sweet job of going through the large book collection

that he and my mother had collected through the decades. In the midst of this collection I found a small chapbook about the history of my childhood hometown of Melfort, Saskatchewan.<sup>239</sup>

I took it home with me. Within that book the story is told of the colonization of the Melfort area. The author describes how, prior to the intrusions of colonization, there were small woodlots dotting the prairies in this area. These woodlots were filled with old-growth timber, trees that could have been hundreds of years old. The Cree, who had traditionally been living upon this land, and had been harvesting those woodlots for generations, were then removed. The settlers came and occupied the land, transforming it into wheat-based farmland. However, after only a few years of the settlers' occupation, great fires passed through, burning everything in their way, including the grasses, the settlers' homes and farms, and the woodlots that had held the old-growth trees.

The book tells the story of an old Cree elder who told the author how, when they had been responsible for these lands, every spring, while the snow was still in the woodlots, but the surrounding grasses were drying out, they would purposely burn around the woodlots, consuming the flammable grasses and tinder. Because of the snow still in the woodlots, the fire stayed away from the trees. This ensured that, when the fires came through in the heat of the summer, there would be no fuel for them around the woodlots and the fires would be forced to pass by. The Cree people had clearly been actively involved in holding the integrity of these landscapes together through time. They were not simply people who roamed over the land, just passing through. No, they were involved in sculpting the land that they moved upon. When they were removed, the land, as it had been known, was forever changed. This brings home what a Sts'ailes elder recently said to me, "The land and the people are one." Such words are not just a statement of a truth, but a calling that must be lived up to.

Back to my trip from Kamloops to Valemount. This land I am travelling upon -- I am unfamiliar with it. I haven't travelled upon it before, and I do not know its histories very well. I do not know the

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<sup>239</sup> Unfortunately this book has become misplaced – I no longer have a copy in my possession.

indigenous connections to this place, other than a small amount that I had been able to read. But, I am certain that these lands that look so wild and free, were also formed, molded, and held by the peoples who, for innumerable generations, lived with and upon these lands and waters. I think of how often we all travel upon land without knowing even its simplest of histories. There is much to learn.

## A Continuing Journey: a Return to the Fraser

Somewhere just south of Valemount, I leave the watershed of the North Thompson Valley. The streams that I drive over now no longer enter the North Thompson, rather they all go northward directly into the Fraser, herself. Just outside of Valemount the Fraser and I reacquaint ourselves. The river here is a young and vigorous flow. Tomorrow, I follow her to the headwaters, and beyond.

But, I began this section with a question: What happens with the rhizome when this forest goes up in flames? Well, we could limit ourselves to a story of destruction, an accelerated destruction for which we and our ancestors who came before us clearly have some responsibility. We could enter a process of lamentation – which is a tried and true biblical tradition. But, we also can carefully attend to the land, and witness and encourage the rhizome’s organic return. I remember that intense green spring growth around the charcoal trees in the burn near Barrière – for rhizomes return. We discover this rhizome-return in new ways. For new sets of relations come to life: new plants (successions of plants beginning with fireweed and then moving into new aspen growths – both fireweed and aspens are rhizomes), new fungi (the morels arrive the first spring after a fire season), new assemblages of people and creatures and land, together, coming together, finding renewed and creative relations that can sustain and give a future. Is this, perhaps, not a large part of our task in today’s scorched world -- to discover and enter-into the new and vigorous rhizome worlds (both worlds that we sometimes call *natural* and other times call *human*) coming alive around us?

# Experiment #3 –Flights of Ecstasy and a Will to Power

I am learning to see something new. In addition to sky and land, a third thing has equal significance: the air.

Rainer Maria Rilke<sup>240</sup>

Weary of seeking had I grown,  
So taught myself the way to find:  
Back by the storm I once was blown,  
But follow now, where drives the wind.

Fredrich Nietzsche<sup>241</sup>

In the beginning, lyrical wisdom -- something more than the poetic, where words and rhythm, voice and land, breath and history come together, creating a pulsing ontology of joy. Something is produced in the cauldron of high mountain air. Some might think of this as an unconcealed innocence, but I see it as something much more.

He left yesterday behind him, you might say he was born again.  
You might say he found a key for every door.  
When he first came to the mountains, his life was far away,  
On the road and hanging by a song,  
But the strings already broken, and he doesn't really care,  
It keeps changing fast, and it don't last for long.

And the Colorado Rocky Mountain high, I've seen it raining fire in the sky,  
The shadows from the starlight are softer than a lullaby,  
Rocky Mountain high, Colorado. Rocky Mountain high.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke. 2009. p.260.

<sup>241</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science*. Trans. Thomas Common. Mineola. 2006. 3.

<sup>242</sup> John Denver, "Rocky Mountain High," *Rocky Mountain High*. Sony/RCA Victor. 1972.

## Lines of Flight and Will to Power

Before we continue with this lyrical and affective encounter, this *high* connected to the mountain air, we for a moment focus upon what Deleuze and Guattari call “lines of flight.”<sup>243</sup> For, I am compelled to believe that these rocky mountain *highs* and *lines of flight* are strongly connected. In this context, these lines of flight are not seen as lines of escape, that is, they are not acts of liberation from some identified oppression or evil. These are not lines of critique, finding ways to undo that which we have discovered to be sullied or undesirable. No, these lines of flight, as they are being used here, are something closer to flows of rapture, collective forces pushing bodies outwards and upwards, perhaps something close to what Nietzsche calls a “will to power.”<sup>244</sup> <sup>245</sup> These lines of flight are certainly more than Schopenhauer's “will to life,”<sup>246</sup> and most definitely more than a *will to survival*. For life in these mountains is able to move beyond, even if for moments, the heavy weight of needs, lacks, and their accompanying ethics of survival. This is not a platonic move, a distancing from the darkness of Plato's cave toward higher, more visible and appropriate planes.<sup>247</sup> Neither are we referring to Old Testament lines of flight -- exodus lines, liberating from the tyrannies of an Egypt-like authority. For the lines of flight I am suggesting here are not escaping anything, and certainly not trying to escape the earth. These are flights towards, through and within an earthly and immanent bliss and power; and that is if, and only if, we consider the earthly to be inclusive of the air, the winds, and the ecstasies of the heights.

Such lines of flight, or wills to power, are an experience that the singer-songwriter John Denver (whom I quote above) may have known more than most. For, in his shortened life, he submitted to a pull that lured him toward the skies, and towards those living creatures of the skies.

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<sup>243</sup> Deleuze and Guattari. 1987.

<sup>244</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*. Penguin. 2003.

<sup>245</sup> Nietzsche contrasted the will to *survive*, which he saw at work in Darwin's thinking, with the *will to power*, which he imagined to be more prevalent in life than survival -- Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*. Penguin. 1968. 75-76.

<sup>246</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Presentation: Volume I*. Routledge. 2016.

<sup>247</sup> As found in: Plato, and Stephen Halliwell. *Republic 10*. Warminster, UK: Aris & Phillips. 1988.



I am the eagle, I live in high country  
In rocky cathedrals that reach to the sky.  
I am the hawk, and there's blood on my feathers.  
But time is still turning, they soon will be dry.  
And all those who see me, and all who believe in me  
share in the freedom I feel when I fly.

Come dance with the west wind  
And touch on the mountain tops.  
Sail o'er the canyons and up to the stars.  
And reach for the heavens  
And hope for the future  
and all that we can be  
And not what we are.<sup>248</sup>

This song, “The Eagle and the Hawk,” was written by Denver for a film he made about raptors -- eagles and hawks -- a film that was never released. The song captures the affective movements that the eagle and the hawk are familiar with; as well as the affective movements of those of us who, like Denver, might wish to approach such flights as those of the eagle and the hawk. It is no surprise that John Denver’s death came about as he was attempting to fly like the eagle and the hawk – an ultra-light plane he was operating malfunctioned and crashed into the ocean.<sup>249</sup>

## Continuing into the Heights

In my journey, I continue into the heights. Leaving the town of Valemount, crossing the upper reaches of the Fraser River, I head up the Yellowhead highway toward the Great Divide -- a geographical event that splits the continent of North America into two, while also marking the border between British Columbia and Alberta.

It is upon this land that I also enter this “Rocky Mountain High.” I experience it again, for it is not new for me. I have felt this before. In my younger years – much of my late teens and twenties -- I lived in the province of Alberta and travelled to the Rocky Mountains whenever I could. Whether

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<sup>248</sup> John Denver, “The Eagle and the Hawk,” *Aerie*. Sony/RCA Victor. 1971.

<sup>249</sup> John Collis. *John Denver: Mother Nature's Son*. Random House. 2011.

walking, driving, riding a mountain bike, skiing the slopes, or just sitting and contemplating this altitudinal world, a joy would inevitably occupy my body, and an experience would connect me, as it did Denver, with the eagles, the hawks, as well as the ravens and the other creatures of flight that inhabit this land and this air. I knew of this joy that was able to lift bodies, many bodies.

## From Yesterday to Today

There are differences between this day and my younger days. One primary difference being that I am now more aware that this land, and the air, is not just occupied by birds and animals, it is also occupied, with long historical claims, by peoples. The first peoples in this region – particularly the Dakelhne and the Secwepemc -- assert ancient relations with these mountain lands, waters and airs. They also occupy special relations with the eagles, hawks and ravens of this country.<sup>250</sup> I remember as a child being driven to Banff and Jasper National Parks with my family, and we stopped on the side of the road, some distance outside of Banff to get our pictures taken with a local indigenous elder (probably of the Stony Tribe) dressed in full ceremonial regalia. He was trying to make a few bucks by getting pictures taken with tourists. We were those tourists, the pictures were taken, and the money changed hands. I remember, he wore eagle feathers in his headdress. I am now much more aware that this land that I took holiday upon with my family, this very territory I am on this day, and even the air that I travel through, is and continues to be occupied by various first peoples.

I have also come to appreciate the knowledge that this land, and even its atmosphere, is also occupied by the ancestors of these people. The memories of all those who came before are marked into the landscapes and move in these winds and waters. Their bones too. The relations of the peoples to the land is complex, but these relations are alive and, if we listen carefully, we discover them written into the very soils, stones, snows, creatures, flows of water and air that we now encounter. It takes

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<sup>250</sup> See the following: Government of Canada, *First Nations of British Columbia* (map). [https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-BC/STAGING/texte-text/fnmp\\_1100100021018\\_eng.pdf](https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-BC/STAGING/texte-text/fnmp_1100100021018_eng.pdf)

time, care and a willingness to learn and engage, to come to appreciate even a fraction of these land/people relations.

But for now, a return to the heights.

## Eagles into the Heights

I have come to understand this turn to the experience of the mountain air, this high, in a profound way from the eagles, in another context altogether. Every November and December, out towards the coast, within Sts'ailes First Nation territory, particularly along the Harrison River and the Dewdney Slew (both waterways flow into the Fraser) the bald eagles return in epic numbers to feed upon the chum salmon that spawn along these waterways. I have been driving to Sts'ailes twice a week for the last 26 years and, through this time, have been closely watching the movements of these eagles. I have seen how, in the early morning, the eagles feed upon the dead salmon; then, when the daytime winds start to blow, and the updrafts awaken, the eagles take to the skies in vast numbers. If the winds are especially strong, the eagles soar upon the updrafts all the way to the very tops of the local mountains. You can see them as tiny dots moving in and out of sight through the altitude. Why do they do this? Certainly not for food – there is no shortage of nourishment at this time of year. Certainly not to conserve energy – there is no such need in this time and place. And, neither for sexual exploits -- this is not yet the season for eagles' mating activities. I have come to believe that the eagles do this mid/late morning flight for the sheer joy of it, for the pure elation of riding these winds, and of riding them together. If you watch carefully you will see as they move among these heights that they will often spar and jostle with each other, sometimes, for a brief moment, they even lock talons and, held together, spin like a propeller through the air.

Only when they spread their wings,  
do they stir the air –  
as if God with wide sculptor's hands  
were turning pages

in the hidden book of first things.<sup>251</sup>

Perhaps such spectacles are as close as we can come to witnessing the will to power that Nietzsche attempted to bring to the world. The will to power -- in this context -- becoming evident amidst unbridled movements of joyful and ecstatic flight. A kind of ecological impetus, unimpaired by lacks, harnessed in these mountains by creatures of flight, the eagles and ravens. Such wills and powers are evident in the lyrics of Bruce Cockburn:

Go higher, go higher where the wind is all  
In the bright sky, bright sky

Where the bullets get tired and fall  
In the bright sky, bright sky

They fly out of vision taking part of my soul  
In the bright sky, bright sky

Well, maybe together we can touch down whole  
In the bright sky, bright sky<sup>252</sup>

## An Injunction

So, in response to this high mountain air, I propose an injunction. Let us bring in the joy -- or, more appropriately, let us move outwards, upwards, towards such ecstatic flows. Let us return to the joys, reclaim those moments and places of ecstasy that the modern world has so often stolen or hidden.

We can return to such joys, even in our therapeutic endeavours. Perhaps we can actually reclaim the therapeutic outside of the gloom of deficits and pathologies, outside of the internalizations of individualisms, outside of the bureaucratic burdens of pretending we can fix that which we are told is broken? Perhaps, we can move towards practices, forms of engagement, that find place within the heights for the joys, the powers, the creations, the wills that life can fling our way?

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<sup>251</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, is here writing about angels. I am using his words for the flights of the eagles -- and why not turn the eagles and the angels into the same creature? Rilke, "Angels." Ibid. 267.

<sup>252</sup> Bruce Cockburn. "Bright Sky." *Further Adventures of*. True North Records. 1978.

A will to joy, a will to the powers of this earth. Far beyond the category productions of education. Far beyond the ongoing constructions of deficits, the assembling of everything done wrong, the marking of everything that children are doing wrong, families are doing wrong, the measuring of all that teachers are doing wrong. A wrong-noticing, as a kind of professionalized, institutionalized fetishism, that seems to force all things downwards, and not toward the soils and waters of the earth, but to something all-too heavy and cumbersome already entrenched in modern thought and life. And now a will to joy, and an awakening to powers found in the updrafts rising alongside the rocky peaks, a rolling skyward toward the lofty highs that the raptors and the ravens love, the elevations that the autumn geese are familiar with. We move to such exalted places and we discover, we rediscover, our earth's powers, and the wills and joys that accompanies these earthly movements.

Such joys appear in the mountain air – certainly -- but they also flow amidst many of life's movements. They can be found on the waves of the ocean, the flows of the river, amidst prairie winds. These joys can also be encountered in our gatherings, in songs, the rhythms of drums, in electronic beats, the pounding and sexualized intensities of rock and roll and all its permutations. These powers can be found in Beethoven's Ode to Joy or his Fifth Symphony, as they can in the gospel choir or songs around a campfire. They can be found in coffee shops, in all sorts of public spaces, in enlivening conversations, in spaces of play. These joys can be found with shared food and beverages. They can be found in every excuse for communal celebration, as they can in the aloneness of a clear night sky and the contemplation of a single piece of art. Please, let us go to such places, and go repeatedly. Let us go to such places in our educational and therapeutic endeavors. Let us travel beyond simple survival, beyond the inadequacies required by modernity, to places where the earthly joys can truly fly.

Today, it is to the high mountain airs that I go. To join with these flows. Tomorrow I begin a return downstream, towards the sea.

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When you ride out of the shining sky  
To claim the ones who love you  
Can I go with you?  
Can I go with you?

When the angel shouts from the heart of the sun  
And the living water flows down  
Can I go with you?  
Can I go with you?

When the earth and stars melt like ice in the spring  
And a million voices sing praise  
Can I go with you?  
Can I go with you?

Bruce Cockburn<sup>253</sup>

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Hear the wind moan  
In the bright diamond sky,  
These mountains are waiting  
Brown-green and dry.  
I'm too old for the term  
But I'll use it anyway,  
I'll be a child of the wind  
Till the end of my days.

Bruce Cockburn<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Bruce Cockburn. "Can I Go with You." *Ibid.* 1978.

<sup>254</sup> Bruce Cockburn. "Child of the Wind." *Nothing but a Burning Light.* True North Records. 1991.

## Dérive.Prayer -- #4: Kamloops or Quesnel?

My pain is self-chosen  
At least, so the prophet says  
I could either burn  
Or cut off my pride and buy some time  
A head full of lies is the weight, tied to my waist  
The river of deceit pulls down, oh oh  
The only direction we flow is down  
Down, oh down  
Down, oh down

Mad Season<sup>255</sup>

It was a death march. The following poem from 1858 sets the tone, bringing to life the feverish movements associated with the Fraser River goldrush -- an event that was just commencing at the time this poem was published.

What's the matter? What a clatter!  
All seem Fraser-river mad,  
On they're rushing, boldly pushing,  
Old and young, good and bad:

Lawyers, doctors, judges, proctors,  
Politicians, stout and thin;  
Some law-makers, some law-breakers,  
Rogues as well as honest men.

Hurly-burly! What a hurry!  
All confusion! 'Tis a sin  
To see the sacrifice they're making  
For the Fraser river tin.

Poor exchanges, price it ranges  
Low, and profits they are small:  
But they care not, for they can not  
Crush the Fraser-river call.

Ballot-stuffers, steamers-puffers  
Bribed with money – sums untold;  
They may stick to it, but they'll rue it,  
If the people find they're "sold."

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<sup>255</sup> Barrett Martin, John Saunders, Layne Staley, Mike McCready. "River of Deceit." Mad Season, *Above*. Columbia. 1995.

Picks and shovels, washing cradles,  
Packing saddles, pans and bags –  
On they rush by every steamer,  
“Packed like pickled port in kegs.”<sup>256</sup>

A new event was encroaching upon the land, beckoning large numbers of profit-seeking souls to the River. This event led to devastating consequences.

The men swarmed in.

On March 23, 1858, the first big strike was made. A party of miners stopped for dinner on a sand bar 10 miles north of Hope. One, a man named Hill, noticed particles of gold in the moss at his feet. A panning yielded some nuggets. The bar, appropriately named Hills Bar, was immediately divided into 25 foot squares and digging began. Before the end of the season, they had taken \$2,000,000 from the sand.

By June 1<sup>st</sup>, bitten by the gold bug, 10,000 men had struggled up the river to Hope and beyond. Literally “leaving no stone unturned” they scoured the river banks both above and below the little fort.

They were the vanguard of more gold-crazy hordes. On June 7, the first steamer to reach Hope – the Surprise – docked with the advance guard of another 15,000.

Frank W. Anderson<sup>257</sup>

The majority who came to the Fraser seeking gold in the late 1850s and early 1860s reached their destination via the West Coast. Originating in the American East, they navigated south from the Eastern USA, on the Atlantic seaboard, trekked west by land through Panama, and sailed north via the Pacific. In the wake of the failed California gold rush, a number of miners joined this northern exodus in San Francisco. All these men made their way to Victoria on Vancouver Island, over the Georgia Strait to the mainland (often on hand-made canoes) and up the river to Fort Langley.<sup>258</sup> Continuing upstream into the Fraser Canyon, and beyond, they staked claims upon the river’s shores and tributaries seeking for gold.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> “The New Yellow-Fever,” *Bulletin*, 19, June 1858. 3. I discovered this poem in a book about the Fraser River goldrush -- Daniel Marshall, *Claiming the Land: British Columbia and the Making of the New El Dorado*. Ronsdale Press. 2018. 7.

<sup>257</sup> Frank W. Anderson, *The Fraser Canyon: Valley of Death*. Frontier Publishing Ltd., 1968. 7.

<sup>258</sup> They were almost all men who made this trip.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*



But, there was another group, the overlanders, who came from the East.<sup>260</sup> They were led by two overly-adventurous brothers: Thomas and Robert McMicking of Welland County, Ontario.<sup>261</sup> In 1862 they left eastern Canada with a group of about 150 men (one woman was part of this group). This first phase of the trip was made by a means of several modes of transportation but executed primarily by American rail. They all convened at the destination of Fort Gary (Winnipeg). From there, they packed into covered wagons to journey west all the way to a place that later was known as Edmonton. Trading their wagons for pack horses and, with the help of indigenous guides, they passed through the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains and through what is these days called Jasper National Park. Traversing the Great Divide and heading downwards they stopped at a stay-over called, Tête Jaune Cache -- a location on the upper reaches of the Fraser River which is close to current day Valemount.

At this stop decisions had to be made. Their destination was an area along the Fraser known as the Cariboo, and there were two options that they could see as to how to get there. The first option was via the Fraser. The Cariboo was supposed to be somewhere downstream from them, on the Fraser. There was risk in this decision however, for the Fraser, at this point, was not heading west at all but was flowing north. The other option was to go overland, directly west, over the mountains to the Cariboo. They split up into two groups, with each group taking one of these routes.

Both decisions were fateful.

For those who followed the Fraser a number of them died on route The Fraser River was no friend to these wanderers -- the trip was a dangerous and merciless venture. After running north, the Fraser veered west to Fort George (now Prince George, BC), and then south towards the area of the

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<sup>260</sup> The story of the overlanders was perhaps first sketched out (though in a rather brief manner) in one of the earliest books detailing British Columbia history (first published in 1894): Alexander Begg, *History of British Columbia: From its Earliest Discovery to the Present Time*: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd. 1972.

<sup>261</sup> See, Barry M. Gough. "Overlanders of 1862," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2006. Retrieved from <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/overlanders-of-1862#>; and Gerry Burnie. "Overlanders of 1862," *Interesting Canadian History*, 2013. Retrieved from <https://interestingcanadianhistory.wordpress.com/2013/06/29/overlanders-of-1862/>

supposed goldfields. Somehow, the majority of them made it all the way to Quesnel in the Cariboo, though they were all much worse for the wear.

The second group ended up abandoning their direct, westward attempt over the mountains – they discovered the impassability of the dense western forests. Instead, they traveled south by raft down the North Thompson river (the same river that I followed upstream on my trip from Kamloops to Valemount). This is not a waterway suitable for large groups traveling on wooden rafts. As with those who traveled the Fraser, this group also suffered the loss of lives. The entire trip was fraught with difficulties, injuries and death. However, by October of 1862 most of these travelers arrived at Kamloops. The one woman who made the trip had been pregnant and gave birth just after arriving in Kamloops.

Following these two arduous trips hardly any of them found gold. We could argue that they had succumbed to the emptiness and heartbreak of the capitalist tease. There was an elusive promise of wealth-for-the-taking in those mountains; but that's not what they found, instead they encountered tragedy, poverty, and, for some, untimely deaths. In those days the misfortunes of such capitalist ventures was often clothed in the victorious and romanticized language of exploration. Such irony – misfortune and progress in a tidy package -- was clearly articulated in singer/songwriter, Gordon Lightfoot's trilogy about the development of the railway across Canada (the railroad was completed about 20 years after the goldrush years).

Oh, the song of the future has been sung,  
all the battles have been won,  
On the mountain tops we stand,  
all the world at our command,  
We have opened up the soil  
with our teardrops and our toil.

For there was a time in this fair land when the railroad did not run,  
when the wild majestic mountains stood alone against the sun.  
Long before the white man and long before the wheel,  
when the green dark forest was too silent to be real,

when the green dark forest was too silent to be real,  
And many are the dead men too silent... to be real.<sup>262</sup>

The same silence of the dead men could equally apply to the Fraser River gold rush, for overwhelmingly it produced devastation to lives, hopes, and financial security for those who succumbing to its lure. This silence of the dead men also followed the search for gold in other parts of the Americas. Eduardo Galeano describes this rush as it moved upon the lands of South America, as typified in the search for the golden lake, sometimes named El Dorado<sup>263</sup>.

Spaniards, Portuguese, Englishmen, Frenchmen, Germans have spanned abysses that the American gods dug with nails and teeth; have violated forests warmed by tobacco smoke puffed by the gods; have navigated rivers born of giant trees the gods tore out by the roots; have tortured and killed Indians the gods created out of saliva, breath, or dream. But the fugitive gold has vanished and always vanishes into the air, the lake disappeared before anyone care reach it. El Dorado seems to be the name of a grave without coffin or shroud.<sup>264</sup>

As is clear in Galeano's words, the movements of these early capitalist explorers were not just destructive to their own lives and relations, but also marked an entryway for forces that severely misshaped the land herself, as well as interrupted the lives of the peoples who occupied these lands. The presence of explorers in search of gold opened the door to tremendous intrusions upon land and people.

In 1910, a letter was written by chiefs of the first nations occupying the interior of British Columbia -- this letter was directed to the prime minister of Canada and was provided to him prior to a joint meeting between the chiefs and the prime minister in Kamloops of that year.<sup>265</sup> In this letter the

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<sup>262</sup> Gordon Lightfoot. "Canadian Railroad Trilogy." *The Way I Feel*. United Artists. 1967.

<sup>263</sup> Marshall. 2018. directly connects the Fraser River gold rush to the El Dorado of South America.

<sup>264</sup> Eduardo Galeano, *Memory of Fire. Vol. 2, Faces and Masks*. Translated by Cedric Belfrage. Pantheon. 1987. 4-5.

<sup>265</sup> This letter was previously quoted in Dereve Prayer -- #2. Because of its clear significance in the context of this particular section, I offer it here a second time: "We were friendly and helped these whites also, for had we not learned the first whites had done us no harm? Only when some of them killed us we revenged on them. Then we thought there are some bad ones among them, but surely on the whole they must be good. Besides they are the queen's people. And we had already heard great things about the queen from the 'real whites.' We expected her subjects would do us no harm, but rather improve us by giving us knowledge, and enabling us to do some of the wonderful things they could do. At first they looked only for gold. We know the latter was our property, but as we did not use it much nor need it to live by we did not object to their searching for it. They told us, "Your country is rich and you will be made wealthy by our coming. We wish just to pass over your lands in quest of gold." Soon

chiefs talk about their relations with the goldminers with their capitalist intentions. They stated that, at first, they were open to these newcomers, for they had experienced good relations with the white fur traders who had preceded the gold-seekers -- the interior chiefs called these mostly French-Canadian fur traders the "real whites." Things changed dramatically when the gold miners arrived.

The decisions these Overlanders made were fateful, leaving marks that these days we might call *trauma* upon their lives, relations and futures. But, the actions of the overlanders also had influences upon land and people far beyond the specifics of their own tragic trip to the goldfields. The particular sufferings the overlanders experienced came in response to a submission to unfettered capitalist desires, and the scars upon land and peoples were also the consequences of such desires. Perhaps this calls for a note of caution?

We can argue that a turning of the eye toward the traumas that have affected individual human lives, and a more general turning to the language of trauma, might lead to an internalization and psychologizing of realities that are more appropriately spread out into a larger world. For these experiences we call trauma are much more than private feelings, however troubling the feelings may be, they are usually events that are political and ecological in nature. The turning to a language of trauma might lead to an obscuring of: the worldly consequences of actions and histories, consequences that at times can devastate lands and peoples; as well as current political realities, also spread upon the land, that must be attended to if people, and the tangle of relations that they find themselves within, are going to be allowed to somehow move beyond these devastations, and not repeat them. I maintain,

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they saw the country was good, and some of them made up their minds, to settle it. They commenced to take up pieces of land here and there. They told us they wanted only the use of these pieces of land for a few years, and then would hand them back to us in an improved condition; meanwhile they would give us some of the products they raised for the loan of our land. Thus they commenced to enter our 'houses,' or live on our 'ranches.' With us when a person enters our house he becomes our guest, and we must treat him hospitably as long as he shows no hostile intentions. At the same time we expect him to return to us equal treatment for what he receives." Kanakabarband.ca. "The Memorial to Wilfred Laurier: Celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1910 – 2010." <http://www.kanakabarband.ca/downloads/memorial-to-sir-wilfred-laurier.pdf>.

along with others, that experiences we identify as “trauma” must be perceived in the context of political, colonizing, ecological, and capitalist histories and influences.<sup>266</sup> Perhaps we need to turn to new ways of talking about struggles and suffering, new forms of speech that take seriously the movement of thoughts and affects upon the lands and waters of our earth, new forms of speech that can be found embedded in ecological, historical and political worlds?

David Treuer, in a CBC Radio, Ideas podcast talks about the need for discourse about indigenous peoples to move “beyond tragedy.”<sup>267</sup> As he more fully articulates in his book, “The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee,” the language of tragedy is grossly inadequate in that it is not able to capture the living heartbeat of his people.<sup>268</sup> It leaves them as if dead, or at least as if lost to any meaningful involvement in the modern world. As I, in this *Dérive Prayer*, challenge the dependence on the language of trauma (not in any way denying the imposition of traumatic events on human lives and relations), so Treuer challenges the manner that a dependency upon a language of tragedy limits the movements, and perceptions of, indigenous lives and communities.

Jeanette Armstrong states that in her language, the Okanagan language, “When the phrase ‘people without hearts’ is used, it refers to collective disharmony and alienation from land. It refers to those who are blind to self-destruction, whose emotion is narrowly focused on their individual sense of well-being without regard to the well-being of others in the collective.”<sup>269</sup> But, perhaps, the words

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<sup>266</sup> See: Derek Summerfield. "A Critique of Seven Assumptions behind Psychological Trauma Programmes in War-Affected Areas." *Social Science & Medicine*. 1999. Rania Kassab Sweis. "Children as Biological Sufferers? The Paradox of International Medical Aid for Homeless Children in Cairo." *Childhood* 24, no. 4. 2017. 502-516. Also see: Oliva Goldhill. "Palestine's Head of Mental Health Services says PTSD is a Western Concept." *Quartz*. Jan 13, 2019. <https://qz.com/1521806/palestines-head-of-mental-health-services-says-ptsd-is-a-western-concept/?fbclid=IwAR0MwAzWhurYjGacrwyVLZmPskSmkfGH7y2414DcBYHzbem7X-WODn5NOFs> -- An article examining the situation of psychiatry from Palestine, focusing on the thought and work of “Samah Jabr, chair of the mental health unit at the Palestinian Ministry of Health and one of just 32 psychiatrists in the Palestinian territories...”

<sup>267</sup> David Treuer. “Beyond Tragedy: The Living History of Native America.” *Ideas: CBC Radio*. Feb 20, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/beyond-tragedy-the-living-history-of-native-america-1.5026269>.

<sup>268</sup> David Truer. *The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present*. Penguin. 2019.

<sup>269</sup> Jeanette Armstrong. 2005.

“without hearts,” might refer, not just to individual people, but also to *ideas or forms of thought and living* that are without heart. For we have seen how the hyper-capitalist pull of the Fraser goldrush, or the search for El Dorado, were ideas that yanked the hearts out of human lives, communities, and the land.

My friend and mentor, the late Lynn Hoffman, in her later years insisted on bringing to light the workings of the Occupy Wallstreet movement.<sup>270</sup> She reminded us of warnings coming from the young people connected with that movement. Hoffman heard these young people as claiming that contemporary hyper-capitalism removes certain people (most people) from important conversations about life, ecologies, economics, and governance. This Occupy Wallstreet movement insisted that all people be permitted into the conversation, and, with great resistance from the powers that be, they took actions that called for a more inclusive dialogue.

Bruno Latour takes this even a step further, and claims that the earth herself, or Gaia, as he calls this living earth, must also be at the table.<sup>271</sup> We must find ways, he suggests for the peoples of the earth, as well as Gaia herself, to also have a voice in this conversation. For Latour, this is not just a simple, idealistic concept, but rather a reality that we are obliged to come to terms with. We are called upon to find ways whereby Gaia can be at the table and be in conversation, along with the rest of us, in finding ways to continue-on together.

Our sorrows can and must be acknowledged, but it is essential to find ways to connect them -- or perhaps more appropriately -- to reconnect them, to the sufferings and experiences of all peoples, including those frequently removed from the conversation. And, a reminder, it is not just about

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<sup>270</sup> Hoffman's thoughts on Occupy Wallstreet are shared in a documentary film: Christopher Kinman with Lynn Hoffman. "All Manner of Poetic Disobedience: Lynn Hoffman and the Rhizome Century." 2012.

<sup>271</sup> See: Bruno Latour. *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Polity Press. 2018; Bruno Latour. *An Attempt at a Compositionist Manifesto*. Gato Negro. 2016; Bruno Latour. "Waiting for Gaia. Composing the Common World through Arts and Politics." *Equilibri* 16, no. 3. 2012.

connecting to the sufferings of all peoples, but also to their powers, their joys, and the possibilities inherent in their worlds.

Adding to this, we must connect beyond the human conversations, we must labour to find ways whereby Gaia herself might be able to be brought actively into the conversation. We have work to do!

It is now before Gaia that we are summoned to appear: Gaia, the odd, doubly composite figure made up of science and mythology used by certain specialists to designate the Earth that surrounds us and that we surround, the Möbius strip of which we form both the inside and the outside, the truly global Globe that threatens us even as we threaten it.

Bruno Latour<sup>272</sup>

Resuming the journey, we leave Valemount, traveling downstream with the Fraser. We go north through the town of McBride, then west through the city of Prince George, following the turn of the river south through Quesnel, Williams Lake, 100 Mile House, and eventually we arrive at the settlement of Lillooet. It is at Lillooet where we, in the next chapter, choose to linger.

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<sup>272</sup> Bruno Latour. *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*. Harvard University Press. 2013. 9.

# Experiment #4 -- The Thing in the Bushes: From Commodities to Ecologies; Re-Imagining the Work of Human Services

I write not with the hand alone,  
My foot would write, my foot that capers,  
Firm, free and bold, it's marching on  
Now through the fields, now through the papers.

Friedrich Nietzsche<sup>273</sup>

## Forward

The following experiment was first published in the British, peer-reviewed journal, *Human Systems: The Journal of Therapy, Consultation and Training*.<sup>274</sup> This current version has been re-edited, reformatted, and reworked to fit into this thesis project. It is similar, but not identical to the journal publication.

Two quick notes about the structure of this document.

First of all, periodically in this document there are centred headings in italicized text that provide a location and a date. Influenced by both Eduardo Galeano's *Memory of Fire* books<sup>275</sup>, as well as Deleuze and Guattari's, *A Thousand Plateaus*,<sup>276</sup> I am attempting, in this experiment, to extricate thought from the sense that it is timeless and universal, and instead locate it in specific times and places.

And secondly, toward the end of this experiment I attend to histories and ecological relations connected to the great Fraser River, or as it is called by the First People's where I live, the Stó:lō. In the

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<sup>273</sup> Nietzsche, Friedrich. "The Gay Science." tr. Thomas Common. Mineola. 2006. 14.

<sup>274</sup> Christopher Kinman. "The Thing in the Bushes: From Commodities to Ecologies – Reimagining the Work of Human Services." *Human Systems: The Journal of Therapy, Consultation and Training*. Vol 28: 2. 2017. 199 –234.

<sup>275</sup> Eduardo Galeano, *Memory of Fire II. Faces & Masks*. Pantheon. 1987. And, Eduardo Galeano, *Memory of Fire III. Century of the Wind*. Pantheon. 1988.

<sup>276</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. 1987.



spirit of this river I decided to purposely allow the structure of this paper to move and flow in a manner that reminded me of the Fraser River. This paper, in a way, is a form of structural experiment with the Fraser River, in that it attempts to move like the river, it flows through various thoughts, it bends through different geographies, it is fast at times and slow at times, it permits other rivers and streams to inform its larger movements, and it allows its coherence to form through such movements of flow and confluence. I attempt to create here a consistency between style and content.

## Introduction

### *Unceded Sto:lo Nation Territory*

I begin with an invitation...

*How can we learn to think and act like a forest?*

*How can we learn to move in thought and life like a flight of salmon coursing up rivers and streams to spawn?*

*How can we learn to think and act like a gut learns to digest (millions of life-forms, complex and endless relations creating ways to give living and health to an impossible diversity of bodies)?*

*How can we learn to think and to act as ecologies and webs of relationships? And, how can we learn to think and act in terms of ecologies and webs of relations from in the midst of the human services work we engage in?*

This paper wanders through a landscape of ideas about ecologies, lingering on the question of how the notion of ecologies can transform thoughts and practices related to human services work. Ecologies are contrasted with the idea of commodities – a comparison that brings to light some of the real-world challenges that materialize as we learn to think and move and work in realms of relations.

We enter this journey accompanied by a diversity of characters. We visit with those who have found and created ways to live and work with an acute awareness that we are always inexorably intertwined within realms of relations, or ecologies. For such people, everything is composed of tangles of interaction – and this both unsettles and enlivens everything. They also find ways to talk about these engagements, learning to navigate through some of those all-too-common traps of language that

restrain our seeing and our acting. Some of these people we could call poets, or novelists, song-writers, philosophers, researchers, ecologists, family therapists, and more. Some I know through their writings, and with others I have much more personal connections (such as my dear friend, Lynn Hoffman), but they together create an assemblage of living voices and bodies that can escort us, in different ways, into invigorated worlds of intricate and shifting ecologies.

This is not an abstract or ethereal journey. We travel through real geographies, particularly through lands of this continent, North America.

We stop and visit, listening to the stories and wisdoms of peoples who, for thousands of years, have lived with and upon these territories. Learning to see something of what these people see about engaging in living relations with this land. This is not a romantic move that can be summarily dismissed. My desire to honor these people/land relations comes following many years of interactions, in friendship and work, with the First Peoples of these territories -- with children, families, elders, artists, leaders, their institutions.

It comes also with an appreciation that the very geographies I move upon daily are not packages of real-estate poised to generate profit; and neither are they wildernesses, empty and waiting for either our exploitation or protection. Rather, these geographies come occupied by peoples with undeniable and living relations to the land. I also learn there are ghosts from past times, ancestors who have never ceased to traverse these territories. For the dead have not gone away, they lie within this ground, and they move upon these lands, in hearts and minds, in conversations and traditions. I go to such places and peoples in response to a generosity I have been repeatedly shown in life and work. I have been permitted to learn something from how they have learned to think about and engage with this world.

I attempt to walk with soft steps in this realm, for I know how easy it is to usurp, to lay claim, to do with peoples' wisdoms and traditions what has repeatedly been done to their lands. But still, I have come to see that it is important to revisit our relations with the First Peoples, for, from that place, we

are able to meaningfully revisit our own relations with the land, the waters, the living things that move upon the lands and waters, and the people with whom we share this land. Perhaps by bearing witness to histories and wisdoms gained through thousands of years of relations with these territories, we can also find ways to think and act like a forest, or a flight of salmon, to live as if entangled with a million forms of life?

*Okanagan Nation Territories – 2005*

Poet, author, educator, artist, activist, Jeanette Armstrong, offers a small gift of her own people's thought and language. In her language, with her people, we are all in the midst of ecological relations.

When we say the Okanagan word for ourselves, we are actually saying 'the ones who are dream and land together.'<sup>277</sup> That is our original identity. Before anything else, we are the living, dreaming Earth pieces...

I explain this to try to bring our whole society closer to that kind of understanding, because without that deep connection to the environment, to the Earth, to what we actually are, to what humanity is, we lose our place, and confusion and chaos enter.<sup>278</sup>

Entangled together, moving through the surfaces of lands and waters, things new and things renewed enter our worlds.

This journey now moves to...

*Montreal, Quebec – 1969*

## Part I -- A Lyrical Beginning

For the great Idea,  
That, O my brethren, that is the mission of poets.

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<sup>277</sup> Armstrong claims that the word "dream" in her language means something different than it does in English. First of all, she says it refers to "the unseen part of our existence as human beings." But the word also takes us into communal and ecological relations: "(I)f you take a number of strands of hair, or twine, place them together, and then rub your hands and bind them together, they become one strand. You use this thought symbolically when you make twine, thread, and coiled baskets. This part of the word refers to us being tied into and part of everything else. It refers to the dream parts of ourselves forming our community." Jeannette Armstrong, "I stand with you against the disorder." Jeanette Armstrong. "I Stand with you Against the Disorder." *Yes Magazine*. 2005. Retrieved from <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/spiritual-uprising/i-stand-with-you-against-the-disorder>.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

Walt Whitman<sup>279</sup>

Following Walt Whitman's thinking, we proceed with a poet, another poet, toward a moment of lyrical understanding. Leonard Cohen in just a few phrases of lyrics tells a most timely tale.

A bunch of lonesome and very quarrelsome heroes  
were smoking out along the open road;  
the night was very dark and thick between them,  
each man beneath his ordinary load.  
'I'd like to tell my story,'  
said one of them so young and bold,  
'I'd like to tell my story,  
before I turn into gold.'  
But no one really could hear him...<sup>280</sup>

This hero is turning to gold. That is, he is about to no longer be a living creature among living creatures, and instead will be transfigured into a different kind of entity.

This is a contemporary story, but it is also a most ancient one. Remember also Lot's wife? The story says that she turned to look at the world around her and she became a pillar of salt. Gold and salt: Cohen's hero and Lot's wife were not changing into just any old things, but into the forms of well-established commodities. They were transforming into product-things: known things, the type of things that always fit into previously established categories; and measured things, eternally calculated and evaluated. Leonard Cohen's hero and Lot's wife -- becoming-commodity.

One -- just one -- of Cohen's "lonesome and quarrelsome heroes" sees this move. He sees a world moving upon him where he, and all around him, are turned into things. He is certainly aware that by becoming-thing/becoming-gold he is also becoming-disconnected from much of life: from friends, family, from flowers, grass, starlings and eagles, from the floods of spring and the long sleeps of winter. He understands that he is gradually becoming dislocated from those territories and ecologies that

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<sup>279</sup> Whitman. Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Leonard Cohen. "A Bunch of Lonesome Heroes." On *Songs from a Room* [CD]. Sony. 1991.

enable life to evolve and flourish. And, not just him, but everything that can be conceived or imagined becomes conceived or imagined as a commodity-thing.

For Lot's wife, the process is presented as over, she is a completed pillar of salt. Or, so we are told. But, what if somehow, she did not in actuality become this finished bastion of salt? What if others in her world, particularly those who held the purse strings and managed the discourse, insisted upon the news that her commodification was accomplished? She would have much company – and particularly the company of other women. For Lot's wife had already been made into a commodity long before she was pronounced a pillar of salt. She was Lot's wife, after all. No name, just Lot's wife and a pillar of salt. A possession-thing, a claimed and owned commodity -- just like salt and gold. Women: separated from their relational worlds. Now, woman: as individual (*individual* is what you think you want to be until you discover you are one); woman: as possession, as a finalized commodity.

*New York – 1909*

What would happen if a woman woke up one morning changed into a man? What if the family were not a training camp where boys learn to command and girls learn to obey? What if there were daycare for babies, and husbands shared the cleaning and cooking? What if innocence turned into dignity and reason and emotion went arm in arm? What if preachers and newspapers told the truth? And if no one were anyone's property?

So Charlotte Perkins Gilman raves, while the press attacks her, calling her an *unnatural mother*... This stubborn wayfarer travels tirelessly around the United States, announcing a world upside down."

Eduardo Galeano<sup>281</sup> E. (1988), pp. 18-19.

*Paris -- 1949*

How, in the feminine condition, can a human being accomplish herself? What paths are open to her? Which ones lead to dead ends? How can she find independence within dependence? What circumstances limit women's freedom and can she overcome them? These are the fundamental questions we would like to elucidate.

S. de Beauvoir<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Eduardo Galeano. *Memory of Fire III. Century of the Wind*. Pantheon. 1988. 18-19.

<sup>282</sup> Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*. Vintage. 2011. 17.

It is Lot's wife story, it is women's story; it is the story of countless peoples throughout the flows of history; in many ways it is the story of all; and it has often been a most ruthless story.

Enter the "New World." Salt and gold reappear. Living beings, human beings, are again reshaped into commodities, and this time by use of outright brutal means. Even children, bought and sold. This was how much of the new Americas were built.

*The Mines of Brazil – 1714*

In the places where they pan for gold, and in the galleries below ground, no black lasts ten years, but a handful of gold buys a new child, who is worth the same as a handful of salt or a whole hog.

Eduardo Galeano<sup>283</sup>

In a world where people become commodities, everything becomes commodities, everything that can be translated into number and value is transformed into commodity.

*Rhode Island – 1776*

The thirteen colonies that will soon be the United States of America have much to thank their slave traders for. Rum, good medicine for the soul and for the body, is turned into slaves on the African coast. Then those blacks become molasses in the Antillean islands of Jamaica and Barbados. From there, the molasses heads north and becomes rum in distilleries of Massachusetts, and then the rum crosses the ocean again to Africa. Each voyage is rounded off with sales of tobacco, lumber, ironware, flour, and salted meat, and with purchases of spices in the islands. The blacks left over go to the plantations of South Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia.

Thus the slave trade produces profits for seamen, merchants, moneylenders, and owners of shipyards, distilleries, sawmills, meat salting plants, flour mills, plantations, and insurance companies.

Eduardo Galeano<sup>284</sup>

It seems that for the last 500 years (at least since the time of Columbus) the reckless processes we now call globalism have traveled over the seas and the lands, turning every perceived entity in every possible location into a commodity-like thing. I suggest that there may be at least five forms of commodity that appear on the lands:

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<sup>283</sup> Galeano. 1987. 12.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid. 46.

- People-commodities -- slavery, family relations, the workplace;
- Real-estate-commodities -- usurped territories, people relocated;
- Product-commodities -- living and non-living things removed from ecologies and turned into goods – things to be bought and sold;
- Service-commodities -- even love, justice, compassion, healing, family, and art become commodity-like things that must be subjected to the marketplace and bureaucracies of governance; and...
- Negative-value or liability-commodities – purposeful destruction of people, land, ecologies and ideas; genocide; we rid ourselves of those things that get in the way of profitability.

Not all becoming-commodity of people is accompanied with the same intensities as the savagery of slavery, but it certainly appears that all becoming-commodity is attended with an impulse to disregard the networks of relations that give and sustain living. The processes of becoming-commodity can never truly escape a lingering odor of death.

*Ireland – 1889*

Come away, O human child!  
 To the waters and the wild  
 With a faery, hand in hand,  
 For the world's more full of weeping  
 Than you can understand.

W. B. Yeats<sup>285</sup>

*Return to Montreal, Quebec – 1969*

For Cohen's hero, transformation into product appears almost complete. Through the language of commodities, almost every conceivable part of his life, soul, body and world has been separated from its contexts, measured and probed by an ever-researching, ever-judging eye. How do we know this? Well, this is just the way gold, the commodity, is always treated.

However, the hero has a request. He wants a conversation. He is not pretending he can escape the changes sweeping over him and his world, but he would like to talk with others about it, he would like to tell his story.

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<sup>285</sup> William Butler Yeats. "The Stolen Child." *The Irish Monthly* 14, no. 162. 1886. 646-647.

The other heroes do not respond. The conversation does not happen. Perhaps, for the processes of commodification to occur, there must be an insistence on non-conversation. Perhaps it is a prerequisite for becoming-commodity.

*Victoria, British Columbia – 2013*

Refusing to enter into conversation? This is not new. We turn to a news story that tells a very old tale.<sup>286</sup> One individual who had been identified as the *watchdog* for child welfare in a Canadian province, released a scathing report on the state of aboriginal child welfare in the province. A group of First Nations' leaders attempted to organize a meeting to talk with her, and with each other, about child welfare in their communities. The watchdog refused, saying the meeting "was focused on 'talk,' not action."<sup>287</sup>

I am sure that all of us have been in those positions where people choose to continue talking rather than take action for others; however, from my own experience working with various First Peoples of this land, it seems that much of the work (or the "action" -- using the language described above) we need to do is precisely that of enabling conversation to happen. It is a work that brings us together -- with words, with gestures, with shared food or tea, with laughter, with tears, with ceremonies, with the accompaniment of the ancestors and the laughter of children. It is a work where we indeed do find ways to meet, where we do listen, we talk, and we are able to discover and build new and renewed ways forward.

One of the standard complaints of the British and the Canadian officials who negotiated treaties with the First Nations was that the latter talked on and on. Had our negotiators paid any attention to the other, they would have realized that the First Nations leaders talked on because they were not engaged in a goal-oriented process that, like the Europeans' commercial contracts, is concluded by a transfer of ownership. The First Nations leaders weren't even negotiating ownership. Instead they were putting on the table concepts of complex, inclusive, balanced existence on the land.

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<sup>286</sup> W. Stueck. B.C. "Child-Welfare Watchdog Turns Down Aboriginal Conference." *The Globe and Mail*. Nov 14, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia>.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.



John Ralston Saul<sup>288</sup>

Yes, I speak to you, I address you, I listen to you.

Jacques Derrida<sup>289</sup>

Yet, the invitation to talk was shut down, as it has repeatedly been shut down throughout most of the history of governmental contact with the First Peoples. The wisdom that has come to these communities through thousands of years of relationship with the land, the waters, and with each other, has time after time been overlooked and often outright silenced, and often in the name of good governance principles. The colonizing authorities seemed to know better, and apparently still believe they do.

Still... when we look at Native – non-Native relations, there is no great difference between the past and the present.

Thomas King<sup>290</sup>

Complicating factors arise, for real losses can accompany the proposed meeting. If we enter into conversation together, not only will those forces that lead us to commodify the other be diminished, but we will also discover that our own identities, our own thing-ness becomes less solid, less shiny, and less significant.

Becoming is always double...

Deleuze and Guattari<sup>291</sup>

Conversation changes things. It even breaks down those identities we may believe we need to hold secure. There are commodification-productions placed upon ourselves that we might not want to let go. But, as we enter a shared conversational space the hierarchies are curtailed, divisions generated

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<sup>288</sup> John Ralston Saul. Ibid. 50.

<sup>289</sup> Derrida. 2003. 180.

<sup>290</sup> Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian Illustrated: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*. Doubleday Canada. 2017. xv.

<sup>291</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. 1984. 305.

by identities of profession, and other forms of status, do not operate with the same potency. The gold loses its lustre.

However, in conversation something else emerges -- new and renewed webs of relations. But, perhaps this newness is not new at all, for such knots of ecologies have always both sustained living and unsettled our institutional artifices.

*One More Time, Montreal, Quebec – 1969*

Returning to Cohen's story.

If these heroes were to enter into conversation about becoming-gold, they would be removed from the very context whereby they would be made into gold. Conversation is what living creatures connected to other living creatures do; conversation is what ecologies do; it is not at all something that gold, salt, and other separate things, in their commodity forms, are capable of participating in.

Perhaps the overwhelming push of becoming-gold may not always be as engulfing as it first seems, for in the midst of conversations, and other kinds of connections, a reverse alchemy tends to happen -- gold and salt dissolve into surprising, unmeasurable and living complexities.

I sing this for the crickets,  
I sing this for the army,  
I sing this for your children  
and for all who do not need me.  
'I'd like to tell my story,'  
said one of them so bold,  
'Oh yes, I'd like to tell my story  
cause you know I feel I'm turning into gold.'<sup>292</sup>

## Part 2 -- Addictions, Rats, and Other Commodities

*Vancouver, British Columbia -- 1978*

This journey now moves through a history of thought closely tied to Vancouver, BC – a territory which is close to home. There is a professor and researcher at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver

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<sup>292</sup> Leonard Cohen. "A Bunch of Lonesome Heroes." On *Songs from a Room* [CD]. Sony. 1991.

(recently retired) who throughout the last five decades has brought to light remarkable understandings (and commonly-held misunderstandings) about the thing, the commodity we often call *addictions*. His name is Bruce Alexander.<sup>293</sup>

From early on Alexander was no stranger to controversy, leaving an American university in 1970 because of his overwhelming discomfort with the war in Vietnam. That same year he came to Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, and quickly a new controversy began to occupy his world.<sup>294</sup>

Alexander noticed that there was a form of research that continually asserted that addiction was the result of a powerful, “demon drug”.<sup>295</sup> The researchers claimed to be studying the responses of rats to various drugs. They would put a rat in a small cage, would provide the rat the option of either plain water, or water laced with a particular drug. The rats would compulsively choose the water laced with the drug.

These rat studies examined individual entities (rat, water, water laced with drug) and they would try to determine cause/effect relations between the entities. Such research attempted to establish an ultimate source of power, typically the demon drug and/or the immoral choice, within contexts that can never reveal a singular influence, and rather should be thought of as thorny and complex realms. Such studies dismiss complexities and relations in favor of the precision of commodity and the conclusiveness of causality.

### **The Commodities (in my own words)**

A Rat – a-disconnected-research-tool-commodity... a-solitary-entity-in-a-cage-commodity. Water in a Bottle – “a-more-perfect”-commodity. Water in a Bottle Laced with Heroin – a-controlled-(ostensibly)-controlling-more-perfect-commodity... an-illicit-made-licit-for-now-commodity. Demon Drug – a-shock-value-vote-getting-commodity... a-both-hated-and-adored-commodity. Addiction – a-medicalized-in-the-body-pathology-commodity. Addiction Research – a-medicalized-in-the-body-counting-probing-commodity... isolating-variables-isolating-rats-

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<sup>293</sup> For an overview of his life and work, visit <http://www.brucealexander.com>.

<sup>294</sup> Bruce K. Alexander, (2007, October 4). The Nora and Ted Prize for the Support of Controversy – Audio of Lecture. *Simon Fraser University*. Retrieved from <http://www.sfu.ca/sterlingprize.html>

<sup>295</sup> J. Hari & N. Klein. “Does Capitalism Drive Drug Addiction?” *Democracy Now*. March 11, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.democracynow.org>.

commodity... paid-for-by-?-corporate-commodity. Addiction Treatment – a-pathology-erasing-evidenced-based-corporate-owned-well-branded-brand-protected-lawyer-supervised-lawyer-guarded-primarily-American... supposedly-emancipating... commodity.

Alexander was curious, wondering if, perhaps, rather than studying a rat's response to a drug, these studies were examining how a rat reacts when disconnected from its ecology and is isolated in a small cage. He responded by creating his own study which involved placing rats in what became affectionately known as *Rat Park*.<sup>296</sup> The rats were allowed to live in a full ecology, they were permitted to breed and raise young, they were able to play and engage with a complex environment. They were then also given the same choices in Rat Park as they had previously been given in the isolated cage – water, or water laced with drugs. Overwhelmingly the rats in Rat Park chose the water and not the drug, and they did not display the typical signs of addiction as the rats in the cages had shown.

The professional journals were initially not eager to take on Alexander's work, but eventually the study was published in *Psychopharmacology*.<sup>297</sup> Alexander walks us through this process, beginning at the end, with the disappointment that came with the closure of Rat Park.

Rat Park closed forever more than 30 years ago. In its heyday, it was a very large plywood box on the floor of my addiction laboratory at Simon Fraser University. The box was fitted out to serve as a happy home and playground for groups of rats. My colleagues and I found that rats living socially in this approximation of a natural environment had much less appetite for morphine than rats housed in solitary confinement in the standard tiny metal cages of those days.

Who could be surprised by this finding? The only people who acted surprised – and a bit offended – were those addiction researchers who believed that the great appetite for morphine, heroin, and cocaine that had earlier been demonstrated in rats housed in those tiny solitary confinement cages proved that these drugs were irresistible to all mammals, including human beings. I call this idea the "Myth of the Demon Drug." This myth was the backbone of mainstream theories of addiction in those days.<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Bruce K. Alexander, R. B. Coombs, and P. F. Hadaway. "The effect of Housing and Gender on Morphine Self-Administration in Rats." *Psychopharmacology*. 1978. Vol 58. 175–179.

<sup>298</sup> Bruce K. Alexander, "Rat Park verses the New York Times." *Bruce Alexander*. Retrieved from <http://http://www.brucealexander.com/articles-speeches>.

Alexander did not stop at this disappointment, he moved his attention to, among other things, “the war on drugs”<sup>299</sup>, and the relationship between addictions and the environment<sup>300</sup>. In 2008, after years of focusing his research upon the historical relationship between addiction and hyper-capitalism, he published a ground-shaking book called, *The Globalization of Addiction: A Study in Poverty of the Spirit*.<sup>301</sup> Within this book Alexander questions those ideas that claim addiction is primarily an entity, a thing that resides within an individual psyche or body, and/or in a realm of moral choice. Rather, he suggests that what we call addiction repeatedly surfaces in response to the actions of *dislocation* (from community, family, ecologies, relationships, spiritualities, etc.) that haunt modern capitalist-influenced societies. Addiction, for Alexander, becomes an elusive and hard to define relational entity (or perhaps, more an anti-relational entity), an event that emerges with a unique forcefulness within our modern, capitalist world. He painstakingly documents such addiction/dislocation relations through history and in our current time.

Life in the midst of the intensities and messiness of its ecologies; or life separated, sorted, measured, evaluated, and dislocated from its requisite relations. Relational complexities or the making of insulated commodities. These were the kinds of issues that Alexander became preoccupied with.

#### *Melfort, Saskatchewan – 1960s*

My family moved from a small hamlet in Southwest England to the town of Melfort, Saskatchewan, Canada, in 1966. I was just six years old at that time. I recall during those childhood years that my father would often complain about the “drunken Indians.” He worked in public health, and repeatedly witnessed the alcohol addictions facing so many of the Cree people of our area. He saw

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<sup>299</sup> Bruce K. Alexander, (1990). *Peaceful Measures: Canada’s Way Out of the War on Drugs*. University of Toronto Press.

<sup>300</sup> See: Bruce Alexander, “The Eco-Crisis, Spirituality, and Addiction.” *Bruce Alexander*. Retrieved from <http://www.brucealexander.com/articles-speeches>; Bruce K. Alexander, “Addiction, Environmental Crisis, and Global Capitalism.” *Bruce Alexander*. Retrieved from <http://www.brucealexander.com/articles-speeches>

<sup>301</sup> Bruce Alexander. *The Globalization of Addiction: A Study in Poverty of the Spirit*. Oxford University Press. 2010.

their connection with alcohol either as a moral dilemma – meaning, of course, an immoral choice -- or as a genetic or biological defect, whereby indigenous peoples were unable to properly metabolize alcohol.

However, my mother had a much more benevolent and complicated view of this issue. Working as a teacher she often took time with Cree children and helped them learn how to read. She was able to appreciate the richness of their culture, the powers and joys that came to the children as they traveled with their families into the forests (or “the bush” as we all called it in that part of the land) for seasonal hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering trips. She also, even back then, went out of the way to learn the history of Canada’s treatment of the first peoples and their lands (even though much of that history was not easily accessible then). Often openly disagreeing with my father, she repeatedly, and sometimes harshly, would correct him for his “drunken Indian” talk.

The connections between addiction and dislocations from the requisite relationships of life were visible to me, even in those years. I thank my late mother for this.

*South and East across the continent to Appalachia -- 1994*

Processes of dislocation, the story of its varied movements upon the land, is viscerally evoked in a few phrases by Cherokee and Appalachian poet, Marilou Awiakta.

Old Students of the New Physics

A bulldozer slashed the breast  
of the Indian mound --  
    back and forth  
    back and forth  
scraping ancient soil  
bone/pottery/prayer  
into a dump truck  
until the land was flat

except

for one hip bone.  
It stood upright –  
a periscope from Mother Earth –  
and drew into its dark socket  
    the wide open wound

with its ragged edge of grass,  
trees standing nearby  
dropped in dust and shock,  
machines receding...

A monarch butterfly  
drifted over the site.  
She lit on the bone,  
slowly flexed her wings.  
'When I move my wings  
Energies change around the world  
    round and round and  
    up... up... up...  
    into the sky.  
I may cause storm/hurricane/tornado  
when I move my wings.'

'I know.' Said the bone.  
'Now men have moved me.'<sup>302</sup>

A scraped earth, a people removed, bones and prayers recklessly erased, denied their movements and their rests upon a land. Not people as tangles of relations embedded in thickets of ecologies, tied into full and complex histories; but people as isolated, partitioned, and removable things.

And, their sufferings also seen as things, as commodities discovered inside a body, inside a genetic code, inside an addiction, inside a brain, inside the chemistry of the brain – things, moving far from their ecological homes, and ever penetrating inward.

However, Awiakta's poem does not move inward, it pulses outward toward the various powers of the winds. She arouses protest. From the seeming ruins of a dislocated world, she summons a new and renewed world where life is not content to stay in displacements and pathologies. New forces arrive with her words, and they find ways to connect together. Bones, butterflies, and tornadoes, are just the beginning.

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<sup>302</sup> In: Joseph Bruchac. *Returning the Gift: Poetry and Prose from the First North American Native Writers' Festival*. Vol. 29. University of Arizona Press. 1994. 14.

## Part 3 -- Bateson, Deleuze and Guattari, and Hoffman

From Alexander and the relationship between addictions and dislocation, to a group of thought-creators, all who are tied in relations with, often unnoticed, lines of connection. We bring together the thought of: Gregory Bateson, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and Lynn Hoffman. All these thinkers share a similar wonder at the extraordinary complexity of relations connected to life; and they go to great effort to bring into language such complexity. They also share a disquiet with those processes at work in western thought that tease life apart, separate it from its contexts, and assume it to be made of individual things and defined identities.

*Palo Alto, California; New Guinea; Bali -- 1950s through 1980*

### **Gregory Bateson**

I saw that there was this deep shift, and that it was probably in the future, and I got a sense of it through Bateson.

Lynn Hoffman<sup>303</sup>

Gregory Bateson incessantly invites his readers to find ways in language – and beyond language, in art, dance, poetry, as well as research and science -- that honour engagements with life in its diversities of relations. He calls upon his readers to respect the ongoing shifts and movements inherent in living ecologies, rather than tearing such ecologies apart into static things that are placed in preordained categories.

As I see it, the fundamental idea that there are separate ‘things’ in the universe is a creation of and projection from our own psychology. From this creation, we go on to ascribe this same separateness to ideas, sequences of events, systems, and even persons<sup>304</sup>.

Continuing with this idea.

Conventional epistemology, which we call ‘sanity,’ boggles at the realization that ‘properties’ are only differences and exist only in context, only in relationship. We abstract from relationship and from the experiences of interaction to create "objects" and to endow them with characteristics. We likewise boggle at the proposition that our own character is only real in

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<sup>303</sup> This quote is from the Introduction to this thesis in the section titled, *Conversational Flows – The Stutter*.

<sup>304</sup> Gregory Bateson and Rodney E. Donaldson. 1991. 77.



relationship. We abstract from the experiences of interaction and difference to create a 'self,' which shall continue (shall be "real" or thingish) even without relationship.

An epistemological crisis is provoked by enforcing the idea that even *things* have character only by their differences and interactions.<sup>305</sup>

After modern thought assumes that there must be separate things in the world, these things are submitted to the processes of quantification that science, business and governance have become preoccupied with.

Man lives in a very strange world, with trees, and fishes, and oceans, and what not, and he has a sort of culture contact with this strange world and tries to understand it. The first thing he does is try to quantify it, you know, and that's what science is about. Science is a piece of bastard culture contact studying between man and nature in which the complexities of nature get simplified as far as possible into measurements of one kind or another... and we count the storms, the raindrops, the frosts, the vegetation, how many inches the turf is, and so on.<sup>306</sup>

It was not just the physical world that, according to Bateson, must be perceived as webs of ecologies, but also those things that have to do with what we call *mental health*. Starting with some typical psychological jargon of his day, Bateson challenges the commodification of mental process.

Now I want you to notice these words like 'dependency,' 'dominance,' 'spectatorship,' 'suffering,' 'passive-aggressive' – and a number of other descriptive terms that you habitually use about individuals. If you really want to say what you mean by them – which I think most psychiatrists don't really want to do – you will find you have to spell out *context of interchange* between persons in order to define their meaning. That is, there is not something called dependency which is inside people and which makes them dependent.<sup>307</sup>

*Paris, France – 1960s and 1970s*

### **Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari**

Bateson had a significant influence upon the joint writings of Deleuze and Guattari.<sup>308</sup> In *Anti-Oedipus*<sup>309</sup> (1983), the first volume of their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* series, there are several

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid. 190.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid. 71

<sup>307</sup> Ibid. 168.

<sup>308</sup> There are very few works that address the relationship between Bateson and Deleuze and Guattari. However, one fairly recent attempt to articulate the connections between them is: Robert Shaw. "Bringing Deleuze and Guattari down to Earth through Gregory Bateson: Plateaus, Rhizomes and Ecosophical Subjectivity." *Theory, Culture & Society*. Vol. 32(7–8). 2015. 151–171.

<sup>309</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. 1983.

references to Bateson's work. However, the second volume, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), is structured according to an idea that Bateson developed and put forward -- the concept of *plateaus*. In Deleuze and Guattari's words:

Gregory Bateson uses the word 'plateau' to designate something very special: a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end.<sup>310</sup>

The whole of *A Thousand Plateaus* is organized around a series of plateaus – in the manner that Bateson conceived of them. The book was, in a way, a literary and philosophical experiment in how to write, how to talk together, in ways consistent with Bateson's plateaus. *A Thousand Plateaus* becomes a Deleuze and Guattari -- and Bateson -- assemblage (with, of course, many other thinkers traversing upon the plateaus that makes up this book).

At this point, however, I wish to pay attention to the thought of Deleuze prior to any reference to Bateson, and outside of his writings with Guattari.

Deleuze re-occupies the idea of empiricism, removing it from its contemporary incarnation as the truth-telling of numbers and calculations, and returning it to the territory that he believed philosopher David Hume intended it to reside within, a territory where everything is composed of relations, a place where relations and movement are always what most matters. Upon this territory, the world can no longer be imagined as if it can be divided into discreet parts that are given identities – this is especially true of those great metaphysical entities presumed in the history of philosophy.

What Hume will show is his most subtle, most difficult, analyses concerning the Self, the World and God: how the positing of the existence of distinct and continuous bodies, how the positing of an identity of the self, requires the intervention of all sorts of fictive uses of relations, and in particular of causality, in conditions where no fiction can be corrected but where each instead plunges us into other fictions, which all form part of human nature.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Brian Massumi. 1987. 24.

<sup>311</sup> Gilles Deleuze. *Essays on a Life*. Zone Books. 2001. 43.

Deleuze invokes Hume, whom he sees as articulating the self-perpetuating trap of western thought that insists upon the “existence of distinct and continuous bodies.”

This concept was further developed in the joint writings of Deleuze and Guattari. In *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*<sup>312</sup>, Deleuze and Guattari blatantly draw together:

- those assumptions and procedures whereby things are separated out from the complexities that gave them life and, in turn, are subsumed as parts of a capitalist system (they become commodities);
- with what they observe as a neurosis that unrelentingly adheres to modern institutional worlds (and the dislocations summoned by such neurosis);
- as well as the methodologies and measures of capitalist, academic and governmental systems (such as incessant efforts at control and management through bureaucratic and numerical/measurement means);
- and the assumptions of psychoanalysis and other practices that locate human sufferings and dilemmas away from a complex world, and away from the political and ecological realities tied to such a complex world.

Such ways of operating are neither sensible nor desirable to Deleuze and Guattari; instead, these ways are madness itself. With bluntness, Deleuze and Guattari say:

There is not one of these aspects – not the least operation, the least industrial or financial mechanism – that does not reveal the insanity of the capitalist machine and the pathological character of its rationality... The capitalist machine does not run the risk of becoming mad, it is mad from one end to the other and from the beginning, and this is the source of its rationality.<sup>313</sup>

Deleuze (1997) expands upon this *rationality or logic* – giving further weight to the language of madness.

But we, we live at the very most in a ‘logic’ of relations (Lawrence and Russell did not like each other at all). We turn disjunction into an ‘either/or.’ We turn connection into a relation of cause and effect or a principle of consequence. We abstract a reflection from the physical world of flows, a bloodless double made up of subjects, objects, predicates, and logical relations. In this way we extract the system of judgment... But whenever a physical relation is translated into logical relations, a symbol into images, flows into segments, exchanged, cut up into subjects and objects... we have to say that the world is dead...<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. 1984.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid. 373.

<sup>314</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Essays: Critical and Clinical*. University of Minnesota Press. 1997. 52.

But Deleuze and Guattari were never content with a dead world, their thought was far more than a critique of modernity, it was laden with explosive possibilities. Numerous other prospects for thought and action come into our worlds as renewed assemblages of relations. Numerous flows are set loose.

Deleuze brings into movement what he called a *physics of relations*. “The collective problem, then, is to institute, find, or recover a maximum of connections. For connections (and disjunctions) are nothing other than the physics of relations, the cosmos.”<sup>315</sup> A maximum of connections! Not simply an adequate amount of connections, neither a nod to the importance of relations, nor some section in a research document where relationships can be checked off – but rather, a maximization of relations.

(T)here are always relations that compound, and nothing but relations that compound.

Deleuze<sup>316</sup>

This is indeed a therapeutic calling, an antidote to the dislocation that Bruce Alexander so astutely drew our attention to.<sup>317</sup> But, it is more than that, it is also an intensely political act, for it moves beyond the negations and objectifications so innate to modern institutional life, toward an amplification of relations, and it celebrates the joys, the surprises, and even the comedies that flow in response. A maximization of connections -- it is also an idea that disrupts. Like Christ in the temple, such thought turns over tables, it trashes those influences that minimize our relations and establishes commodities in their place. Over and over again, in both their individual and joint writings – and in a manner that conjures up Bateson’s thinking -- Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the necessity of engaging with living assemblages composed of always complex relations.

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Gilles Deleuze. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Robert Hurley. City Lights. 1988. 37.

<sup>317</sup> B. K Alexander. “The Nora and Ted Prize for the Support of Controversy.” Audio of Lecture. *Simon Fraser University*. Retrieved from <http://www.sfu.ca/sterlingprize.html>, (2007, Oct. 4).

Deleuze and Guattari -- drawing on the writings and creations of numerous others, and in opposition to much (if not most) of modern psychiatry, psychology and academia -- invite a different kind of territory to come to the surface of life. In this territory living beings cease to be things.

Lawrence, Miller, and Laing were able to demonstrate this in a profound way: it is certain that neither men nor women are clearly defined personalities, but rather vibrations, flows, schizzes, and 'knots.'<sup>318</sup>

We reach our freedoms and possibilities in Deleuze and Guattari's thought, not as things, as bodies, as organisms, or bodies with organs, nor within the organizations and structures that attempt to form and arrange us. Rather, such freedoms and possibilities arrive amidst the complexities of relations, where we, together, and never identically, become something more, something not previously perceived or arranged, we become *bodies-without-organs* -- a concept that Deleuze and Guattari developed that they originally found in the writings of the poet, Paul Celan. We become far greater than an identity, a commodity, an object or a subject; we become, in relationship with each other and our world, "vibrations, flows, schizzes, and knots."<sup>319</sup>

*Northampton, Massachusetts – 1980s to the Present*<sup>320</sup>

### **Lynn Hoffman**

Things that are in relation with each other are always changing and moving. If you pin something down -- as a cat or a dog or a table or a chair -- they can't move. But now we have a picture of a web, like the internet, all of a sudden it seems that static objects, names of objects, are no longer sufficient to present these ideas we want to get across about human living. A body, or a self -- these concise words that describe almost a biological entity for the persons we are and the actions we perform -- they don't really exist and are not useful if they do.<sup>321</sup>

Lynn Hoffman is my long-time friend. Consistent with our friendship, I will often call her "Lynn" in this paper. Lynn is also one of the original innovators in the profession of family therapy.

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<sup>318</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. 1983.

<sup>319</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and Brian Massumi. 1987.

<sup>320</sup> When I first wrote this paper, Lynn Hoffman was still alive. However, sadly, in December of 2017, Lynn died. My heart is still moved by her life and her passing, and I miss her deeply.

<sup>321</sup> Lynn Hoffman. 2012b.

In one of the chapters of *Foundations of Family Therapy*<sup>322</sup> Lynn asks the question -- What is the thing in the bushes? That is, what is the unit that we are dealing with in family therapy? Who and what makes up that unit? And, what is it that we are trying to accomplish with this unit? She was perpetually curious as to what might those *things* we are creating and addressing in the family therapy milieu be composed of.

As time moved on, the *thing in the bushes* became more obvious to Lynn. She realized that it was not a single, defined thing, in the way we usually think of the word, "thing." It was a tangle of relations inclusive of the thing, the bushes, and all the relationships that may be connected to the thing and the bushes. It was a *web* of relations that travels and expands, it has no clear, defined boundaries, but is a shifting, moving complexity. The metaphor -- the thing in the bushes -- was apt, for she was imagining a growing, complex tangle inclusive of all sorts of living and non-living things.

Such a shifting complexity was beautifully and simply demonstrated at a family therapy event in Europe which both Hoffman and I attended. I describe this event below.

*Porto, Portugal –2008.*

Lynn was the keynote presenter at a large, international conference. I followed her presentation with a presentation of my own. When I was finished, Lynn and I connected on the stage for a public conversation. We talked together about what touched us, what moved us, what struck us, in response to the morning's event so far. Then we invited others to also share in the exchange. A growing conversation began to form. Lynn asked each person who wanted to share to come up to the stage with us, and to bring the chair he or she was sitting on. Many came and shared their thoughts, conversations emerged and spread like lines of flight. Everyone who came stayed with us on the stage. It was truly an event, and a visual event at that, for what began with just two in conversation grew and grew till the stage was overwhelmed with bodies. People had to repeatedly move and adjust their

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<sup>322</sup> Lynn Hoffman. 1981.

chairs to make room for others. It was a surging, sinuous, somewhat clumsy, movement-entity coming into life. And, during this event, a people were created – not an institution, not a prescribed or intentional community, but a people who were previously unknown and undefined, an event and movement that congealed and populated at a specific moment in time.

The event then dissolved, but I am certain it did not simply disappear; rather it flowed to other places, to other continents, in other languages, into contexts far away and near. New assemblages, of which we are not aware, and of which we have no direct influence, are now moving upon the surfaces of this world.

I believe that this is the type of “thing in the bushes” that Lynn became fascinated with -- a coming-together, a people-created and people-creating, a creature created and creating, a becoming-flow, a becoming-movement, a populated and populating event. She was captured by this kind of entity – the thing in the bushes -- and she often encountered it within her work and the work of others.

There is no work of art that does not call on a people who does not yet exist.

Gilles Deleuze<sup>323</sup>

Lynn has always been weaving together webs of relationships. Most of her earlier writings explored the ideas and practices of those who were actively creating forms of connection, ecologies, in the domain of family therapy. Later, she also became fascinated with Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring, among other groupings and events, as they were producing a whole range of important assemblages composed of peoples, technologies, invented gestures, streets and buildings, ideas, etc. It seems that she developed a most unique career for herself, which consisted of finding, creating, honoring and documenting those relations which, in turn, generate further relations. Her writings and workshops were always intriguingly populated; there have always been generous and generating crowds -- nomads at move -- in her writing and work.

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<sup>323</sup> Gilles Deleuze. *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*. 2007. 324.

Just a few of the nomads – living beings and otherwise -- roaming across Lynn Hoffman’s world

(forgive me for those I miss)...

*Gregory Bateson, Virginia Satir, the Boy with Good Seed, Salvador Minuchin, Techniques of, Jay Haley, Peggy Penn, Foundations of, Luigi Boscolo, Gianfranco Cecchin, Milan Systemic, Umberta Telfner, Pietro Barbetta, Robin Routledge, Mikhail Bakhtin, Without Rank, Gilles Deleuze, a People Who Do Not Yet Exist, Tom Andersen, the Art of Withness, John Shotter, Magnus Hald, Beyond Homeostasis, Harry Goolishian, Harlene Anderson, Collaborative Practices, Ken Gergen, Mary Gergen, Taos, Judit Wagner, Exchanging Voices, Michael White, the Irish Fifth Province, Imelda McCarthy, Nollaig Byrne, Phillip Kearney, the Crane Bag, Helena Marujo, Luis Miguel Neto, Ardelia Garcia, Sylvia London, Margaritta Tarragona, an Intimate History, Sheila McNamee, Diane Gehart, Gees Bend Quilts, Gisela Schwartz, Catherine Taylor, Judy Davis, Mary Olson, Dialogic Practices, Jaakko Seikkula, Marcelo Packman, Ellen Landis, Linda Thompson, Dick Baldwin, Sharevision, Peggy Sax, Lois Shawver, the Postmodern, the Fairy Godfathers, Drew Moore, Webs of, Marjory Warkentin, a Language of Gifts, Christopher Kinman, smoke signals across the continent, the Rhizome, Dean Wolf, Alistair Moes, All Manner of Poetic Disobedience, Edward McAvoy.*

Lynn does much more than give language to practices of relationship, she goes out of the way to travel beyond words, especially those words that denote separate entities. She talks extensively about what she calls, *unlisted languages*. That is, forms of communication that have not been categorized, and that are not dependent upon the forms of thought, expression, and grammar that we usually associate with language. She does not just talk of relations -- she images them, she engages with them, she works them, incessantly weaving relations together.<sup>324</sup>

From the film *All Manner of Poetic Disobedience: Lynn Hoffman and the Rhizome Century*, Lynn invokes Bateson.

Trying to end the practice of stabilizing and locating each thing – like psychiatry, that became a thing; mental illness became a thing. And Gregory Bateson, one of the great impressions he left on me was the idea that you had to give the ecology of any given noun, otherwise you couldn’t understand the fullness of its description.

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<sup>324</sup> Hoffman’s *unlisted languages* reminds me of Ursula Le Guin’s writing about the process of *unnaming* the animals; that is, giving the naming duty back to the original Adam and learning to live in a world where names and naming were actually unnecessary. She suggested that such an unname process engendered new forms of engagement: “I could not chatter away as I used to do, taking it all for granted. My words must be as slow, as new, as single, as tentative as the steps I took going down the path away from the house, between the dark--branched, tall dancers motionless against the winter shining.” Ursula K. Le Guin. “She Unnames Them.” *The New Yorker*, 21. January, 1985.



And to illustrate it he talked about the blind man and the cane, and the cane and the sidewalk and the street, and the direction he should go in, and all the other aspects of the blind man's life. But where would you say the creature stops and the objects or inanimate parts of the whole cycle kick in? And do you also include the climate? Is there a thunderstorm, and this blind man is trying to walk? Is that part of the ecology? Maybe it's a really hot day? So, these are puzzles. But that is a way to describe an ecology in the manner that Bateson tried to show us.<sup>325</sup>

A new wind of hope blows through Hoffman's work. In more recent events such as Occupy Wall Street and the Arab Spring she encounters an inventiveness that captures her. New forms of engagement and new ways of communicating together doggedly undermine the very idea of the world as composed of separate entities and categories.

The thing, the unit, the animal, the creature, the thought, the concept – that sort of unity is being erased. What's fascinating is that this is a category of language that is being explored partly because of the technical discoveries like the internet, the smartphone, and so forth, by the new generation. And young people all over the world have noticed that there are ways of having the ability to be heard that are not dependent on words alone, that is just a matter of grouping, of assemblages, as Deleuze would say.<sup>326</sup>

## Part 4 -- A Feast of Ecologies

### *Xwisten First Nation – 2013*

We travel to the town of Lillooet. It is a small community nested on the leeward side of the Pacific Coast Mountain Range and the western edge of the dry Interior plateau of north-western North America. It is located on the Fraser River.

Up on the hill, above the river, just off the north end of Duffey Lake Road, there is a series of signs introducing the traveler to the town and surrounding area. From these signs we get a glimpse of a fascinating history. For example, we learn that Lillooet is known as one of the oldest continuous settlements in the Americas (at least 9,000 years). Also, at one time it was the second largest non-

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<sup>325</sup> Lynn Hoffman -- Christopher Kinman with Lynn Hoffman. *All Manner of Poetic Disobedience: Lynn Hoffman and the Rhizome Century*. YouTube Video, 1:09:04. Posted (09/2017).

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

indigenous community west of the Mississippi River -- during the gold-rush days in the nineteenth century the only town bigger was San Francisco.

My friend, Aanaatwoqwees Valerie Adrian (I will here call her Valerie), lives in a community close to Lillooet. She is an elder and leader with the Bridge River Indian Band, a place also known as *Xwisten First Nation*. Valerie's work and thinking are central to this portion of this document. She has read this chapter over and agrees with the course of events and the details of conversations that we describe in this section.

It is here at Xwisten and Lillooet that we revisit the invitations we provided at the very beginning of this paper:

*How can we learn to think and act like a forest? How can we learn to move in thought and life like a flight of salmon coursing up rivers and streams to spawn? How can we learn to think and act like a gut learns to digest (millions of life-forms, complex and endless relations creating ways to give living and health to an impossible diversity of bodies)? How can we learn to think and to act as ecologies and relationships? And, how can we learn to think and act as ecologies and relations in the midst of the work we do?*

But, before we continue, a quick stop; for, there are some *Old-World* ideas that we must quickly attend to. There are forms of thought and practice that migrate, whether we want them to or not, into this *New-World*, making the living of relations and ecologies a tricky, costly, and even disobedient endeavor.

### Two Cultural Shifts

There are two particular cultural shifts I wish to pay attention to for a moment.

*Poland – 1940s*

#### **Cultural Shift 1 -- Policy and Procedure over the Face-to-Face**

During World War II a young Polish Jew named Zygmunt Bauman fought against the Nazis as part of the underground resistance movement.<sup>327</sup> Throughout his life, Bauman (who died in January 2017) continued challenging injustices inherent in Western institutions and thought, with a particular focus upon the fluctuating European contexts he was most familiar with.

Much later in his life, Bauman drew attention to a movement that had been developing in Western thought and was showing itself blatantly in almost all forms of governance and organizations.<sup>328</sup> He saw a shift away from what he called the face-to-face as the essential context for building communities, enriching human lives, and addressing differences. In place of the face-to-face, Bauman identified a cultural and institutional push to ensure that every possible issue will be dealt with in advance – that is, before it even arrives in a relational realm -- by means of correctly scripted policies and procedures. This is all followed by calculated planning, management regimes, strategically implemented interventions, and well-organized oversight and review. Redemption through legislative methods.

The intent is to enable policies and procedures, and other procedural processes, to allow us to escape the inclination to turn to relational means for addressing our human circumstances. Relational means are to be considered suspicious, inefficient and inadequate.

Unlike other civilizations, modernity legislated itself into legislation -- legislation as a vocation and duty and as a matter of survival.<sup>329</sup>

Bauman, much like Leonard Cohen's hero, realized that he was part of a world that was quickly moving away from -- and becoming increasingly distrustful of -- the possibilities inherent in relational and ecological realms. A similar phenomenon was observed by Gilles Deleuze.

But the conquest of nature, without which it would no longer be a society, is achieved progressively, from one source of energy to another, from one object to another. This is why

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<sup>327</sup> Y. Laor. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman Has Found the Origins of Evil. *Haaretz*. 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.haaretz.com/misc/haaretzcomsmartphoneapp/.premium-1.562128>.

<sup>328</sup> Z. Bauman, "Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Morality." 1995.

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.* 34.

law weighs with all its might, even before its object is known, and without ever its object becoming exactly known.<sup>330</sup>

*Prussia – 1867 - 1900*

## **Cultural Shift 2 -- Negation as a Form of Societal Control**

Something else was also going on, and according to Deleuze it was Frederick Nietzsche who most lucidly gave language to this concern.<sup>331</sup> Deleuze's Nietzsche saw a world coming upon all of us that was saturated with the requirement for the negative, and the repetition of the negative as a primary means whereby power is to be exercised over the world and its inhabitants. Blunt and confident negation -- a procedure for managing the diversities of life. In my own words:

*Just say No... it is a requirement to find things to say No to... It is the holy thing to do.  
Just say No... repeatedly... for redemption is dependent upon your many times "No!"  
Just say No... in increasingly sophisticated ways... be a professional No-generator... a trained and skillful Nay-sayer... a Nay-writer... an academic Nay-reproducer.*

The requirement for processes of negation is deeply ingrained in modern life, and is particularly entrenched within two modern societal contexts:

- The worlds of politics have become utterly dependent upon identifying and giving commodity language to social and institutional wrongs. It is, of course, always the wrongs of the other party that are commodified. Negation and politics, in today's world, go inextricably hand in hand -- and they do so with what seems like addictive power. Almost any election campaign operating within a democratic context reveals overbearing and excessive negation actions.
- And, the development of what I call the "cult of the therapeutic." That is, an assumption that is thoroughly imbued in the management and practice of the human service industries -- including psychiatry, psychology, education -- where pathologies or problems must be identified, commodified, and, when possible, submitted to numerical analysis. The identified pathology is determined to lie within the realm of a specified category -- such as the brain, the individual, the addiction, the family, the community, etc.

The Christian resolution to find the world ugly and bad, has made the world ugly and bad.

Nietzsche<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*. Continuum. 2004.

<sup>331</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Columbia University Press. 1983.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.* 93.

In human service realms negation and the movement of money go hand in hand. Negations are commodified, and, these commodified-negations are assigned monetary values. Monies travel from assigned funding bodies to service providers through the doors of such commodified-negations. From city-planning to the treatment of mental health concerns – money follows the identified pathology or problem. Entire industries, complete with complex financial flows and management structures, have been formed that are built upon, and completely dependent upon, the identification and assessment of problems and pathologies, and the consequent development of interventions intended to treat these problems or pathologies. This is a mix from which it is most difficult to escape. Deleuze...

Everywhere we see the victory of the No over Yes, of reaction over action. Life becomes adaptive and regulative, reduced to its secondary forms; we no longer understand what it means to act. Even the forces of the earth become exhausted on this desolate face. Nietzsche calls this joint victory of reactive forces and the will to negate 'nihilism'...<sup>333</sup>

What characterizes reactive forces... is their opposition to what they are not, their tendency to limit the other: in them, negation comes first...<sup>334</sup>

Add Bauman's insights into this fray and we see a society and institutions that impulsively, and out of supposed urgent necessity, create legal language -- policies and procedures -- intended to identify, assess, and treat anticipated problems and pathologies. Treatment, in such a context, means the precise application of previously indicated interventions directed to a specific identified pathology-commodity. In such realms, relations are often distrusted and minimized; or they are perhaps acknowledged but are seen as a trivial or less significant part of a therapeutic agenda.

In spite of the secular presumptions accompanying these processes, I argue that these are old religious ideas. The movements of sin, law, and redemption are repeated -- negations are commodified (sin); policy and procedure are articulated in writing (law); and the application of policies and procedures in the form of specified interventions not only addresses the wrongs (redemption), but

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<sup>333</sup> G. Deleuze. *Essays on a Life*. Zone Books. 2001. 75.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.* p. 74.

presume to be able to keep it from happening in the first place (the arrival of the City of God, the second coming of Christ). As Bauman says:

The modern project postulated the possibility of a human world free not only from sinners, but from sin itself; not just from people making wrong choices, but from the very possibility of wrong choice.<sup>335</sup>

Now a return to Valerie's home community.

*Xwisten First Nation – 2013*

**The Ecology of a Room**

There was a beautiful program operating at Xwisten First Nation that focused upon pre-school children and those who cared for them.

This program was based out of a large room filled with much natural light and color. Just outside was a small playground surrounded by mountains, by the aroma and music of ponderosa pines, and the passing flashes of songbirds returning for the summer. Inside, small tables – children-sized tables – were practically arranged throughout the space. Photos, art work, books, crayons, paints, large and small pieces of paper, other assorted creative tools – all scattered in useful places throughout the room. In the back corner, there was something most special -- a chilled and well-aerated aquarium occupied by recently hatched salmon fry. These tiny creatures were awaiting a soon-to-come event where the entire class will go down to the river and, with festivity, the fish will be released. From there the young salmon will join with the other fry, make their way to the sea, and a few years later some will return as mature salmon to spawn, ensuring many further years of salmon to come. Generations of salmon, generations of people, always in movement -- children and parents and elders also move about this room with gentleness, with care, and with humour.

I encountered this room, this work, this service, as an event or assemblage consisting of children, creatures, mountains, rivers, sunlight, clouds, seasons, elders, flowers, teachers, salmon fry,

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<sup>335</sup> Bauman. 1995. p. 4.

families, creative movements, gentleness, laughter... This is an ever-evolving realm of relations, an ecology -- a beautiful ecology.

There was work to do -- I was asked to help collect stories, artworks, photographs, and whatever else we might find, that would bring to life the gifts of these children and those who love and care for them. And, I was asked to help prepare a small document for each child that would return these gifts into their own families and homes.

This was in no way a work that was mine, in some separated form. It was the work of a community, even of an ecology, as I was to experience.

### **A Communal Event – an Ecological Event**

Upon my second visit, Valerie had arranged a feast and celebration where I would be introduced to the community. When I arrived, I could smell the sockeye salmon baking in the ovens. The children and the workers were all there, the parents and elders were beginning to arrive. I was brought right into the fray, helping in any way I could, talking with the people as they arrived. Then the celebration began.

All who came – children, parents, elders, community-leaders -- were seated at one of those low children's tables. Valerie gave a warm welcome to everyone and introduced me and the work I was doing. Then a woman elder who regularly spent time with these children gave a blessing on the food and the event.

The blessing began with everyone in the room being given a hard-boiled egg. The elder talked about the importance of the egg in their culture as a tie to the powers of springtime, and as another reminder of the importance of the small children who were in our presence. She taught us the name for "egg" in her language. And then she picked up her drum and sang a prayer of blessing upon the egg and the rest of the meal to come.

After the song, the drum, the blessing, every person in the room did what they needed to do to prepare the egg for eating. Some of the children watched the adults near them as they carefully peeled

the shell off the egg, and they tried the same; others took an experimental attitude, finding their own creative ways of removing the shell; while still other children just grabbed the egg, crushing shell and contents into one glorious mash. No one told the children what to do with the egg. No one gave instructions. No one corrected a child in his or her eggshell removal methods. Instead, great delight was shown at the innovative ways that each child prepared an egg for eating. In no time, all were eating this gift of new life (some, shell and all).

Eggs were not new in this room. As mentioned previously, some months ago fertilized salmon eggs were brought into the room and placed into an aquarium at the back. These eggs were allowed to slowly develop and eventually hatch into tiny fry. The young salmon were swimming in the currents of this artificial stream flowing in the back of the room. Eggs – always temporary, yet forever repeating, returning.

Before the baked sockeye salmon arrived, the aromas of this beautiful fish flowed in with a new force, inhabiting every conceivable corner of the room. People smiling, laughing, conversing – and many heads turning towards the kitchen. And heads always turn for the salmon, for the movements of the sockeye and the chinook are the very movements of life for this community, and for the many communities that live upon this river.

Salmon, potatoes, vegetables, salad, buns are all brought in as if gifts from the earth, the river, and from those who prepared it. We all partake.

### **A Conversation**

Following the meal, I go to the kitchen with Valerie to help clean up. While in the midst of rinsing dishes, Valerie reveals what she sees as a serious challenge that faces her and her community and describes it in light of the celebration we just participated in. Valerie mentions that funding for this particular program comes, in part, from government sources, and to continue receiving funding a proposal has to be made that thoroughly articulates:



1. The various needs/weaknesses/problems that are evident.
2. These needs/weaknesses/problems are to be distinguished in three (and only three) places: a) in the children, b) in the families, and c) in the community.
3. Once these needs/weaknesses/problems are determined, specific curriculum-based interventions must be decided upon that address each individually identified need/weakness/problem.

This contemporary fall/redemption approach to human services, the problem-commodification tactics carefully described by Deleuze, Nietzsche and Bauman, presumes itself upon the Xwisten First Nation, and attempts to do so with a disruptive power.

Valerie, for a moment, stops rinsing dishes, turns to face the rest of us in the room, and reminds us of the number of supposed “educational learnings” that emerged in the very meal we just shared.

She lists the following learnings:

- As the children peel their eggshells they practice *fine-motor skills*.
- The children learn about *healthy nutrition* – and through example, not just through words.
- They learn *cultural traditions* – the egg, the drum, the salmon, the blessing, etc.
- They learn their *language* – the word for egg,
- They learn of their *spirituality* – the concept of the egg, the drum and the song.
- They *build community* – relations with the children, the families, elders and community leaders are reinforced.
- They *build family relations* – family members mingle with community members, supports are generated and strengthened.
- They learn the importance of *honouring the gifts of the children*.
- They learn the importance of *honouring the gifts of their elders*.

And Valerie points out that this event, and the learnings that the children gained through this event, would count for nothing in the government proposal format. For no needs/weaknesses/problems were determined, and there was no curriculum put in place that specifically addressing individualized issues. Instead, there was an event, and there was a communal participation in an ecology.

Continuing in the conversation, Valerie carefully articulates what she sees as important to her and her community. Following is my remembrance of her passion and words (which Valerie has subsequently confirmed):

- Her culture does not focus upon the needs/weaknesses/problems, but rather upon the gifts that emerge, circulate and grow among her people and in their world.
- The children, the families, and the community carry gifts for us all, they are not needs/weaknesses/problems to be fixed.
- Their children, and all of us, learn through experience, through real-world events, and in a holistic manner, with the support of a caring community, not through specific, separate items of curriculum.
- The learnings of life cannot be taught as elements of a curriculum that address previously determined and separated needs, but rather come to us in connection with the movements of community, and community's relations with the world in which it lives – including relations with the salmon, the mountains, the river, the egg, etc.
- Government methods for allocating funding are often opposed to the very forms of thought and practice that have upheld the community for thousands of years.

We turn back to complete the task of washing the dishes, we cover the remaining food with plastic wrap and put it away in the refrigerators. Valerie packs a few sockeye fillets for me to take home for my children. Then we sit down, continue the conversation with coffee or tea before I begin my three-and-a-half-hour drive home.

## Part 5 -- Bringing it Home

*Unceded Stó:lō Nation Territory -- 2015  
Abbotsford, British Columbia.*

A chorus of voices reverberate in my mind as I travel through the canyon and follow the Fraser River on my way home. I see the sun hiding behind the mountains, creating shadows on other mountains, and I recall Valerie telling me that at a particular time of the summer, and a particular time of the evening, a shadow resembling a horse appears on this one mountain. The appearance of this shadow-horse means it is time to set the nets in the river, for one of the salmon runs will have arrived. I wonder about all the shifts and movements of this ecology, an ecology permeated with the people who live with it. I wonder about all the dreams, the ghosts, the memories, the sufferings and joys that move with the land, with the sun, with the river. My trip home becomes occupied with an array of nomad spirits traveling waters and valleys.

Jeanette Armstrong's wisdom became alive for me on the trip home. As she was quoted at the beginning of this document, "Before anything else, we are the living, dreaming Earth pieces..."<sup>336</sup> Such was the world I encountered that day. And it came home to me... Of course, we all can learn to think like a forest. We all can learn to think and act like a flight of salmon heading upstream (or the salmon fry heading down to the ocean). We all can learn to live like a gut, digesting the delicacies and joys of our world, in relation with the millions of life forms and relations that occupy and surround us. There are endless ways that we can all become living dreaming Earth pieces.

I arrive at home. I prepare the sockeye fillets and invite my own children to join in the meal.

The gift of living and working in the contexts of ecologies, or webs of relations, is not limited just to the First Peoples of this land, it is a gift that comes to life with many. As we have seen, such a gift certainly shines brightly in the works of Gregory Bateson, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Lynn Hoffman, Bruce Alexander, and many others.

We finish this journey in...

*Northampton, Massachusetts – 2012*

Hoffman, in her unique relational manner of talking and writing, recalls Bateson, who in turn is recalling Lewis Carroll. However, such lines of relations are always complex, for Lynn is herself also directly recalling Lewis Carol, and is reminded, in her recollection of Lewis Carol, of her connections to her friend, the late Norwegian psychiatrist, Tom Andersen.<sup>337</sup> And of course numerous other lines of relation could be brought into the mix. There is no end to the relation possibilities. As a family therapist friend of mine, Dean Wolf, from Maryland, likes to say: "Connect the dots" – for that is how you discover an ecology. Lynn, in just a few words, creates such a relational world.

What came to me was from Alice in Wonderland, that little picture of Alice jumping into the pool of tears, which she had dropped from her eyes. These animal friends were in this pool Alice created, and she had to jump in too. Tom Andersen's work made me feel the way that

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<sup>336</sup> Armstrong. 2005.

<sup>337</sup> Tom Andersen, *The Reflecting Team: Dialogues and Dialogues about the Dialogues*. WW Norton & Co. 1991.

passage made me feel when I read the book -- that there was somehow a way that you could join another person or persons, or creatures (not necessarily persons) in their own tears.<sup>338</sup>

Whether jumping with Alice into the pool of tears with all the different animals or getting tangled in the complexity with *the thing in the bushes*, we find ways to live and work amidst worlds of relations, amidst ecologies. Perhaps, we are no longer becoming gold, no longer turning into pillars of salt. Instead, we are now twisting and turning upstream along with millions of salmon; we are, along with uncountable diverse life forms, digesting the joys and nutrients of this world, we are indeed becoming-ecology.

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<sup>338</sup> Lynn Hoffman. Christopher Kinman with Lynn Hoffman. 2012.

# Dérive.Prayer -- #5: Flows of Affect in the Canyon

Concretely, if you define bodies and thoughts as capacities for affecting and being affected, many things change. You will define an animal, or a human being, not by its form, its organs, and its functions, and not as a subject either; you will define it by the affects of which it is capable. Affective capacity...

Gilles Deleuze<sup>339</sup>

A body can be anything; it can be an animal, a body of sounds, a collectivity...

Gilles Deleuze<sup>340</sup>

In scientific ecology, what passes between “things” is information (as in Bateson); in poetry, it is affects (as in Spinoza)... Deleuze offers a model in this regard: the unit of understanding is not the form or function or organism but the composition of affective relations between individuals, together with the “plane of consistency” on which they interact, that is, their “environment.”

Robert Hurley<sup>341</sup>

We approach the Fraser Canyon; a stretch of river that loudly, coldly, and unabashedly imposes itself upon life and thought. It is here that I feel compelled to reimagine how we might think and talk about the river; or about any entity for that matter.

So, let's think about this river? How might we imagine this river as invested with living powers? And how might such an imagining shape our ongoing relations with the river? How might our entanglements with the river be influenced if we understood the river as a living body, or, more importantly, a composition of living bodies, a sequence or choreography of living bodies?

Perhaps we can begin exploring this living river by first talking about the concept of *affect*. In short, with affect we consider the ability of a body – including the body (bodies) of a river -- to affect and be affected.

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<sup>339</sup> Gilles Deleuze. *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Robert Hurley. City Lights. 1988. 124.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid. 127.

<sup>341</sup> Robert Hurley, Preface to: Ibid. ii.

A shift from an onus on meaning to an onus on affect... Affect refers to the force of intensive relationality – intensities that are felt but not personal; visceral but not confined to an individual body.

Sara Whatmore<sup>342</sup>

Affects should not be confused with traits. They are fluctuating sensations of becoming-other, not fixable characteristics of being.

Diane Chisholm<sup>343</sup>

Whatmore and Chisholm propose affect as not at all an internal condition of the mind or body, but rather, as always connected with the inescapable exteriority of relations, as well as the continuous movements of becoming, always shifting, flowing.

Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* discuss the importance of the idea of *affect*.<sup>344</sup> This is a concept they develop that is particularly influenced by the seventeenth century philosopher, Spinoza.<sup>345</sup> Affect was a pivotal concept for Spinoza. He opposed affect to emotion or feeling and suggested that affect is always connected to bodies and, more particularly, to what bodies are potentially capable of doing. For affect is not just about a felt sense of the world but about the possibilities inherent as bodies touch and engage with each other. And these bodies may be diverse; they could be, among other things, human, animal, vegetal, bacterial, geographical, conceptual and spiritual. Even the river could be imagined as composed of bodies – bodies engaged with each other.

A body affects other bodies, or is affected by other bodies; it is this capacity for affecting and being affected that also defines a body in its individuality.

Gilles Deleuze<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>342</sup> Sarah Whatmore, "Materialist Returns: Practicing Cultural Geography in and for a More-than-Human World." *Cultural Geographies*. 13, no. 4. 2006. 600-609.

<sup>343</sup> Diane Chisholm. "The Becoming-Animal of *Being Caribou*: Art, Ethics, Politics." *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge*. Issue 24. 2012.

<sup>344</sup> Deleuze, Guattari. Massumi. 1987.

<sup>345</sup> Benedictus de Spinoza. *Ethics*. Wordsworth Editions. 2001.

<sup>346</sup> Gilles Deleuze. *Ibid*. 1988. 122.

Deleuze and Guattari also connected the notion of *affect* to Bergson's concept of *duration*.<sup>347</sup>

With duration, affect comes into life through time-bound movements; never internal to a single, individual body, but always at work somewhere amidst the flows of multiple bodies – a minimum of two (but never truly limited to two). Affects are not clearly-identifiable objects, for they always mark transitions from one location to another, from one time to another. They are about flow. With Bergson's influence, affect is continuously in evolution, always moving, in the middle, amongst things and times. While emotion and feeling are commonly, in the west, talked about as if they are static states internal to an individual body, affect, with Deleuze and Guattari, and with their interpretation of Bergson, is always in flow between and amongst bodies, and always opening to something new and yet to come. Affect is unavoidably social and bound into the flows of time.

Brian Massumi offers a quick summary of Deleuze and Guattari's thinking on affect:

AFFECT/AFFECTION. Neither word denotes a personal feeling (sentiment in Deleuze and Guattari). *L'affect* (Spinoza's *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in the body's capacity to act. *L'affection* (Spinoza's *affection*) is each such state considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body.<sup>348</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari take affect away from any connection with the internalization of emotion, and instead, turn affects into creatures that are alive and in motion in the world: "(A)ffects are not feelings or affections any more, they surpass the powers of those, through whom they pass. The sensations, percepts and affects, are *beings*, which stand for themselves and transcend all experienceability."<sup>349</sup>

Another element I'd like to add to the concept of affect is that it is *not* known and identifiable prior to our encounter with it. That is, it must always be expressed and re-expressed in response to the

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<sup>347</sup> See: Henri Bergson. *Creative Evolution*. University Press of America. 1984; Henri Bergson. *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*. Routledge. 2014; Gilles Deleuze. *Bergsonism*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. Zone. 1991.

<sup>348</sup> Massumi, in: Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Brian Massumi. 1987. xvi.

<sup>349</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* Columbia University Press, 1994. (??)

specifics of time-bound engagements with it. Unlike emotions, where we have some knowledge of what they are prior to our encounter with them (we know, for example, what sadness or happiness is before we face a specific occurrence we might call sad or happy in a real-world context), with affect the engagement is experienced as if new. New forms of language must be created to express an affect specific to each context. Emotion may be what is described in a psychology textbook, but affect is more noticeable in literature or film, for such artists are continuously pulled toward the recreation of affective relational contexts, and they know they cannot be dependent upon the categorical language of pre-identified emotional states.

It is with this concept of affect that I approach the Fraser Canyon – and even before the canyon, the stretch of the Thompson River just prior to it entering the Fraser. For, in these stretches of river, a competition becomes evident, a rivalry between land and water, between mountain and river. And in this geological struggle, amidst the persistences of water and the solidity of the land, affects are produced. These affects are in no way internal to the body of the river, neither to the body of the mountain, but they appear always in the relations between these bodies. River/land relations produce, in these places, profound demonstrations of powers, inescapable violences and forms of rage beyond what human bodies could even consider arousing.

Place the movements of people and other creatures into the intensities and ferocities of this river/mountain rivalry, and further affective encounters emerge. Again, to emphasize, it is not simply the river which is displaying these affects, it is the river along with the mountains, as well as the creatures (living and past) linked with the river. The affect is always a product of relations.

The affects of the canyon are always caught in transitions. First of all, they are held in-between the less aggressive but persistent flows upstream of the canyon and the smooth, powerful flows downstream in the Fraser Valley before the river enters the salt water. Secondly, these river-mountain affects in the canyon expose large sweeps of previous affected histories. This is perhaps most visible



with the rapids of the Thompson River. For there, the surges of water have, over vast geological timeframes, worn down and washed away the foundations of the land, and formed what is now the Thompson canyon. Layers of time, immense spans of geological movements, are exposed, made evident for all to witness upon these canyon walls.

Also, the seasonal affective flows of the river are evident for those who pay attention. Perhaps this is most apparent in the yearly movements of the salmon – the sockeye, the chinook, the chum, the pink, the coho, the steelhead. They migrate, at their assigned times each year, upstream toward their streams of birth. There, if they have survived the journey, they spawn, then they die, they all die (except for the steelhead), and their offspring repeats the cycle. I choose to see all of these as movements of affect.

All along the river affective relations are produced. At times the affects might be something approaching a joy. Up by Valemount, we encounter a dancing, bubbling river, moving in conjunction with a less formidable descending landscape. At other times we encounter the river in song. As the water passes over the glacially deposited gravel beds of the Fraser Valley, uncountable small stones on the river bottom are disturbed, and a music is created as they roll along with the flow. If one goes out on the river by boat around Chilliwack, BC, and if the boat's engine is turned off, the singing of the river becomes evident. This is truly a river of song.

It is not just the Fraser that sings. The Pascagoula River, part of the Mississippi system, is also known as a singing river.<sup>350</sup> It is also a river that produces song in relation with the land that it moves over. A river that also awakens affects, spiritual and sacred affects, amongst and between the peoples it connects with – and it has awoken such holy affects for many generations.

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<sup>350</sup> Mark Wallace. *Finding God in the Singing River: Christianity, Spirit, Nature*. Fortress Press. 2005.

At times the bodies-in-relation that produce affects with the river might be bodies of history, bodies of justice and injustice, and bodies of narrative. Take the following story described by Eduardo Galeano.

Three years ago, Captain Ponce de Leon arrived at this island of Puerto Rico in a caravel. Chief Agueynaba opened his home to him, offered him food and drink... and showed him the rivers from which gold was taken...

Three days ago, the soldier Salcedo came along to the banks of the Guauravo River. The Indians offered their backs for him to cross on. When they reached midstream, they let him fall and held him down against the river bottom until he stopped kicking. Afterward they laid him out on the grass.

Salcedo is now a glob of purple contorted flesh squeezed into a suit of armor, attacked by insects and quickly putrefying in the sun. The Indians look at him, holding their noses. Night and day they have been begging the stranger's pardon, for the benefit of the doubt. No point in it now. The drums broadcast the good news. The invaders are not immortal.

Tomorrow will come the rising...

"Co-qui, co-qui," cry the little frogs. The drums calling for struggle drown out their crystal-counterpoint singsong.<sup>351</sup>

Even the frogs, whose songs are canceled out by the drums, call forth a narrative of injustice, along with cautionary tales of paths toward justice. The frogs, the river, the hot sun, the indigenous people, the soldier, the drums, the insects – all, in relation, produce powerful and disturbing moments and movements of affect.

I wish to invest my own relations with the river, the Fraser River -- and the river's relations with the land and the people of the land -- with affects, both new and old. For ancient and original forces may be awoken as we permit the flows of the water, the geographies of the mountains and valleys, and the varied movements of people and creatures to become more closely connected.

Slow rivers run cold  
Shallow waters never sank so low  
I thought I'd drown and you'd never know  
You're a slow river and you run so cold

The winter here don't believe in God  
The bitter wind just bites through me like a wild dog  
I still see your eyes tonight like headlights through the fog  
But one foot in your door, oh, that's all I ever got...

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<sup>351</sup> Galeano. 1985. 55-56.

Elton John<sup>352</sup>

Affects both unsettling and hopeful might just move upon these waters. Out of the canyon and into the large broad stretches of the Fraser Valley, we now head toward a lake that is no more.

(A)s a launching of affects, and impulses, a series of whirlwinds.

Gilles Deleuze<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Elton John and Bernie Taupin. "Slow Rivers." *Leather Jackets*. Duet: Elton John with Cliff Richard. Geffen. 1986.

<sup>353</sup> Gilles Deleuze. 1988. 130.

# Experiment #5 -- Striative Forces and Pedagogical Smooth Spaces: An Experiment with a Missing Lake, an Idea, and a Web of Contested Relations

The land and the people are one.

Sts'ailes Elder

## Introduction

This experiment explores a particular line of inquiry. What might a missing lake, an idea, and a set of caring, yet politically-contested relationships, when brought together, unfold for us – and particularly for those of us attending to the tasks of education? Also, what patterns might emerge as we follow the lines that connect these three seemingly dissimilar events? And, from an encounter with these events, what fears, warnings, as well as hopes and creative possibilities might emerge for those of us connected with institutions of education?

There are three events that we will be attending to:

1. *A geographical and historical event.* The historical transformation of a geographical entity, a water-land-people-ecology assemblage whose alteration is evident in language from a location once called *Sumas Lake* to what is now called *Sumas Prairie*.
2. *A conceptual event – an idea.* We mull over a dual-concept called *smooth space/striated space*. I purposely, in this paper, describe this conceptual component as *an event*, along with the geographical and human events, thus endeavouring to ensure that the conceptual work is not utilized as a tool to gain authority or hegemony over other forms of event. All three are considered real-life, real-time events.
3. *An event of human relationships.* A particular story is followed, a set of relationships is brought to life, of which I was part, as well as four young men, and some male caregivers, among others. It is from within this relational realm that a locating, dislocating, and relocating event becomes evident.

From these three events, as they flow through this study, *patterns which connect* come to life.<sup>354</sup> But, the patterns emerge only as we attend to the particularities of each separate event. We start with the event of a lake.

## A Geographical and Historical Event -- Sumas Lake to Sumas Prairie

According to Deleuze, thought comes into life through an actual encounter:

Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object, not of recognition, but a fundamental 'encounter'... It may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed.<sup>355</sup>

So, we continue with something in the world which forces us to think -- in this context that something is a geographical, historical, sensed and affective encounter with a lost lake.

Not far from where I live, between the cities of Abbotsford and Chilliwack, in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia, there is an area of land that carries upon it both fruitful and devastating histories. These are little-told histories.<sup>356</sup> This place is today called Sumas Prairie -- though, the area is not a prairie, and never truly was a prairie.

This location is now encountered as a large area of flat farmland bordered on the South by the Northern edge of the Cascade Mountains, and on the North by Sumas Mountain. These days it is productive farmland, growing corn, flowers, vegetables, and turf for lawns, among other things. It is also home for a number of large dairy and poultry farms. The area is crossed with straight lines, roads and field boundaries laid precisely North and South, and East and West -- the most prominent and politically significant of these lines is the USA/Canada border, which cuts through the Southwestern corner of this area. It is also traversed by a major thoroughfare, the Trans-Canada Highway. This land is

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<sup>354</sup> This is a term presented by Bateson in: Bateson. 1979.

<sup>355</sup> Gilles Deleuze. *Difference and Repetition*. Columbia University Press. 1994.

<sup>356</sup> Since I first wrote this chapter, a new book has been published looking at the histories of Sumas Lake. See: Chad Reimer. *Before We Lost the Lake: A Natural and Human History of Sumas Valley*. Caitlin Press. 2018.

maintained as productive farmland, in part, through a network of drainage ditches, dikes, and pumping stations, all which help keep the spring floods at bay while also providing water for irrigation purposes.

In the winter time this land attracts an abundance of life, particularly migratory birds. This is the winter home for numerous flocks of trumpeter swans, as well as many other species of waterfowl. The swans feed in the old cornfields and the remnant winter greens in the pasture lands. Other birds set up residence here in the winter, including an impressive number of raptor species: many bald eagles, along with red-tailed hawks, rough-legged hawks, northern harriers, sharp-shinned hawks, cooper's hawks, barn owls, short-eared owls, American kestrels, merlins, peregrine falcons, even the occasional northern prairie falcon and gyrfalcon. All of this is watched over by large flocks of crows and families of ravens, residents who have been a steady presence in this location through all the changes that have occurred.<sup>357</sup>

Ecological abundances are still moving over the land, and they hint at something significant that came before; for the land carries with it a certain haunting. This haunting is evident in that telling flatness of the land (the rest of the terrain is composed of mountains and glacial-deposit hills). It is evident in the year-after-year return of the winter waterfowl and raptors. It is evident in the fertility of the soil. For there are histories here of an abundant past, a world now absent; as well as histories dark and destructive. Histories largely forgotten yet moving like ghosts upon this land. This is a historical event.

“Where the river expands into a lake” -- Simon Fraser.<sup>358</sup>

Things were once different. Prior to the 1920s, this same area was a large, shallow body of water. There was no Sumas Prairie, there was Sumas Lake. This lake was home, as well as the source of

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<sup>357</sup> The list of species I provide in this paper are birds that I have personally witnessed (over a period of about 25 years) on the land that is now called Sumas Prairie.

<sup>358</sup> Fraser's words in: Stephen Hume. *Simon Fraser: In Search of Modern British Columbia*. Harbour Publishing. 2009. 296.

food, for the Sumas -- or Sema:th, people. As Ray Silver, a Sema:th elder says: "The lake was, I don't know what you'd call it, our fridge I guess. It meant everything to our people."<sup>359</sup> It was also a place of great ecological importance, at that time it was one of the primary stopping places for migratory waterfowl in North America.<sup>360</sup>

The Sema:th people called this lake the Big Opening.<sup>361</sup> The word *Sumas* means *an opening*. An opening of water, along the Fraser River, where spring floods can disperse. An opening of light emerging from the ancient forests. An opening between mountains. An opening of travel for salmon, sturgeon, eulachon, and the people to the river. An opening for food, for hope, for ancestors, for life. This is an opening whose particularity is now closed, except in memory. Laura Cameron, a writer who has thought a great deal about this lake and has worked hard to retrieve it into our contemporary memories, talks of this lake as: "An opening between water and history, the interplay linking the stuff of nature and its historical representation within culture. The entry point is specific, local, and currently non-existent: a southwestern British Columbia lake... Sumas Lake..."<sup>362</sup>

This shoreline of this lake fluctuated greatly as it moved up and down with the freshet of the Fraser River. For the creatures connected to this lake, this fluctuation became an ontological reality that demanded response. According to Reimer, the Sema:th learned to orient their lives around these fluctuations.

The Sema:th and their neighbours had few problems accepting and working with the lake the way it was... The Sema:th view of the world itself was based on transitions and transformations, not the rigid distinctions of the White world. The space between things – a littoral zone in the cosmos – was as real as the things on either end. The physical and spiritual, human and animal, land and water – all occupied this world together, continually moving from one to another.<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Emma Smith and Katelyn Verstraten. "Sumas First Nation Seeks Compensation for its Lost Lake." Vancouver Sun. June 5, 2013.

<http://www.vancouversun.com/life/sumas+first+nation+seeks+compensation+lost+lake/8307346/story.html>

<sup>360</sup> Robert Wilson. *Seeking Refuge: Birds and Landscapes of the Pacific Flyway*. University of Washington Press. 2010. 37.

<sup>361</sup> Laura Cameron, *Openings: a Meditation on History, Method, and Sumas Lake*. McGill-Queen's Press. 1997.

<sup>362</sup> See: John Marsh, "Review of *Openings: A Meditation on History, Method, and Sumas Lake*, by Laura Cameron." *Canadian Historical Review*, 80, no 2. June 99. 343.

<sup>363</sup> Chad Reimer. *Before We Lost the Lake: A Natural and Human History of Sumas Valley*. Caitlin Press. 2018.

The government of British Columbia, however, chose not to adjust to the ontological realities of Sumas Lake.

In the 1920s something happened which the Sema:th people never believed was possible. The British Columbia government built a series of dikes and pumping stations, and thereby diverted the Chilliwack River into the newly-constructed, and renamed, Vedder Canal. The river which once fed into the lake, was diverted to flow directly into the Fraser River, completely detouring the Lake. Sumas Lake was drained.<sup>364</sup>

For the Sema:th, their home, their source of life and sustenance had been taken away. They were never seriously consulted about this action. In fact, when the decision to drain the lake was being considered, Chief Ned, of the Sumas Indian Band, spoke the only recorded words of opposition. His expression was stark and unsettling: "I am against the dyking because that will mean more starvation for us."<sup>365</sup> The warning of "more starvation" fell silently upon the political powers of his day. The lake was taken away, with no ear for the people who had lived with that lake for countless generations. No compensation was ever provided for their loss.

From the start, they dreamed of ridding the land of its wetness, of draining the lake and dewatering the valley.

The wetness of the land stopped them from creating the life they desired. It also was something that had no place in their grand view of the natural world, which was built on the distinction between two fixed elements – land and water. Lands that were wholly dry, and water that was not sufficiently wet, were not understood or accepted on their own terms. Instead they were vilified, written off as "dismal" marshes, swamps and bogs.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>364</sup> Bruce Hutchison. 1950. 208.

According to historian Bruce Hutchison, Edward Barrow, a local farmer turned politician, "had a crackbrained scheme for damming back the inflow of the Fraser, which oozed through a narrow channel between the hills of its Southern bank. He would also put a strait jacket on the Vedder. Then he would pump out Sumas Lake and farm the lake bottom." Ibid. 208. Hutchison, who admired Barrow, failed to acknowledge the damage done to the environment and to the Sema:th people. He reflected upon Barrow's last days: "Across the lake bottom sweep the heaviest hay crops in the country, fields of hops, orchards, nurseries of shrubs and roses. Barrow, I suppose, has done more to subdue the Fraser than any other man. He will die beside it..." Ibid. 209.

<sup>365</sup> Thom, Brian, and Laura Cameron. "Changing Land Use in S'olh Temexw (Our Land): Population, Transportation, Ecology, and Heritage." *You Are Asked to Witness: The Stó:lō in Canada's Pacific Coast History. Chilliwack: Stó:lō Heritage Trust*. 1997. 178.

<sup>366</sup> Riemer. Ibid. 25.



Today, we don't encounter a Sumas Lake. Instead we encounter the farmlands, roads, dikes and canals, now called Sumas Prairie.

## A Conceptual Event – Smooth Space and Striated Space

A change in course. We move from an encounter with particular geographical and historical spaces to what could be called a conceptual encounter.

In 1980 French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, and psychoanalyst and activist, Felix Guattari, published a second book in their series, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*,<sup>367</sup> this one titled, *A Thousand Plateaus*. They had together created a text that to this day challenges the constructions of western, capitalist thought and practice. One of the ideas that they delve into in this book is the dual concept of smooth space/striated space.

A quick description by Deleuze and Guattari:

Smooth space is filled by events or haecceities, far more than by formed and perceived things. It is a space of affects, more than one of properties... It is an intensive rather than extensive space, one of distances, not of measures and properties... smooth space is occupied by intensities, wind and noise, forces, and sonorous and tactile qualities, as in the desert, steppe, or ice... Striated space, on the contrary, is canopied by the sky as measure and by measurable visual qualities deriving from it.<sup>368</sup>

While the relations between smooth space and striated space are clearly complex, at the risk of oversimplifying, I present a comparative chart to assist in differentiating the two forms of space. There are three important points I would like the reader to keep in mind as I present this chart.

- 1) This is not simply a situation of one side being desirable and the other side being undesirable. For in the modern world we cannot escape the forces of striated space upon life, land and relationships -- even if we wished to; and we also are now completely dependent upon the influences of striative actions. However, at the same time, striative forces have exercised repeated violences upon people and land. Also, I propose that there is a persistent need among living creatures, including people, for access to smooth, relationally-determined -- and determining -- space. It is my conviction that we need to do all we can to enable such spaces to come to life for people, for all living creatures, and for

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<sup>367</sup> The first book in this series is: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. 1983.

<sup>368</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Brian Massumi. 1987. 479.

- the ecological realms that they are part of. It is in the midst of such a smooth space that living things can thrive.
- 2) In describing this idea, I am not limiting myself to Deleuze and Guattari's descriptions of this concept, I have also allowed the concept to be influenced by other writers (such as Marilou Awiakta, Zygmunt Bauman, Jacques Derrida, Bruno Latour, Brian Massumi, and Isabelle Stengers).
  - 3) And, the concept of smooth space/striated space describes actions upon real geographical spaces as well as what might be called metaphorical or conceptual spaces (which are arguably just as real as those locations we imagine to be actual geographic spaces).

The following chart articulates some of the differences we can note between smooth space and striated space.

**Table 1**

| Smooth Space  | Striated Space  |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Ecological Space I</i></p> <p>A space arranged by the movements of ecologies; that is, located-relations, always in movement in and on land/water/air. Always situated in time and history. Ecological space includes all relations that are necessary and influential for communal and ecological living.</p>  | <p><i>Controlled Space</i></p> <p>Space which is controlled, by various managerial means, for predetermined outcomes. It is organized space, where movements of people, other living beings, and non-living entities (such as waterways) are channeled, canalized, restricted and monitored in order to enable defined, set ends.</p>   |
| <p><i>Ecological Space II</i></p> <p>Spaces are marked, carved and formed in response to the movements of ecologies. This includes the movements of climate, seasons, tectonic shifts, other flows of the land, water and air. It also includes the organic reterritorializing and redistribution of life, as well as the flows of affect between relations within ecological contexts. Jacques Derrida argues that what we are here calling flows of affect move between</p> | <p><i>A Space of Straight Lines</i></p> <p>Lines are cut into land, into relations among people, into the innumerable movements of life itself, and even into thought and affect. These lines are cut in straight and precise forms, usually in accordance with predetermined axis such as north/south, east/west. Prior to the actual cuts, the details of these straight lines are decided always away from the location of the cuts, within the interplay of three distinct influences : 1) varied assigned mathematical equations and algorithms (think mapping, outcome measurements, opinion polls, research activities);</p> |

much more than just living entities, but also travel between the non-living and the dead.<sup>369</sup>

2) political determination of need (political concerns are mostly about needs, liabilities, and problems, rather than gifts or desirable, positive investments); and 3) previously determined striative actions, including innumerable legal striations. Following such procedures, lines are then cut directly upon land and life, leaving real, affective, and lasting influences upon the relations connected to that particular context. Psychological and educational testing could also be viewed as similar actions of striation across the lives of children, youth, adults, and families.

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*Flows of Affect*

Brian Massumi elaborates upon Deleuze's concept of *affect*.<sup>370</sup> Affect is concerned with the way bodies influence each other; it is what happens between bodies amidst their interactions. It is a flow of feeling/thought that moves between and amongst bodies. These flows move between all kinds of bodies, not just human bodies (but also animals, plants, fungus, stones, mountains, rivers, lakes, technological creations, and numerous other types of bodies). One could say that ecologies are *planes of immanence* where affects flow amongst various involved bodies.<sup>371</sup> Affects are generally pre-linguistic, or, at least pre-identification and pre-categorization, which makes them differ from emotive experiences. They may be named, but there is no name prior to their being experienced.

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*Categories of Intelligence and Emotion*

A Cartesian notion. The world of human experience is divided between emotion and intelligence, between body and mind. Emotion and intelligence are, generally speaking, assigned to human subjects, not to animals, plants, other forms of life, and certainly not to non-living things. Emotion involves the seeming domestication of affect. Emotion can be categorized, identified, named and listed, and thereby, can be subjected to quantification and forms of empirical study.

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*Rhizome*

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*Arborescence*

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<sup>369</sup> Derrida. 2005.

<sup>370</sup> Brian Massumi. "Parables of the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation." Edited by Gregg, Melissa, and Gregory J. Seigworth. *The Affect Theory Reader*. Duke University Press. 2010; Brian Massumi. *Politics of Affect*. Polity Press. 2015.

<sup>371</sup> The "plane of immanence" is a concept that was extensively developed by Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Brian Massumi. 1987.

Deleuze and Guattari<sup>372</sup> identify the rhizome as a revolutionary image. Rhizome is a non-hierarchical structure, a set of relations that typically grows underground and connects horizontally through an expanding web of lines and nodes. Rhizome is not an item that is susceptible to being controlled. Think grass, prairie dog towns, old European cities, poplar trees, weeds, the internet, etc. Rhizome is incessantly responding to, and finding ways around, striative influences. Smooth space is a rhizome-like space, created through lines and flows of bodies and affects.<sup>373</sup>

Arborescence is a structuring process described by Deleuze and Guattari<sup>374</sup>. It is presented in opposition to the rhizome. It has historically been modeled after the tree (the individual tree, not the collective tree, not the forest) which, therefore, includes in its organization: a center core; branches which emerge out of the centre, some of which are higher than others; a rootedness in the depths of the ground, in a fixed manner; and a future that does not so much move horizontally (as does the rhizome), as it aims for the heights.

*Impending Actions of Gaia*

I am connecting smooth space with the term "Gaia," an idea developed by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis to denote the earth as being its own living system, if not its own organism.<sup>375</sup> Isabelle Stengers and Bruno Latour take the concept of Gaia and they invest it with further powers.<sup>376 377</sup> For them, Gaia becomes that surface space of the planet that enables the livingness of the world. They suggest that with Gaia there is no *mother earth*, there are no obligations for Gaia to care for us, to nurture us. On the contrary, Gaia carries the potentiality of exercising great destructive powers on living and non-living things. Human activity, while not being able to control Gaia, does have the power to awaken Gaia's threatening potentials (think of climate change). There is, however, with both

*Management and Governance*

Basic to modernity is the belief that all issues can be dealt with through appropriate management interventions. In a striative world, a failure to manage a problem away is not a challenge to the idea of management itself, but rather it is assumed that the wrong use of management principles was implemented, so the failure tends to invite further and more intense management actions. This push to use management principles is also utilized on matters of ecology and human relationships. It is held that, with the correct interventive strategies, and of course, with the correct application, delivery and monitoring of these strategies, any problem can be eradicated.<sup>379</sup> Therefore, the larger issues that the world is facing, including environmental concerns such as global warming, can be fixed, or

<sup>372</sup> Ibid.

<sup>373</sup> I wrote about the idea of rhizome and arborescence in: Kinman. 2014.

<sup>374</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Brian Massumi. 1987.

<sup>375</sup> James E. Lovelock and Lynn Margulis. "The GAIA Hypothesis." <http://gaia-movement.org/files/gaia%20overview.pdf>. 2007.

<sup>376</sup> Isabelle Stengers. 2014.

<sup>377</sup> Bruno Latour, "Waiting for Gaia. Composing the Common World through Arts and Politics." *Equilibri* 16, no. 3. 2012. 515-538.

<sup>379</sup> This is a concept carefully explored by Z. Bauman. 1995.

Stengers and Latour, the potential of working with Gaia, responding with Gaia's movements and directions. This Gaia has no interest in responding to our well-intentioned interventions, but we can attempt to live in response to Gaia's movements.<sup>378</sup>

at least adequately minimized, but only with the correct strategic interventions, and the appropriate forms of governance which arrange and oversee the implementation of the chosen interventions.

Deleuze and Guattari are certainly not the only ones to perceive such movements at work in our world. Marilou Awiakta, a Cherokee and Appalachian poet, describes similar processes in her poem titled, *Old Students of the New Physics*.<sup>380</sup>

A bulldozer slashed the breast  
of the Indian mound --  
    back and forth  
    back and forth  
scraping ancient soil  
bone/pottery/prayer  
into a dump truck  
until the land was flat

    except

for one hip bone.  
It stood upright –  
a periscope from Mother Earth –  
and drew into its dark socket  
    the wide open wound  
    with its ragged edge of grass,  
    trees standing nearby  
    dropped in dust and shock,  
    machines receding...

A monarch butterfly  
drifted over the site.  
She lit on the bone,  
slowly flexed her wings.  
"When I move my wings

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<sup>378</sup> Stengers clearly states the import of the idea of Gaia: "(T)he new figure of Gaia indicates that it is becoming urgent to create a contrast between the earth valorized as a set of resources and the earth taken into account as a set of interdependent processes, capable of assemblages that are very different from the ones on which we depend." Isabelle Stengers, "Thinking with Whitehead: A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts." Harvard University Press. 2011. 163.

<sup>380</sup> I find Awiakta's writing particularly compelling and informative to my work in this thesis. This poem is previously quoted in Experiment 4: The Thing in the Bushes.

Energies change around the world  
round and round and  
up... up... up...  
into the sky.  
I may cause storm/hurricane/tornado  
when I move my wings.”

“I know.” Said the bone.  
“Now men have moved me.”<sup>381</sup>

Awiakta reveals forces at work upon the earth; some of these forces tear apart the smooth spaces, the ecological spaces, spaces where children have been raised, spaces where ancestors move upon land, wind and waters. The story she unfolds has often been repeated, and we certainly can witness such movements upon the location that was once Sumas Lake. These striative forces come in the name of progress, yet they incise and slash with little to no thought for the histories and ecological relations that are destroyed in the process (those involved must not think of these things or they might not be able to continue implementing their striative actions).

However, Awiakta does not leave us with the violences of these striative forces. She introduces new forces at work, smooth space forces of bones, butterfly wings, tornados and hurricanes. Forces of the earth that bring their own life-assemblages, and their own destructions, Gaia-like forces. It is in conjunction with these forces where for Awiakta hope emerges, new possibilities are able to roam upon the land, wind and water. These forces, however, are invested with their own powers. Powers potentially more destructive than the powers of striation – consider the tornado, the hurricane, the flood, consider also the movements of bacteria and viruses, consider the quaking of the earth.

The movements of such smooth space and striative forces are not limited to geographical and historical contexts, they are at play even in our most intimate and caring of relations.

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<sup>381</sup>Marilou Awiakta. 1994. 14.

## An Event of Care and Disruption -- Four Indigenous Young Men and their Caregivers

The third event involves the story of smooth space created with four young men and their caregivers. It is also the story of striative disruptions to care. While this is a most specific story, it is not alone, it is similar to countless other events.

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, Guattari discussed the importance, in the work of human services, for what he called “in vivo” studies.<sup>382</sup> I consider this section to be just such an “in vivo” study.

This story has been fictionalized to protect the confidentiality of the original people involved. While the broad sweep of the story still rings true, the details presented differ from the original. Effort has been made to change non-necessary details and remove identifying characteristics of those involved within this story.

A number of years ago now, I was involved with an organization that provided residential services for children and young people. Those who were sent to this agency typically had not been able to be cared for successfully in other available residential contexts. Most of them had been involved with drugs and the drug lifestyle. Many of them were considered “street-entrenched.”

We adopted a particular approach in our work, in that we focused upon the caregivers and the relationships that they were able to provide for these young people. Some of the caregivers we contracted with we called *single-male caregivers* -- family therapy elder, Lynn Hoffman, affectionately and delightfully called these individuals “the Fairy Godfathers.”<sup>383</sup> These caregivers were men who had themselves, in the past, been entangled in forms of addictions and street life. These men were committed to, and well-established in their “recovery” from their previous lifestyles. Over and over

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<sup>382</sup> Felix Guattari. *Lines of Flight: For Another World of Possibilities*. Trans. Andrew Goffey. Bloomsbury. 2016. 145.

<sup>383</sup> Lynn Hoffman, “Meeting Chris Kinman.” *Territories of the Alive*. 2008.  
<http://christopherkinman.blogspot.ca/2008/07/meeting-chris-kinman-by-lynn-hoffman.html>.

these caregivers were able to build strong relationships with the young people and were able to help them find safety and security.

There was one particular person that we invited to create a home for these young men that were being referred to the agency. This individual had, in the past, experienced time in the prison system. He emerged from the prison system years ago as a well-respected leader, recognized for his peacemaking work by both guards and inmates. We already knew of his work and we were impressed with the care and patience he gave for those he worked with. He brought on a secondary caregiver, a younger man who had not been involved in the justice system and was new to this kind of work.

These two caregivers established a home. The home was located not too far from a forest, which was a perfect context for attracting its fair share of animals and birds. The primary caregiver built relationships with the creatures in the area, not only with the young men.

Four young indigenous men were brought to this residence. There were two sets of brothers. Two of the brothers had been living on the streets. They came to us physically bruised and battered from their interactions on the street. These two brothers had no contact with family. Their mother had died years prior. We had tried to connect them with their home nation, but had difficulty, at that point in time, linking with anyone who might have been able to help rebuild their relations to their culture and community of origin. For the other young men, previous residential resources had not worked out for them.<sup>384</sup> They had also grieved the loss of their mother. She had suffered a violent life and death. These brothers seemed lonely when they first arrived. We were able to help them rebuild connections with their extended family and their people.

All of the young men found an immediate fit in this home. They didn't want to leave. They just wanted to stay at home.

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<sup>384</sup> I use the term "settle" with full cognizance of this word's meaning when connected to indigenous histories.



One night, the young men, along with their caregiver, started to talk together about the sadness they felt around the loss of their mothers. They cried together, and comforted each other, around the loss of their mothers. They didn't go to a therapist for this. They didn't get professional help. They didn't go to a workshop at a school. They did it together, in the smooth space of a home that they felt was their space, uniquely theirs. There were many beautiful moments that happened between us all.

However, things changed. The referral organization we were working with underwent a change. They moved the boundary lines of the "regions." The idea of regions, in this context, involves striated spaces determined by a higher agency. Agency representatives are assigned to a given region, and only those representatives are permitted to implement agency policy within that defined area. In practice, this meant that we were no longer working with the same people and had been transferred to a new region. We had a good working relationship with the people from the previous region and were hoping that the goodwill would continue with the new region. This was not to be.

A representative of that region attended the home. He was not indigenous. He had never lived through anything like what these young men, and their caregivers had lived through. But he didn't attend to understand their experience, or ours. He did not come to listen. He came to close the home down. After weeks of intense criticism of the home and the business that provided the services, after informing that the caregivers had not passed criminal records checks (which they had), after requiring changes to the home (which we did); after telling us that the business was not a legal business (which, of course, it was), we realized that he came as a representative of a new striative and striating entity, and his job was to close us down.

And that is what happened. The beauty of this work, the care that became alive between all involved with the home, the relations that were expanding and reconnecting beyond the home, the respect for each person's unique experiences, and the smooth space that had quickly evolved and that the young men had settled into, was taken away. And why? Because of changes in the boundary lines?

Economic priorities? Prejudice against the single-male-caregivers? We can only guess. We can only make presumptions as we listen to the nuances of talk, for those types of striative decisions are almost never made upon the ground where the smooth space is active; they are made elsewhere. Therefore, we were necessarily restricted from the rationality of this decision. We all suffered from this loss. The young men went their own way.

However, the caregiving didn't stop, rather it entered a new smooth space. The primary caregiver moved to another place, this location was out in the country, a small place where he could afford to live. There he spent days on end taking care of, and conversing with, the wild birds and animals that were around him. The creatures knew him, and he knew them. I saw him as a contemporary Saint Basil.

And Saint Basil seems particularly fitting, for a prayer attributed to the saint astutely depicts the affects that surrounded our caregiver, whether the caring was for the young men, or for the birds and animals. Affects close to love and grief in complex and diverse movement.

O God, enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all living things, our brothers the animals to whom thou has given the earth as their home in common with us. We remember with shame that in the past we have exercised the high dominion of man with ruthless cruelty, so that the voice of the earth, which should have gone up to Thee in song, has been a groan of travail. May we realize that they live, not for us alone, but for themselves and for Thee, and that they love the sweetness of life.<sup>385</sup>

Flows of affect involving the young men, the caregivers, and the animals. As well as striations of *high dominion* over the young men, the caregivers, and the animals. And the voices of the earth – the animals, the young men, and all their relations -- in a groan of travail. Saint Basil gives articulation to the affective consequences of arborescent forces cutting with bureaucratic brutality into smooth spaces.

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<sup>385</sup> Catholic Concern for Animals, "Saints who Loved Animals." Retrieved from <https://catholic-animals.com/activities/catholic-spirituality/saints-who-loved-animals>. In the ecological spirit of complexity, and, as with many of the sayings that come from ancient sources, the actual authorship of this quotation is not clear. See an ongoing and inconclusive conversation about this topic at: Monachos.net, *Seeking source of quotation from St. Basil the Great*, <http://www.monachos.net/conversation/topic/4993-seeking-source-of-quotation-from-st-basil-the-great>.

A few years later (through a different context altogether) the mother of another young man that I knew had suddenly died and I went to his home to meet with him and his family and show my support. When I got there a wonderful surprise met me. The door was answered by the older one of the two sets of brothers who were in the home that was previously closed down. We both looked at each other with astonishment, and simultaneously blurted out the nicknames that we used for each other. A tender conversation followed. This young man's girlfriend was related to the young man I had come to visit. He was there to help out with the family. We talked for a while, he filled me in as best as he could with the story of the other young men. Before I got on with my intentions for the visit I thanked him for caring, for being there for my friend and his family. After that I ran into him a few more times, and we always enjoyed reconnecting.

The gift of smooth space didn't stop with the dislocating actions of striative institutions. A new smooth space emerged, this time in the context of a grief (as it did in the old home), a coming-together around a specific and painful sorrow. And this happened in a geographical location not far from a lake that was similar to, but smaller than, Sumas Lake. I believe this may be the last remaining shallow lake that, like Sumas Lake once was, is still responsive to the Fraser River's seasonal flooding. Smooth spaces can come alive where care, where grief, where relations are able to reconnect, and where the courses of rivers and lakes are still able to ebb and flow with the movements of the seasons. And, by the way, just yesterday I witnessed the winter swans feeding on this lake.

## Not a Conclusion, but an Opening

My hope is that the coming together of these three events within this chapter can act as a catalyst for conversation, with a particular invitation for readers involved in the realm of education to explore the relational contexts -- including the geographical, historical, conceptual and personal relations -- that make up their own pedagogical worlds. And maybe we should begin, not with predetermined assessments, not with striative actions, not with intentions for the creation of remedies

and plans, but rather with the type of affective movements articulated in the previous quote credited to Saint Basil – “We remember with shame that in the past we have exercised the high dominion of man with ruthless cruelty, so that the voice of the earth, which should have gone up to Thee in song, has been a groan of travail.”

Also, I put forward the idea that the playing out of smooth space and striative forces within the institutional and communal contexts of our educational worlds must be thoughtfully attended to. Perhaps, first of all, we need to continuously attune ourselves to the destructive potentials within the striative impulses that emerge within our institutional settings, and particularly within our institutional remedies (how institutions endeavour to fix identified problems and minimize perceived liabilities).<sup>386</sup> And secondly, perhaps we can together find ways, actually within the institutional contexts, whereby we can create, foster and cherish smooth space relations. I hope it is possible – indeed, in some ways it is already happening -- that institutions of education can attentively and cautiously apply striative influences toward the active recognition, cherishment, and generation of smooth spaces for students, families, community, teachers, staff and administrators, and also for the other living relations that are inevitably connected to our educational endeavours.

Whether we wish it to be or not, this blending of smooth and striated spaces composes most all the contexts for life in contemporary modernity -- including education. However, I fear that, in such contested contexts -- as with Sumas Lake, and as with the young men and their caregivers -- the ecologically requisite smooth spaces are poised to be repetitively minimized, overwhelmed and violated. I must admit that affects approaching doubt and fear are never far away when I consider contemporary relations between smooth space and striative forces. A grief ever-present – but perhaps it is there that our hope may lie.

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<sup>386</sup> It is my observation that striative influences are particularly operative and virulent amidst institutional efforts to produce remedies.

## Sumas Lake, 1915.

Trumpeter Swans on farmland that once was Sumas Lake, 2014 (Sumas Mountain in background).



Figure 2<sup>387</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> Fig. 2. Christopher Iwestel Kinman. Personal Photo. Nov. 2014.

## Dérive-Prayer #6: Remembering the Forgotten Dead and the Vulnerable Living in Abbotsford

Beyond Sumas Lake, the Fraser enters realms that are much more occupied with human souls than previously along the river – beginning with the city of Abbotsford. Over the decades, numerous municipalities have grown up on the banks of this river, and, as we travel down the Fraser toward the sea, we now must face the urban and its complexities. Cities, with all the people, all the living, moving elements of urban life, and all the possibilities and troubles that they produce, now inescapably confront us.

There is one type of assemblage that we encounter, and we encounter it often in the city. Rather than label this assemblage with a single term, we can access this assemblage by means of a variety of words, including: homelessness, poverty, addictions, inequity, the opioid epidemic, death, grief, recovery, harm-reduction, treatment, to name just a few of these words and phrases. In many ways this assemblage seems to be held together in response to the overwhelming hegemonies of capitalist and managerial values at play within these urban contexts. It is such an assemblage that I wish to walk amidst in this chapter.

We begin with the deceased.

It's not an easy thing to consider the dead. The following is a disturbing, but common story, written by David McIntosh. He tells this story as poem.

I was hoping to find him drunk or long dead and stiff as a board Nothing indecisive No uncertainty But he was neither No uncertainty He groaned as I rolled him out of blood and vomit in which his face lay It was probably gas Escaping The sound I scooped out a bit of vomit and I sealed his lips to mine I blew into the emptiness of his lungs I did some compressions I blew again I ran to the shack and called 911 describing where I was and what I found I hoped they would keep me on the phone but they didn't They said the ambulance would be there soon I didn't want to go back to the dead guy I heard the ambulance and went out to the street to wave it into the worksite They were in no hurry to get to the dead guy either Taking their time with their equipment The cops who soon followed lingered leisurely They all expressed surprise that I did mouth to mouth... I felt sick I wanted to leave but the cops said I had to stay and that I would want to see this The

Ambulance guys were about to shoot the dead guy full of Narcan. Sometimes junkies you thought long dead were in fact in a deep coma. A hit off this stuff could reanimate them. They'd jump up and run around like a headless chicken. It was really worth seeing. But this guy stayed dead. No one could access the site until the Coroner's van picked up the body. The masons arrived and they were pissed... I kept rinsing my mouth. I closed the site when they finally took him away. They were going to do some tests. HIV. Hepatitis. They would let me know. Not to worry. I went home and brushed my teeth continuously. He was dead. I was worried<sup>388</sup>

McIntosh's story is situated in Vancouver. An everyday occurrence in that city. However, this story could have happened in any of the cities along these last stretches of the Fraser. I wish to focus particularly on the city of Abbotsford, where my home resides, and where similar events occur all-too regularly.

But first, let me introduce the reader to Ward Draper.<sup>389</sup> He is the pastor of the *Five and Two Ministries*, an Abbotsford, faith-based group that emphasizes an obligation for all of us to attend to those who are poor, hungry and homeless around us. For Ward and his group, this is a Christian obligation. On their website they quote Mother Theresa:

Prayer in action is love, and love in action is service. Try to give unconditionally whatever a person needs in the moment. The point is to do something, however small, and show you care through your actions by giving your time... We are all God's children so it is important to share His gifts. Do not worry about why problems exist in the world – just respond to people's needs... We feel what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean, but that ocean would be less without that drop.<sup>390</sup>

Ward, and others connected with his ministry, are daily involved in assisting this population of our city in finding housing, food, clothing, company, and care. They provide food every day. Some of this food comes from the Sikh temple – a Christian organization and Sikhs working together, feeding those who are unable to obtain a meal of their own.

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<sup>388</sup> Chris Bose and David McIntosh. *Vancouver, Crawling, Weeping, Betting*. Battery opera performance and UNIT/PITT Projects. 2014. #4.

<sup>389</sup> Ward wrote a blog that was published on Huffington Post. See his posts at: Ward Draper. *Huffington Post*. <https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/author/ward-draper/>

<sup>390</sup> Mother Theresa. quoted in *The Five and Two Ministries*. <http://the5and2.ca/>

Ward recently took me on a tour around Abbotsford, showing me the actual locations where some of these people we would consider marginalized have died. He told me their names, their stories, the circumstances around their deaths. The first stop we made on this tour was about a death that occurred in 1884. That long ago.

Ward tells me about Louie Sam.

This event occurred about thirteen years after British Columbia joined the Canadian confederation. It happened within the territory of the current town of Abbotsford. He was a fifteen-year old Sema:th boy who was accused of murdering a shopkeeper on the American side of the border. It seemed that the most they had against him was someone had reported that on the day of the shopkeeper's death Louie had looked guilty. Added to that, his deceased father had been accused of murder in the past, and it is of course assumed that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.<sup>391</sup> Louie had been in custody with authorities on the Canadian side of the border. In an emboldened and lawless move, a group of armed men, faces blackened with charcoal, crossed the border into Canada and demanded at gunpoint to have Louie turned over to them. These Americans forcibly took Louie from his Canadian guards. The next day this Sema:th boy was found dead, hanging from a tree near Whatcom Road, just a short distance from the American border. An American lynching, here in Abbotsford, BC.

At the corner of Whatcom and Vye Roads, out in the farmlands around Abbotsford, there is a small monument. There, amongst a collection of other stories from this area's history – mostly histories of early Canadian settlement – is a brief mention of Louie.

Perhaps our memories, along with our hearts, must be expanded.

Such a story is overflowing with political relevance. It is, for one, a story of the long legacy of American and Canadian relations. The bullyish approach that the USA so often takes to its neighbours,

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<sup>391</sup> This story is told in detail by: John Vaillant. "The Lynching of Louie Sam." *The Walrus*. Dec 12, 2008. [https://thewalrus.ca/the-lynching-of-louie-sam/?gclid=CjwKCAiA1ZDiBRAXEiwAIWYNC-IEScFgVC7g0JzSNUJcshEsGPzzio0JzoFpLC-hwNOJ9p4tnw3ifBoCumQQAvD\\_BwE](https://thewalrus.ca/the-lynching-of-louie-sam/?gclid=CjwKCAiA1ZDiBRAXEiwAIWYNC-IEScFgVC7g0JzSNUJcshEsGPzzio0JzoFpLC-hwNOJ9p4tnw3ifBoCumQQAvD_BwE).



and others in the world. It is also, of course, a story about the treatment of indigenous peoples on both sides of this border. But, during my trip with Ward, this story became the tale of a real young person who had been killed in our hometown and needed to be remembered. It did not matter that his death took place so long ago. It was our duty and our privilege to find ways to keep him alive. For this is the story of a minor, a mere boy, brutally murdered on lands we often travel upon. We took time to remember Louie.

Remembering the dead. Particularly those deaths that are easy for us to overlook.

And, while we were there, we also remembered Sumas Lake. For Louie was murdered on the shore of this lake. About 40 years after Louie was killed, the lake that his people had lived with for countless generations, the very body of water whose shoreline had witnessed Louie's murder, was also destroyed (we told some of this story in the previous chapter). A lake, pumped, diked and emptied. A peoples' source of life and spirituality taken away. A type of killing committed directly by the British Columbia government. This lake is now gone, its existence no longer evident to those who pass through the area.

Our histories are filled with many deaths. Many kinds of deaths.

Ward and I often meet on Sunday evenings at a coffee shop in a strip mall off McCallum Road, near Highway #1, in Abbotsford. We are frequently joined by his wife and by others that might happen by. There, we sit in deckchairs beside his vehicle out in the parking lot. We share coffee and conversation. Ward also has his much-desired smoke. One time when we were on this location, Ward and I both recalled that, not many years ago, this very parking lot was a trailer park, a location where those without a high level of income could experience the dignity of owning their own home. The trailer park is also gone. Nothing around to keep its memory alive, to remember the families who lived in that spot, to remember those who raised their children in that location, those who lived and died there. It seems, just perhaps, that capitalism – a force that thinks little of tearing down existing ecological

relations to build a strip mall – is not particularly comfortable with the ramifications that may come with remembering the dead. The trailer park has died, been killed off – as are trailer parks all over this part of the world.

People, places, relationships, histories, memories -- lost, disappearing, deliberately destroyed, at times outright murdered.

There is a work before us, a work of returning to what we have turned away from, a listening to the living and the dead.

Why must our leaders be so consistently blind to the call of justice and mercy? Why must our city consistently violate and victimize the humans living in our alleys and ditches? Is it not time to take definitive action to bring greater resources, compassion, and restoration to our broken city?

When will the cries be heard?

Ward Draper<sup>392</sup>

And, when will their cries be heard? And, why are our leaders blind to the call of justice and mercy? Perhaps, just perhaps, because justice, mercy, and those who sleep in our ditches are not usually values that build up the capitalist ventures of a city. In fact, perhaps those sleeping in our ditches get in the way of such schemes.

There is a work that must be done -- and it is certainly being done by people like Ward and his friends. It is a work that takes us beyond the western values for profit that have repeatedly wreaked havoc upon the lands and peoples of this continent. It is a work of returning to the stories of our dead, a work of remembering. It is also, a work of moving actively into the living times -- caring, feeding, housing those residing in our communities who are vulnerable. It is a compassionate work. It is also a spiritual work. And, it is a work that we must invent, and constantly reinvent – finding ways to remember both the dead and the vulnerable.

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<sup>392</sup> Ward Draper. "When Will the Cries of Abbotsford's Homeless be Heard." *Huffington Post*. Feb 18, 2014. [https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/ward-draper/cries-abbotsford-homeless-be-heard\\_b\\_4811429.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/ward-draper/cries-abbotsford-homeless-be-heard_b_4811429.html).

A return to McIntosh's story.

The day before the dead guy my mother had come by the site I still have no idea how she knew where I was She was all teary She had found some writing I had left on her computer I didn't have a computer of my own back then I must have needed to print something She wanted to thank me for writing about my father I had written about a Cyclops I guess it was metaphorical I accepted her thanks<sup>393</sup>

\* \* \*

We'll live to dance another day  
It's just now we have to dance for more of us

Frank Turner<sup>394</sup>

There's a knot in my gut  
As I gaze out today  
On the planes of the city  
All polychrome grey  
When the skin is peeled off it  
What is there to say?  
The beautiful creatures are going away

Like a dam on a river  
My conscience is pressed  
By the weight of hard feelings  
Piled up in my breast  
The callous and vicious things  
Humans display  
The beautiful creatures are going away

From the stones of the fortress  
To the shapes in the air  
To the ache in the spirit  
We label despair  
We create what destroys  
Bind ourselves to betray  
The beautiful creatures going away

Bruce Cockburn<sup>395</sup>

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<sup>393</sup> Chris Bose and David McIntosh. Ibid.

<sup>394</sup> Frank Turner. "Long Live the Queen." *Love Ire and Song*. Xtra Mile Recordings. 2008.

<sup>395</sup> Bruce Cockburn. "Beautiful Creatures." *Life Short Call Now*. True North Records. 2006.

# Experiment #6 — Entering Vancouver: The City, Capitalism and the Death of God

## The River and the City

In this cold commodity culture  
Where you lay your money down  
It's hard to even notice  
That all this earth is hallowed ground --  
Harder still to feel it  
Basic as a breath --  
Love is stronger than darkness  
Love is stronger than death

Bruce Cockburn<sup>396</sup>

I've been following the river, until it joins hands with the sea

Rolling Stones<sup>397</sup>

The muddy water of the Fraser ends its land-based journey where the City of Vancouver is now located. But it is an ending that doesn't tell the whole truth, for, as we will see soon, the river continues into the sea. However, it is this Vancouver ending, a terrestrial and urban ending, that I wish to attend to here. For I find the completion of this river, in this city, to be entwined with a kind of complicated spiritual story – though it might not seem like a spiritual story at first.

Inevitably this chapter is, to some extent, my own experiment exploring the lines of relationship between the city, its inhabitants and visitors. Vancouver has been a recurrent presence in my world for many years. The lines of connection for me are numerous, including: I live in a suburb of this city and have done so now for almost three decades; part of my work responsibilities involves an associate professorship that takes me into the downtown core on a weekly basis; two of my children and my brother call Vancouver their home; and, of course, there are endless other ties, social, cultural, spiritual.

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<sup>396</sup> Bruce Cockburn. "The Gift." *Big Circumstance*. True North Records. 1988.

<sup>397</sup> Rolling Stones. "Following the River." *Exile on Main Street*. Rolling Stones Records. 1972.

I have come to appreciate that towns and cities are not simply jurisdictions of governance, nor compositions of demographical data, but are relational, rhizome compositions inextricable from the complexities of human lives and the lives of the other living creatures of the city. There are always intense personal connections between people and city, between all the living beings and the city.

Urban life also cannot be separated from the geographical entities that have given a city its form. This includes the bodies of water upon whose banks a city resides. In this chapter we think not only of relational assemblages composed of people, other living entities, and the city of Vancouver, but, we add to this complexity relations with the Fraser River.

I heard that evil comes disguised  
Like a city of angels  
I'm walking towards the light

Baptized in the river  
I've seen a vision of my life  
And I wanna be delivered  
In the city was a sinner  
I've done a lot of things wrong  
But I swear I'm a believer  
Like the prodigal son  
I was out on my own  
Now I'm trying to find my way back home  
Baptized in the river  
I'm delivered  
I'm delivered...

I heard that evil comes disguised  
Like a city of angels  
I'm walking towards the light

Good Charlotte<sup>398</sup>

The river, the city, and certain angels move together here in Vancouver. However, I find Vancouver to be a city that tends to minimize its relations with the river, even though the Fraser marks its entire southern border. There are only a few access points where the river can be visited in this city,

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<sup>398</sup> Don Gilmore, Benji Madden, Joel Madden. "The River." Good Charlotte. *Good Morning Revival*. Sony/ATV Music. 2007.

and they are certainly not well-marked nor well-travelled locations. The Fraser is certainly not offered as a highlight of the city in its public relations campaigns. And, in attending to the local news, it becomes apparent that the Fraser is viewed as a partisan obstacle leading to arguments about bridges or tunnels, and the economic and political pitfalls of both.<sup>399</sup> To local politicians, the river has become an inconvenient barrier, a reality that but must be addressed, but with the loss of as little political capital as possible.

## An Economic and a Spiritual City

The angels of this city? I suggest that they include economic angels, and, in conjunction, angels of inequity. Vancouver, to many, feels like a city dedicated to the production of wealth, but it is certainly only wealth for some.<sup>400</sup> Parts of the city hold some of the worst poverty in Canada, and these parts refuse to go away (this poverty is, perhaps, the other side of the coin – pardon the pun – of the city of money). And the Fraser enters this economic conversation.

Those who can afford to live in the city, particularly those who can afford to own property, have little need to cross the Fraser, or to even think about her. For many Vancouverites, their encounters with the river tend to be composed of mere seconds as they cross the bridge over the North Arm of the Fraser to go to the Vancouver International Airport. Almost everything they perceive to need is in the city, or, for recreational purposes, is in the mountains north of the city. However, many of the working people, of necessity, live outside the city of Vancouver, and out of no choice of their own must cross the river and cross it often for employment or other business concerns.

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<sup>399</sup> For example: Laura Sciarpelletti, "Further Delays Hamper B.C.'s Massey Tunnel Replacement." *The Globe and Mail*, 12, 18, 2018. <https://libguides.westsoundacademy.org/c.php?g=457482&p=3155556>.

<sup>400</sup> A few years ago, my daughter found an online copy of a book that was published in the late nineteenth-hundreds – unfortunately she has since lost the digital file and I cannot access a precise reference for it. The book looked at a variety of cities of the world from its late nineteenth century perspective and described them. Both Vancouver and Victoria were mentioned. Victoria was described as a city of high tea, extremely British in tone, and Vancouver was described as a city obsessed with its capitalist pursuits. It appears that spirit of Vancouver hasn't changed much in well over a hundred years.

It seems the Fraser River in Vancouver is encountered not so much as a reminder of the power of this land and its waters, nor as a remembrance to ancient flows of history and ecologies, neither as a linking system bringing together assorted peoples for trade and the sharing of cultures, but as a political hinderance interrupting flows of capital and reinforcing lines of inequity.

Perhaps these Vancouver-style thrusts of capitalism are themselves spiritual movements. Not a spirituality of the land and the water, but rather a spirituality that must operate separate from any and all specified locations. A spirituality exportable to any context – not tied down, limited to a place on the earth, not connected to the particularities of any distinct place.<sup>401</sup> A spirituality marked by an allegiance to transcendence. A spirituality that builds downtown-centres and international airports that look and feel practically the same everywhere on earth. A spirituality that creates stores and supermarkets that also seem identical wherever one might be in the world. A spirituality that in recent years has discovered it can even dispose of these very same brick and mortar stores, and replace the need for location with even more dislocated, digital purchasing processes.

Certain gods seem to have arisen with the forces of capitalism, and they care little about the earth, the waters, and those who realize their dependencies upon such ecological realms. These gods are not concerned with the importance of place. They believe that they are not affected by a river. And specifically, they believe that they are certainly not affected by *this* river. Such gods manage and arrange life as they do the management of all goods under their control, by classifying every possible entity for ease of organization, sale, and consumption, by positioning everything within the shelving processes of modern institutions.

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<sup>401</sup> This thought echoes Isabelle Stengers, who, in turn, evokes Alfred North Whitehead. Stengers suggests there are certain ideas that “beings of power will have difficulty tolerating” in part because these beings are “proceeding as they do in the name of an intangible right that must be satisfied everywhere, which recognizes no difference between a here and there, other than that of the parasites to be eliminated so that they themselves can be confirmed.” Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead*. Harvard. 2011. 518.

But, perhaps these are not gods, or they are attempting to not be gods. Rather, they endeavour to be God, singular -- *the God*.

“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”<sup>402</sup>

Perhaps the spirituality of this movement holds more in-common with western monotheism than with a diversity of divinities. For polytheism has a history in the modern world as a religious orientation of the uncivilized; far too chaotic for the hierarchical distinctions of modernity.<sup>403</sup> Monotheism demands unity and orderliness under the auspices of a single, hierarchical organizing process. Difference and diversities are clearly problematic and can only be of value if they are still able to be classified underneath the singularity of the One. Such a monotheistic singularity and its ties to capitalist histories and structures was clearly observed by Felix Guattari: “... the universalization of paradigms, the accentuated arborification of their systems of organization resulting notably in all the abstract machines being conjugated on the basis of a mono-subjectivism, which finds its religious expression in monotheism (correlative to a degeneration of systems of animal abstract machines).”<sup>404</sup>

This spirituality also must not be about a pantheism; that is, about divinity residing within the movements of nature, relational realms, the cosmos. For this God must stand above all of that and must have the authority to consign everything to its appropriate place. A capitalist God who resides over all and organizes all. A single God who we do not describe as a God, but who operates as a God, *the God*, nonetheless.

Such a monotheistic God of capitalism has been addressed by numerous thinkers.

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<sup>402</sup> Exodus. 20:3.

<sup>403</sup> Modern versions of Christian opposition to polytheism are easy to find. A couple of references: Wayne Jackson, “Is Christianity Polytheistic?” *Christian Courier*. <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/236-is-christianity-polytheistic>; Timothy McCabe. “What's an Easy Way to Demonstrate that Polytheism is False?” *The God Intention*. <https://www.godcontention.org/christian/an-easy-way-to-demonstrate-that-polytheism-is-false>.

<sup>404</sup> Felix Guattari. *Lines of Flight: For Another World of Possibilities*. Trans. Andrew Goffey. Bloomsbury. 2016. 184.



We begin with Thompson Highway.<sup>405</sup>

[O]ne linguistic structure is monotheistic in architecture, with one god only, a god that is male, the other is pantheistic, a system where divine energy has not yet left nature, so that nature – trees, grass, air, even one drop of water, even the aforementioned ant – virtually bristles with divine energy. In this latter design, god is biology, womb, female, god is the land. Another way of putting it: structurally, one linguistic notion is phallic – a straight line; the other yonic, womb-like, a circle. So that one system defines existence on planet Earth as a curse from an angry male god – we are here to repent, to suffer; the other a blessing from a benevolent female god: we are here to laugh, we are here to celebrate... This pantheistic design, in any case, is the “map” that has steered our culture over the eons.<sup>406</sup>

Highway evokes a polytheistic, womblike spirituality far away from the patriarchal monotheism evident in the actions of Christian colonization. His is not at all the spirituality of the one, true, capitalist God.

Thomas King, another writer of indigenous heritage, in an audacious literary move, states, “If you want the positive but somewhat callous view, you might wish to describe Christianity as the gateway drug to supply-side capitalism.”<sup>407</sup> He presents a case that directly connects the monotheistic spiritualities of the West to the ventures of western capitalism.

Highway and King are not alone. Jacques Derrida challenges the categorization systems that dominate our capitalist, modern world – systems of organization that attempt to eradicate difference, diversities, and the seeming anarchy of relational worlds. At times Derrida challenges these ideas through the lens of Marx.<sup>408</sup> Bruce Alexander is able to convincingly connect the sufferings of addiction with the dislocations that hyper-capitalism imposes upon the living world – with a particular emphasis upon the dislocations associated with the City of Vancouver.<sup>409</sup> Lynn Hoffman, who was born in a left-leaning artist colony in Paris of the 1920s, throughout her life was interested in the influences of class and capitalism upon the lives of those we work with in family and communal therapies.<sup>410</sup> And, in her

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<sup>405</sup> This quote is also provided in the introduction section of this thesis.

<sup>406</sup> Tomson Highway. 2017. xiv-xv.

<sup>407</sup> Thomas King. 2017. 103.

<sup>408</sup> Jacques Derrida. 1994, 1998.

<sup>409</sup> Bruce Alexander. 2000. 2010.

<sup>410</sup> Christopher Kinman with Lynn Hoffman. 2012.

later life, Hoffman became captivated by the Occupy Wall Street movement, which insisted upon breaking down the exclusivity of what was termed *the one percent* in the decision making processes of governance.<sup>411</sup> Hoffman was always looking for more democratic forms of connection and engagement, and she found the Occupy movement to be filled with important examples of such forms of communication. Deleuze and Guattari wrote two books with the subtitle, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.<sup>412</sup> They repeatedly found ways to connect the movements of capitalism with the subjectivities of living bodies in modern times. They, perhaps more than most, went out of the way to articulate ways to counter the thought processes of modernity and capitalism. They created concepts that burst through the organizing systems of capitalism; concepts such as: rhizomes, assemblages, the body without organs, ritornellos, schizoanalysis, nomadology, the nomad war-machine, etc.

And, the list of those who address the spirituality of capitalism could go on.

## Nietzsche and the Death of the Neoliberal God

But, before all of these thinkers, there was Nietzsche.<sup>413</sup>

Around the mid to late nineteenth century, in the boldest of statements, and in an intensely poetic statement, Nietzsche declared God to be dead.<sup>414</sup> Of course, most connect this God to the divinity of the church, the God of western religion -- and they are certainly correct in doing so. However, I suggest we must hear Nietzsche once again, and hear him this time addressing the capitalist God – this

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<sup>411</sup> Ibid.

<sup>412</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari. 1987.

<sup>413</sup> According to Reddekop, Nietzsche and Heidegger, are arguably the two most prominent western thinkers who promote a “relational ontology” that opposes the typical western ontologies (in which capitalism is firmly ensconced). Nietzsche’s relational ontology will become evident in this chapter. Reddekop also claims that indigenous thought takes such relational ontologies to levels beyond Nietzsche and Heidegger. He says, “the critical arsenal these thinkers offer Western theory gives valuable insights concerning the potential that relational thinking might have as a counterdiscourse *vis à vis* our dominant culture – but that Indigenous thought pushes us much farther still in this direction.” Jarred Reddekop. “Thinking Across Worlds: Indigenous Thought, Relational Ontology, and the Politics of Nature; Or, If Only Nietzsche Could Meet a Yachaj.” PhD Diss., University of Western Ontario. 2014. Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository, 2082. ii.

<sup>414</sup> Nietzsche spoke repeatedly about the idea of *God is dead*, but perhaps his most memorable statement about the death of God was in: Friedrich Nietzsche. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Prabhat Prakashan. 1898.

singular God who operates much as Christianity once did, and who organizes the structures of our modern world. For this God, in Nietzsche's language, is dead.

How does Nietzsche describe this God who is now dead, the God of western capitalism?

### **The God of Coherence**

Perhaps he<sup>415</sup> is *the God of coherence*, the God that stands above all and organizes all, the monotheistic God of unity. Nietzsche claims, "I mistrust all systematizers and avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity."<sup>416</sup> Elsewhere, Nietzsche talked of the *principium individuationis* -- a principle of individualism that divides the world up into distinct, separate things, where the more organic or rhizome relations between entities are minimized or lost. The God of coherence requires such separations, an incessant value for individualism, to do its systematizing work.

Nietzsche presents Schopenhauer's figure of the individual alone on the sea as an ultimate image of principium individuationis -- an image he despised.

In an eccentric way one might say of Apollo what Schopenhauer says... of man caught in the veil of Maya: "Even as on an immense, raging sea, assailed by huge wave crests, a man sits in a little rowboat trusting his frail craft, so, amidst the furious torments of this world, the individual sits tranquilly, supported by the principium individuationis [principle of individuation] and relying on it"... One might say that the unshakable confidence in that principium has received its most magnificent expression in Apollo, and that Apollo himself may be regarded as the marvelous divine image of the principium individuationis, whose looks and gestures radiate the full delight, wisdom, and beauty of "illusion."<sup>417</sup>

The publishers of Lynn Hoffman's 2002 book, put a similar image to Schopenhauer's -- of the individual alone on a boat -- upon the cover.<sup>418</sup> Only this time it was an isolated female image instead of male. What an offense this was to Hoffman, for every sentence and paragraph of her writing invites a movement away from such individualisms. Her feminist vision was one that called for communal ethics over all individualisms.

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<sup>415</sup> This *one* God was always *male*.

<sup>416</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Twilight of the Idols and the Anti-Christ*. Penguin. 1968. 25.

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<sup>418</sup> Lynn Hoffman. 2002.

Hoffman preferred the sculpture by Haida artist, Bill Reed, residing in the Vancouver International Airport, where a boat is presented that is filled with people and animals, all jammed together, some cooperating, some arguing, some biting each other – but all in this boat together, with continuous connections of touch, no separations, nothing detached from anything else.<sup>419</sup> I remember being in conversation with Hoffman where she informed me that her publisher was not interested in looking into this Bill Reed option.

Western thought often takes for granted the idea that the individual, alone, is the basis for building a responsible world. Hoffman was viscerally antagonistic to such thinking. As was Nietzsche. I sometimes hear Nietzsche presented as if he is a supporter of the individualisms of libertarian philosophies. Nietzsche was far away from such ideas, for he goes to great length to dispose of principium individuationis – a basic concept within libertarianism. If we follow Nietzsche’s thought, this God of unity, God of the individual, is dead. And, somewhere, in some places, diversities, complexities, polytheisms, are returning into the spaces left from the death of this capitalist God.

### **The Numerical/Counting God**

First, a quick diversion to a children’s book, *The Little Prince* (Oh, it’s so much more than a children’s book):

If I’ve told you details... and if I’ve given you its number, it is on account of the grown-ups. Grown-ups like numbers. When you tell them about a new friend, they never ask questions about what really matters. They never ask: “What does his voice sound like?” “What games does he like best?” “Does he collect butterflies?” They ask: “How old is he?” “How many brothers does he have?” “How much does he weigh?” “How much money does his father make?” Only then do they think they know him. If you tell grown-ups, “I saw a beautiful red brick house, with geraniums at the window and doves on the roof...” they won’t be able to imagine such a house. You have to tell them, “I saw a house worth a hundred thousand francs.” They then explain, “What a pretty house!”<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> Bill Reed. 1994. *The Jade Canoe*. Bronze Sculpture. Vancouver International Airport.

<sup>420</sup> Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. *The Little Prince*. Mariner Books. 2000.

Maybe this God who is dead is the *grown-up God*. Living to assign value – he becomes the *numerical/counting God*. And, perhaps Jacques Derrida, in light of the words of the Little Prince, might have preferred to have been imagined as a child, rather than a grown-up, for both he and the Little Prince were uncomfortable with the obsessive calculations: “What would an equality then be, what would an equity be, which would no longer calculate this equivalence? Which would, quite simply, no longer calculate at all?”<sup>421</sup>

Back to Nietzsche: “One must reach out and try to grasp this astonishing *finesse, that the value of life cannot be estimated.*”<sup>422</sup>

The quest of modernism has gone in an opposite direction to Nietzsche’s thinking, asserting that every element of life must go through appraisal and assessment processes and receive assigned numerical valuations in response. In opposition to Nietzsche, this process of mathematical evaluation becomes a new law imposed upon the land. This is a concept that, for Nietzsche, was hostile to life itself. Yet this is a concept that has become central in the modern world to the economic perspective often called *neoliberalism*.

Neoliberalism is not just a move towards increasing quantification and economic valuation processes, neither is it simply about the increasing spread of economic globalism. For beyond all of this, it is argued that neoliberalism is about a move to quantify and value ALL things, to leave *nothing* outside of the grasp of economic processes and valuations.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Jacques Derrida. *Politics of Friendship*. Verso. 2005

<sup>422</sup> Hoffman. *Ibid.* 31.

<sup>423</sup> Stephen Metcalf. "Neoliberalism: The Idea that Swallowed the World." *The Guardian*. 18. 2017; Jason Hickel. "Neoliberalism and the End of Democracy." In *Handbook of Neoliberalism*. 170-180. Routledge,.2016. With Esposito and Perez neoliberalism is seen as profoundly influencing the concept of mental health. Luigi Esposito and Fernando M. Perez. "Neoliberalism and the Commodification of Mental Health." *Humanity & Society*. Vol. 38(4). 2014. 414-442. Psychology’s ties to neoliberalism are explored from within, by a writer who describes herself as a “critical psychologist.” Mónica Peña. “Against Normality: Three Stories about Children, Monsters and Neoliberalism” *The Discourse Unit*. <https://thediscourseunit.files.wordpress.com/2017/08/arcpmonicap.pdf>.

## The God of Reason

And continuing, Nietzsche talks of *the God of reason*, the God who assumes that correct thinking, which of course turns out to be western thinking, is possible and required. Nietzsche speaks of a tradition of rationality that emerged from ancient Greek thought. He is suspicious of such traditions of thinking:

Rationality was at that time divined as a *saviour*; neither Socrates nor his 'invalids' were free to be rational or not, as they wished – it was *de rigueur*, it was their last expedient. The fanaticism with which the whole of Greek thought throws itself at rationality betrays a state of emergency: one was in peril, one only had *one* choice: either to perish, or – to be *absurdly rational*.<sup>424</sup>

He continues challenging these forms of rationality that oppose themselves to the supposed irrational elements of real life. He speaks of: "The harshest daylight, rationality at any cost, life bright, cold, circumspect, conscious without instinct, in opposition to the instincts, has itself been more than a sickness – and by no means a way back to 'virtue', to 'health', to 'happiness'..."<sup>425</sup> He compares this rationality to the seemingly chaotic arrangements of the living world. There is a push, in Nietzsche, toward the irrationality that is often identified with that which we call *nature*, rather than the apparent rationality of the western mind -- a rationality molded in the Greek philosophical tradition.

Reason is always a region cut out of the irrational...

Gilles Deleuze<sup>426</sup>

Derrida also challenges the concept of the rational God, the Cartesian God. The traditional formulation of rationality put forward by Descartes, and reworded by Derrida, says: "I think therefore I think myself and am sufficient unto myself, there is no (need of a) friend, etc."<sup>427 428</sup> This is an ontology

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<sup>424</sup> Ibid. 33. Education also discusses the neoliberal agenda: Frank Margonis. "Opting Out of Neocolonial Relationality." *Philosophy of Education Archive*. 2016. 1-13.

<sup>425</sup> Ibid. 35.

<sup>426</sup> Quoted in: Felix Guattari. *Chaosophy: Texts and Interviews: 1972-1977*. Ed. Sylvere Lotringer. Trans. Francois Dosse. MIT Press. 2009. 35.

<sup>427</sup> Derrida. Ibid. 224.

<sup>428</sup> Descartes states his view of the rational being: "But what then am I? A thinking being. What is a thinking being? It is a being which doubts, which understands, [which conceives,] which affirms, which denies, which wills, which rejects, which imagines also, and which perceives." *Rene Descartes. Meditations on First Philosophy*. The

of self-sufficiency that attempts to repudiate all things relational. However, Derrida suggests a different formula:

I think, therefore I am the other; I think, therefore I need the other (in order to think); I think, therefore the possibility of friendship is lodged in the movement of my thought in so far as it demands, calls for, desires the other, the necessity of the other, the cause of the other at the heart of cogito.<sup>429</sup>

Derrida introduces us to a relational cogito, a relational realm where thought and reason finds a new home.

### **The God of Morality**

Nietzsche also talks of *the God of morality*, that is, the God whose knowledge is supreme over the peoples and creatures of this earth, a God who insists on knowing much more about how such living creatures should operate in the world than the creatures themselves. This is not a lambaste against living responsibly -- in response -- with other beings. Not at all! Quite the opposite! This is about defying the presumption of a higher ownership of that which is moral. "I formulate a principle," Nietzsche says, and continuing...

All Naturalism in morality, that is all *healthy* morality, is dominated by an instinct of life – some commandment of life is fulfilled through a certain canon of 'shall' and 'shall not', some hindrance and hostile element on life's road is thereby removed. *Anti-natural* morality, that is virtually every morality that has hitherto been taught, revered and preached, turns on the contrary precisely *against* the *condemnation* of these instincts.<sup>430</sup>

The God of morality and the God of coherency join with Nietzsche. Speaking specifically of Christianity, he says, it is...

A system, a consistently thought out and *complete* view of things. If one breaks out of it a fundamental idea, the belief in God, one thereby breaks the whole thing to pieces: one has nothing of any consequence left in one's hands. Christianity presumes that man does not know, *cannot* know what is good for him and what evil: he believes in God, who alone knows. Christian morality is a command: its origin is transcendental...<sup>431</sup>

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Liberal Arts Press. 1960. All of this thinking is done by the individual mind and is supposed to prove the existence of the single, discrete mind and reify the concept of the independent self.

<sup>429</sup> Ibid.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid. 69.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid. 69-70.

Perhaps the contemporary person might take pride in the idea of escaping such dependency on Christian dogma. However, I argue that such values are just as vigorous in a neoliberal modernity as they once were with Christianity. For western capitalism goes to great lengths to impose forms of life, forms of decision-making, forms of intimacy, work and play, monotheistic values that descend upon all people on this planet. Western capitalism demands values and lifestyles that are embedded in the market and the ways of the marketplace. Everything required for contemporary life is supposed to be distinguished through the categorization processes of modernity and can be obtained as discreet, disconnected objects in the neoliberal marketplace. Even *thought* is described in American law as if it is to be found in the *marketplace of ideas*.<sup>432</sup> We are obliged to obey the moral forces of neoliberalism.

This God, the God of capitalism, the neoliberal God, is dead. We don't need to go out of our way to kill him, for that has already happened. Rather, we need to learn to live on the other side of this death of God event. And, we need to be able to appreciate the significance of this death; to witness the earth's celebration in response to the demise of this singular God. For just perhaps the earth knew of this death long before we did. Can we hear her singing in the background? Can we see her dancing over on that other shore (Nietzsche could hold no place for any god that did not dance<sup>433</sup>)?

We may say that this God of capitalism seems to be anything but dead. The workings of modern capital are everywhere around us. However, for Nietzsche, such movements of modern power do not at all detract from the death of such a God. For this God still has run his course and come up empty, with little to offer the contemporary world. Nietzsche talks about the old saint in the forest who has not yet heard the news of this death.<sup>434</sup> For there are those who have not come to terms with the reality of the

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<sup>432</sup> Stanley Ingber. "The Marketplace of Ideas: a Legitimizing Myth." *Duke Lj.* 1984. 1.

<sup>433</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Prabhat Prakashan. 1898. #7.

<sup>434</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Gay Science*. trans. Thomas Common. Mineola. 2006. 108.



death of this God. At other times he talks about this death of God as a process that of necessity takes time.

This prodigious event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time, the light of the stars requires time, deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars — and yet they have done it themselves.<sup>435</sup>

Nietzsche not only articulates this God who is dead, giving form to both this divine life and his demise, but he also hints at what lies on the other side of the death of God. And, it is something that the living world held onto all along. It is also something to which Bateson repeatedly gave language, to which Deleuze and Guattari gave multiple names. It is something that Derrida carefully exposed, and Lynn Hoffman experimented with her entire career. That which lies on the other side of the death of God is something that has been talked about and played with repeatedly by those who have carefully and lovingly attended-to and engaged-with the movements of the living world. In Nietzsche's words: "The world apart from our condition of living in it, the world that we have not reduced to our being, our logic and psychological prejudices, does not exist as a world 'in-itself'; it is essentially a world of relationships."<sup>436</sup> Nietzsche presents a complex relational and a posthuman ontology that moves on the other side of the death of God.

He also described that which is on the other side of the death of God as the glorious failure of the *principium individuationis*: "If we add... the blissful ecstasy that wells from the innermost depths of man, indeed of nature, at this collapse of the principium individuationis..."<sup>437</sup> For, this fundamental dogma of capitalism, liberalism, conservatism, libertarianism -- the sense that we are individuals, standing on our own, responsible for our own selves, and only our own selves -- spins wildly away, and we discover that as living creatures, we are hopelessly and endlessly entwined into current, past and

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<sup>435</sup> Ibid. 125.

<sup>436</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Will to Power*. Vintage. 1968. #568.

<sup>437</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner*. Vintage. 1967. 36

future knots of relations, all kinds of relations. To use Deleuze and Guattari's language, we are inexorably and hopelessly *rhizome* creatures.

And, it is there, it is here, entangled in these realms of relations, that we find what lies on the other side of the death of God. We discover that we are not individual consumers of discreetly separated and evaluated goods. No, we are impossibly entangled in expansive relational worlds, and it is from the midst of such entanglements that new and renewed spiritualities of the earth appear to us. I am not suggesting a search for a new formula, a better program that will solve the entrenched issues of our world. No, with Nietzsche, I am just suggesting a relational turn, a re-focus upon our own entanglements into the messiness of life. This could take any number of forms, can invite endless possibilities, and must be continually renewed and reinvented. I am not suggesting a particular program that will lead us forward, a saviour program, for that will just resurrect a return to the futilities of monotheistic divinity and His values. What I am hoping for, and, what I believe I am now beginning to see, is an awakening to the creative possibilities that come to life from within our entanglements. A companionship of creation, not with a higher-power God, but with an earthly creator power:

Companions, the creator seeks, not corpses, not herds and believers. Fellow creators, the creator seeks -- those who write new values on new tablets. Companions, the creator seeks, and fellow harvesters; for everything about him is ripe for the harvest... Fellow creators, Zarathustra seeks, fellow harvesters and fellow celebrants: what are herds and shepherds and corpses to him?<sup>438</sup>

## The Book of Job and the Death of God

Perhaps Nietzsche was not the first and only thinker to confront us with the death of God. For another death of divinity appears, and this death appears directly in the Hebrew scriptures. To further outline the relevance of this death of God I discuss this biblical tale.

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<sup>438</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. 1898. 135.

In the biblical *Book of Job* there are two Gods, two Yahwehs. I will now address the first of these Yahwehs.

This God is presented as a being swayed by economic measures. Satan suggests to this Yahweh that Job is a loyal follower only because he has been rewarded by God. Satan puts a wager forward to God, and God accepts. All wagers are economic in nature. Things must be reduced to defined and measurable forms so that life can be weighed and evaluated. Job is submitted to such a wager by the divine powers. Job imagines an economic realm that is reliable, that makes it clear that he has been paid appropriately for his stewardship of his wealth. Satan argues that if Job is now cursed by this same Yahweh, he will lose his loyalty (perhaps even the concept of loyalty, in light of the Book of Job, turns out to be an economic concept). Everything of blessing is removed from Job in quick succession – all his possessions, all his important relationships, even his health.

Job is then surrounded by supposed friends, who first just sit with him (good for them). However, they eventually lose their patience and add their own economic evaluations upon Job as he sits amid his overwhelming losses and suffering. Speaking to these calculating friends, Job says: “How painful are honest words! But what do your arguments prove? Do you mean to correct what I say, and treat my desperate words as wind? You would even cast lots for the fatherless and barter away your friend.”<sup>439</sup> The wagering God and the wagering friends are inescapably and painfully present to Job.

Job bought in to this economic system. This was the Yahweh he had known and counted on his whole life. And, this economic divinity, this counting, evaluating God, in Job’s eyes, had seen his worth and had blessed him appropriately. Now something has gone terribly awry. Job maintains that according to the evaluating measures of this economic God, he should be doing alright. He plainly puts forward his righteousness.

When I went to the gate of the city and took my seat in the public square, the young men saw me and stepped aside, and the old men rose to their feet; the chief men refrained from speaking

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<sup>439</sup> Job 6: 25-27.

and covered their mouths with their hands; the voices of the nobles were hushed, and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths. Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me, because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist them. The one who was dying blessed me; I made the widow's heart sing. I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger. I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth. "I thought, 'I will die in my own house, my days as numerous as the grains of sand. My roots will reach to the water, and the dew will lie all night on my branches."<sup>440</sup>

Despite Job's insistence upon his own value, this economic Yahweh found him wanting. Of course, the evaluating goes both ways, for this wagering God himself, under these circumstances, finds He is also evaluated and found lacking. Job turns to assess Yahweh, and he is intensely criticized for doing so.

Job says, 'I am innocent, but God denies me justice. Although I am right, I am considered a liar; although I am guiltless, his arrow inflicts an incurable wound.'

Is there anyone like Job, who drinks scorn like water? He keeps company with evildoers; he associates with the wicked. For he says, 'There is no profit in trying to please God.'<sup>441</sup>

However, for Job, another Yahweh, a second God appears. This one seems to know nothing of the wagering God, the economic Yahweh. Instead this God is found far away from all economic calculations, out in the wilderness where ecological realities have been moving and playing for millennia. This Yahweh speaks, not from a judge's seat, neither from the accountant's desk, nor from the technician's algorithms, but from out of the unpredictability and inescapable powers of the whirlwind. Away from all measures and into the ecological realms that the economic beings refuse to enter. Beautiful words, powerful words, words of the second Yahweh:

Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? Do you watch when the doe bears her fawn?  
Do you count the months till they bear? Do you know the time they give birth?  
They crouch down and bring forth their young; their labor pains are ended.  
Their young thrive and grow strong in the wilds; they leave and do not return.<sup>442</sup>

Who let the wild donkey go free? Who untied its ropes?

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<sup>440</sup> Ibid. 29: 11-16.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid. 34: 5,6,9.

<sup>442</sup> The stanza breaks in these texts are provided by me, the author.

I gave it the wasteland as its home, the salt flats as its habitat.  
It laughs at the commotion in the town; it does not hear a driver's shout.  
It ranges the hills for its pasture and searches for any green thing.

Will the wild ox consent to serve you? Will it stay by your manger at night?  
Can you hold it to the furrow with a harness? Will it till the valleys behind you?  
Will you rely on it for its great strength? Will you leave your heavy work to it?  
Can you trust it to haul in your grain and bring it to your threshing floor? ...

Do you give the horse its strength or clothe its neck with a flowing mane?  
Do you make it leap like a locust, striking terror with its proud snorting?  
It paws fiercely, rejoicing in its strength, and charges into the fray.  
It laughs at fear, afraid of nothing; it does not shy away from the sword.  
The quiver rattles against its side, along with the flashing spear and lance.  
In frenzied excitement it eats up the ground; it cannot stand still when the trumpet sounds.  
At the blast of the trumpet it snorts, 'Aha!' It catches the scent of battle from afar, the shout of commanders and the battle cry.

Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom and spread its wings toward the south?  
Does the eagle soar at your command and build its nest on high?  
It dwells on a cliff and stays there at night; a rocky crag is its stronghold.  
From there it looks for food; its eyes detect it from afar.  
Its young ones feast on blood, and where the slain are, there it is.<sup>443</sup>

This passage from the Book of Job was of profound inspiration for Gregory Bateson. As stated  
by Stephen Nachmanovitch:

In the book of Job, another of Gregory's important teaching texts, we are assailed by all the great unanswerable cosmic questions: Why is their evil? What does it all mean? Why me? But when the Lord finally answers Job out of the whirlwind, He steers clear of such illusory topics as good and evil (God is not a theologian) and speaks instead of the rain, the dew and the wild goats, how the foundations of the earth were laid, implying that wisdom lies in the minute particulars of natural history.<sup>444</sup>

I personally think that the Book of Job is not so much addressing the "unanswerable cosmic questions," as it is concerned with economic, calculating and evaluating powers. It is addressing the question of those powers-at-be that only know how to barter and bet, how to calculate and evaluate. It

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<sup>443</sup> Ibid. 39: 1-30.

<sup>444</sup> Stephen Nachmanovitch. *Gregory Bateson: Old Men Ought to be Explorers*. Stephen Nachmanovitch. 2001. [http://cat4chat.narod.ru/files/stephen\\_nachmanovitch\\_about\\_bateson.pdf](http://cat4chat.narod.ru/files/stephen_nachmanovitch_about_bateson.pdf). 11.

is addressing the gods, both new and old, who spend their time finding and deploying economic measures for judgment.

What lies beyond the death of this economic Yahweh? The Book of Job is clear – beyond the death of the first Yahweh lies ecological realms, composed of exquisite, unmeasurable details. It is not at all to say that economics as a practice will or should disappear. Rather it is suggesting that the realities that we need to cherish and honour, realities that give us life and hope, have been and always will be of ecological realms. It is suggesting a life that is first and foremost composed of innumerable rhizome lines. We are relational creatures – and let us never forget this.

I am proposing that in the book of Job there are two Yahwehs. The first, the economic Yahweh, is found dead. At the end of the Book of Job, He is killed off, not just to Job, but to the entire world that the second Yahweh resides within. He is absent. There is no trace of that first Yahweh in the full ecological realm that the second Yahweh moves within.

## Conclusion

Let us also entertain the idea that the contemporary God of economics, the neoliberal God is also dead. Perhaps this is close to what Stengers and Latour are after with their unique approach to the concept of Gaia.<sup>445</sup> For perhaps today's spiritual world must be imagined as composed of powers, divine powers, if you wish, that are also ecological powers. These are powers of the earth, rhizome powers, Gaia powers, powers of expanding relations. As with the second Yahweh and the world he/she/they live within, these are not powers holding any special care for human beings and their calculations. Gaia holds no singular eye for the human. Gaia emerges from and returns to the earth, to the ecological places that gave her birth. And, it is there, with the Book of Job's second Yahweh, with Gaia, where Nietzsche's god is clearly dead, and where our only hopes and possibilities might lie.

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<sup>445</sup> Bruno Latour. 2012; Isabelle Stengers. 2014.

This new God offers the world a new role. This is not a role that establishes *Him* as an overpowering authoritative presence in and above the world, a power that controls and determines the directions of life and world. On the contrary, this new role does not even have to set up this God as any kind of real, material, and singular presence, let alone an active, power-over being.<sup>446</sup> Rather, as described astutely by Alfred N. Whitehead, this God comes as “the poet of the world,” and offers a “vision of truth, beauty and goodness.” The river, all its tributaries, and all the varied relations connected with this river, come to life within this description of divinity. This is the kind of vision I welcome.

God’s role is not the combat of productive force with productive force, of destructive force with destructive force; it lies in the patient operation of the overpowering rationality of his conceptual harmonization. He does not create the world, he saves it: or, more accurately, he is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness.<sup>447</sup>

## The Fraser Leaves the City

The Fraser leaves the landscape that we now call British Columbia, and she enters the sea. From the sea she originally came, and to the sea she eventually goes. This river remains a power of Gaia. We could dam her, we could poison her, we could minimize and belittle her, but she will continue to roll down to the sea. Her descent cannot be stopped. Passing through the city, and into the ocean, the Fraser River continues.

Make a church out of words...  
And the beauty that still remains-  
I can touch it through you  
Goodbye to a river  
Goodbye to a river  
So long...

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<sup>446</sup> I talk of this non-material, non-authoritative divinity with great respect for the different perspective that many of my friends might take to this God.

<sup>447</sup> Alfred N. Whitehead. *Process and Reality*. corrected edition by D. R. Griffin and D. W. Sherburne. Free Press. 1979. 346.

Goodbye to a river  
Goodbye to a river  
Roll on<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>448</sup> Don Henley, Stanley Lynch, Jai L. Winding, Frank Turner Simes. "Goodbye to a River." Don Henley. *Inside Job*. Warner Bros. 2000.



# Dérive.Prayer #7 -- We Come to the Sea: From the Waves to the Child

I would be a sad man if it were not for the hope I see in my grandchild's eyes.

Chief Dan George<sup>449</sup>

Just a short stop. We leave the grandeur of the river for the even greater grandeur of the ocean. And, we do this transition amidst a delta geography similar to the coastal sections of Holland inhabited by the nineteenth century artist, Vincent Van Gogh. That is, we encounter large, shallow tidal flats rolling out to an expansive sea. However, Van Gogh, offers cautionary thoughts as we enter this shift in flows from river to sea – he reminds us where we might truly go for an experience of grandeur.

When one is in a somber mood, how good it is to walk on the barren beach and look at the greyish-green sea with the long white streaks of the waves. But if one feels the need for something grand, something infinite, something that makes one feel aware of God, one need not go far to find it. I think I see something deeper, more infinite, more eternal than the ocean in the expression of the eyes of a little baby when it wakes in the morning, and coos or laughs because it sees the sun shining on its cradle. If there is a “rayon d'en haut,” perhaps one can find it there.<sup>450</sup>

Adieu boy, with a handshake in thought.  
Yours sincerely, Vincent.<sup>451</sup>

We travel across the sea and a whole continent and return to the West Coast – not far from where the Fraser returns to the sea. Here, we encounter the words of Chief Dan George. Despite all that distance, his vision of the world is eerily similar to Van Gogh's. A common world, across the globe, across a century, across cultures.

When you are old and left sitting by the side you may feel bitter. But bitterness drives warmth from the heart and makes you lonely. There was a time when I felt like that. Yet it didn't make me let go. Life still wants to be lived, and one does the best one can. The best way, the most gratifying is to look deep into the eyes of a small child. Look until you tingle with compassion. Then you will see joy in life.

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<sup>449</sup> Chief Dan George and Helmut Hirnschall. *My Spirit Soars*. Hancock House. 2000. 87.

<sup>450</sup> Van Gogh had a well-established respect for the child. He even worked, at times, as a nanny, looking after small children. See, Vincent Van Gogh. *The Complete Letters of Vincent Van Gogh: with Reproductions of all the Drawing in the Correspondence. Volume One*. Bullfinch Press. Third Edition. 2000.

<sup>451</sup> Van Gogh. *Ibid.* 485.

All the feelings one can have in the long years of life are to be conquered by compassion. Only then is one able to let the flame go out by itself.

Chief Dan George<sup>452</sup>

We share Chief Dan George and Vincent Van Gogh together. Their words bring us close, not just to the sea, but to a world both unfolding and smiling before us, a world composed of the affective movements of small children. I appreciate this connection. As a family therapist, I regularly work with families who are raising young children. I understand this grandeur that Van Gogh and Chief Dan George experienced. I share the overpowering joy they encountered in the company of children. Their words require no further explanation.

Now, just one more stop...

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<sup>452</sup> Chief Dan George, *Ibid.* 81.

# Dérive.Prayer #8 -- Into the Salish Sea: A Conclusion and a Creation Story

In the following thoughts by Whitehead and Deleuze, I see this river, the Fraser, as it's currents flow far away from the land I have come to call home.

Thus "together" presupposes the notions "creativity," "many," "one," "identity," and "diversity." The ultimate metaphysical principle is the advance from disjunction to conjunction, creating a novel entity other than the entities given in disjunction.

Alfred N. Whitehead<sup>453</sup>

It appears therefore as a pure stream of a-subjective consciousness, a pre-reflexive impersonal consciousness without a self... the passage of one to the other as becoming... a movement that neither begins nor ends...

Gilles Deleuze<sup>454</sup>

We will say of pure immanence that it is A LIFE, nothing else.

Gilles Deleuze<sup>455</sup>

The river leaves us for the saltwater. It leaves us -- to reiterate Deleuze -- as "A LIFE, nothing else." It streams into the Salish Sea; known also, at this location, as the Strait of Georgia. As "A LIFE," the river also leaves us with forms of death. For living and dying always go hand-in-hand. However, the deaths of this river are never something final and complete. There is always something more. For, deaths are inescapably a form of continuance, a grieving continuance.

I have a poster on my wall at home, a satellite image, it shows the Fraser completing its journey from the high mountains to the sea. We see its muddy waters crossing west on top of the saltwater, over the strait, all the way to Galiano Island.<sup>456</sup> Upon reaching Galiano it disperses in accordance with

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<sup>453</sup> Whitehead. *Ibid.* 21-22.

<sup>454</sup> Gilles Deleuze. *Pure Immanence: Essays on a Life*. Trans. Anne Boyman. Urzone. 2001. 25-26.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.* 27.

<sup>456</sup> Galiano Island is named after one of the early Spanish explorers who came through this region in the late 1700s and early 1800s. See: "The Pacific Coast." *Library and Archives Canada*. <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/exploration-settlement/pathfinders-passageways/Pages/pacific-coast.aspx>.

the flows of the currents and the pulls of the tides. Some of the river moves north, dissipating with its travels. Some journeys south, eventually blending into the changing faces of the sea. While the muddy currents are no longer visible, the varied exodus and influxes of the salmon testify to the river's perpetual presence. Eventually all these flows bend around Vancouver Island, passing through, either the Juan de Fuca Strait in the south, or the Johnstone and Queen Charlotte Straits in the north. They then diffuse into the Pacific.

I suggest it is there, in the Pacific, that the river ends. It ends where it began. The Fraser, the Stó:lō, returns to its birthplace. One can argue that the North Pacific is a certain origin, a place that can be seen as initiating the river's creation. For, out in the cold Pacific, some of the flows of water are pulled upwards, evaporating into the east-surg-ing currents of the atmosphere. There, they return to the rainforests of the West Coast, or on, into the high Rocky Mountains. They come, as they did before, as the seemingly never-ending rains and snows of winter storms. They recreate the river, one more time, and then again... and again...

This is a creation story -- it is our creation story. This is a sacred story -- these are our sacred flows of life and land, ecologies and histories, saltwater and freshwater. As it says in the Genesis creation story, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good."<sup>457</sup> So with this river, and with the sea, we have seen what it has made, we have travelled with its various flows, we have been pulled by its affects, entangled in its relations, and, I want to say -- *it was good*. Perhaps even -- *it was very good*.

Ward Draper – the radical Abbotsford pastor we met previously – takes the biblical creation story and brings some newness to it. He presents some beauty that, in these alternatively fundamentalist and modernist times, I warmly welcome.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> Genesis 1:31.

<sup>458</sup> These ideas come from personal conversations with Ward Draper – coffee shop conversations.

I follow Draper's thought here, rather than more formal theological and philosophical references, because I know his thought is resolutely connected with the actual flows of the community where he lives (and I live). To use Deleuze's language, there is an immanence in his thinking. For, his thoughts are directly linked to these lands, and particularly linked with those people on these lands whom our society has marginalized and misunderstand. Draper presents ideas that have become intimately tied to the realities of this very place.

From some of Draper's sermon notes reflecting on the first Genesis creation story:

I ask you to look at this line another way. I ask you to read it in this way:

"In the beginning LOVE created the heavens and the earth."

Love, that is the who, what, where, how and why, of God. Love is God and God is Love and it is love who created all.

"In the beginning Love..."

Meditate. Reflect. Pray on this truth.<sup>459</sup>

And he continues...

*Love said, let there be light.*

*Love said, let there be plants and trees.*

*Love said, let the waters fill with living creatures and let birds fly above.*

Draper suggests, first of all, that this God of creation is also *Love*. So, with Draper, the creation story can say – *in the beginning Love created the heaven and the earth*. We are invited to see that these creation stories are actually about the creation of spaces, within the diversities of creation herself, for the movements of a being we now call Love. Perhaps we can also say that in the beginning, out in the ocean where all living things once began, this same Love created this river, these flows, these forces of

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<sup>459</sup> These words are from some sermon notes created by Draper. He generously provided me this document.

earth and life that we have been exploring in this document. So, perhaps we should feel free to allow this Love to flow generously with the currents of this river and this story.

Draper goes further. He introduces a trinitarian twist to this creation story. In the beginning, not just God, but the Trinity God created this earth. That is, in the beginning, there was the Trinity; one could say, in the beginning there was a web of *original relations* -- the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit -- engaged in mutual creative action. A creative force, never emerging from a singular entity, but always originating from a relational entity, and always embedded in Love. For, the news of the Trinity is that relational movements, and loving movements, are creating the entirety of the heavens and the earth. Creation itself, therefore, according to Draper's trinitarian perspective, is not formed by an individualized, isolated being, but *by* the complexities of webs of loving relations. If we listen, there are haunting echoes of Von Humboldt, Bateson, and even Darwin calling out in this creation story.

And also, this creation is formed *into* webs of loving relations. That is, the creation itself is composed in the image of its trinitarian, relational creator. The creation, as with its creator, is composed of webs of relations.

Draper's creation story begins and ends with a relational ontology. It offers relational worlds always involving creative actions of loving.

Furthering this trinitarian thought, Draper introduces an image, a painting by a fifteen-century artist, Andrei Rublev.<sup>460</sup> Rublev's vision does not emerge from the lineages of western history; rather his legacy comes from the lands of the east, those territories east of the 1054 ecclesiastical split. Particularly, his vision emerges from within the Russian Orthodox tradition.

Rublev's image of the Trinity is unique in several ways.

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<sup>460</sup> "Explanation of Andrei Rublev's Icon." *St John's Anglican Church*.  
<http://www.stjohnscamberwell.org.au/Sermons/ExplanationofTheTrinityIcon.htm>.

First of all, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all look similar, and we cannot tell which one is which, they are interchangeable. And, it must be noted, they do not look masculine at all. Indeed, they could easily be imagined as women. A gender is not clearly assigned in this trinitarian image of divinity. The typical authoritarian, father God, as in Michelangelo's mature, bearded, powerful and patriarchal God in *The Creation of Adam* (and the hyper-masculinized Adam in this same painting), is certainly not present in Rublev's painting.<sup>461</sup> Some other kind of gendered, or, perhaps, even non-gendered, relational divinity seems to emerge into life in this image.

Secondly, the image is incomplete. There are three beings sitting around a table, and there is a chalice in the middle, between them. However, there is a fourth place, an empty place at the front of the picture, waiting for another presence to join the other three. With Draper, this image suggests that the trinity is awaiting its completion, not with the identification of three beings -- as with the traditional transcendent trinity -- but with a fourth presence. There is a fourth person, an absent person, in this image. At the front of the communion table, in the empty, waiting spot, there is a small square that seems out of context with the rest of the image. Draper informs me that some say there used to be a mirror attached to this square. Therefore, those who observed the painting discovered their own image appearing as the fourth person at the table. The fourth person at the table, therefore, is you, it is me, it is the marginalized person that Ward is seeking to serve. The fourth person at the trinitarian table is the creature of creation. The relations that created relations (the Trinity) are at the table waiting for the creatures of these relations to join with them. Creature and Creator are waiting to become One through a mutual joining in acts of hospitality.

One is always the index of a multiplicity: an event, a singularity, a life...

Gilles Deleuze<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> I am referring to Michelangelo's painting of Adam and Creation in the Sistine Chapel.

<sup>462</sup> Gilles Deleuze. Ibid. 30.

Not just human creatures, but all the diversities of creation are welcomed into this fourth spot at the table. The relational realm of the Trinity is completed not with the transcendent three, but with the inclusion at the table of the fourth being. The creatures of creation, the relational creatures of creation -- including you and me; including the salmon and the sturgeon; including the river, the rain and the snow; including the storms of winter and the freshet of summer; including the indigenous peoples who nurtured this land for millennia, as well as the waves of newcomers who find themselves and their families upon this same ground; and also, including a divinity of Love (not a three-crowned divinity, but a set of relations composed of four beings, three plus one, all communing at a table of hospitality) – all these creatures, organic, geological, conceptual, take on the role of completing this remarkable trinitarian, relational, divine image.

A creation story is finished, not just with the creation of ecological realms of diverse creatures, but in its very shared-ness, amidst the movements of generosity and hospitality that come to life within these ecological realms. In the sharing of food, beverages, shelter, with the sharing of conversation and other forms of engagement, with the sharing of land and space, with the creation of *witness*. With all of this, the fourth person at the communion table is restored, and the creation story is able to find fulfilment.

## An Ontological Ending

God has created, not Adam the sinner, but the world in which Adam has sinned...

Gilles Deleuze<sup>463</sup>

We are often asked: *So, what next?*

This question implies that the kinds of explorations I am undertaking in this thesis must conclude with a specific to-do list, instructions about how to proceed from here. But, perhaps, in light of

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<sup>463</sup> Gilles Deleuze. *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*. Trans. Tom Conley. University of Minnesota Press. 1993. 64.



the work of this thesis, my job is not, first and foremost, to create an ethical template, not to create generalizable rules, policies and procedures, or well-formulated moral injunctions.

Rather, my work may be to help in the co-creation of worlds, with the readers, as well as with the cooperation of the geologies and ecologies to which we are all inseparably connected. Perhaps my work is primarily to enable the creation of encounters – earthly encounters. For, amidst our engagements in life, we can create worlds together -- with each other, and with living ecologies which surround us. As Deleuze mentioned, God didn't create Adam the sinner, he created the world in which Adam was able to sin. We don't create a to-do list, we create a world in which the creation of actions becomes a possibility, even something likely to happen.

This is an ontological calling. This is worldmaking. But, it is never simply a human activity, never simply an action of human social construction. It is something we do together with the ecological relations in which we are embedded. It is an earthly activity. The *together* which I am invoking here, is always an earthly togetherness. It is an earthly activity, a river activity, that always, of necessity, includes those people/peoples tied most intimately with the lands and waters.

What about the field of education?

And also, what about the therapeutic professions to which I have been connected for most of my career?

Perhaps we can... (again) together... go down to the river – to this river, to the Fraser. Or, we could go to the sea. Or, into the streets of our city. Or, under the highway overpasses where some people actually live. With this river, with these streets, with that highway overpass, with living webs of relations that always surround us, and even with the divine beings that also might move amongst us, we can enter encounters, and we can, from the midst of these encounters, discover and co-create worlds in which we can find our actions.

And each engagement with these worlds will create a different response. Remember Jacques Derrida's *law of the singular event*?<sup>464</sup> Each event calls for a creativity that was not previously called-for and which will be inadequate for the next event that we encounter. This creativity which calls us must be a repeated visitor in our worlds, and, if we nurture our relations with this creativity, it will never cease to visit us.

So, what is next? Well, perhaps I will provide just one instruction.

Go... go to the river.

And from the midst of the relations that we find surrounding us while there, the river may, just perhaps, if we care to listen, let us know what might be next. Are we able to live with such tentative, yet (I would suggest) explosive possibilities?

I hope so. For that seems to be the way the river flows.

The river carries  
that which  
the mountains  
cannot hold.

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<sup>464</sup> Jacques Derrida. *Learning to Live Finally: The Last Interview*. Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Nass. Melville House. 2007. 1.

# Addendum

I recall in 2012 when I made a film about the ideas and work of my mentor, Lynn Hoffman, a rather important learning about art and creation came home to me.<sup>465</sup> That was: with every creative exercise there is always an inherent grief associated with the process. By that I mean, with every act of creation there are numerous elements of the creative process that are left unused and unsaid. For example, with the creation of the Lynn Hoffman film I had over 25 hours of recorded video; yet the film we created was only one hour and fifteen minutes long. The vast majority of what I had recorded was left out of the film. And, this leaving-out process was not easy for me – I wanted to include so much more.

The writing of this thesis also entailed a leaving-out. It also was a process accompanied with its own grief. For, there is so much more that I would like to have said. Following is a sampling of topics that I wanted to explore in this thesis, yet did not make it into the final cut (to keep with the film metaphor):

- I wanted to explore more about the fish of the Fraser River, in particular, I wanted to look at the complex histories of the salmon, the eulachon, the sturgeon, and their relations with the various peoples who lived along the river. I have spent many a day fishing along the Fraser and feel it is important to gain knowledge about these wonderful creatures that are so vital to this river.
- I wanted to explore the histories of the Chinese men who worked on the railroad construction – much of which occurred along the banks of the Fraser. What happened to these men? For those men who died during their railroad work, what happened to their remains? Where did those who survived the building of the railroad end up? I would have liked to have learned more about these men and their families. I would like to have found ways to celebrate their lives and their deaths.
- I also wanted to explore the history of the Sikh people's movement into the lands along the Fraser River. They were major players in the pioneering of farming in the Fraser Valley and in the Richmond and Delta areas. I would have liked to further explore their connections with this land and with the river.
- In fact, I would have liked to have explored the history of farming and ranching, in general, along the Fraser. The farmers and ranchers provide us with the food we all need to live. I believe that it is important to learn more of the geophilosophy of farming along the river.

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<sup>465</sup> Christopher Kinman with Lynn Hoffman. *All Manner of Poetic Disobedience: Lynn Hoffman and the Rhizome Century*. YouTube Video, 1:09:04. Posted (09/2017).

- The concept of the gift has been integral to me in my work through the years. I do not significantly explore the gift to any degree within this thesis. Arguably, I should have.
- I found similarity between the flows of a river and the quantum mechanics' concept of light being both wave and particle. As I am beside the river and a boat comes by, making waves. I realize that the flow of the river, a flow of particles, is one phenomenon, while the movement of the wave is a totally separate yet connected phenomenon. I like to compare the difference between wave and particle to the movement of, what I have previously called, the gift -- which is like a wave, and the individual/family/organization/or other entity -- which is like the particle. The gift, like a wave, moves through the bodies of individual entities, flowing through and connecting many bodies and kinds of bodies. I would have liked to explore this concept more in the context of the flows of the river.
- I would have also liked to have looked deeper into the geological histories connected with the Fraser River lands. I feel that I barely touched the surface of these histories.
- Another interest that I would like to have explored is related to the creation of public spaces. That is, where rhizome relations and conversations can be engendered among the human spaces along river. I am particularly intrigued in the phenomenon of coffeeshops and cafes, and their contemporary role in encouraging the creation and movements of rhizome worlds.

And, of course, there are endless other areas of interest or concern that I would have liked to have followed, perhaps should have followed, but in the end did not follow. So, I complete this journey the same way that I began it when in a Sts'ailes forest – with the aching realities of a grief. I end this journey not so much with a sense of accomplishment, but with a certain grief-saturated need to honour all that was left unsaid, all that was left undone. I know that in all practicality it is not possible to do all I would like to do. Our work of necessity must be limited. However, I still believe that this grief inherent in the creative process must, in some way, be honoured, and not denied.

Perhaps... maybe... this is just the way life with this river is determined to flow?

## Into the Mystic

We were born before the wind  
Also younger than the sun  
Ere the bonnie boat was won  
As we sailed into the mystic

Hark, now hear the sailors cry  
Smell the sea and feel the sky  
Let your soul and spirit fly  
Into the mystic

And when that fog horn blows  
I will be coming home  
And when the fog horn blows  
I want to hear it  
I don't have to fear it

I wanna rock your gypsy soul  
Just like way back in the days of old  
Then magnificently we will float  
Into the mystic<sup>466</sup>

Van Morrison

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<sup>466</sup> Van Morrison. "Into the Mystic." *Moondance*. A & R Studies. 1970.

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