

Buried Epistemologies: The Politics of Nature in (Post)colonial British Columbia

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Postcolonial theory has asserted the need to carefully consider how present-day social and cultural practices are marked by histories of colonialism. This paper explores representations of the 'rainforest' and 'nature' in British Columbia, Canada, and traces a series of 'buried epistemologies' through which neocolonial relations are asserted in the region. Drawing upon recent representations of the forest proffered by the forest industry and the environmental movement, and the historical writings of a prominent nineteenth-century geologist and amateur ethnologist, the author shows how 'nature' ('wilderness') has been constructed as a realm separate from 'culture.' He locates in this the possibility for contemporary practices that abstract and displace the 'forest' from its cultural surrounds and relocate it within the abstract spaces of the market, the nation, and, in recent ecological rhetorics, the biosphere and the global community. By so doing, the author contests assumptions that colonialism is only an 'ugly chapter' of Canadian history and argues instead that colonialist practices and rhetorics remain present but unthought in many of the categories, identities, and representational practices that are deployed today both in public debate and scientific management of 'natural landscapes' and 'natural resources.' Thus, amid the current popularity of notions like sustainable development, biodiversity management, ecosystem restoration, and so on—which risk abstracting natural 'systems' apart from their cultural surrounds—it is essential to recognize the colonial histories and neocolonial rhetorics that continue to infuse 'commonsense' categories and identities like 'nature' and 'resources.' Key Words: cultural politics, environmentalism, nature, postcolonialism

Focusing attention on the presence of the colonial imagination in today's post-colonial society is not a gesture of ahistoricism—on the contrary. Problematising historical distance, and analyzing the way streams of the past still infuse the present, make historical inquiry meaningful (Bal 1991:34).

At what point can we be said to have entered the 'postcolonial'? This question has been raised recently by a number of writers who worry that with the recent acceptance of 'postcolonial' criticism and theory into the academy, the term is now applied so broadly (and uncritically) as to render it empty (Mishra and Hodge 1991; McClintock 1992). At its best, postcolonial theory has sought to bring critical attention to bear on the contested terrains, global flows, and hybrid identities of a world undeniably marked by histories and legacies of colonization and decolonization, including even the spaces and identities of the metropolitan 'core,' its forms of consciousness and its theories (Spivak 1988a; Appadurai 1990;

Bhabha 1994). At its worst, postcolonial theory assumes a temporality that suggests that colonialism is something that can be relegated to the past, or, equally problematic, generalizes first, a colonial *discourse*, and second, a subsequent postcolonial *condition*, in ways that are inattentive to the unevenness and particularity of specific colonial practices, processes of decolonization and continuing anticolonial struggles located at different sites; projecting globally what are but local practices (for critiques, see Mishra and Hodge 1991; McClintock 1992; Shohat 1992; Dirlík 1994; Thomas 1994; De Alva 1995). Most useful, I think, are those instances where commentators have asserted the need to think carefully about the continuity of colonial or neocolonial relations, tracing the way that streams of the past still infuse the present (Bal 1991; Shohat 1992), and also turning attention to differences *between* and *within* 'postcolonial' societies whereby the legacies of colonialism are experienced unevenly between

social objects (Frankenberg and Mani 1993). ‘Postcoloniality,’ after all, appears quite different when applied to different social groups within now-independent white settler colonies like the U.S., to the *mestizaje* of Latin America or to indigenous peoples in Canada or Australia. In this paper, the ambivalence of the term postcolonial is explored along with its theoretical and political relevance through a discussion of the ‘politics of nature’ in recent environmental conflicts in British Columbia, Canada (hereafter BC).

In light of recent criticism, ‘postcoloniality’ is now often taken to refer not only to a condition ‘after colonialism’ but also to the ways that colonial pasts continue to organize experience in the present. It signals, in other words, both *continuity* and *discontinuity* in histories of colonial power and decolonization. As Stuart Hall has recently noted, the temporalities (and, I would add, spatialities) of colonialism/postcolonialism are neither singular nor universal.

What ‘post-colonial’ certainly is not is one of those periodisations based on epochal ‘stages,’ when everything is reversed at the same moment, all the old relations disappear forever and entirely new ones come to replace them. Clearly, the disengagement from the colonising process has been a long, drawn-out and differentiated affair (Hall 1996:247).

For Hall, postcolonial societies are characterized by the persistence of the ‘aftereffects’ of colonialism. But, he cautions, its politics cannot be declared to be the same as they were during the time of direct colonial occupation and rule, or assumed to take the same form across different sites. I wish to draw out three implications that follow from Hall’s remarks, and which in turn frame the discussions that follow. First, in light of the complex histories of colonialism/postcolonialism, it seems necessary that we renovate our conceptions of historical time. In other words, to comprehend how colonialist practices persist in the present requires a shift from conceptions which understand the time of colonialism/postcolonialism to be singular and unified and where postcolonialism necessarily follows after and supersedes colonialism as a subsequent stage in history, to an increased attention to the multiple temporalities of colonialism/postcolonialism, the many condensations and ellipses that arise when these different temporalities are convened in relation to each other, and the various temporal rhythms and spatialities that gov-

ern the emergence of colonialist or countercolonial representations and practices. Second, if there is indeed no *singular* time and space of colonialism/postcolonialism—but only the transient moment of many intersecting temporalities and spatialities drawn into relation—it is also impossible to speak of a singular colonial discourse. If we take colonial discourse to refer to the production and codification of knowledge that underwrites and legitimates the deployment of Western power over colonial subjects (Williams and Chrisman 1994), it must be recognized that this also occurs *differentially* through time and between places and thus can be approached as neither a fixed nor universal set of statements (see Thomas 1994). Quite the opposite—it can be argued that colonial power, far from monolithic, seizes upon, enlists, and combines a range of discourses, knowledges, and signifying practices (scientific, religious, aesthetic) which are not formally or ideologically aligned with colonial administration, but from which the demarcation and regulation of difference can be appropriated and utilized by colonial power. In short, as Nicholas Thomas argues, there can be no global theory of colonial culture, only localized theories and historically specific accounts that provide insight into varied articulations of colonialist and countercolonial representations and practices.¹ Finally, it follows that any politics of decolonization in the present must be attentive to these multiple temporalities and spatialities, and thus to the multiple forms that colonialist practices take and to the differential and nonidentical sites of resistance that emerge in this colonial/postcolonial terrain. This is as true for North American societies as any other. As Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994) have demonstrated for North America, colonialist cultural practices, and Eurocentrism more generally, remain *endemic*, present as “residual traces of centuries of axiomatic European domination” and therefore continue to inform “the general culture, the everyday language, and the media.” Such “vestigial thinking,” to use their phrase, “permeates and structures contemporary practices and representations even after the end of colonialism. . . . [It] embeds, takes for granted, and ‘normalizes’ the hierarchical power relations generated by colonialism and imperialism” (p. 2). These traces are not always immediately visible, nor do they comprise a homogeneous, internally consistent, (neo)colonial discourse. Instead, they take the form of “buried

epistemologies” or “bad epistemic habits” that have been naturalized as “common sense” in everyday relations and in social, economic, and political institutions.²

For geographers, the claim that a colonial imagination can be found in the present, and, further, that it operates quietly and effectively in unquestioned identities and positive knowledges, has presented a challenge to the discipline’s self-understanding. Like anthropologists earlier, geographers have come to recognize their discipline’s complicity with colonialism and imperialism (Driver 1992; Livingstone 1992; Godlewska and Smith 1994), although few have given this a contemporary focus. Indeed, the critical project as a whole has followed certain paths, while leaving others unexplored. Most commentators have mapped the links between individual geographers, geographical institutions, and past colonial administration: geography as knowledge *wielded* in the interest of empire. Others, drawing on a very different concept of power, have explored in more detail the colonizing power *inherent* in particular ways of rendering landscapes ‘visible’: in other words, the intersection of modalities of power, knowledge, and spatiality in specific colonial practices (Driver 1992; Gregory 1994; Ryan 1994). In almost all cases, however, colonialism is safely relegated to the past, although the motivation behind this work often lies in the present (Driver 1988). Curiously, while geographers have paid considerable attention to the significance of the production and representation of *space* for colonial practices, less attention has been paid to the production and representation of *nature*. Geographers have had little to say about the role that the production of nature (rhetorically and materially) has played in the colonization of particular social environments, how natural scientists (including geographers) made visible and available to colonial administration a discrete realm called ‘nature’ that could be seen as separate from colonized peoples, or, perhaps more important, how what counts as ‘nature’ *today* is often constituted within, and informed by, the legacies of colonialism. No doubt this is explained in part by the growing distance between critical human geography (concerned primarily with spatiality) and environmental geography (concerned mostly with the management of physical environments), such that both approaches all too often allow ‘nature’ to stand as an unproblematic, ahisto-

rical ‘object.’ So, although geographers have written extensively on the representation of *nature*, and, equally as important, have linked this with nature’s transformation, this paper focuses on questions of representation for different reasons.³ Rather than explore changing ideas *about* nature, I am more interested in the *emergence* of ‘nature’ as a discrete and separate object of aesthetic reflection, scientific inquiry, and economic and political calculation at particular sites and specific historical moments. By attending to nature’s construction in representational practices, the cultural politics that accompany each and every staging of ‘nature’ can be made explicit. It may be necessary then—amid declarations of the postcolonial—to decolonize commonsense notions of ‘nature’; that is, to locate the operation of relations of colonial power in what has hitherto been seen as an inviolable identity.

The ‘Fate’ of the Temperate Rainforest: ‘Public’ Conflicts and Constitutive Silences

The most intense, mediatized, and internationalized conflicts in British Columbia have surrounded the ‘fate’ of the region’s temperate rainforest. These conflicts have conventionally been staged as struggles between the forest industry and environmentalists, seen as an agonistic contest between two poles in the sort of binary logic of ‘regulated opposition’ that Baudrillard (1984) locates as both the form and content of politics in what he calls highly “mediatized” societies (and without which the singular collapses under its own weight). This binary ‘staging’ has focused much-needed attention on the ecological consequences of forest modification, on the responsibilities of forest users, and, to a lesser extent, on the political economy of the forest industry. But it has also worked hand-in-hand with, and indeed relied heavily upon, the marginalization of other voices—labor, local communities, and, as I argue in this paper, indigenous peoples (First Nations)⁴ who do not fit either of the ‘positions’ ascribed. Rather than referee these conflicts, I seek to interrupt this binary staging through a series of other questions about what is left *unthought* in struggles over ‘nature’ in a region like BC. In what ways and to what extent do these conflicts occur upon

and rework a material-semiotic terrain already inscribed within and through the histories and tropes of past colonial practices? To what extent are these histories simultaneously present but buried within the conventional categories—‘nature,’ ‘resource,’ the ‘nation’—through which these struggles are mediated such that these categories appear today in our public cultures as unmarked, self-evident ‘identities,’ leaving their constitutive moments in colonial histories, and their political significance in the present, unexamined? How do these identities, in turn, work to *authorize* certain voices (industry, environmentalists) while simultaneously marginalizing others? In short, to what extent are political struggles *over* nature in sites like British Columbia always already complicit in a politics *of* nature that risks reenacting colonial relations in the present?

The significance of these questions has been made evident most recently in the highly publicized conflicts over the ‘fate’ of the forest in Clayoquot Sound, a region that covers some 350,000 ha on the west coast of Vancouver Island (Figure 1) and which contains large areas of “old-growth” forests.⁵ That the region has become the focus of intense international attention in the 1990s is due, in part, to a particular configuration of local-global economic, cultural, and ecological dynamics that have combined to produce Clayoquot Sound as an ‘event.’ These can be summarized briefly. First, rates of timber harvest in BC have historically exceeded the annual reproduction of wood fibre in the province’s “economically viable” forests. This, together with increased competition from new wood fibre-producing regions (Southeastern United States, New Zealand, Indonesia, Brazil, and Chile, among others) has resulted in a situation where for transnational forest companies to maintain market share and profitability, and for the provincial government to meet its social goal of sustaining local forest-dependent communities, the further exploitation of already depleted old-growth forests is necessary. Second, just when the last remnants of so-called ‘unmodified’ forests were scheduled to be remade in the image of the commodity, the science of ecology provided powerful new metaphors and new ways of ‘envisioning’ the forests—and the earth—as ecological *systems*, and thereby brought within public discourse concerns over biodiversity, habitat fragmentation, and ecological ‘integrity.’ Yet other local-global



Figure 1. Location of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, showing Clayoquot Sound and areas claimed as traditional territories by the Nuu-chah-nulth.

dynamics have emerged concurrently: the growth of Vancouver as an administrative, financial, and service center in globalizing economies, increasingly detaching the city from the remainder of a resource-dependent province (Davis and Hutton 1989); linked to these transformations, the formation of a new middle class in Vancouver and elsewhere for whom ‘nature’ could be given new meanings; and the development of international circuits of capital, commodities, and images that have increasingly displaced sites like Clayoquot Sound into global networks, and thus transformed local struggles over BC forests into a global issue. Together these conditions have worked to produce new political spaces and constituencies.

For these reasons, among others, Clayoquot Sound has become a flashpoint for struggles over the fate of the temperate rainforests, and, in the early 1990s, as transnational forest companies stood poised to increase the scale of forestry operations in the region, environmentalists—most from outside the region—declared a ‘last stand’ in defense of the region’s old-growth forests. It is here, also, in the midst of political struggles over ‘nature’ and the ‘fate’ of the temperate rainforest, that a specific silence can be located and where we can begin to map ways that present-day constructions of nature are marked by a colonial past. These issues could be clearly seen in a series of events in 1993. The increasing intensity of the conflict over the Sound, and the internationalization of protest

in the early 1990s prompted the provincial government to prepare and release a land-use plan (British Columbia 1993a) that sought to mediate between the widely divergent demands of industry and environmentalists.⁶ The plan, which zoned the region for different uses—forestry, recreation, preservation, and so on—failed to end conflict over the region, precipitating instead one of the largest collective actions of civil disobedience in Canada’s history: the arrest of more than 900 environmental protestors, and an equally emotional response by forestry workers who saw their livelihoods threatened. Much has been written about this, mostly from within the environmental movement and usually focused on relations between the state, corporate capital, law, citizenship, and the ‘rights’ of the nonhuman (Breen-Needham et al. 1994; Hatch 1994; MacIsaac and Champagne 1994). Less attention has been paid to a subsequent report by the provincial ombudsman (British Columbia 1993b) which asserted that throughout the events leading to the Clayoquot Sound decision, the Nuu-chah-nulth—a confederation of First Nations that live on the west coast of Vancouver Island⁷—were not adequately consulted, even though the land at issue lay entirely within their traditional territories and had never been ceded to colonial authorities or to the federal state.⁸

The marginalization of the Nuu-chah-nulth in decision-making processes around Clayoquot Sound raises important questions that this essay seeks to address. How is it possible that amid the many voices ‘speaking for’ nature in Clayoquot Sound, the voices of indigenous peoples were not adequately heard? What contributed to this ‘silencing’? The argument I make is that the ‘itineraries of silencing’ that contributed to Nuu-chah-nulth concerns going unheeded are not found primarily in administrative process or state policy (although they are certainly evident at this level).⁹ Rather, in order to locate the conditions of possibility for this absence, I turn my attention to a series of current and historical representational practices through which ‘nature’ is made to appear as an empty space of economic and political calculation and particular actors authorized to speak for it.¹⁰ I argue that it is precisely such representational practices that have underwritten and legitimated the abstraction and displacement of commodities (‘natural’ resources, visual ‘scenery,’ ‘ancient’ trees, etc.) from one set of cultural relations and their relocation within others: the abstract

spaces of the ‘market,’ the ‘nation’ and, in recent ecological rhetorics, the ‘biosphere’ and ‘the global community.’¹¹ One effect has been that all apparent (from a distance) ‘public’ and ‘unconstrained’ discussion over the fate of the forest has been convened in precisely the binary logic (jobs vs. environment) that authorizes certain voices while marginalizing others. Indeed, this displacement has enabled the construction of policy about a self-evident thing called ‘nature,’ and its zoning between various users, to proceed as though it were simply the transparent expression of a ‘national’ interest or a mediation between various ‘public’ interests.

As I note later, these dynamics have not gone uncontested—a story increasingly told by First Nations, historians, anthropologists, and filmmakers. First Nations in BC continue to articulate other ways of imag(in)ing social natures that are tied to their own cultural traditions and historical and spatial practices. My purpose here, however, is not to establish these as somehow more ‘authentic.’¹² Rather, I focus on those practices that work to limit possibilities for their expression, and thereby seek to problematize and undermine assumptions of historical distance between a colonial past and a postcolonial present in BC’s temperate rainforests. Beginning therefore with recent forest industry promotional literature and ending with contemporary constructions of ‘nature’ in environmentalist rhetorics, I will show at both sites on what critical and constitutive absences the authority to ‘speak for’ nature has been built. Between these sections I interject the texts of the prominent late nineteenth-century geologist George Dawson in order to map ‘genealogies’ or ‘pretexts’ both of what counts as nature in BC today, and of present configurations of authority in BC’s forests. Certainly, Dawson’s texts do not lead directly to the present ‘war in the woods’ between environmentalists, industry, and First Nations, as one link in a chain of historical events, but they can be read to show the emergence of the ‘natural’ as an entity separate from the ‘cultural’ and the simultaneous marginalization of native presence in British Columbia. Behind present-day identities—as Foucault (1977) and others have noted—lie numberless beginnings and myriad events, and Dawson’s texts can be made to subvert the easy play of recognition in the present. In short, this paper can be read as a cautionary tale; against what is now a flood tide of managerialism in BC and else-

where, organized around such notions as ‘sustainability,’ ‘ecological restoration,’ ‘bioregionalism,’ and ‘landscape ecology,’ I sound a cautious warning that asks about the historical conditions that enable the management or preservation of ‘nature’ to proceed in the ways that it does, that permit ‘authority’ to be constructed and legitimated in particular ways, and that naturalize a ‘post’colonial cultural and political terrain.

Staging ‘Pure’ Spaces of Economic and Political Calculation

‘Custodians of the Forest’: The Rhetorics and Rights of Access of Transnational Capital

British Columbia’s environmental conflicts are today played out in a highly mediatized terrain in which actors vie for ‘public opinion.’ Appropriately, then, I begin my inquiry with an artifact drawn from the midst of these media wars.

Beyond the Cut—my first exhibit in this story of nature and its representatives—is a public relations document in which the forest industry conglomerate MacMillan Bloedel (MB) seeks to legitimate its authority as the forest’s ‘custodian’ in the face of strong criticism of industrial forestry as practiced under advanced capitalism (MacMillan Bloedel n.d.). The document, one of several that the company has produced, is attractively packaged and organized in an easy-to-read format that mixes glossy photographs, graphics, and written text (including boxed quotes from scientific ‘experts’). What intrigues me, however, is not this format—which appears ubiquitous today—but the two ‘invitations’ that this document offers readers and through which MB’s authority is built. The first is an invitation to *evaluate* MB’s forest management practices. The second, implicit in the first, is an invitation to *forget* the colonial histories which have made MacMillan Bloedel’s position as ‘custodian’ possible. It is the second that enables the first to be taken up as ‘common sense’ by the reader.

The booklet opens with a statement by Ray Smith, then president and CEO of MacMillan Bloedel:

At MacMillan Bloedel we are proud of our history of forest management in BC—we believe that we

are among the best in the world when it comes to forestry practices and integrated resource management. We asked British Columbians about their views on managing and using the forests in this province, and we are now convinced that MB shares the same constructive values, concerns, and expectations for use of the forest resource as do the majority of people living in the province. . . . We are committed to manage our forestlands in the best interests of the public.

Smith’s statement sets the tone for the remainder of the document, where, in a selfless act of ‘corporate responsibility,’ MB turns the spotlight of public scrutiny on its own practices. This rhetoric of accountability pivots on the mobilization of a potent political fiction—the ‘public’—which at once posits a singular body, situates the reader within it, and assumes a unified and collective interest in the forest, flattening out any difference within BC society. In turn, this permits an initial but crucial displacement: MB’s rights of access to the resource are to be legitimated through an evaluation of its *management* of the resource, shifting attention away from the more politically charged question of *tenure*. This emphasis on management is in large part a response to critics who claim that the forest industry in BC is ecologically destructive and unsustainable (Hammond 1991; Drushka et al. 1993), but it also carefully delineates what is at stake in BC’s forest disputes.

Organized thus, *Beyond the Cut* sets out to persuade the reader about MB’s expertise as a forest manager and its responsiveness to ‘public concerns.’ The first is achieved through a rhetoric of ‘expert,’ ‘scientific’ management. The booklet is filled with photographs of experts at work. “MB road engineers,” readers are told in a caption beside a photograph of road builders, “know that poor road construction practices can cause erosion and mud build-up in streams.” Photographs depict environmental scientists engaged in research “in the field” or the “lab,” or working with “computer simulations”—all privileged sites of ‘authority’ in Western cultures of science (Haraway 1989). Other photographs depict “high-tech greenhouses” (Figure 2) which grow “genetically superior offspring,” ‘assisting’ rather than ‘destroying’ nature. LUPAT—a Land Use Planning Advisory Team—is introduced as a crack team of “environmental specialists” with expertise in “soils, wildlife, fish, water resources, and growth and yield projections.” Other experts, we are assured, are consulted about “recreation and aes-



Figure 2. Forestry issues in British Columbia are often framed by forestry companies in technical rather than social or ethical terms, thereby shifting attention away from contentious issues like land tenure. Images like this one showing high-tech greenhouses are designed to convince viewers that the forests are being managed in the most efficient manner and in the interests of an undifferentiated ‘public.’ Courtesy, MacMillan Bloedel Ltd.

thetics.” Finally, the corporation notes that it consults with the state at every level: BC Forest Service, Ministry of Environment and Parks, Heritage Branch, and the federal department of Fisheries and Ocean. What makes this representational strategy effective is what Jürgen Habermas (1987) has described as the ‘splitting off’ of expert cultures from the lifeworld, such that communicative action becomes truncated or colonized by systems-imperatives. Questions of politics and legitimation are therefore displaced from the *social* realm (‘value’ or moral reason) to *technical* realms (instrumental reason). Likewise, technical interests become estranged from what Habermas calls ‘enlightened action’ and come to be established themselves as ‘values’ such that rationality (as *technique*) is no longer critique but legitimation. The issue then is not whether MB’s scientific credentials are solid but how technical rationality becomes a surrogate for moral or political rationalities. Placed together with aesthetic displays of forest

renewal (inverting the ‘before’ and ‘after’ photos that the environmental movement has used so effectively), these rhetorics permit the company to narrate a comforting story of rational management and temporary disturbance of a ‘public resource.’ The message is unmistakable: MB’s forest practices are ‘sustainable’; left to the company, the forest will be renewed, if not improved, for future generations.

Pursuing the second tack, MB demonstrates its *responsiveness* to public concerns by noting that it incorporates public input, opens ‘its’ forests to multiple users, and goes far beyond its legislated responsibilities in preservation of forests and wildlife habitat. We are assured that the company holds the same concerns as the average citizen about preserving areas of “special importance.” “The forests of British Columbia,” we read, “are a great source of pride and concern for the people of the province. No one wants to see them decimated or devoted exclusively to timber production.” MB therefore cooperates

with government agencies in preserving examples of old-growth forests in areas of special beauty and in critical wildlife habitats. Thousands of hectares of forestland on Vancouver Island, it claims, have been transferred from MB ownership or tenure to parks and ecological reserves, while logging in other “sensitive” or “aesthetic” regions has been deferred indefinitely. At the end of the day, MB appears as the public’s trusted spokesperson, possessing the most objective knowledge and advanced technology, and mediating, in a disinterested manner, between the claims of various “interest groups”:

As custodians of the forest, MB protects, cares for, and renews this great resource for the benefit of present and future generations. . . . The company’s forestry policies are based on achieving an *optimum balance* for all users taking into account economic, recreational, and environmental factors. . . . (italics mine)

In a world of competing demands and uncertain economic and ecological futures, MacMillan Bloedel knows best.

Normalizing the Forest: Public Fictions and National Displacements

This is not the place to debate the sustainability of current forest practices, nor to ask whether MacMillan Bloedel has been a good steward. Not that these are unworthy topics, but to do so would be to accept the first invitation without recognizing the second invitation that accompanies it—the invitation to forget the colonial histories that enable and legitimate present-day constructions of authority. How is it that the land appears in documents like this—and in much ‘public’ debate over forest management—as a purified space of economic and political calculation (containing visual, ecological, and economic resources) without any other competing claims? Why should this appear so ‘natural’? Why is it ‘common sense’ to debate rights of access to forest resources in terms of technical expertise and the strategic interests of the ‘nation’ without any acknowledgment that other ‘nations’—First Nations like the Nuu-chah-nulth—may dispute these territorial claims? In turn, how is it that MacMillan Bloedel (or, for that matter, the BC Ministry of Forests) appears as the forest’s legitimate custodian? What dynamics lie behind and establish this authority? Perhaps more to the point, how is it that in BC,

a discourse of resource management (bound to a new and powerful metanarrative of sustainability and tied to the administrative space of the nation) has been constructed and institutionalized in a conceptual and administrative space entirely separate from another, unmarked, but certainly not unrelated, management discourse that never appears in these discussions, yet which by its absence naturalizes the abstract space of the Canadian state and economy: the demarcation, segregation, and administration of native communities and lands?¹³

These are difficult questions, but we can begin our inquiry into this invitation to forget by returning to *Beyond the Cut*, and by paying attention to the absences and silences that structure its narrative. What remains completely *unmarked* in the photographs, text, and figures is a subtle manoeuvre whereby the ‘land,’ the ‘forest,’ and a commodity, ‘timber,’ are simultaneously abstracted and displaced from existing local cultural and political contexts, and resituated in the rhetorical space of the ‘nation’ and its ‘public.’ The forest that MB discusses is at once *any* forest and *no* forest at all. With the exception of a small map that superimposes MB’s forest tenures over the ‘empty’ space of the province, MB’s forests are devoid of specificity—geographical or historical. Thus, in a neat symmetry, what MB authors, authorizes MB. Displaced from its cultural surroundings, the forest becomes an unmarked, abstract category emptied of other claims—a pure space that exists only as a ground and raw material for the self-creation and rational management of the nation-state. As such it is free to be inscribed and incorporated within other territorializations and temporalities as the ‘nation’s’ forest, divided into units (Tree Farm Licences), allotted to leaseholders (like MB) and subjected to rational management (computerized models, scientific and economic rationalities) so as to produce ‘sustained yield’ through rationalized ‘forest rotations’ as part of the administration of a national ‘population’ and ‘economy’ (Figure 3). Indeed, in one of the many ironies found in BC’s forests, foresters and economists today refer to this rationalized forest as the ‘normal’ forest.¹⁴

Ecologists have argued that the ‘normal’ forest is in many respects ‘abnormal,’ but in the present paper this is not my complaint. (Nor do I share belief in a ‘normal’ forest that can be si(gh)ted independent of regimes of knowledge—even the science of ecology.) Rather, in

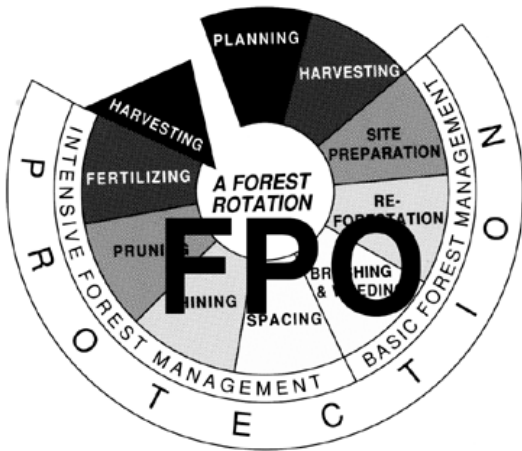


Figure 3. In discourses of forest management, BC's forests are displaced from their local contexts and relocated into the abstract spaces of the nation-state. This effaces the many ways that BC's forest landscapes are contested. What lies 'buried' in models of silviculture are precisely the colonial histories by which the forests were made available as resource landscapes rather than cultural and historical landscapes. Source: MacMillan Bloedel, n.d.

the midst of a putatively 'postcolonial' context, I argue that this abstraction displaces discussions of authority from questions of territory, tenure, and rights of access (and their constitutive colonial histories), and convenes them instead—precisely *through* the normalization of the 'forest' and its integration into the administration of the 'nation-state' and its 'populations'—around questions of rational management and conservation. This, in turn, permits a particular logic of equivalence to circumscribe and apparently exhaust possibilities of public debate: the health of the resource is the health of the nation. It is not rights of access but the economic and ecological details of the 'normal' forest that are at stake.

MB's rhetorics—and the normalization of the forest more generally—however, assume a priori the juridical, political, and geographical space of the nation-state and ignore its historico-geographical constitution (and contestation). By staging the nation-state as accomplished rather than continually articulated, the Tree Farm Licences which MB holds, and the 'normal' forest it manages, are rendered transparent and thus 'common sense.' Detached from their local cultural relations, it becomes a short step to see

these territories as empty public lands ('wilderness'), leased to transnational companies for the 'benefit' of the general population.¹⁵ In light of incomplete decolonization in British Columbia, such rhetorics risk reinscribing colonial relations, erasing present-day First Nation struggles over 'sovereignty,' and ignoring their continual assertion that what appears as 'wilderness' in one rhetoric is a highly *cultural* landscape in another. Assuming the fixity of these 'national/natural' spaces (and their staging as an abstract 'void' and normalization within a 'national economy') is, I suggest, a bad epistemic habit, one that simultaneously incorporates and renders invisible the colonial histories through which these spaces have been constituted and naturalized, and which in turn authorize certain voices—resource managers, bureaucrats, nature's defenders—to speak for nature.

Unthinking Neocolonial 'Cultures' of Nature: Genealogies of 'Wilderness'

If the genealogist refuses to extend his faith in metaphysics, if he listens to history, he finds that there is 'something altogether different' behind things: not a timeless and essential secret, but the secret that they have no essence or that their essence was fabricated in a piecemeal fashion from alien forms. . . . What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origins; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity (Foucault 1977:142).

It is to these colonial histories and practices that I want to turn now. MacMillan Bloedel's 'authority' is built, in part, by establishing the forest as a 'natural' and 'public' resource. But this is facilitated, in turn, by histories of 'seeing nature' on Canada's west coast that are deeply imbricated with forms of colonial power. In other words, the authority of corporate capital today is related in important ways to historical practices of imagining, representing, and purifying 'natural' landscapes. As I will argue, these practices permitted 'natural' spaces to be apprehended apart from forms of native territoriality. Wedded to a Western metaphysics of truth, such representations could be seen as revealing the 'real' structure of the landscape, and could give rise, in turn, to forms of administration that accepted this as a matter of course. By showing the mechanics of the production of this rhetori-

cal space called 'nature,' it becomes possible both to write a genealogy of 'nature' as the absence of culture ('wilderness') in late twentieth-century British Columbia, and to destabilize claims of authority that are built on this absence.¹⁶ I will be necessarily selective; to *un*think the neocolonial assumptions buried in MB's text, I will enlist the writings of George Dawson, a geologist and amateur ethnologist, who traveled the coast with the Geological Survey of Canada in the 1870s–1880s. By reading Dawson's texts against the grain, the fixity of this national/natural space—and its representation as a nonhumanized hinterland—appears less certain; its construction as such, upon which subsequent 'rights' of access are built, is made visible at the moment of its emergence.

Displacements: Bounding the 'Native' and Producing 'Nature'

Dawson's travels coincided roughly with the years that the federal Indian Reserve Commission (IRC) was allocating and demarcating Indian Reserves in the province. This makes Dawson's texts particularly significant. It is the Reserve Commissions that cartographically inscribed colonialist discourse onto the territory of the province, bounding, within a quasi-legal discourse, the space of native villages and beyond their extent, positing an empty nature open to settlement or enterprise. This in turn has authorized subsequent depictions of BC as a 'resource landscape' rather than a 'cultural landscape.' Considerable attention in BC historiography has focused on the Indian Land Question, debating the relative 'generosity' to the Indians of successive colonial administrators, and later, after the colony joined Canada in 1871, specific provincial and federal authorities (Fisher 1977; Tenant 1990). However, as Gayatri Spivak (1990) reminds us, administrative practice presupposes an irreducible theoretical moment. Practices such as those of the IRC occurred not simply through administrative fiat, but were made possible through a series of discourses through which a 'space' of administration could appear, and that at once invited and legitimated the actions of administrators. The cartographic inscription of colonialist rhetoric in the 'reserve' was thus prefigured and facilitated by a more general *textualization* which included not only the appearance of written records, but more important, the emergence of a sense of order

and totality through the production and dissemination of knowledge pertaining to the land and its inhabitants. In this way a 'landscape' could be known and made available.

In this light, Dawson's travels and writings—in part because he wrote as a 'disinterested' scientist, not a colonial apologist—provide a valuable window into the extent of a colonialist visibility that at once ordered and naturalized BC's natural/cultural landscapes, and at the same time underwrote the bounding of native territories and the shape and future direction of state policy. What I wish to trace in Dawson's work, then, is the process by which the 'land' was made to appear as 'nature': a space that held no signs of 'culture' and therefore could be appropriated into the administrative space of the 'nation.' This occurred, I will argue, not through the denial by Dawson and others of native claims to the land (Dawson personally suggested the opposite) but through a series of representational practices that at once *located* and *contained* a native presence, dividing west coast territories into the 'primitive' spaces of native villages, and the 'modern' spaces of the emerging Canadian nation.

Dawson's official writings took the form of survey reports for the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC), fulfilling one of the conditions that the colony of British Columbia had attached to union with the Dominion of Canada in 1871: that geological surveys be made of the new province's 'domain.' Several scholars have shown the significance of these surveys in the development and spatial extension of the Canadian nation. Zaslov (1975) notes that the survey was a prime instrument in "pushing back the frontiers" and that it was, in many places, the "first arm" of the Canadian government. More recently, Keller (1987) has tied the formation and activities of the GSC more closely to imagined geographies of a 'transcontinental' Canadian nation, and also to utilitarian concerns for national economic development. Both, however, view the survey primarily as a process of *enumeration*, documenting, through careful observation, the wealth of the new nation.

This the survey certainly was. But it was also much more. The GSC not only enumerated, but brought a particular *mode of intelligibility* to bear on the landscape. This was no mere accounting, it was a means of simultaneously *staging* and *availing*, a way of producing 'spaces of visibility' (Rajchmann 1988; Gregory 1994) and by extension 'spaces of invisibility' that in

turn authorized the activities of certain actors. The outline of Dawson's (1880) report on his 1878 explorations in the Queen Charlotte Islands (located north of Vancouver Island) makes the construction of spaces of visibility/invisibility in the practice of enumeration abundantly clear. Like most GSC reports, it begins with a general description of the islands—a bird's eye view that situates them in relation to the rest of the nation, and provides a general outline of their physical geography—coastline, harbors, rivers, mountains, and so on. This provides readers with a general 'frame' that can then be filled with more detail. Subsequent chapters and appendices locate and describe the islands' geology, Indians, zoology, and botany—divisions in the text which apparently 'mirrored' what could be 'found' in nature. Plants, animals, Indians, rocks—each were separated and evaluated as discrete entities which, in turn, could be further subdivided, providing, through the enumeration of the 'parts,' a picture of the 'whole.' Geological observations, for instance, were divided into further classifications: Triassic, Cretaceous coal bearing, Tertiary, and glaciated and superficial deposits. Likewise, Dawson's notes on the Haida Indians distinguish and analyze physical appearance, social organization, religion and 'medicine,' the potlatch and distribution of property, folklore, villages, and population. Through the construction of particular circumscribed knowledge domains, these landscapes were encountered, organized, and enumerated.

More than enumeration, Dawson's survey also stood as a remarkable case of 'anticipatory vision.' At the time he undertook this task, the white settler population in BC was still outnumbered by natives, and, further, this settler population was clustered almost entirely at the extreme southwest corner of the province (Galois and Harris 1994). Beyond its extent, the land was still known and experienced through native territorialities and temporalities. The survey therefore embodied and inscribed a national teleology on a landscape that, although bounded by the cartographic abstraction of national borders, had not yet been rationalized in relation to them. Yet these boundaries—however abstract—were of great significance. As Benedict Anderson (1991) persuasively argues, it is only *subsequent* to the demarcation of a 'national territory' that surveys like Dawson's could become part of the accounting ledgers of the nation. Only subsequent to this bounding could 'interiors' ap-

pear 'empty' and available to be 'filled.'¹⁷ In a series of telling metaphors, Robert Brown, an explorer on Vancouver Island who preceded Dawson by fifteen years, makes this anticipatory filling explicit.

It was the intention . . . that we should strike through the unexplored sections of the Island, carefully examine that tract as a *specimen*, and thus form a *skeleton* to be filled up afterwards (Hayman 1989:9) [italics mine].

Later, Brown described the findings of his explorations as "tests of the whole" (1869), by which the regions between his traverses could be "judged." On more than one occasion he fantasized of its future transformation at the hands of settlers:

The trail from Victoria to Comox crosses the Quall-e-hum River close to the coast, and an extension of this would form a transinsular road connecting coal miners of Nanaimo and the farmers of Comox with the wild savage of Nootka, Klayo-quot [Clayoquot] and Barclay Sound (1864:25) [italics mine].

Likewise, Dawson (1880a:38) speculated that in the Queen Charlottes "before many years extensive saw-mills will doubtless be established. . . . The quality of the spruce timber is excellent, and beside the immediate shores of the harbour, logs might probably be run down the Naden River from the lake above." Both Brown and Dawson assume and enact the bounded space of the colony and nation respectively, reproducing in a speculative fantasy what had already been accomplished elsewhere in the Americas. The GSC, then, in Dawson's writings more specifically, must be seen not only as an enumeration, but also, quite literally, as a means of *incorporation*—constructing and filling the 'body' (skeleton) of the 'nation' (specimen), and inscribing these new territorializations onto West Coast lands.

Significantly, in the colonial context, the incorporation of the nation (as a body) and the 'visualization' of its 'internal structure' involved also a fundamental division and displacement. These occurred in two ways. First, at the same time that the skeleton of the nation was being given flesh, it was also anatomized—divided into its component parts. The divisions of the survey introduced categories by which the land could be known and appropriated. Second, by constructing discrete entities—minerals, trees, Indians—these could be apprehended entirely *apart* from their surrounding, displacing and

resituating objects within quite specific, but very different, orders of signification. These processes of division and displacement can be seen in Dawson's journals. In these, Dawson recorded observations and kept a daily account of his movements, including descriptions of the social and technical mediations that made his movement and his scientific observations possible: people he met, how he traveled, where he stayed, who acted as his guides, instruments used, measurements made, and so on. On the reverse side of his journal pages, Dawson occasionally inserted details that he had missed. More often, Dawson used these blank spaces to write a second 'parallel' text. In this he elaborated upon aspects of the physical landscape or native culture. Much of the information found on the back of these pages was later incorporated into his 'scientific' texts on the geology, resources, and native cultures of the west coast, but it is the *organization* of these parallel texts that is of interest. Some passages dealt exclusively with geology or botany, others only with native culture, while yet others synthesized both into an enumeration of different aspects of the country (but even here, as in his reports, the two identities were rarely brought into relation; natives appeared as yet another element to be documented).

One example will suffice. From August 8–10, 1878, Dawson, accompanied by his brother Rankine, an Indian guide named Mills, and the crew of the schooner *Wanderer*, traveled from Skidegate to Masset, along the east and north coast of Graham Island. On August 11, the day following his arrival in Masset, Dawson attended church, dined with the missionary Mr. Collison, read recent newspapers, and "wrote up notes." The events of the four days are duly recorded in his daily journal entries. On the reverse, two parallel texts are found (see Table 1). In one text we find an enumeration of the 'wealth of nature.' Here the sciences of botany and geology play a larger part. Specimens are located and related in space. Physical processes are described and possibilities for establishing communications (or lack thereof) duly noted. In the parallel text, Dawson describes native peoples, their customs and behavior (and, on other occasions, their villages). This appears, quite literally, as a turning of Dawson's gaze from one 'object domain' to another.

The same separation is found in his photographs: geological sites and landscape vistas on

the one hand (Figure 4) and native villages and individuals on the other (Figure 5).¹⁸ So, while indigenous peoples were at once described in great detail—their physical features and cultural forms documented and enumerated—they were simultaneously *detached* from the landscape, which could then be subsequently encountered and described as devoid of human occupation. In other words, Dawson distills the complex social-ecological worlds of his travels into neat unambiguous categories: primitive culture and pristine nature. No relations are drawn between the two. Instead, the former is contained within the 'village,' fixing a native presence in 'place,' while beyond the bounds of the native villages, Dawson filled the blank spaces of the imperial map with the colored spaces of geological and botanical maps. In turn, these latter spaces could be subject to new visual regimes which saw the land in terms of stratigraphy and geological time, 'revealing' an 'environmental architecture' that could be appropriated as yet new frontiers for capital. The enterprising settler, armed with a rudimentary knowledge of geology, could therefore 'read the rocks' according to an assumed plan, and indeed was encouraged to do so.¹⁹ Dawson himself would go on to write texts about Canada as a "field for mining investment" (1896), and create provincial maps of the region's "important trees" (1880b)—important not for native inhabitants, but for the nascent forest industry. What we find in Dawson's writings, then, is the unveiling of nature's 'plan,' a plan which both *preceded* and lay *external to* a native presence and which would be fulfilled only through the judicious mixing of European (Canadian) capital and labor.

The Appearance of Natural Order and the Ordering of Nature's Appearance

Dawson's texts suggest the possibility of writing genealogies of unmarked categories such as 'nature,' the 'land,' and the 'nation.' But they also help clarify how colonizing power *works*. As Timothy Mitchell (1988) notes, the illusion of representations like the survey, the journal, or the map was that they appeared to be *without* illusion: they were faithful to the 'things' represented, promising complete and certain knowledge (even if this was continually deferred, as Robert Brown [1869] noted, leaving "details" to "more minute after inspection"). This promise

Table 1. Parallel Texts Found on the Reverse Pages of George Dawson's Journals

Text 1: Physical Landscape	Text 2: Cultural Landscape
<p><i>The Coast between Skidegate & Masset</i>, in some respects resembles that between Cumshewa & Skidegate. A bare open stretch with no harbour & scarcely even a Creek or protected bay for Canoes or boats, for long distances. The beach is gravelly & sometimes coarsely stony to a point near windbound camp of track Survey. Beyond this it becomes sandy, & though not without gravel continues generally of Sand, all the way to Masset.</p>	<p><i>Potlatch.</i> Mr. Collinson gives me some additional light on this custom.</p>
<p>Lawn Hill is evidently Caused by the outcrop of volcanic rock described in field book, is probably Tertiary. Beyond this for some distance, & including the region about Cape Ball, cliffs, or low banks of drift-clay, & sands characterize. They are generally wearing away under the action of the waves, & trees & stumps may be seen in various stages of descent to the beach. In some places dense woods of fine upright clear trees, are thus exposed in section, & there must be much fine spruce lumber back from the sea everywhere. Very frequently the timber seen on the immediate verge of the cliffs, & shore is of an inferior quality, rather scrubby & full of knots. The soil is generally very Sandy where shown in the cliffs, or peaty in bottom places where water has Collected. Sand hills or sandy elevations resembling Such, are seen in some places on the cliffs, in section, & there is nothing to show that the Soil away from the Coast is universally sandy, but the fact that the upper deposits of the drift spread very uniformly & are of this character. Further north the shore is almost everywhere bordered by higher or lower sand hills, Covered with rank Coarse grass; beach peas, &c. &c. Beyond these are woods, generally living though burnt in some places. The trees are of various degrees of excellence, but most generally rather undersized & scrubby. This part of the coast is also characterized by lagoons, & is evidently making, under the frequent action of the heavy South East sea.</p>	<p>When a man is about to make a potlatch, for any reason, such as raising a house &c. &c. he first, some Months before hand, gives out property, money &c., So much to each man, in proportion to their various ranks & standing. Some time before the potlatch, this is all returned, with interest. Thus a man receiving four dollars, gives back six, & so on. All the property & funds thus collected are then given away at the potlatch. The more times a man potlatches, the more important he becomes in the eyes of his tribe, & the more is owing to him when next some one distributes property & potlatches.</p>
	<p>The blankets, ictus &c. are not torn up & destroyed except on certain special occasions. If for instance a contest is to be carried on between two men or three as to who is to be chief, One may tear up ten blankets, scattering the fragments, the others must do the same, or retire, & so on till one has mastered the others. It really amounts to voting in most cases, for in such trial a mans personal property soon becomes exhausted, but there an under-current of supply from his friends who would wish him to be chief, & he in most popular favour is likely to be the chosen one.</p>
	<p>At Masset last winter, a young man made some improper advances to a young woman, whose father hearing of the matter, was very angry, & immediately tore up twenty blankets. This was not merely to give vent to his feelings, for the young man had to follow suite, & in this Case not having the requisite amount of property, the others of his tribe had to subscribe & furnish it, or leave a lasting disgrace in the tribe. Their feelings toward the young man were not naturally, of the Kindest, though they did not turn him out of the tribe as they might have done <i>after</i> having atoned for his fault.</p>
	<p><i>Totems</i> are found among the indians here as elsewhere. The chief ones about Masset are the Bear & the Eagle. Those of one totem must marry in the other.</p>

Source: Cole and Lockner (1993:57–59). Emphasis in original.

allowed readers (and writers) to apprehend an *appearance of order* that was thought to emanate from nature itself, rather than from the *ordering of appearances* in representational practices. Reading the survey only as a more-or-less accurate 'record' within a story of progressive European acquaintance with west coast lands obscures the manner by which the survey en-framed the land within regimes of visibility. It is

important to be clear: what is at issue is *not* whether Dawson's surveys represented the landscape accurately. As Mitchell notes (1988:18), the problem with explanations that reveal power to work only through *misrepresentation* is that representation is itself left unquestioned. Power, he argues, operates precisely in the novelty of continuously creating the *effect* of an 'external reality.' Thus, the force of Dawson's surveys lay



Figure 4. ‘Basaltic columns, Tow Hill.’ Photograph by George Dawson, 9 August 1878. As a geologist, Dawson was trained to evaluate BC’s landscapes in terms of geological formations, revealing an ‘environmental architecture’ that could be mapped entirely separate from the cultural landscape and appropriated as yet new frontiers for capital. Source: National Archives of Canada, C51371.

not in whether they got it right or wrong. Rather, it lay in the production of an ‘effect’ of truthfulness that was tied to a metaphysics which assumed that *behind* representation lay an order that representation continually *approached*. Through the hold of this metaphysic, the survey could be taken as approaching ‘nature’ itself, effacing the particular technologies of vision through which it was produced, and finding in the ‘order’ of representation the order of ‘reality’ itself.

Dawson’s surveys and journals did not invent objects and landscapes in flights of fancy. These were material practices that engaged material worlds. Rather, in rendering the land *visible*, the surveys constructed from what was encountered an ordered scene that could be *read*. Such practices, as Paul Carter (1987) notes, were not simply textual, but highly material; they did not leave the land untouched. Instead they actively displaced and resituated landscapes within new

orders of vision and visibility, and within regimes of power and knowledge that at once authorized particular activities and facilitated new forms of governmentality. It was only after the land was staged as a ‘theatre’ of ‘nature,’ after all, that it could be made available to political and economic calculation.²⁰

Significantly, the production of ‘nature’ in colonial discourse did not occur through a straightforward erasure of native presence. In Dawson’s texts (as in others of his time), indigenous ‘populations’ were identified and described in great detail. This presence, however, was ordered and contained in a discourse of ‘primitive culture’: a culture that lay outside, and had no place in, the unfolding history of the modern ‘nation.’ At the same time that Dawson placed native peoples ‘on view,’ he displaced them both temporally and geographically from their surroundings. Concurrently, Dawson described a national (physical) landscape consisting of cer-



Figure 5. ‘Skedans Indian village.’ Photograph by George Dawson, 18 July, 1878. In his photographs, as in his journals, Dawson divided the land into ‘natural’ and ‘cultural’ landscapes. Dawson was fascinated by the totems at Skedans and took five photographs of the village. The following day, he examined the surrounding landscape for mineral deposits. Source: National Archives of Canada, PA38148.

tain geological and botanical entities, containing certain landforms and waterways, and subject to particular climates and meteorological phenomena. What resulted, then, was a textual and spatial separation of the ‘tribal’ village from the ‘modern’ nation. Native village sites became tied to a traditional, nonhistorical culture, and separated from a surrounding landscape that was figured, in turn, as a field for the enterprise of a dynamic modern culture. Colonial discourse in this instance did not erase, it *displaced*. Erasure occurred, to be certain, but not through lack of attention. Rather it occurred in the movement/translation between different orders of signification.

Here lies the significance—in the present—of rereading historical texts like Dawson. Mary Louise Pratt (1992) has argued that this dis-

placement of the ‘native’ from their physical surroundings was a common trope in nineteenth-century travel writings produced by Europeans moving through the ‘primitive’ spaces of Africa and the Americas. As Pratt notes, scientific accounts—like Dawson’s—did not exist in a realm *apart* from imperialism and European expansion, they actively *facilitated* both. “Natural history,” she writes, “extracted specimens not only from their organic or ecological relations with each other, but also from their place in other people’s economies, histories, social and symbolic systems” (1992:31). In Dawson’s texts, native peoples were spatially ‘fixed’ at certain sites—usually villages or resource procurement sites—and surrounded solely by what appeared as the empty space of nature. Across this empty space, primitive peoples only ‘moved,’

leaving little trace of occupation or, in the same discourse, few claims of possession. As people possessing only a transient, undisciplined gaze, it could be assumed that they had no real knowledge of the tremendous riches that lay upon or beneath the “face of the country.” In this way, Pratt writes, the Americas were reinvented as “a primal world of nature, an unclaimed and timeless space occupied by plants and creatures (some of them human), but not organized by societies and economies; a world whose only history was the one about to begin” (1992:126). Dawson’s textual divisions and rhetorical displacements were, in effect, agents of *detritorialization*, rendering invisible existing relations between native peoples, their immediate surroundings, and the complex cultural/political institutions that organized these relations.²¹ In turn, other notions of property and ownership particular to European societies could be inscribed over the extent of the territory and institutionalized in legal and political discourse.

Indeed, there is an entire institutional/administrative history to the construction of ‘natural/national’ space that I have explicitly not focused on here. The separation of the ‘land’ and its ‘resources’ from native peoples and their communities and its relocation into the abstract space of the nation is not solely, or even primarily, the result of juridico-political statements and public administration (colonialism proper). Nor is the persistence of colonialist practices *today* solely the result of administrative policy. The conditions of possibility for modern Tree Farm Licences, abstracted as ahistorical, rationalized spaces, are multiple and disparate. In part, they were prefigured and facilitated in the manner that the BC landscape was encountered and described by explorers, travelers, scientists, and settlers and the cultural, economic, and institutional forms that were subsequently inscribed and reproduced in BC society. “The act [practice] of language,” Paul Carter (1987:144) notes, “[brings] a living space into being and render[s] it habitable, a place that [can] be communicated, a place where communication [can] occur.” This is an important point to make in the political present. In legal struggles today, and in recent “government to government” negotiations, First Nations must always deal with the question of ‘evidence’ for native claims. Most commentators on native ‘dispossession’ have debated colonial policy and legal pronouncements (Tenant 1990). While this is important for tracing the quasi-legal apparatus of dispossession, it

leaves what Spivak calls the theoretical moment contained in administrative practice intact. It fails to sufficiently identify the many ways that past colonial policy (and administrative practices today) relied upon and incorporated representational practices that as a matter of course *already* depicted the land through colonialist rhetorics which narrowly circumscribed notions of native territoriality within a larger narrative of the emerging nation. The displacement that occurred in the ‘spatial writings’ of settler societies rendered invisible existing territorializations, making the land appear “as Eden.” This was, figuratively and materially, the “worlding of a world on a supposedly uninscribed territory, part of an imperialist project which had to assume that the earth that it [re]territorialized was in fact previously uninscribed” (Spivak 1990:1). Native land rights have been notoriously difficult for Western colonial cultures to see. Indeed, countering such colonialist rhetorics—both historical and contemporary—was a central task faced by the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en nations in their early 1990s land claims case (Solnick 1992). If these founding rhetorics and territorializations are left unexamined, then past colonial authority appears legitimate, and by extension, so also does the authority claimed today by transnational forest companies. By noting that dispossession occurred not simply through legal pronouncements, but also, and primarily, through a visibility that at once geographically located and spatially contained native presence (and therefore authorized European claims to an empty land), a narrative that sees the land as unoccupied wilderness can be contested and dismantled, creating a conceptual space within juridico-political discourses in which past and present forms of native territoriality and possession might be made visible.

Saving ‘Wilderness’: Nature as the Absence of (Modern) Culture

The continuing colonial legacy of extractive capital and state-economic planning found today in BC is not unique within Canada. From Clayoquot Sound in BC to the Great Whale hydro project in Quebec, race, colonial histories, and staples development have been closely intertwined. At least until recently, the explicit environmental racism of such projects has been contained through a silent colonial violence that

marked the bodies but denied the voices of First Nations.

Let me return to the present, but in order to ask a different question. If, as many First Nations speakers have argued, the economic exploitation of nature-as-resource has tended to rely on, and reproduce, colonial relations in BC, might the same be said of environmentalist rhetorics articulated in the *defense* of nature? To what extent does the defense of nature mirror, albeit inversely, the staging of nature-as-resource in staples economies, a staging that is itself tied to the nation's colonial legacy? Here I am responding to criticisms leveled by a number of First Nations speakers—perhaps most prominently by George Watts during the European tour of the BC Premier in February 1994—that the environmental movement is guilty of its own forms of neocolonialism.²² To explore Watts's complaint, I return to the same 'media wars' from which I drew my first 'exhibit.'

On the Wild Side

Clayoquot: On the Wild Side (Dorst and Young 1990) is one of the most popular coffee-table books recently published by the Western Canada Wilderness Committee. Although it has a substantial text, the 160-odd photographs are clearly asked to bear the narrative burden. This book, and others like it, have been immensely successful in raising public awareness about environmental issues in British Columbia, not the least because the landscapes that the photographers 'capture' are some of the most 'scenic' (according to certain Western aesthetics) that the province has to offer.

Photographic collections have been used effectively to mobilize support for the preservation of certain landscapes in the U.S. and Canada since the 1930s, when the Sierra Club first published Ansel Adams's photographs in its struggle to preserve Kings Canyon, California, from resource development. It is important to note, however, that photographs, even in documentary photography, do not 'mirror' nature; they actively construct landscapes that observers are invited to grasp as the 'real.' As cultural critic and historian of photography John Tagg notes,

The photographer turns his or her camera on a world of objects already constructed as a world of uses, values and meanings, though in the perceptual process these may not appear as such but only

as qualities discerned in the "natural" recognition of "what is there". . . . The image is therefore to be seen as a composite of signs. . . . Its meanings are multiple, concrete and most important, constructed (1988:8).

So, although *Clayoquot: On the Wild Side* disrupts the representational logic of extractive capital, it does not necessarily reveal an essential 'reality' that is obscured behind the commodity form. Rather, it invites the viewer to engage the landscape of Clayoquot Sound in highly selective ways. In itself this is not a problem—it is the nature of all representational practices. But it means that rather than accept these photographs as a transparent reflection of 'nature itself,' we should read such images as texts organized through a particular optic.

The book opens with a series of spectacularized landscapes. Here the photographer, Adrian Dorst, displays his substantial talents and finely tuned aesthetic sensibilities as a nature photographer. From the first page on, scenes unfold of a sublime, complex, enchanting landscape filled with powerful forces and intricate, even delicate relations (Figure 6). This is a fantastic display of the 'wild side' of Vancouver Island, what Young, in the text, declares a "showcase of environmental elegance and diversity" (p. 20). From the wide sweep of crescent beaches to wave-pounded coastal headlands; from shoreline trees sculpted by the lashing winds of fierce winter storms to the unimaginable, soft silence and teeming, luxuriant growth of its ancient forests, Dorst 'captures' a spectacular landscape. Land, forests, animals, and sea are brought together into a symphony of natural harmony. This is a land that is resolutely 'wild' and 'nonhumanized,' the last stand of a pristine nature external to and threatened by the juggernaut of industrial society.

In light of recent millennial pronouncements of the 'end' of Nature (McKibben 1990), Dorst's images are not only striking but contain a sense of political urgency. Yet as important as the authors' political commitments are, these images are deeply problematic. This is true not because they set out to defend 'nature.' Rather, what is equally striking about the images—although at first this only seems 'natural'—is the absence of people, including the photographer himself. With the exception of one chapter, few photographs contain people, and only a few more contain signs of human activity. This allows the region to appear as the 'other' to industrial society: untrammelled wilderness. In turn,



Figure 6. Old-growth, Clayoquot Sound. Photographer, Adrian Dorst. Images of ‘ancient,’ ‘pristine’ rainforests are frequently used in struggles to preserve ‘wilderness’ areas like Clayoquot Sound. In these, ‘wilderness’ is framed through a constitutive absence: signs of modern culture and technologies. Courtesy, Adrian Dorst and the Western Canada Wilderness Committee.

the absence of Dorst allows the camera to appear as an unmediated extension of the ‘eye,’ an apparatus that simply records for the viewer what is ‘there’ to be seen: a timeless, nonhumanized nature. As the Wilderness Committee’s popular poster declares, “Wild beaches. Wild rainforests. Wild forever.”

Tropes of Traditional Culture

They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented (Karl Marx 1965[1852]:106).

Clayoquot Sound, of course, is far from unoccupied. Today, some 1,800 people live in the region, of which the Nuuchahnulth account for about half. The non-Native population lives almost exclusively at the south end of the Sound in the town of Tofino, which is also the Pacific terminus of the Trans-Canada Highway, and

thereby stands, for many non-Native Canadians, as the symbolic end of ‘humanized’ nature. Beyond this lies ‘wilderness.’ Native communities in Clayoquot Sound are today centralized at Ahousat, Optisat, Hesquiaht, and Esowista. All but the latter are located beyond Tofino.

Although the first few chapters of the book depict landscapes that contain no signs of human occupation, Dorst and Young are more than casually aware of a native presence. In the middle of the book, they include a chapter that focuses at some length on the Nuuchahnulth. Here lies a crucial tension: a cultural presence lies at the heart of this ‘natural paradise.’ How this tension is negotiated and resolved points to underlying differences between the environmental movement and First Nations in BC and reveals some insidious neocolonial tropes that lie at the heart of environmental representations of ‘nature’ in the region. These are not immediately apparent and have generally been over-

shadowed by the support that most sectors of the environmental movement have given to First Nations' land claims in BC. Indeed, Dorst and Young reiterate this support. Their book is itself dedicated to the Nuu-chah-nulth, and the text, at least in this chapter, is clearly sympathetic to Nuu-chah-nulth struggles within a judiciary that has often refused to recognize native sovereignty. The author, Cameron Young, celebrates precontact Nuu-chah-nulth life, which, he writes, subverting a discourse of primitivism, was "lived on a grand scale." He also relates recent work by anthropologists that estimated populations on the so-called wild side of Vancouver Island to have stood at 70,000 at the time of contact. Prior to contact, Young continues, "these people developed a cultural philosophy and a life-support system [that was] subtle and complex" (p. 41). Placed against the comments of a BC judge who claimed that precontact native life was "to quote Hobbs (sic) . . . at best 'nasty, brutish and short'" (*Delgamuukw v. the Queen* 13:129), Young's text weighs in on the side of anticolonial struggle.

Yet despite such assertions, this chapter is highly ambiguous at several levels. Inserted into the book as it is, it gives the impression of simply 'inserting' native people into, and as part of, a preexisting natural landscape. Other chapters focus on the rainforest, wildlife, coastal ecology, and so on. This is mirrored in the text of the chapter itself, which begins with a brief account of the region's natural history and ends with the appearance of what amounts to one of nature's constituent parts: native peoples (summarized best by the chapter title: *At Home in the Wild*). It is not that native people are erased from representations of Clayoquot Sound. Rather, just as with the writings of George Dawson at the end of the nineteenth century, it is *how they are made present* that matters.

Most problematic, I think, is that the authors remain within the thrall of a transcendental naturalism that requires that nature appear in its most 'pure' form as the *absence* of culture. "In many places," Young writes, "this is still a virgin landscape lost in time and governed by the unequivocal laws of nature." On this, much turns. Within this rhetoric—a mainstay of much North American environmentalism (Guha 1989)—the text and photographs can present native culture only in narrowly circumscribed ways. If we look at Dorst's photographs in more detail, we can locate a well-rehearsed

series of distinctions that at once mark a *traditional* native presence but erase all signs of a *modern* Nuu-chah-nulth culture. As the chapter unfolds, it becomes clear that human presence is not the problem in the Sound but the presence of modern technological societies. This requires that the author and photographer maintain and police a careful distinction between the 'traditional' and the 'modern.' All photographs that depict Nuu-chah-nulth culture therefore firmly bind this culture to history, not to the present. Eight photographs in the chapter contain 'native' content. In the only one to show 'live' natives, members of the Tla-o-qui-aht band are shown paddling a traditional canoe (Figure 7). In another a fallen totem pole is reclaimed by nature. A moss-covered skull is identified as the remains of a Nuu-chah-nulth member, while another photograph depicts the decaying corner post of a traditional longhouse. A single dugout canoe is shown on a beach as dusk falls. In a similar scene, a canoe floats a few meters offshore, silent and empty in the fading light. A whale bone is located at an old village site. A lone totem is found standing in the forest.

The book's photographs are clearly designed to be the focal point of the publication, but they contain no signs of ongoing struggles by the Nuu-chah-nulth to forge a cultural existence that is at once continuous and modern. Where Nuu-chah-nulth activity is present, it is only as a picturesque traditional life, threatened by an intrusive modernity.²³ These photographs invite viewers to encounter the region through a well-organized, historically specific optic that trades heavily upon distinctions drawn between nature and culture, the modern and the traditional. Through lenses ground in histories of colonial (and colonizing) practices, natural and cultural identities are constructed, purified, and disseminated. From the contested multiple identities of social life in the Sound are captured a timeless series of 'pure' forms. This optic can be displayed as operating along two axes (Figure 8). Together with the nature-culture (or wilderness-city) axis that Roderick Nash (1973) mapped in *Wilderness and the American Mind* can be found a second continuum: traditional-modern. On each axis identities are invested with meaning by the antipodal identity of the other. Identities are more 'pure' the further they can be separated. Nature is the *absence* of culture. The traditional is the *absence* of the modern. In turn, once these



Figure 7. Tla-o-qui-aht [Clayoquot] paddlers. Photographer, Adrian Dorst. While the presence of First Nations in supposedly ‘wild’ regions of BC is noted by environmental groups, this presence is contained through their representation as ‘traditional’ or ‘ecological’ cultures. Courtesy, Adrian Dorst and Western Canada Wilderness Committee.

dualisms are established, a logic of equivalence can link ‘similar’ terms: nature/traditional; culture/modern. The two axes—nature-culture, and traditional-modern—become conflated into a singular story of modern, Western cultures and traditional, non-Western, natures. Once established, other dualisms can be mapped onto this grid: science-ethnoscience, fact-myth, civilized-primitive, spoiled-pristine, and so on (Hall 1992).

Dorst and Young set out to establish the unique wilderness character of Clayoquot Sound. As such they map a metropolitan anxiety over the space of its hinterland. Despite celebrating native culture, the authors’ overarching representational logic requires that native presence not exceed the bounds of the traditional. The language and visual representation of “natural harmony,” of a nature “as yet untrammelled wild and free,” becomes a language of cultural invisibility. The Nuu-chah-nulth, rele-

gated to the traditional, remain only as placeholders in a larger, natural drama. By removing signs of modern Native culture from the landscape, the same rhetorical manoeuvres which

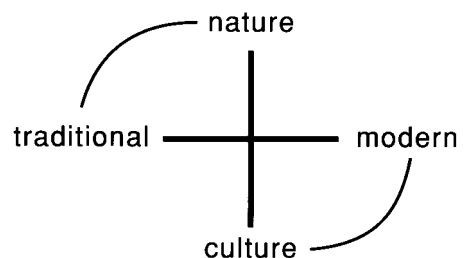


Figure 8. The colonial rhetorics of ‘wilderness.’ By mapping these dualisms onto each other (culture-nature, modern-traditional) native peoples are conflated with nature and areas are seen to remain ‘natural’ only if the cultures that live there remain ‘traditional.’

enabled the region to be seen as a resource landscape in the first place are again deployed just as with Dawson a century prior; native presence is at once marked, contained, and marginalized, and this landscape becomes simply a “gift of nature to humanity” (p. 20).

Ironically, by locating native culture resolutely in the realm of the ‘traditional,’ the writer and photographer can retain a contradictory political posture that articulates support for *land claims* as well as a desire for *preservation*. These very different political struggles become conflated through the assertion that traditional native culture was not ecologically disruptive and, if it remains ‘authentic,’ should never be. In turn, by staging this region as ‘nature’ and the Nuu-chah-nulth as ‘traditional,’ the environmental movement establishes its own right to be modern, scientific, and enlightened spokespersons for nature (and ‘natives’) in the region, and the legitimate opponents to corporate capital. The distinction between the ‘tradi-

tional’ and the ‘modern’ thus becomes what Haraway (1992:312) has described as a ‘distancing operation’ whereby the represented is “disengaged from surrounding and constituting discursive and non-discursive nexuses and relocated in the authorial domain of the representative.” Ironically, the only ‘modern’ intrusion into the Sound that is authorized becomes that of ‘disinterested’ photographers and scientists (Figure 9). Zodiacs, it appears, are reserved only for these. In a preface to the book, the wildlife artist Robert Bateman assumes the position of nature’s ‘ventriloquist,’ abstracting nature into the rhetorical space of the nation in a maneuver remarkably similar to MacMillan Bloedel’s:

The world recognizes Canada as containing one of the last great remnants of wilderness and we Canadians have always prided ourselves in *our natural history*. . . . This decade will see them saved or lost. Our generation must draw the line for all of them [italics mine].



Figure 9. Nature’s representative. Photographer, Ron Grover. Within the frame of ‘wilderness,’ only two actors are authorized to ‘speak for’ nature: ‘traditional’ native peoples, and ‘disinterested’ ecologists. In essence, because the former is often an identity imposed *on* First Nations rather than ascribed *by* them, ‘wilderness’ becomes the authorial domain solely of the ecologist. Courtesy, Western Canada Wilderness Committee.

Likewise, a recent Greenpeace UK (1994) publication extends this further:

Clayoquot Sound . . . is at the center of an ecological catastrophe of *global* significance. . . . An area of stunning natural beauty, Clayoquot Sound is the largest remaining area of intact ancient rainforest left on Vancouver Island. The *people of British Columbia* therefore have in Clayoquot Sound the best opportunity to protect *an irreplaceable part of their natural heritage* before it is destroyed by logging [italics mine].

While I also am concerned about the rainforests and their inhabitants, human and nonhuman, I worry about the representational practices in this last publication, where, despite the familiar refrains of support for land claims, the photographs actually *do* erase native presence from the Sound, reducing the conflict for British viewers to one between logging and preservation: nature spoiled or nature saved.

Within rhetorics of “nature as the absence of culture,” First Nations are provided with few possible subject positions, and these few are highly circumscribed. While nineteenth-century colonial rhetorics simultaneously marked and contained native presence and voice, this representational logic ‘gives back’ a native voice only to ask it to speak the language of traditional culture and cultural authenticity. Native peoples are asked to occupy subject positions demarcated by others. For First Nations to forge a modern future *within* the staples-based economies of the west coast is to risk ‘losing’ what many non-Natives consider ‘authentic’ native culture and thereby also their right to speak *as* native people for *their* lands. On the other hand, to refuse modernization—to constitute identity around the ‘traditional’ as the environmental movement implicitly asks—is to remain forever outside the economic circuits of the global economy, situated where European cultures have always placed indigenous populations: back in nature, always outside modern forms of rationality, as undeveloped, primitive precursors to modern cultures. As a Hesquiaht woman noted, both rhetorics easily lead to assumptions that aboriginal people are “incapable of being maintainers of our own territory” (Charleson 1992). In a region whose future appears destined to be tied to staples production (and its associated industry, nature tourism), these rhetorics are deeply problematic. My argument is not that cultural traditions should be abandoned, or that native people should neither appropriate the languages of Western culture

nor speak from the various ‘positions’ available within these discourses. As Cree Chief Whapmagoostui explained in a context that has distinct parallels (the Great Whale project in Quebec), when necessary the Cree played the *Dances with Wolves* card to great effect (Cohen 1994). Rather, attention must be paid to whether these distinctions—nature-culture, traditional-modern—among others, are externally *ascribed* or internally *claimed* by a people for whom the categories may have little salience, or may, at certain moments, become mechanisms for cultural invisibility.

Conclusion: The Cultural Politics of Nature

“Nature,” Donna Haraway (1992:296) argues, “cannot pre-exist its construction.” What counts as nature is always something attained, not found in passive observation. It is given form and meaning, identity and specificity, through a series of specific, embodied practices. Through these, not despite them, nature is “made to speak.”

I emphasize Haraway’s point not to argue that nature can be represented in many ways, which is obviously true, nor to turn materialist accounts on their head by insisting on the materiality of representation (without emphasizing that this is always also a representation of materiality), but instead to insist that *how* nature is constructed matters. Poststructuralists have insisted upon the ‘unfixity’ of social identities like nature, in part to move away from notions of fixed ‘identities,’ ahistorical ‘essences,’ or underlying ‘structure.’ While it has led at times to arcane debates over ‘social constructivism’—an unfortunate phrase which, as Bruno Latour (1993) has shown, displaces everything into the ‘social’ without attention paid to the practices of purification by which the ‘social’ itself is made to appear self-evident—I wish to highlight more explicitly the political usefulness of certain poststructuralist insights.

Emphasizing the *unfixity* of identities suggests that they are always in the process of being constituted and that attention must be paid to the processes by which identities assume degrees of fixity. Hence, what counts as nature is always only ‘unstably fixed,’ the many ways that it has been constructed, and, more important, the political effects of each always open to contest-

ation. Yet contesting the construction of nature, despite widely held assumptions, is not simply a matter of speaking nature's *truth*. Somewhat ironically, given their mistrust of modernity, environmentalists have remained under the thrall of this most modern mythology. Nature is not 'hidden' through *mis*representation. Nor is there any environmental 'ethic' that preexists a way of valuing, enframing, or disclosure (Heidegger 1977). Environmental politics is not solely a matter of 'speaking for' a 'mute' nature, or becoming nature's 'voice' in the midst of, and against, what is thought to be, in modern industrialized societies, a narrowly instrumental relation to the nonhuman world. This is because *speaking for* 'nature' is always simultaneously an *enframing of* 'nature.' There is always, as both Derrida (1976) and Spivak (1988b) have noted, a 'double session' to representation; to represent as a proxy is always already to frame a constituency. Both aspects of representation, *speaking of* and *speaking for*, are present simultaneously. Failure to attend to this, as I have sought to demonstrate, risks engaging in an unacknowledged, hidden, or buried politics that a metaphysics of presence renders invisible. Yet we cannot simply avoid the problem of representation: one cannot *not* represent. Responsibility (political and academic) therefore lies at that point of internal tension that marks the 'double session' of representation; one needs to be vigilant about the problem and politics of representation.

As I have shown in this paper, Nature is never a 'pure' category. It is always invested with, and embedded in, social histories. Indeed, it is precisely when it appears as a pure category that it operates most ideologically (Smith 1984). First Nations in BC know this well. The ambivalent natural/cultural landscapes of the Pacific Northwest have been distilled into 'natural' and 'cultural' landscapes by European explorers, scientists, and settlers since the time of first contact in the second half of the eighteenth century. Today the marginalization of native voices can be found, despite important differences, in the rhetorics and practices of *both* extractive capital *and* environmentalism. Each constitutes nature as external to human communities, a rhetorical manoeuvre that authorizes certain 'disinterested' voices—the resource manager, the ecologist, or nature's 'defender'—to speak as nature's 'representatives.' From an anticolonial perspective, extractive capital and environmentalism are in many ways mirror images, sharing common elements of a culture of nature. In the case of the

former, the BC landscape is staged as a 'natural' landscape filled with 'natural' resources but empty of people. In the case of the latter, nature is also emptied of cultural content, understood as existing in its most purely 'natural' state only in the absence of (modern) culture. Taken together, these rhetorics constitute a 'natural' field and divide it between opposing non-Native interests.

Neocolonialist practices persist in 'postcolonial' societies like Canada, surfacing time and again in everyday practices of representation, producing and legitimating new forms of colonial domination. These have not gone unchallenged. Long before the contact periods (from time 'immemorial'), First Nations peoples had clear conceptions of ownership, political authority, and social and ecological responsibilities (Monet and Skann'u 1992; Marshall 1994). The landscape that a member of Captain Cook's crew thought in 1778 "remained in a state of nature" was already a fully social and political landscape. These relations did not disappear with the cartographic and quasi-legal separation of native peoples from their lands. Today, in a series of interventions—from commissioned archaeological studies to documentary filmmaking, from deconstructing maps to building road blockades—First Nations are contesting the buried colonial epistemologies that enframe nature through a defining absence (Arcas Consultants 1986; Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council 1990; Wild 1993; Brody 1994; Blomley, forthcoming). At these sites can be found representational practices that construct nature as *social*, relating physical environments to historical narratives and cultural practices. In these cases, to speak *of* nature is immediately to invoke and articulate a series of other intertwined cultural identities, while at the same time placing in question those representations that construct nature as external to cultural and social relations.

The earth, Haraway (1992:315) writes, is a "semiotic place." If, as she insists, Nature is one of those impossible things that we cannot not desire but can never have, we must always attend to its making—rhetorically and materially, and the two always together.

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Notes

1. As Williams and Chrisman (1994) note, “colonial discourse” emerged as a field of academic inquiry with the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1979). Although scholars have argued over whether colonial discourse can or should be understood as coherent or unified, two general assumptions are widely accepted. The first, drawing on Foucault, is that it is possible to locate a series of Western discourses (whether or not formally aligned with colonial administration) that produced and codified knowledge about non-Western cultures, and thus established rules governing what could or could not be said. And, second, it is generally acknowledged that these knowledges could be utilized in, or worked to facilitate, the deployment of colonial power.
2. Colonial discourse theory has drawn extensively on Foucault and Gramsci, perhaps most productively by Said (1979; for a critique of Said’s method of drawing these two together, see Porter 1983). Both locate power at all levels of society. Gramsci emphasizes that relations of power are found in the taken-for-granted and that this is linked to the hegemony of a certain class; Foucault documents how power *operates* in the nomination of the *visible*, and how this makes ‘objects’ (the body, populations, etc.) available to disciplinary practices. Without conflating the two, and thus effacing important differences, it is useful to see how both can be resources for theories of colonial (and colonizing) practices. Foucault provides tools by which to show how colonial subjects (and colonial natures!) could be made available to administrative practices, or in other words, how power/knowledge was itself colonizing. Gramsci, on the other hand, provides a framework by which to see how colonial practices were legitimated and naturalized through the ascendancy of certain ideas.
3. For the classic history of how nature has been represented in Western cultures, see Glacken (1967). David Livingstone (1995) is one among many recent examples of a renewed interest in this topic.
4. First Nations is the term preferred by BC aboriginal communities, deliberately subverting the primitivist tropes of ‘tribe’ found in anthropological literatures. In addition, the term is used to assert an organized, political presence that

preexists European contact while simultaneously placing in question the territorial claims of the Canadian nation-state.

5. What constitutes ‘old-growth’ forests—and their significance—is widely debated. Most generally, ‘old-growth’ forests are characterized by the following: huge accumulations of biomass; large trees exceeding 1–2 m diameter at 1.3 m height and reaching 60–80 m total height; old trees, often older than 200 years and occasionally exceeding 1,000 years; and structural diversity, including various tree sizes, snags (dead standing trees), down logs, and so on. The latter is often considered its most important feature since ecologists link it to the abundance of habitats for specialized species, higher biodiversity, and within this ‘web’ of relations, higher ecosystem resiliency (see Klinka et al. 1990; Franklin and Spies 1991; Kimmins 1992; Franklin 1993).
6. Various unsuccessful attempts at reaching consensus occurred between 1989 and 1993. Most important were the Clayoquot Sound Integrated Resource Management Planning Process, and the Clayoquot Sound Sustainable Development Task Force.
7. The Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council is an umbrella organization that represents various tribal groups on the west coast of Vancouver Island. It is itself divided into a northern, central, and southern district. Clayoquot Sound lies in the central district, and the government land-use decision affected the traditional territories of five bands (Tla-o-qui-aht, Ahousaht, Hesquiaht, Toquaht, and Ucluelet).
8. The issue of Nuu-chah-nulth sovereignty in Clayoquot Sound is still before the courts. See *Martin v B.C. (Govt.)*. Recently, treaty negotiations have begun between the Nuu-chah-nulth and the provincial and federal governments.
9. This argument is made most forcefully by Nicholas Thomas (1994:2).

Colonialism is not best understood primarily as a political or economic relationship that is legitimated or justified through ideologies of racism or progress. Rather, colonialism has always equally importantly and deeply been a cultural process; its discoveries and trespasses are imagined and energized through signs, metaphors, and narratives; even what would seem its purest moments of profit and violence have been mediated and enframed by structures of meaning. Colonial cultures are not simply ideologies that mask, mystify, or rationalize forms of oppression that are external to them; they are also expressive and constitutive of colonial relationships in themselves.

10. Here I depart from the current fascination with ‘round tables’ on the environment, which assume that such arenas provide possibilities for ‘ideal speech situations.’ Although these arenas

do often increase possibilities for participation, they do not by themselves mitigate the relations of power that are inscribed into public debate through the categories and identities by which conflicts are organized and understood. By establishing their resolutions as products of 'open' public processes, existing relations are often legitimated.

11. The abstraction and displacement of the local into the global has become a well-rehearsed theme and it is not only aboriginal communities that are marginalized by such processes (see Hecht and Cockburn 1989). My argument is somewhat different: for this abstraction and displacement to proceed as it does in BC, a *native* presence must be at once erased or marked in ways that de-link indigenous peoples from their surroundings. This occurs in different ways and is enabled through different knowledges and signifying practices (i.e., primitivism) than the marginalization of *other* social groups. My argument, in other words, is not that marginalization is unique or limited to indigenous peoples, but that by paying attention to these practices we can begin to identify how colonial relations are perpetuated in the present.
12. The phrase 'social nature' should ward against simplistic interpretations that locate aboriginal peoples as 'closer to' nature or as necessarily having an environmental ethic of sustainability. Like any other social group, the production of nature by individual First Nations groups is mediated through cultural practices, epistemologies, and technologies.
13. The legislative vehicle for administering Indians and Indians lands in Canada has been the federal Indian Act, which was administered by the federal Department of Indian Affairs. For a history of its early years, see Brian Titley (1986).
14. The normalization of nature in forms of modern power remains undertheorized. Michel Foucault (1979, 1980), for instance, rarely looked beyond human subjects, bodies, and institutions, but clearly the normalization of 'life' that he documented with such brilliance—its ordering and disciplining through modalities of power, knowledge, and spatiality—extends to and incorporates not only human subjects but 'nature' itself. The regulation of populations and economy in BC required not simply the exploitation of the 'forest' but its *construction* in discursive practices that at once constituted, rendered available, and rationalized the 'forest' within an administrative apparatus, making it adequate for models of social and ecological productivity. The relation between modernity, modernization, and nature has generally been discussed in terms of the *domination* (even *death*) of nature in the face of instrumental reason (Leiss 1972; Merchant 1980). One of the problems with such work is that it assumes that modernity marks a transition from harmony with, to exploitation of, nature. While the scale and intensity of nature's production by human societies has certainly changed, an argument can be made that what differentiates premodern from modern relations with nature is not harmony versus domination so much as different knowledges and technologies that articulated nature as a *social object* and made it *available* to economic and political calculation in new ways.
15. Various Royal Commissions have been commissioned to evaluate BC's forest tenure system and practices. Each has based its findings on two founding assumptions: that the forests are "Crown" land, and that they are to be managed in the "public" interest.
16. Foucault (1977) develops his notion of genealogy to trace the 'emergence' of objects and identities in the present, rather than understanding these as preexisting their construction.
17. It is no accident that Dawson first traveled to the west coast as part of a joint British and American survey of the international boundary between Canada and the United States.
18. Dawson's photographs are collected in the National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario.
19. An editorial in the Victoria newspaper *British Colonist* from June 27, 1863 makes this explicit,

Every school in the colonies where boys are taught should make these branches [geology and mineralogy] part and parcel of its curriculum. Small cabinets of rocks and ores could be easily made or imported for the purpose of giving the pupils a practical acquaintance with the subject matter of those sciences. . . . The mountains, the hills, and the rocks of the island and the mainland would be no longer trodden over in ignorance without attention. . . . Combining this acquaintance with theory they may learn from books, they would in their prospecting tours be alive to metaliferous indications, and would no longer walk blindfolded, passing unconsciously material for untold wealth, as must now be often the case (de Cosmos 1863).
20. Cultural geographers have recently placed considerable attention on 'reading' the landscape as a 'text' (Duncan 1990; see also the edited collections by Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Barnes and Duncan 1992). This has had the important effect of shifting attention away from the previous concerns of cultural geographers with mapping the material transformation of 'natural' landscapes into 'cultural' landscapes by successive culture groups, and instead has drawn attention to the cultural construction of landscape through contested practices of signification. Demeritt (1994), drawing on Latour and Haraway, has recently criticized the 'new' cultural geography for locating agency wholly in humans (or the 'social'). I share Demeritt's concerns

(although caution that the agency of non-humans—animals and machines—can never be marked apart from a further set of contested practices of signification). However, I find the new cultural geography problematic in other ways. First, by its almost exclusive focus on ‘cultural’ landscapes, it has left unexplained how so-called ‘natural’ landscapes have themselves been constructed and contested. Second, and perhaps more important, by presuming the landscape as a ‘text’ to be decoded, much attention has been given to ‘interpreting’ landscapes and less attention paid to how the ‘landscape’ is made to *appear* as a text to be read in the first place. In this section I have sought to demonstrate how landscapes are *made intelligible*. Although focusing on different ‘mechanisms’ of landscape production, I share Mitchell’s (1994) desire to retain within the concept of landscape a clear focus on “how landscapes are produced and in what ways they structure social action” (p. 10).

21. The erasure of native presence—textually and physically—occurred in many ways, and was in any case uneven across the Americas. Historians of the American West, for instance, have emphasized how the frontier mythology was central to the removal of native people from their lands (Drinnon 1980; Slotkin 1985; Limerick 1987; Limerick argues that this continues to underwrite American imperialism). In Canada, this mythology did not take hold in any comparable way. Regardless, what I trace here is not the evacuation of the ‘real’ into ‘mythology’ (and thus into the realm of the ‘untruthful’), but the very ways that locating the ‘real’ or the ‘truthful’ through representational practices became aligned with colonialism. In a sense the subtitle to Drinnon’s book—*The Metaphysics of Indian-hating*—captures this conjoining of knowledge and power in the marginalization of natives, even if his account does not work directly with this constellation of ideas.
22. Premier Harcourt’s tour of European cities was intended to forestall a boycott of BC forest products which Greenpeace had threatened to organize. Watts’s statements became the most provocative aspect of the trip, both in Europe and in British Columbia. The ‘accuracy’ of news reports and Watts’s own position as a Nuu-chah-nulth spokesperson came under considerable attack in the days and weeks that followed. Regardless of how either issue is answered, Watts’s comments brought to the fore the problem of conflating two very different political struggles.
23. This contains echoes of nineteenth-century American painter George Catlin’s desire to ‘preserve’ Indians who were fated to become ‘tainted’

by the ‘contaminating’ vices and dispositions of civilization (see Limerick 1987).

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