

SONGLINES, SALMON, AND THE SINGULARITY OF BONES:

How Our Attachment To Landscape Poses Us In Place

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**Songlines, Salmon, and The Singularity of Bones: How Our Attachment To
Landscape Poses Us In Place**

In his book *The Wayfinders*, anthropologist Wade Davis describes the joy of experiencing “the opportunity to live amongst peoples who have not forgotten the old ways, who still feel their past in the wind, touch it in stones polished by rain, taste it in the bitter leaves of plants” (1). Davis goes on to describe an “ethosphere” derived of the “sum total of all thoughts and intuitions, myths and beliefs, ideas and inspirations brought into being by the human imagination. . . . the product of our dreams, the embodiment of our hopes, the symbol of all we are” (2). In short, the “ethosphere,” as Davis describes it, is a combination of experience and memory as refracted through the diverse lens of human experience, memory, and art; the ethosphere could even be read as poetry, or other art forms which are fed by landscapes that hold meaning for us, and, most importantly, by the spiritual ties that bind us to the peculiarity of place.

Within the scope of his field, Wade Davis is concerned about the loss of languages world-wide, and he describes this loss in very personal terms: “What could be more lonely than to be enveloped in silence, to be the last of your people to speak your native tongue, to have no way to pass on the wisdom of your ancestors or anticipate the promise of your descendants” (3). As a writer, I can’t help but read his comments as a description of what can happen when we experience spiritual dislocation from the landscapes that have formed us as individuals, and as artists. In the opening of her essay collection *Distance And Direction*, Judith Kitchen states that she is writing “essays of place—of distance and direction and the way memory works through and within

landscape” (1). She goes on to note how “[s]ometimes landscape settles inside you and makes room for nothing else. Each emotion is weighed against that inner scene to determine how it fits, whether or not it has a rightful place. Whole ranges of possibility have been discarded in the face of one flaming field” (24).

Here, Kitchen describes how landscape can compel us into editing our experiences and ourselves, for as we reflect upon how certain places have formed us, we cannot escape the effects of loss and change, even as we try to locate the touchstones of our past. Kitchen notes of her own experience: “All I know is that one Sunday afternoon I am back in Painted Post and my grandmother Mayme has fixed a lunch . . . Forty years have disappeared, swallowed by a landscape that never seems to change, for all the Wal-Marts and Kentucky Fried Chickens and aluminum siding and satellite dishes. But everything changes. Time proves that” (22-3).

Everything changes. Time proves that. Tracking the passage of time and the resulting changes in landscape is also a major theme in Mary Clearman Blew’s memoir *All But The Waltz*. Blew opens her book with a description of the landscape of her youth: “In the sagebrush to the north of the mountains in central Montana, where the Judith River deepens its channel and threads a slow, treacherous current between the cutbanks, a cottonwood log house still stands” (3). The Judith River looms large in Blew’s recollection, as do the touchstones of her family’s homestead out in Montana, with its log house that “still stands” and which, viewed from a carefully chosen angle, “looks hardly changed from the summer of my earliest memories, the summer before I was three . . .” (3). And yet, when she views this landscape from the perspective of the present, Blew acknowledges that:

My memories seem to me as treacherous as the river. Is it possible, sitting here on this dry shoulder of a secondary highway in the middle of Montana, . . . watching the narrow blue Judith take its time to thread and wind through the bluffs on its way to a distant northern blur, to believe in anything but today? The past eases away with the current. . . . How can I trust memory, which slips and wobbles and grinds its erratic furrows like a bald-tired truck fighting for traction on a wet gumbo road? (3-4)

In another memoir, *Bone Deep in Landscape*, Blew acknowledges that the passage of time, and even the act of writing about personal history and landscape, can result in indelible alterations at both the individual and the collective level:

I own my past and my present. Only I can decide whether or how to write about it . . . once I have written about the past, I will have changed it—in a sense, set it in concrete—and I will never remember it in quite the same way. The experience itself is lost; like the old Sunday storytellers who told and retold their stories until what they remembered was the tale itself, what I will remember is what I have written. (7)

Blew goes further, asserting how, in editing our history, and in selecting which details of the landscape of the past to preserve, “something personal is being sacrificed, for when [we] write about [ourselves], [we] transform [ourselves] just as [we] do the past” (7).

There also is the simple difficulty, as time passes, of locating ourselves within the details and the myths of the landscapes of our youth. In his memoir *The Lost Coast*, poet Tim Bowling laments how his hometown of Ladner, B.C. has been altered and gentrified over time from a fishing village into a modern day suburb. Part of this gentrification

process has been the collapse, through mismanagement, of the coastal salmon fishery.

Ladner, the place that Bowling writes about, is also my hometown, the place where I was raised, and the place where my paternal grandparents—unknown to me as individuals and as history—helped to farm the delta. It is the town where I have returned to raise my own children, and, in the words of Judith Kitchen, with the hope of “find[ing] a place that fits. Where past and present coincide. Where the landscape feels like a version of the self . . . a place, so at home in its vocabulary that you don’t need words” (45).

But does such a landscape ever exist, particularly when the passage of time has altered its rhythms and its notes—the very language that the place once knew and used to express itself? And what happens once the landscape has been colonized by outside forces, be they colonial or capitalist in nature? In *The Lost Coast*, Tim Bowling describes a town “built on a marsh. Grass, dirt, clay, water. You can’t dig a human grave there” (46). A village that once breathed and sang itself in the rhythms of farming the soil and fishing for salmon, now Ladner “lies . . . in the ever-lengthening shadow of the ever-more cosmopolitan and sophisticated city of Vancouver” (39).

The blackberry fields in Ladner that I used to traverse on my way to and from elementary school have long since been bulldozed and turned into a strip mall of big box grocery stores and restaurants: if I want to find the landscape of my past, the landscape that still can tell me who I am, and what is important to me, then I have to go looking. I have to skirt the bustle and blandness of town and go in search of the river. I have to locate the pair of swans that return every year to skim the ribbon of water plants greening the sides of the dyke. I have to cross the main street and edge my way away from the

blunt chorus of leaf blowers and gas powered lawn mowers, to find the line of gnarled chokecherry trees that border the cornfields out at the town's edge.

I have to seek out the places that resonate with my memory of this landscape, and so, with each walk, I collect versions of my town that reflect meaning back to me, and each of these versions of the landscape correspond to a different version of the self, or as Tim Bowling describes it in his poem "The String," in *The Memory Orchard*:

. . . the light impress
of what we were, all we are,
a faint passage along a muddy bank
through the fraying edges of the day
into the taut horizon and the grave-grass snarl. (57-61)

It is a process that is similar to one that poet and philosopher Jan Zwicky outlines in her poem "Cashion Bridge" (*Songs for Relinquishing the Earth*), where she describes the particular route she likes to take through her town, and the idea that it is the actual *process* of the walking, and being present to and moving through the landscape, that constitutes an artistic, spiritual practice for her:

. . .What I wanted
was the walking, not the walking-to but
the not-getting-there, the every moment
starting out, the every moment
being lifted in an arc against the moment of arrival: the anticipation
is terrific, yet always nothing

happens when I'm there—so
 not even this, but the ungraspableness
 of knowing, the inarticulateness of
 that flexed second above the keys,
 of how we are translated,
 that held breath
 between the future and the past that's neither, but is still
 the only place we'll ever be arriving
 to, the only place it's possible
 we are. (44-45)

Often we hold the desire within us to reach for permanence within the landscapes that surround us; or as Zwicky interprets it in her poem "The Geology of Norway":

. . . I came
 to find a word, the perfect
 syllable, to make it reach up,
 grab meaning by the throat
 and squeeze it till it spoke to me.

 How else to anchor
 memory? I wanted language
 to hold me still, to be a rock,

 I wanted to become a rock myself. I thought
 if I could find, and say,

the perfect word, I'd nail
 mind to the world, and find
 release.

The hand moving is the hand thinking:
 what I didn't know: even the continents
 have no place but earth. (34-35)

And yet there is no permanence available to us, for the landscapes around us are constantly changing and being continually altered by modernity's hand. With each new subdivision and each rezoning permit, with each parcel of farmland that is altered, irrevocably, into greenhouses and golf courses in my town, I can feel the landscape of my past slipping further away from me. The loss of natural wildness corresponds directly to a loss of inner, reflective space, and the resulting grief often voices itself within the terrain of my own writing, in a place where bullrush seed heads and bright rosehips root themselves as symbols of the landscape's impermanence and its eventual decay.

This sense of loss tied to the degradation and loss of landscape has been studied and raised into the public lexicon by Australian philosopher and Professor of Sustainability Glenn Albrecht. Albrecht coined the term "solastalgia" to refer to the condition of "melancholia or homesickness you have when you remain locked in your home environment while, all around you, your home environment is being desolated in ways that you cannot control. The existential and emplaced feelings of desolation and loss of solace are reinforced by powerlessness" ("Solastalgia, Soliphilia, Eutierria and Art"). Albrecht makes the distinction that the experience of "nostalgia" intensifies when

this experience of ‘homesickness’ is dislocated from actual landscape and is instead rooted in a false idealization of the past:

The more frequent modern use of the term [nostalgia] loses its connection to the geographical or spatial ‘home’ and suggests a temporal dimension or ‘looking back,’ a desire to be connected with a positively perceived period in the past . . . For individuals who see the past as [being] better than the present there is the possibility that nostalgia remains a very real experience that can lead to deep distress.

Nostalgia, and how it interfaces with our memories of place, can be read as a limiting tool of perspective or as a means by which humans project longing and the self onto landscape. Jan Zwicky tackles the issue in her poem “Absence” when she says: “When the sky is no longer a roof / one’s eyes are finally open” (1-2). There is a sense here that the physical landscape might be spiritually transcendable if one is able to move along the continuum from self-imposed, past-based *nostalgia* to the more soul-encompassing state of Albrecht’s *solastalgia*. Yet, there is a price to be paid for such a process, as the past—with all of its currents of thought and its collection of imagery—continues to suffuse both chosen landscape and the self. Or in Zwicky’s poem “Absence,” in *Songs For Relinquishing the Earth*:

What is past drifts up then
without effort: river-scent
at twilight, through the rubble of the day. (10-12)

There is a passage in Zwicky’s book *Wisdom and Metaphor* where she talks about how “there is a distinction between finding oneself at home and trying to make oneself at

home. . . . To the extent that one must try to make oneself at home in the world, to that extent one is not part of the ecology of what-is” (28 Left). This “ecology of what-is” is the changed world that Albrecht refers to when he talks about *solastalgia*, and the need to move beyond *nostalgia*, in the sense not that we replace the landscape with an idealized version of its current self but that we accept it as our chosen landscape and affirm the deep value that we attach to it. In Albrecht’s lexicon, “the concept of solastalgia has been constructed such that it has a ghost reference or structural similarity to nostalgia, thereby ensuing that a place reference is embedded” (“Solastalgia: The Origins and Definition”). We are held in place by landscape then, for even as the physical terrain is altered, by virtue of our emotional attachments to the landscape we also are altered ourselves.

Zwicky quotes Robert Hass on this matter in *Wisdom and Metaphor*, with Hass describing how “[o]ften enough, when a thing is seen clearly there is a sense of absence about it... as if at the point of truest observation the visible and invisible exerted enormous counter pressure” (54 Right). In our attempts to be present to the old landscape, and to project it onto the current, changed landscape, we often find ourselves with one foot in the past and another in Zwicky’s “ecology of what is.” There is no way to incorporate the two worlds into a cohesive, sensical whole, and so in Zwicky’s poem “The Geology of Norway” we arrive at a place where:

. . . time,

except as now, does not exist.

A given point in space

is the compression of desire. The difference

between this point and some place else
is a matter of degree.

This is what compression is: a geologic epoch
rendered to the slice of rock you hold between
your finger and your thumb.

That is a fact.

Stories are merely theories. Theories
are dreams.

A dream
is a carving knife
and the scar it opens in the world
is history.

The process of compression gives off thought.

I have wanted
the geology of light. (4-22)

Stories are merely theories. Theories are dreams: Zwicky returns us here to a place not of immediate understanding but of hope, and her assertion that “[t]o understand is to see how things hang together” is a key part of how we can begin to map the past onto the much-altered version of the landscape and ourselves (*Wisdom* 24 Left). To do this, we need, as Glenn Albrecht suggests, to move beyond nostalgia and into actual recollection. While a large part of Tim Bowling’s experience of landscape could be read as being highly nostalgic, the record of this experience—his writing— consists of his

deep spiritual attachment to the salmon, and to the practice of fishing that he grew up with in his hometown of Ladner. In *The Lost Coast*, Bowling mourns the loss of the salmon and the unique culture and ways of being that went with them, while also noting the role that memory plays in the act of mapping the past:

. . . what I knew cannot be retrieved except by words and memory. If the wild salmon isn't extinct yet, the culture around it surely is. And if that culture was itself a kind of death, it nonetheless belonged to me and I have every right to confront it and resurrect it and damn it and praise it for in every death there is something of life. . . . For thirty years, I slept beside a great river to which a hundred million wild salmon a year were once magnetically, magically, enigmatically drawn. For thirty years, the salmon's blood was on my hands. It shapes a person. (64-65)

The river looms large for Bowling, the river that, in his words, “gives an arm to you. Hold it. Bear on your shoulders the full weight of the stars. [And] consider the magnitude of an existence that can change, and will change, despite your careful plans. . . .” (120). In Bowling's mind, the landscape of Ladner—the past even—doesn't merely beckon; instead, the landscape extends itself into his consciousness and it *becomes a part of him*, now, here, where the past and the present, the self and the larger landscape, begin to intersect. This kind of intersection forms much of the subject matter and the spiritual import of Dine poet Sherwin Bitsui's book *Flood Song*. In this collection, Bitsui focuses on how the landscape of the past and the present inform the speaker's identity and consciousness.

The following passage highlights Bitsui's poetic interpretation of the interstice between landscape and the self, and how the loss of the old, defining culture is a lament that must be borne:

Doves' eyes black as nightfall
 shiver on the foam coast of an arctic dream
 where whale ribs
 clasp and fasten you to a language of shifting ice.
 Seeing into those eyes
 you uncoil their telephone wires,
 gather their inaudible lions with plastic forks,
 tongue their salty ribbons,
 and untie their weedy stems from your prickly fingers.
 You stop to wonder what *like* sounds like
 when held under glacier water,
 how *Na ho kos* feels
 under the weight of all that loss. (11)

Much as Tim Bowling concerns himself with recording the imprint of the salmon on his own skin, and with taking the river's extended "hand" into his own, Sherwin Bitsui is equally absorbed, as individual, and as writer, with a similar cause:

I parcel ounces of my body for each acre grazed,
 spear my hands with my sharpened knees

to keep some kernel of this trail my own,
 some piece of the idea of *now*
 before it becomes *was*. (26)

Time and again, Bitsui, like Tim Bowling, returns to this metaphor of the interstice where landscape and the self intersect; only in Bitsui's landscape, the aboriginal people and their culture bear the hallmarks of colonization, in a place where:

they scoop granite stones from your chest,
 Snap each rib shut over the highway leading south,

 comb your hair over pine smoke—
 dreaming out of the ship that carried their shackles here.

Their blue squeal—rectilinear in predawn air—
 blows northward followed by a fog of galloping horses.

It is here they shake down branches to lift the veil
 so the water of our clans may keep from gushing out—

and leave in its muddied path:
 strips of grief swelling luminous between the chest, its plate bone
 and the dimming atlases of our lungs. (28)

In *Flood Song*, Sherwin Bitsui constructs a poetic litany about the loss of Aboriginal culture and the speaker's corresponding desire to locate himself and his spirit within an ever-marginalized landscape:

Sifting atlas blue from yellow body here again,
 gaveling the nail of the first ship here again,
 crating star maps in corn husk here again,
 unfurling a blank heaven over mapped earth here again,
 the time to leave here again,
 to turn bone white here again,
 an elk's shadow rising behind us here again. (35)

There is a continued marking of presence in the passage above, a constant return to location, as if the speaker is pointing his finger onto the landscape, engaging in the act of reclamation and recollection, and referencing the past even as he draws a new map for his people and for himself; in fact, even though the speaker in *Flood Song* asserts that “I map a shrinking map” (46), the poetry here points, indelibly, to the fact that the Dine culture continues to exist, and that landscape of the past, even as written on the skin of its present inhabitants, continues to inform the present.

This kind of map-making is distinct from the way in which Tim Bowling tries to locate himself within the landscape of his past, in that Bitsui's kind of mapping, stemming as it does from a much older, indigenous culture, identifies itself more with the spiritual intention that Wade Davis has studied amongst the Barasana people of the Amazon, where:

Scale succumbs to intention. Every object must be understood . . . at various levels of analysis. A rapid is an impediment to travel but also a house of the ancestors, with both a front and a back door [a] corona of oropendola feathers really *is* the sun, each yellow plume a ray. (102-103)

According to Davis, in the world of the Barasana “[e]very rock and waterfall embodies a story At the same time, everything is more than it appears, for the visible world is only one level of perception” (108). For these people and for this culture, there is “no separation between nature and culture” (109), for “[w]ithout the forest and the rivers humans would perish. But without people, the natural world would have no order or meaning” (109). Therefore, for the Barasana, like many of the aboriginal cultures and societies throughout the world and across the divide of time, “[e]verything is related, everything connected, a single integrated whole. Mythology infuses land and life with meaning, encoding expectations and behaviours essential to survival in the forest, anchoring each community . . . to a profound spirit of place” (109).

Perhaps the most well known example of this kind of indigenous wisdom/spiritification of landscape can be found within the Aborigine culture in Australia. Wade Davis describes the history of this spiritual practice:

The ancestors walked as they sang, and . . . [w]hen they grew exhausted . . . they retired into the earth, sky, clouds, rivers, lakes, plants and animals of an island continent that still resonates with their memory. The paths taken by the Ancestors have never been forgotten. They are the Songlines, precise itineraries followed even today as the people travel across the template of the physical world. (148)

The “Songlines” are constructed spiritually by the Ancestors, yet the ensuing stories, with their method of intensifying the spiritual significance of the landscape, act in a sense as permanent maps for the Aborigines of today (149). When people follow these maps today, they enter the “Dreamtime,” which Davis defines as “a parallel universe where the ordinary laws of time, space, and motion do not apply, where past, future, and present merge into one It is the real world, or at least one of two realities experienced in the daily lives of the Aborigines” (149).

The value of the Songlines is that it is a place where people can become “part of the ongoing creation of the world, a place that both exists and is still being formed” (149). By participating in the Songlines:

(T)he Aborigines are not merely attached to the earth, they are essential to its existence. Without the land they would die. But without the people, the ongoing process of creation would cease and the earth would wither. . . . The songs create vibrations that take shape. Dancing brings definition to the forms, and the objects of the phenomenological realm appear: trees, rocks, streams, all of them physical evidence of the Dreaming. . . . Everything on earth is held together by Songlines, everything is subordinate to the Dreaming, which is constant but ever changing. Every landmark is wedded to a memory of its origins, and yet always being born The land is encoded with everything that has ever been, everything that ever will be To walk the land is to engage in a constant act of affirmation, an endless dance of creation. (149-150)

The Songlines then, are a way of spiritually recuperating and collecting the earth; what was lost is found, and the landscape is experienced concurrently as both home and

symbol. This type of simultaneity may be exactly what Mary Clearman Blew is describing in *Bone Deep in Landscape* when she talks about living in the town of Havre, Idaho, far from her childhood roots on the homestead ranch in Montana:

To live in Havre is to live in a dilemma. Introspection is subversive here, and memory treasonable. And yet it is the brink on which we all live . . . In Havre the wind is constant, but two thousand years are as close as yesterday, and we cannot keep ourselves from looking back. (19)

When Blew talks about her travels from Idaho to Montana and back again, she uses the language of the Songlines, admitting that “. . . I am not the person I was on the prairies of the east front. Still, I cross and recross the divide, where the rivers change direction and the stories strike sparks like stones. What is a divide, if not for crossing?” (39).

Here, identity shifts as physical location shifts across the landscape, and the “divide” exists in a physical and a rhetorical sense. When Blew asserts that “after twelve years [in Idaho] I have imagined my way here. I recognize the colours now” (40), she means it. While the “deep blonde grass of summer,” the “basalt outcroppings as dark as shadows,” and the “groves of blue-green pines” (40) may never evoke, for Blew, the spiritual intensity of the Judith River in Montana, she has traversed to find a spiritual connection to the new landscape that is absent from any kind of nostalgia.

In contrast, when Blew returns to the Montana homestead of her childhood, and to the Judith River that seems to encompass and to embody—like the Fraser River for Tim Bowling—so much meaning and identity in her memory, she is surprised to realize how “[e]ven in imagination, when I stop at the grassy point that overlooks the Judith River, I come up against the emptiness of the present” (42). When Tim Bowling returns, at the

end of *The Lost Coast* to the Ladner harbour of his youth, he realizes that there is raw sewage spewing into the river (252), and that “[i]t is a strange knowledge to possess that the cherished place of your memories is itself unnatural, a recent product of Victorian industry and stubbornness, and even stranger to understand its Atlantis-like fragility” (250).

In *The Lost Coast*, Bowling notes that he lives now with the knowledge, as I do, that powerful forces are busy campaigning to have farmland taken out of our Agricultural Land Reserve (252) so that more subdivisions for empty nesters can be built, so that even more people can come and enjoy the “natural lifestyle” of what true urbanites deem to be a small town still. Yet even as he laments the destruction of place, Bowling notes how “the rivermouth is still so beautiful on a quiet morning, the natural and social heritage still vivid enough even in decay” (252). *Even in decay*, the human spirit, once it has established ties to a particular landscape will work to sustain a vision of place that enables the spirit, and the person that it formed, to go on. Viewed in this light, Jan Zwicky’s assertion that “stories are merely theories. Theories are dreams” takes on the weight of being a Songline, or a method of posing the self within landscape. This, I think, is what Tim Bowling means in the poem “Dry Dock” when he describes how:

. . . the earth
 holds no one, our
 headlines bleed away. . .
 listen, it’s my heart
 you’re hearing
 and it beats in time

to a river's changes. (*Fathom* 28-34)

Bowling means that the earth can't "hold" him in the place of the past; he must find a way to dream his way into the changed landscape of the present.

Mark Spragg's memoir *Where Rivers Change Direction* exemplifies this experience of landscape as it relates to identity, and to the effort to re-dream the past as a way to try to solidify one's spiritual place within a landscape. Opening his memoir, Spragg notes that "it is easiest for me to remember the land. I close my eyes, and the heat of midsummer swells through me . . ." (1). It is as if he is acknowledging that the entire book will be a process not only of remembering his ties to the ranch land of his childhood and youth, but also a process of re-dreaming the landscape and how it helped to form him as a person and as an artist. Throughout the book, Spragg allows the narrator to access entire realms of subconscious engagement with his landscape and ultimately, with himself and the man that he will eventually become, by writing the landscape from the point of the senses.

It is as if the narrator has become part of this ranch land; as if the landscape has formed him and will continue to form him throughout his entire lifetime, whether he remains in this particular place or not. In this way, Spragg's remembering and re-dreaming aligns with Mary Clearman Blew's deep ties to her Montana homestead and to the Judith River, even as she journeys to Idaho to begin a new life. And it also coheres with Tim Bowling's adult pattern of returning to Ladner and to the Fraser River time and again physically and in his dreams:

. . . I step out of my Edmonton apartment to find myself in the middle of Georgia Street. It's dawn, there's dew on the grass in the sidewalk cracks. Suddenly the

heads of a thousand sockeye salmon silently break the surface of the concrete. In a moment, I'm surrounded, and realize I'm in a skiff, holding a handful of net—corkline, leadline and web. (*Coast* 38)

In Mark Spragg's case, as the title of his book suggests, his narrator is at the place where the past and the present collide—where the landscape alters its elected course and “rivers change direction.” While Tim Bowling asserts that “the search for the past is always doomed and always urgent to the point of desperation,” and that our identities and our very souls are under the force of “memory's mysterious and even destructive pull” (39), Mark Spragg identifies the landscape that formed him as being a force both within and without himself, noting at one point:

I dream myself outside my flesh looking in, standing away from my body, unaffected by winds studying my sleeping form as though I have returned to some old neighborhood . . . the awareness that I am ephemeral as wind startles me. I am frightened that I inhabit my body as though it were some broken spar of rock . . . just a home in which I've come to make some sort of song. (219-220)

In this particular passage, Spragg's narrator is struggling to come to terms with town life after he has spent a hard winter isolated within the wilder landscape of his youth. For Spragg, town life and its confines, and the way that the external landscape's wildness—in the form of the relentless wind—pushes up against the town, are something to be feared; it is as if, dislocated from the wilderness that nurtured and formed him as a child, the narrator has become unhinged from himself. His attempts to try to “make some sort of song” are empty noise; the Songlines of his youth do not seem to be visible in the new, controlled landscape of the town. Perhaps he hasn't yet arrived at the place where,

as Hass defines it, things are “seen clearly . . . [with] a sense of absence,” and where “the visible and invisible exer[t] enormous counter pressure” (*Wisdom*, 54 Right).

Certainly Spragg’s use of the wind as a metaphor for wildness is in stark contrast to the rooted image of bones that surface in the parts of the memoir where the narrator feels the most connected to the landscape and to his place within it. One powerful example of this occurs after the twelve-year-old narrator helps John, a hired man, after John wounds his hand. Afterwards, the narrator is responsible for butchering the elk that he and John have taken down, and, after this rather traumatic experience, the young narrator retires to his tent where he describes how “in the darkness I feel my bones, my spine, reach through the goose-down bag, through the horse pads and meet the bones of the earth. . . . I think of being buried in the earth” (51-52). He then recalls the time when he and John were stranded in a blizzard and how they survived by digging into a hollowed tree and sleeping huddled together for warmth against the storm:

Our shoulders and heads rested against the tree . . . my hip caught in the notch above John’s. I could feel my arm against his ribs, the length of our legs stretched out in the earth. . . . I felt the roots of the tree spread below me; . . . I felt the rock rise up and welcome my bones. I wondered if there was some skeleton to this valley, some armature of stone that realized me only by the pattern and pulse of my bones. I wondered if my death could sadden the earth; if my satisfaction brought it peace. And I slept. (53)

Here in the narrator’s semi-conscious state, he pieces together emblems of the landscape as they relate to his relationship with others, with life, and ultimately with himself, and he arrives at the place of imagining his own frame merging with the posture

of the earth. Later, as they drive John to the doctor's, the narrator muses again about the nature of life and death, and his place in the universe: "I think about the millions of bones that have fallen to the earth—bones like sticks of hail, melted into the earth, nourishing it. . . . I think I know nothing of the singularity of bones. I have picked them up from the ground, held them, and did not know whether I held the bones of a large dog, a deer, or a man" (61).

What makes this passage so powerful is that Spragg refers to the "singularity of bones" as both talisman and simple artifact. In her own memoir *Bone Deep in Landscape*, Mary Clearman Blew notes how "[s]tories give shape to that which has no shape, meaning to that which eludes meaning" (50), and nowhere is this more present than in Mark Spragg's re-dreaming of landscape to include bones that herald the shape of mystery itself. His narrator "know[s] nothing of the singularity of bones," yet he returns to hold them in his hands time and again, much as Blew, by her own account, "[a]s always ...return[s] to rivers and especially to the Judith" (129). Once again, *stories are merely theories and theories are dreams*, or as Tim Bowling writes in his poem "Owl Pellet" in *The Memory Orchard*:

This is the only letter God will ever send you.
 And if, opening it, you expect answers,
 advice, condolences, you will find
 a signature of bone. Otherwise,
 a great hunched watchfulness
 will leave your body and perch
 on the black branch between stars. (1-7)

By her own admission in *Bone Deep in Landscape*, Mary Clearman Blew acknowledges how she “cannot reconcile [herself] to the loss of landscape, which for [her] often is an analogy for [her] own body, sometimes even as extension of [her] body. And yet [she] knows that [she has] never owned the landscape” (151). This concept of not claiming physical ownership over the landscape is central to the experience of the writers I am discussing here, and to the socio-cultural perspective of many of the indigenous tribes and groups whom Wade Davis chooses to focus on in his book *The Wayfarers*. Certainly in *The Lost Coast*, Tim Bowling clarifies his refusal to “own property” as an action which he deems to be “a very unsexy form of rebellion [which is] . . . [d]ull as ditchwater, straight as an arrow, yet nonetheless in opposition to nearly everything my culture values and upholds as worthy of reverence” (252).

In a similar way, in *Bone Deep in Landscape*, where Mary Clearman Blew recalls how her parents sold the homestead ranch in order to buy a lesser ranch that would be closer to the school in town, a sense of grief and loss translates across the pages and across the divide of years (111-112). There is a corresponding sense of loss and dislocation in *Where Rivers Change Direction*, when Mark Spragg’s narrator talks about living in town and how directionless and uprooted he feels there:

When I was a boy my parents would drive across this part of the basin when we made trips to Montana. The land never seemed real to me. More like some bleak prison. And the farmland like some fat and common idiot locked away against the river. I roam the streets. . . . I am not convinced that I am living my life. I feel as though I am only moving through a slice of time between what I have done and what I will someday do. I think that if I could have thought of another place

to go I would have gone there, but I am unwilling to move too far from my past.

(254)

This kind of spiritual dislocation from landscape is antithetical to the practice of the Songlines and the Dreaming that Wade Davis refers to in *The Wayfarers*. Such dislocation speaks more to the anthropologist Margaret Mead's fear that "as we drift toward a more homogenous world, we are laying the foundations of a blandly amorphous and singularly generic modern culture that will have no rivals" (Davis 192). Mary Clearman Blew articulates the need to avoid such bland amorphousness when she refers to how "Barry Lopez believes that our minds are shaped by landscape as they are by our genes, and that stories are the threads that connect our intellect and spirit to the outward existence of rocks and hills and rivers" (*Bone Deep* 39).

When I am walking along the edge of the cornfield in my town, or standing up on the dyke and watching two bald eagles in full mating flight, I know that I am bearing witness not only to what matters to me spiritually, but to what is intrinsically vital and worth preserving—at the very least in the realm of imagination—within my specific landscape. I am not concerned, in these moments, with whether or not anyone else is around to share in what I am seeing; in fact, most times I prefer to be alone with the river's current and the shriveling blackberries as they join summer's inevitable decay. Whatever season is going on around me, the landscape at the wilder edge of my town reflects one solitude back to me; it is the Songline that I prefer to take.

Perhaps this is the kind of semiconscious *dreaming* that Lorna Crozier refers to in her memoir *Small Beneath The Sky*, when she describes a landscape that allows both escape from, and a return to, the self:

Above you, the sky is a vast blue wonder. . . . skinless yet animate, strangely expectant. . . . Calm or restless, the sky follows your every step. It touches you with loneliness. It humbles your tongue. . . . It makes you fall in love with nimbus and feather and hollow bone. Under its blue gaze, you mark the smallest thing. . . . Imagine all the praise and fear and doubt the sky must hold. (59)

It is a landscape that recollects every version and experience of the self even as it sets the known world, in its entirety, free. Or, as Mary Clearman Blew puts it: “When creative myth overlies landscape . . . the relationship between language and the land is literally sacred. Landscape may be so emotionally charged with a writer’s reflection of self” (*Bone Deep* 149). Throughout our lives, the landscapes where we originate from continue to define us, and to speak through us, as Crozier notes:

(T)his country of wind and dust and sky is your starting point, the way you understand yourself, the place you return to when there’s nowhere else to go. It is the pared-down language of your blood and bones. . . . Wherever you go, you speak with the earth on your tongue, in the accent passed down for generations. . . . a dusty drawl thin enough to be carried some distance by the wind. (194)

Indeed, the poet Tim Lilburn has talked about how “hard it would be to move and have to try to take up another landscape. It would involve learning another language,” which he likens to “an extreme and maybe undoable apprenticeship” (Lemay 181). In contrast, in his poem “Slow World,” in *To the River*, Lilburn describes the power that the South Saskatchewan River—a physical, spiritual emblem from his youth—continues to exert over the psyche and the consciousness of his poetic speaker:

I went under the
 earth and the river
 gave me a rag, a leg bone to hold.
 We looked into one another's
 face. Don't say I'm here.
 I am feverish with grass.
 A dark in things, in wild rose,
 a stalk, a line coming out of the mouth . . .(1-8)

In this passage, the river and the speaker are spiritual and physical companions, with both occupying the same pose of desire and mutability.

In his poem “Nothing There,” Lilburn asserts that “[s]omething will happen, / [and] it will be both expansion and breaking down” (17-18, 33). This notion of simultaneous “expansion” *and* “breaking down” lies at the heart of what true *recollection* is: a process of moving through and toward the landscape, while also archiving its smallest details to access their potency for personal revision and emotional saliency. As Jan Zwicky has noted, this process requires being present to the current landscape and to the landscape of the past, since, as Lilburn attests in “Marriage And Agriculture” (*To the River*):

[sometimes] nothing opens, and the light over the river
 does not open; it could say your name, but it does not open.
 What calls blocks the way.
 You would like to seed something in this
 plain of aroused sediment, river light, soft middle of your tongue,

its fragrance would be your face.

But there is no home. Here the light is determined.

No collapsing into it.

Nothing this way at all. (Sec 7, lines 7-15)

We never know when we will connect to the power of landscape in a way that assists us in truly knowing ourselves, and so we must maintain a stance of being present to the landscapes that speak to us. Lilburn, in *Going Home*, refers to this when he discusses our “need to find our own way to take this place into our mouth; [and how] we must re-say our past in such a way that it will gather us here” (171). Here is an assertion of what true *recollection* is, as opposed to the static nostalgia that Glen Albrecht encourages us to transcend.

Lilburn goes further to suggest that, particularly as North Americans, we need to start engaging in a process of “learning to be spoken by the grass and cupped hills. And what we must learn is not geography, not an environmental ethics, not a land-benign economics, not a history, not a respect, but a style that is so much ear, so attentive, it cannot step away from its listening and give a report of itself” (177). In Lilburn’s view, “[w]e must start again learning how to be in this place” (*Going Home* 182), and yet he maintains that “[t]he world, though, will stay nameless, even as we learn our names for it. . . . [for a] sense of the distance of things has a wonderful ascetic effect: it breeds deference. . . . [and it], this farness, returns us to our sober selves” (*Home* 182). He then asserts: “I’ll keep to this distance, I say to myself—without any loss of desire for the far things” (*Home* 182).

Everything changes. Time proves that. Judith Kitchen's assertion, at the beginning of this discussion, returns us to the cycle of alteration, recollection, and perhaps even memory's attempts at repair. Certainly how we are present within a given landscape has the power to alter not only our experience of the landscape but also how we remember the fragile moment where the landscape of the past and the present intersect, and the value of this to us. I think here of my own poem:

A vein
of ditchwater
steeps desire—
the bullrushes
standing tall
above the water
reply

each creek
stream and river
battles fool's gold,
chooses silt,
then loops
back to the self . . .

* * *

She held a piece of switch-
grass and tied a green

knot over
 and over again---
 each tangle sang
 a note
there could be no turning back

the ditch, the piece of field
 smoke dark,
 everything fragile,
 alive in the air.

In my own experience, writing is a way of recollecting and remembering how the past informs where I live now, and who I am at this particular point in life. Certain emblems and metaphors emerge as pathways to traverse this terrain—both real and imagined—and my attempts to locate myself within this shifting landscape are a source of comfort, and, at times, of tension and despair.

When I write about rosehips ready to burst, and unconscious of their inevitable decay, or the spent blackberries that voice summer's decline, I am letting a landscape of wildness compose me in place. When I write: *I stand at the slough's edge / and remember / so many ways to disassemble myself*, the past's refrain dips and pulls through the slow water of the present, and I remember standing at this exact edge of the slough when I was a child. Now, having returned to this spot as an adult and as a mother, my memories and my sense of identity do not fit easily within a landscape that has been rent, sung, and pieced back together again.

Tim Lilburn refers to this desire to connect with landscape in his poem “You Sleep Your Way There” (*To the River*):

Singing is taking away everything
 then standing in the mud of light,
 willow light, poor as that.
 There’s the smoke moon, the mange
 moon. It’s come
 up over the stupid and empty grass.

Beside us, the heaviness of all things turning. (50-56)

Beside us, the heaviness of all things turning: here the poet tries to gather the landscape, with all of its weight, its mutability, and its insecurities, into himself. It’s a moment marked with inability, for he cannot access all of the wildness that the landscape seems to provide; instead he is left with the continual process of *all things turning*. Here, resonance and the grasping power of recollection replace the nostalgia that Glenn Albrecht cautions against. Here, as I have posed in one of my own poems:

a heron flies overhead,
 and you do not see it—
 refuse,
 for now,
 to own it
 with your eye.

This is the place where ritual and dedication, where Songlines, lost salmon, and the “singularity of bones” (Spragg 61) can guide us into a deeper connection with the

land and with ourselves. It also is the space where, in Sherwin Bitsui's words, we can engage in the process of being "here again" (35), as we experience how the landscape extends us into, and also further away from, ourselves. The act of recollection then, of cupped hands waiting to be filled, of moments and mementos archived, and always this posture of expecting closeness with the earth—this then, is all that we truly have:

Held breath—
the squander of it;
each small bird-
feather, each nutshell
resplendent
against the gravel;
every gesture
a note that reverberates
into the river's edge,
as the cattails repeat us:
bright rosehips clinging
to the branch.

Notes

All quoted material from Sherwin Bitsui is from *Flood Song*, a book-length poem; therefore, all citations refer to page number.

The two poems by Jan Zwicky (“Cashion Bridge” and “The Geology of Norway”) are several pages in length, and unless otherwise noted, citations refer to page number.

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This Singularity features Raid Quests for a limited period of time only. Players will work together to defeat a total of 7 Demon God Pillar Raid Bosses. Bosses in Seats II - VII must be defeated 2,000,000 times across all players. The boss in Seat X must be defeated 6,000,000 times across all players. Once a boss is defeated, the Main Quest for story progression unlocks, and the Raid is no longer available! To Reiterate: Once a raid boss is defeated it will never return! For a full explanation of the raid mechanics, see the Solomon Preparation Guide. Servants receive bonus damage depending on A songline, also called dreaming track, is one of the paths across the land (or sometimes the sky) within the animist belief system of The First Nations People of Australia, which mark the route followed by localised "creator-beings" during the Dreaming. The paths of the songlines are recorded in traditional song cycles, stories, dance, and art, and are often the basis of ceremonies. They are a vital part of Aboriginal culture, connecting people to their land. The Solomon Singularity is the Final Singularity (çµ,â±€ç%°¹ç°ç,¹, ShÅ«kyoku Tokui-ten?) of the Grand Order to solve the Human Order Incineration Incident in Fate/Grand Order. Occurring in present day A.D. 2016, its Humanity Foundation Value is "â€" â€". The events of Chaldea's visit to this Singularity are covered in the final chapter of Observer on Timeless Temple; The Grand Time Temple: Solomon (â† ă½æ™,é-“ç¥žæ®; ä,½ăăfăcăf³, Kan-i Jikan Shinden?), alternatively The Rain of Stars (æ¥µâ«©ă@æµæ~ÿé'") Songlines, London, United Kingdom. 17,882 likes Â· 102 talking about this. Songlines Magazine brings you the best music from around the world....Â AnnÃ;ret - YouTube. Share your videos with friends, family, and the world. Share your videos with friends, family, and the world. Songlines updated their cover photo. February 5 at 3:32 AM Â· The March 2021 issue of Songlines is on sale from Friday January 29 with an exclusive playlist on the FREE CD by Verity Sharp. More details at <https://www.songlines.co.uk/magazine>. See All. I answered, thanking her, and presently I received from her another letter saying that she was passing through Paris and would like to have a chat with me; but her time was limited and the only free moment she had was on the following Thursday. She asked me if I would give her a little luncheon at Foyot's. Foyot's is a restaurant at which the French senators eat and it was so far beyond my means that I had never even thought of going there. But I was flattered and I was too young to say no to a woman. I had eighty francs to live on till the end of the month and a modest luncheon shou