

***Not lawn, nor pasture, nor mead:*
Rewilding and the Cultural Landscape**

Andrea Rae Gammon



Not Lawn, Nor Pasture, Nor Mead: Rewilding and the Cultural Landscape

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Not Lawn, Nor Pasture, Nor Mead:
Rewilding and the Cultural Landscape

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Here was no man's garden, but the unhand-selled globe. It was not lawn, nor pasture, nor mead, nor woodland, nor lea, nor arable, nor waste-land. It was the fresh and natural surface of the planet Earth, as it was made forever and ever, —to be the dwelling of man, we say,— so Nature made it, and man may use it if he can. Man was not to be associated with it. It was Matter, vast, terrific, — not his Mother Earth that we have heard of, not for him to tread on, or be buried in, — no, it were being too familiar even to let his bones lie there, — the home, this, of Necessity and Fate.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

For my parents, who have always encouraged me to pursue what moves me, and whose support has been inestimable.

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Introduction

In July of 2017, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, widely known as UNESCO, added the first national park to its list of sites of outstanding universal value. England's Lake District, already renowned for its impressive landscape of mountains and lakes, was inscribed as a World Heritage site for its "harmonious beauty," its history of "vital interaction between an agro-pastoral land use system," and its contribution, through the Romantic and Picturesque traditions, to a "deeper and more balanced appreciation of the significance of landscape, local society and place."¹

Not all were pleased with this inscription, however. Journalist George Monbiot called the designation "a betrayal of the living world" (Monbiot 2017), exemplary of the problems with contemporary conservation. Monbiot is no fan of the Lake District:² where others see a spectacular and historic cultural landscape, he sees "a wildlife desert" (2013a); "an ersatz farm fantasy" (2017); "a treeless waste of cropped turf whose monotony is relieved only by erosion gullies, exposed soil and bare rock" (2017).

Tensions also ran high in a debate concerning the future of a less famous landscape: the Hedwige Polder in the province of Zeeland in the Netherlands. In 2010, the polder, which had been re-claimed from the sea in the early 20th century, was selected for declamation—to be relinquished back to the sea—to compensate for expansions to the nearby Port of Antwerp. With far greater stakes than Monbiot has in the Lake District, Zeelanders decried the decision publicly: "Land Declamation Affects the Zeeland Soul" one newspaper headline read,³ referring to their collective historical struggles against the sea. To Zeelanders, declamation would be a final capitulation.

The tenor of both conflicts suggests that more is at stake than merely a difference in taste or aesthetic preference for one landscape over another. How is it that the preservation of a particular landscape, like the English Lake District, widely celebrated for its unique character and the evidence of centuries of human

1. See the UNESCO website for its entire assessment and for supporting documents: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/422/> (UNESCO, 2017).

2. See Monbiot 2013; 2013a; 2017a.

3. Original Dutch headline: "*Ontpoldering raakt de Zeeuwse ziel*," cited in Drenthen 2014a: 230. See Drenthen 2014a for a more detailed discussion of this case.

labor in its hedges, hills, and stonewalls, to Monbiot, amounts to “a betrayal of the living world”? Why is the Hedwige polder so important to the *Zeeuwse ziel*, the Zeelander’s soul? What is at stake in these conflicts revolves around what might be considered *rewilding*, or the returning of natural processes and the reemergence of self-willed land, as well as the human sense of place and identity that rewilding seems to forsake. These cases suggest that rewilding and the controversies it opens up surface yet a deeper conflict: that underlying and motivating these challenges are philosophical questions about place, wilderness, and belonging. These themes are at the heart of the larger project to which this dissertation contributes and in which it should be situated.

For the past four years, I worked with professor Martin Drenthen, post-doc Glenn Delière, and PhD researcher Mateusz Tokarski on *Reading the Landscape: A hermeneutic approach to environmental ethics*. This VIDI project,⁴ designed and supervised by Martin Drenthen, aimed to bring hermeneutic insights to bear on conflicts arising from rewilding and its ramifications especially in European cultural landscapes. My dissertation is one of two that this project produced: the other, *Wild at Home: The ethics of living with discomforting wildlife*, by Mateusz Tokarski, focused on the new problems posed for coexisting with wild animals and how philosophy has and has not, thus far, dealt with these ambivalent relations. All of the work of this project dealt with questions of identity, landscape, and moral conflicts in recent environmental issues.

In order to make sense of these larger questions, a primer in rewilding will be useful. Since the coining of the term in the 1990s, the conservation strategy known as rewilding has continued to gain attention and interest in and outside of conservation circles. In a simple sense, rewilding is what it sounds like: the return of the wild, invited or uninvited (though usually the former) by turning generally domesticated spaces over to nature and natural processes. Often presented as an antidote to our increasingly homogenized, organized, and managed environments, rewilding deliberately opens up space for the return of wild nature, typically by removing human elements that have obstructed or diminished its free reign. Dams, canals, and fences are often the first to go. Sometimes locally extinct species are reintroduced in efforts to re-establish natural processes that human management of the area might have previously suppressed or eliminated. Whereas rewilding’s more established and professionalized predecessor, ecological restoration, aims to return damaged environments and ecosystems to a pre-determined state or

4. VIDI is the name of the project grant awarded to mid-career researchers through the De Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (NWO), the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research. These kinds of projects fund a vast number of PhD and post-doctoral positions in the Netherlands.

pre-disturbance historical condition, rewilding is premised on the renewal and rejuvenation of nature in such a way that *leaves open* its environmental future rather than determining it in advance or facilitating specific outcomes. Whereas ‘restoration’ is a noun, ‘rewilding’ is a verb: a process-oriented approach that makes space for the return of a seemingly freer nature unimpeded by human plans and designs.

Especially in Europe, rewilding initiatives are growing in number and scope with increasing public interest and support. The largest non-governmental organization dedicated to rewilding, Rewilding Europe, founded in 2011, is based in the Netherlands with activities spanning the continent. Rewilding Europe supervises nine rewilding areas in ten countries and aspires to have one million hectares of rewilded land by 2022 (Rewilding Europe 2012: 3). Its initiatives include river restoration in partnership Sami communities in Lapland; the creation of a wildlife-based corridor landscape in the Apennines in central Italy; and the reintroduction of bison to the Carpathian mountains in Romania (discussed in §6.4), among others.⁵ Their projects often piggyback on areas that have rewilded on their own, taking advantage of the trend of farmland abandonment and welcoming and building on the demographic changes and their resulting ecological ones. Most places are not so renowned, but, for instance, the Chernobyl Exclusion zone, which has famously and surprisingly sprung to life in the decades following the nuclear disaster in 1986, is included as a site on Rewilding Europe’s map of the European Rewilding Network.⁶ Such examples of so-called spontaneous rewilding are marshalled in support of rewilding’s general project: evidence of nature’s resilience and indication that Europe will be wilder inevitably, with or without human support or impetus. Rewilding Britain, founded in 2015, has followed suit, although focusing its energies on England, Scotland, and Wales. This fledgling conservation charity has not yet piloted projects of its own but has aligned itself with pre-existing work, bringing initiatives like the Carrifran Wildwood restoration and Trees for Life in Scotland; the river Wandle restoration in and around London, the Knepp estate, and Wild Ennerdale in England; and the Cambrian Wildwood in Wales together under the singular heading of rewilding (Rewilding Britain 2017).

While many are enthusiastic for these endeavors and welcome the return of a freer, self-willed nature, there is an increasing awareness that rewilding requires that specific areas will be, or already have been, relinquished for this purpose. Already, especially in Europe, there is considerable concern for the disappearance of traditional and cultural landscapes due to changes in demographics, mobility, and

5. See Rewilding Europe (no date) <https://www.rewildingeurope.com/european-rewilding-network/> for a map of Rewilding Europe-specific projects and other rewilding initiatives in its orbit.

6. *Ibid.*, although this is not specifically one of their initiatives.

agricultural practices and policies. Responding to this, the European Landscape Convention, also known as the Florence Convention, was ratified in 2004 to protect the cultural heritage and European identity and diversity bound up in cultural landscapes (European Landscape Convention 2000). Such landscapes are valued because they *themselves* are the product of the complex, intertwining of human and natural histories over centuries. They materialize the various and historic cultural imprints on nature, and reciprocally, the influence of environmental forces on patterns of human dwelling, cultivation, and sociality. “All our landscapes, from the city park to the mountain hike, are imprinted with our tenacious, inescapable obsessions” (1995: 18), writes Simon Schama. In his famous and magisterial book, *Landscape and Memory* (1995), he observes how landscapes, even natural landscapes, are first and foremost cultural: they are *constructed* through the ideas, histories, and myths told through and about them. Further, they instantiate and reflect ourselves back to us. The concern for the loss of them, then, is understandable: cultural landscapes reveal volumes about past and present inhabitants and ground a cultural self-understanding. They offer a sense of place and history and disclose ways of life that are familiar and valuable. Losing them threatens a loss of heritage as well as the loss of an important source of identity. Rewilding, which entails the making-over of these places, threatens exactly that; a thoroughly rewilded landscape would eventually over-write these components. It is feared that rewilding will expunge these telling and evocative traditional landscapes of their cultural influence and activity, rendering them mute, meaningless, and alien.

Nevertheless, to some rewilding advocates, these landscapes and the cultural histories they contain are *worth* contesting: they represent the ways we have, for centuries, subdued nature and bent it towards our human-centric aims and plans. This, in considerable part, is the appeal of rewilding: there is little worth preserving in cultural landscapes that manifest a legacy of environmental harm, where unsustainable life ways have wreaked ecological havoc. As I have already mentioned, this conflict has come to its fullest manifestation in the United Kingdom, where the cultural landscapes in question are the working landscapes of sheep farms and fells like those in the Lake District, and where rewilding has been painted in stark opposition to this rural economy. George Monbiot is rewilding’s most well-known booster; already we have a sense of the flavor of his writing that has inspired many but incensed others. In particular, farmers find their ways of life under indictment. Monbiot, in his popular book *Feral: Rewilding the Land, Sea, and Human Life* (2013) and throughout his writing, contests the image of England’s iconic pastoral and agricultural landscapes as thriving, well-kept, and balanced. Instead, these are ecological wastelands, denuded by centuries of overgrazing, and he names sheep husbandry as the single largest obstacle to rewilding in the United Kingdom. The

Lake District, the best known of these places, is regarded by Monbiot as “one of the most depressing landscapes in Europe; sheepwrecked...by the white plague” (2013a). Monbiot’s provocations are nevertheless optimistic: on his view, rewilding would revive many of these barren places that are now only preserved by misguided conservation policies and sizable subsidies (Monbiot 2013).

Several farmers have defended their ways of life against Monbiot’s attacks and the existential threat rewilding would pose to the uplands of the United Kingdom. Phil Stocker, the Chief Executive of the National Sheep Association in the UK, insists: “We don’t [want] a wilderness landscape. We want an attractive biodiverse landscape that involves human beings” (quoted in Driver 2015). Annie Meanwell, another upland shepherd, answered Monbiot directly in an Op-Ed in *The Guardian*, writing: “As a shepherd, I know we have not ‘sheepwrecked’ Britain’s landscape... Generations of sheep and farmers have created the environment here together... and I am preserving it as best I can for the next generation” (quoted in Driver 2015).

Similarly, the book-length defense English shepherd James Rebanks published about his life in the Lake District, does not respond to Monbiot directly or spend very many pages on the specific threat of rewilding, but nevertheless reads like a reply to Monbiot’s *Feral*, published two years earlier. *The Shepherd’s Life: Modern Dispatches from an Ancient Landscape* (2015) tells the story of farmers “whose lives are often deeply traditional and rooted in the distant past” (2015: xviii). This is hardly an exaggeration: Rebanks and the other shepherds in his book and in his family continue an ancient way of life by farming the fells—the hill and mountainsides that comprise the commons in the Lake District. The fells are an unforgiving landscape, and farming them for thousands of years has produced hardy sheep that are not only endemic to the place but also *belong* there, as Rebanks explains:

They know their place on the mountains. They are ‘hefted’ – taught their sense of belonging by their mothers as lambs – an unbroken chain of learning that goes back thousands of years. So the sheep can never be sold from the fell without breaking that ancient link. (2015: 9)

The historical dimension of fells farming is literally embodied in the lineage and the behavior of the endemic Herdwick sheep: the shepherds work to maintain this connection and breed sheep in the fells so that this link is as continuous as possible. Rebanks, too, expresses a belonging to this place that seems like an anachronism in the twenty-first century:

When we call it ‘our’ landscape, we mean it as physical and intellectual reality. There is nothing chosen about it. This landscape is our home and we rarely stray from it, or endure anywhere else for long before returning. This may seem like a lack of imagination or adventure, but I don’t care. I love this place; for me it is the beginning and the end of ever thing, and everywhere else feels like nowhere. (2015: 4)

Monbiot gives this kind of belonging in place a voice in *Feral*, making a sheep farmer and Welsh translator and language activist Daffydd Morris-Jones the capable spokesperson for this more rooted way of life. For Morris-Jones, rewilding and other developments not only threaten his and his family’s livelihoods but would also erase the unwritten records of their history the land contains. Morris-Jones explains his opposition to rewilding this way:

I’m not against something new, not by any means but it should be a progression from what you’ve got, not wiping the slate clean. With blanket rewilding you lose your unwritten history, your sense of self and your sense of place. It’s like book-burning. Books aren’t written about people like us. If you eradicate the evidence of our presence on the land, if you undermine the core economies that support the Welsh-speaking population in the language’s heartland, you write us out of the story. We’ve got nothing else. (Morris Jones quoted in Monbiot 2013: 176-177)

For Morris-Jones and those like him, rewilding would be a physical and cultural dispossession.

These examples of this conflict—between the prized heritage and history and traditional means of living in the Lake District⁷ or in the Cambrian Mountains of Wales and the challenge posed by ideas of rewilding will amount to—form the context of this dissertation. Such examples manifest an underlying conceptual question about rewilding and place. The idea of rewilding indeed challenges the present and futures of specific places where people live and work and visit, but this is because of an underlying, conceptual tension. Rewilding, at its core, conflicts with the deeply human concerns about place and places in the world: the ways we settle, inhabit, and work; our presence in the land; the historic layers of cultural landscapes and how these orient us and sustain us. This tradition of place, emphasizing human experience in and access to the world, has its roots in Martin Heidegger’s existential phenomenology, wherein place can be taken as a fundamental structure of human access to the world. Jeff Malpas argues that “one of

7. For a continued discussion of this conflict, see Tokarski & Gammon 2017.

Heidegger's most important insights is the recognition that the world opens up only in and through the bounded singularity of place. This is why the question of being must always be with the question of the *Da* - the here/there" (2014: 20). Malpas shows how place is central to Heidegger's thought, and he argues thus that place is central to our human experience of world: "It is, indeed, in and through place that the world presents itself. The very possibility of the appearance of things – of objects, of self, and of others – is possible only within the all-embracing compass of place" (2004: 15). Malpas holds place not only as the fundamental structuring and coalescing of our world but also, consequently, as reflecting us back in it. It is for this reason that identity is so tied to specific places and cultural landscapes: because they are familiar, because they represent us individually and socially through our shaping of them. We understand ourselves *in and through* places: they reflect our past activities and afford present and future ones. Moreover, places are not fixed or finished but change throughout time, transformed by events, activities, actors, and individual and shared experiences that give them new meanings. Though I will explore various approaches and registers of place as the idea of a lived, experiential, meaningful appropriation of the locations that surround and involve us throughout the dissertation, place is, and will remain, a nebulous concept. However, to some, this indicates its significance. Leading ecocritic Lawrence Buell sees place as "an indispensable concept for environmental humanists not so much because they have precisely defined and stabilized it as because they have not; not because of what the concept lays to rest as because of what it opens up" (2005: 62).

Although *particular* places have always featured in environmental thinking in the west, environmental philosophy has only fairly recently turned towards the *concept* of place, perhaps because of the discipline's driving interest in wilderness spaces that are not obviously places of *human* meaning. One approach has been through ecophenomenology, an elaboration of the human body in, amongst, and in concert with the nonhuman world, developed out of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of the embodied and emplaced condition of human life. Separately, bioregionalism organized attention to the nonhuman world on the basis of on local places and nearby supporting ecosystems and the communities of humans and nonhumans who share them. Even more recently, narrative environmental ethics and hermeneutic environmental ethics, concerned with the meaning involved and constituted by the places and environments in which we find ourselves, has focused on the places and cultural landscapes that contribute to shared and inherited meanings and on a deeper explication and understanding of these meanings. Articulating the significance of place in understanding environmental relationships, John O'Neill, Alan Holland, and Andrew Light (2008) write:

An individual's identity, their sense of who they are, is partly constituted by their sense of belonging to particular places. Particular places, whether "natural" woodlands, streams and ponds, or "urban" city streets, parks and quarries, matter to individuals because they embody the history of their lives and those of the communities to which they belong. Their disappearance involves a sense of loss of something integral to their lives. (2008: 39)

Rewilding, for its express emphasis on the nonhuman, for the idea of self-willed land, and for its inheritance of wilderness ideas and meanings, challenges ideas we have of place. How can we understand place in the face of rewilding? Does rewilding open up new avenues between place and wilderness, two concepts with respective philosophical canons that do not often correspond? My method in approaching rewilding is hermeneutical: this dissertation answers rewilding's call to revisit the concepts of place and of wilderness, to again take up their meanings, and to question their separation or interrelation. Rewilding calls into question these concepts, showing up the uncertainties and uneasiness that lurk in our understandings of them. Thus, to examine the phenomenon of rewilding, I detour through the philosophy of place and through wilderness philosophy. The aim of my dissertation is not necessarily to resolve existing tensions or conflicts or to provide definitive answers. Rather, it is to reopen questions of place and belonging in the world that rewilding shows were never entirely answered, and as a hermeneutic method holds, are never entirely or finally answerable. The main question that I will explore is how the relations of belonging and not belonging in place and in wilderness are challenged or reinstated by rewilding.

OVERVIEW

In this dissertation, I propose that we consider rewilding as *placemaking*, and I entertain the various ways it can be understood as making—or performing—place. I do not propose that we look at rewilding as placemaking in an effort to domesticate rewilding or neuter the concept; instead I hold up both place and rewilding as concepts in tension. In the dissertation's final part, I ask how we can see rewilding as placemaking. This is out of an effort to examine more closely how the places that rewilding makes can be grasped and if they can be appropriated into our understanding of the world around us without collapsing or defeating the idea of rewilding. Additionally, I ask how these concepts can be revised if we adopt different ideas about our relation to place.

The dissertation has three parts. The first part (chapters 1, 2, & 3) introduces place. Chapter one, SURVEYING PLACE, covers the main approaches to place outside of philosophy. I overview the original conceptual development of place in humanistic geography and later, more political developments in place in cultural geography. This demonstrated significance of place has also been approached in social science and the humanities in respective treatments of place attachment, which I discuss as well. I then turn to the cultural landscape, a particular form of place that has its own literature. I survey this in brief before turning in more depth to the ways the cultural landscape has been taken up in environmental philosophy for its merging of the human and nonhuman worlds.

In Chapter two, PLACE AS EXISTENTIAL, I aim to provide an overview of place that explains its centrality in this dissertation. How is place relevant for environmental philosophy? I argue, using Heidegger's philosophical anthropology, that place shapes our experience of the world; that we always understand our world in terms of meaningful places, and that we are always involved in those meanings, as conveying them, shaping them, reflecting on them, rejecting them, but that fundamentally, place is the interpretive frame through which we comprehend our surroundings and ourselves in them. I use the work of Jeff Malpas, who has written extensively on the topological center of Heidegger's thought, to argue that place is constitutive for dwelling and the making of world. I then move on to discuss a few place-based approaches already undertaken in environmental philosophy. These views attempt to re-place ethics, that is, to organize ethics in and around the place(s) out of which it arises. This approach gets its fullest expression by hermeneutic environmental ethicists who not only acknowledge the omnipresence of place but endeavor to illuminate its interpretive potential for understanding the world, natural and built.

However, the place concept is not altogether untroubled. Philosophers, geographers, and others who have written about place, as well as those who have eschewed it, have raised many conceptual problems. Is place a relevant concept in an increasingly interconnected, cosmopolitan, and unhomey world, especially to comprehend and address ecological problems that are global in scope? I address some of the problems others have raised about place in Chapter three, BROADENING PLACE, where I attempt to do exactly that. In this chapter, I again draw heavily from Jeff Malpas' reading of Heidegger to defend a dynamic and open-ended idea of identity that feeds into the notion of placemaking I develop in the second part of the chapter. Placemaking emphasizes the *ongoing* nature of place and of our appropriation and understanding of world in and through place. This resists static, fixed, and exclusionary notions of place that have been problematized by others.

In the second part of the dissertation (chapters 4 & 5), *Wilderness & Rewilding*, I turn to environmental philosophy specifically to provide the more immediate context for the phenomenon of rewilding. In Chapter four, *WILDERNESS CONTEXT & MEANINGS*, I discuss the fascination with the idea of wilderness and the debate that occupied environmental philosophy at the end of the 20th century. Central to this chapter is William Cronon's famous problematization of the wilderness concept, and I focus on how wilderness has been understood as expressly differently from place through conceptions of wilderness that situate it as an ontological and transcendent Other to human life and society. I also discuss developments in ecological restoration—rewilding's forbear—that preceded rewilding and respond to debates in environmental philosophy.

Chapter five, *REWILDING'S MEANINGS*, turns to the emerging idea of rewilding itself. I survey the existing uses of the term not only to distill its main themes but also in an effort to broaden the concept to encompass wider shades of meaning less pertinent to rewilding as an ecological practice. I argue that a cluster conceptualization is the best way to represent and understand the various and overlapping uses of the term.

Part three (chapters 6, 7, & 8) of the dissertation brings the offerings of the first and second parts together. I argue in these chapters for rewilding as a form of placemaking, and in each respective chapter I argue that place is performed a different way by examining various examples of rewilding. In Chapter six, *WILDERNESS REWILDING*, I discuss the first kind of placemaking rewilding performs: *wilderness placemaking*. I look more specifically at the development of the rewilding concept in conjunction with conservation science. By basing rewilding on the resumption of ecological processes like trophic cascades, early proponents tried to place this nascent conservation strategy on scientific and thus unassailable grounding. However, an examination of some of the wilderness places that rewilding makes shows that rewilding is never entirely divorced from extra-scientific associations with wilderness (nature that is balanced and harmonious and outside of human society, et cetera). I discuss the wilderness places that rewilding makes in this form of placemaking, places that are emptied of traces of human history and presence, and the lengths to which rewilding in this form goes to obscure the human labor and commitments behind it. We see that rewilding is motivated in part by the desire for places where humans do not belong, and that rewilding is one strategy in the creation and reproduction of this kind of empty place.

In Chapter seven, *PROVING GROUNDS: EXPERIMENTAL REWILDING*, I turn to three more examples of rewilding to discuss a second kind of placemaking rewilding performs: what I term *experimental placemaking*. Using the famous example of the Oostvaardersplassen in the Netherlands and the lesser

known but equally remarkable case of Pleistocene Park in Siberia, I argue how in this type of placemaking, rewilding creates places of experiment. I mean this in a very specific way: not all rewilding is experimental, but that in these particular cases, rewilding is experimentation that tests specific hypotheses about historical ecology. I compare these two cases with the hypothetical case of Pleistocene rewilding in North America, which remains only a proposal, to demonstrate the open-endedness of the two truly experimental cases and their interest in recovering 'real' nature through their investigations and experiments in rewilding.

Chapter eight, PLACE REGENERATIVE REWILDING, considers two final examples of rewilding: the Scottish beaver trial in the United Kingdom and the new nature area of the Millingerwaard in the Netherlands. I use Val Plumwood's critique of the cultural landscape as disappearing the agency of the nonhuman to consider rewilding as a form of placemaking that features, or reappears, nonhuman agency in the landscape. However, while both of the cases achieve this to varying degrees of success, I argue that rewilding in the Millingerwaard is *place regenerative* because of its reflexive stance on its own history and its status as a new form of a cultural landscape rather than a re-creation of some past iteration.

This tension, along with the tensions we discover in the other two modes of placemaking, are brought together in the Conclusion when we return to the question of belonging.

Part 1

PLACE

SURVEYING PLACE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

What is place? How does it differ from space? How is place important in human life, and how could such a common idea as place be understood as so central to several academic disciplines? In this chapter, I review the approaches to place (and to a lesser extent, landscape) across several disciplines. My treatment will be far from exhaustive: the intra-disciplinary literature is vast and not all of the ways in which place is understood and approached will be valuable to the questions and themes my dissertation tackles. My aim in this chapter is to review relevant work in geography and other key fields to provide a sense of the context of place necessary to see how rewilding does not easily sit within it but instead calls it into question. For that reason, this chapter will also introduce the specific form of place with which the dissertation deals extensively: the concept of the cultural landscape. I will overview its roots in cultural geography but focus mainly on the limited uptake of the concept in environmental philosophy (§1.4). Why is the cultural landscape important for environmental philosophy? One of the contributions of this dissertation will be to bring attention to this lacuna. An implicit argument guiding this dissertation is that the *re-* of *re-wilding* begs the questions of what, where, and how wildness or wilderness returns. This forces attention to the yet un-wilded, the domesticated, that is, to the cultural landscape to which rewilding offers a contradistinction. Any discussion of rewilding will refer, whether implicitly or explicitly, to cultural landscapes and places as human-made.

1.1 PLACE IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

Geography has always concerned itself with places—particular locations with particular characters—in one way or another. Whether in its early explorations and the charting of the globe; in describing the native vegetation and fauna of locales and regions; in studying and representing the relationships between local environmental features and culture; place and distinctive places have historically enjoyed a central focus in geography. However, in the 1970s, a sub-discipline of geography with a humanistic emphasis began to gather around the *concept* of place. Drawing heavily from existentialism and phenomenology, the approach of humanist geographers was to reorient the field around the human experience of the world, and they found geography’s prevailing conceptual apparatus—spatiality—inadequate to this task. Space, as conceptually abstract, nomothetic, and methodologically positivist, could not answer to the way in which humans live in the world. Instead, they instated place—which was intimate, pre-scientific, and existential—as the central and defining concept for humanistic geography. Whereas other studies of place had made individual, specific places central, the movement of humanistic geography withdrew from this particularized, descriptive approach in an attempt to open the experience of place up as fundamentally human and fundamentally embodied. Tim Cresswell writes that in this movement, “Place was seen as a universal and transhistorical part of the human condition” (2004: 20). Humanistic geography attempted to refocus geography around human life and place and so to entrench geography firmly within the humanities and social sciences rather than in the quantitative or natural sciences. Consider the unequivocal claims that Yi-Fu Tuan, the most influential geographer in the humanistic tradition, made about humanistic geography’s role in the discipline:

Humanistic geography reflects upon geographical phenomena with the ultimate purpose of achieving a better understanding of man [*sic*] and his condition...What is the nature of the human world?...Humanistic geography achieves an understanding of the human world by studying people’s relations with nature, their geographical behavior as well as their feelings and ideas in regard to space and place. (1976: 266)

In order to answer the kinds of questions Tuan names, place became focally important for humanistic geographers including and following Tuan.⁸ These thinkers, the most prominent of whom included Anne Buttimer, David Seamon, and Edward Relph, made place, through the human experience of it, the central issue for human geography. In summarizing this turn, Tuan writes: “People think that geography is about capitals, land forms, and so on. But it is also about place — its emotional tone, social meaning, and generative potential” (Tuan quoted in Gabriel 2013). Place and space thus became competing ideas and methods in geography: space the realm of the geometric and theoretical, place the experiential and lived. Humanist geography was based in the conviction that geographers and planners may study space and spaces, but because humans live in *place* and never abstractly in space, geographers should not neglect this much more immediate and meaningful aspect of our experience of the world. Place represents ceremonially, symbolically, historically, or spiritually significant spaces, made so by practices and experiences in them, some ritualized, some everyday. Tuan’s work was especially interested in the universality of place, and he frequently puts general concepts like the hearth, the garden, et cetera, to use to encompass a breadth of cultural experiences of place and places. Relatedly, he highlights the prevalence of basic geometric forms (e.g., circles and cyclical processes⁹), and phenomenological endowments like front and back, the bipedal body and its visual schema, et cetera. As such, he writes in an archetypical fashion about ‘man’ and the commonalities of place that point to its essence and the essence of the human experience in place. Tuan suggests that place can have such existential meaning for ‘man’ because ‘man’s’ body is so embedded in this worldmaking, that place is not only experientially embodied but also *epistemically* embodied. Our bodies pervade our knowledge of place. The best examples of this that Tuan provides are the variety of folk measurements, units, and tools that take their basis in human physiology (*cubit* derives from the forearm, *fathom* from the distance between the fingertips of outstretched arms; a stone’s throw, shouting distance, et cetera) (1977: 45). He writes: “Man [*sic*] is the measure. In a literal sense, the human body is the measure of direction, location, and distance. The ancient Egyptian word for “face” is the same as that for “south,” and the word

8. See Tuan 1976 for his definition and defense of humanistic geography. Key texts include Tuan’s *Topophilia* (1974) and *Space and Place* (1977); Buttimer 1976; Seamon 1979; and Buttimer & Seamon’s edited collection *The Human Experience of Space and Place* (1980). Published considerably later by students of Tuan, the essays in Adams, Hoelscher, and Till’s collection *Textures of Place: Exploring humanist geographies* (2001) continue the emphasis of place in human experience but engage methodological and critical developments in the field. The editors’ introduction provides a nice overview of humanistic geography and its advance since the 1970s.

9. “First man [*sic*] creates the circle, whether this be the plan of a teepee or the ring of a war dance, and then he can discern circles and cyclical processes everywhere in nature- in the shape of a bird’s nest, the whirl of the wind, and the movement of the staircase.” (1977: 112)

for “back of the head” carries the meaning of “north” (1977: 44). But just as Tuan shows the universality of place and experience, so too does he point to the differences across places. If place uniformly pressed itself onto human experience across cultures and times, place would be no longer, because it is in its *specificity* that place can be recognized. So while Tuan points to specific, regional differences—how ancient Chinese cities have fronts and backs, how the Puluwatan are gifted navigators of the Pacific Islands by having learned to read the colors of the water and the sky—his examples still retain enough generality to show commonality, to make place resound universally (1977).

For Tuan, abstract space becomes place when it is familiarized, and familiarization is based in kinaesthetic and perceptual experience over time (1977: 73). Of all places, the home is perhaps the most familiarized, which made it the epicenter of much of Tuan’s work and of work in humanistic geography generally. A house, like all places, has geometrical space and dimensionality, but Tuan turned the attention of geographers to the aspects of the house that imbue it with personal significances—a stain on a wall, a piece of heirloom furniture—that, like the slant of the roof’s angle and the meterage of the house’s footprint, fall within geography’s remit. The knowledge the individual has of ‘home’ is an assemblage of memories, associations, and attitudes that separate the particular geographical space from all others, that make it a *place*. One of the fullest and more influential explorations of the emotionality of the place of home was Gaston Bachelard’s topography of intimate places in *The Poetics of Space*. Bachelard performs a phenomenology of dwelling, not only human dwelling, but also of nests, shells, and other places and forms of interiority and sheltering containment to bring out how these innermost forms are so private and personal that they become oneiric, shaping our psyches and becoming the models the spaces our dreams are built out of:

I must show that the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind. The binding principle in this integration is the daydream. Past, present and future give the house different dynamisms...In the life of a man [*sic*], the house thrusts aside contingencies, its councils of continuity are unceasing. Without it, man would be a dispersed being. It maintains him through the storms of the heavens and through those of life. It is body and soul. It is the human being’s first world. Before he is ‘cast into the world,’ as claimed by certain hasty metaphysics, man is laid in the cradle of the house. And always, in our daydreams, the house is a large cradle. (1994/1958: pp. 6-7)

In Bachelard’s poetic and compelling account, the home—in its primacy—is shown not only to be the original place but our first and formative world.

1.2 ATTACHMENT TO PLACE, HOME, & THE LOCAL

1.2.1 Place attachment in social science

Explicating *how* the places of home but also place generally effects and maintains an important significance in human life has been the purview of social science research on place. Sociology, and environmental psychology specifically, have tried to identify and bring to light the specific dimensions of place attachment, although various related terms have been used to describe and to codify the emotional, rooted, and affective ways in which places become meaningful. Place and community attachment, place identity, place dependence, and sense of place—to name a few—all circle around the task of illuminating how place and places play such pivotal and often defining emotional roles in human life.¹⁰ Gieryn describes the personal relation of place attachment as stemming from “accumulated biographical experiences: we associate places with the fulfilling, terrifying, traumatic, triumphant, secret events that happened to us personally there” (2000: 481). Place attachment seizes on the simple but profound fact that we commonly experience special attachment to particular places throughout our lives—whether a childhood home or hometown; parks, gardens, or natural spaces we visit and especially care for; places we associate with important people or times—that these kinds of places can be as formative and defining as the people and experiences that populate our lives and that we value them as much. Place attachment, simply put, is “the bonding of people to places” (Low & Irwin, 1992: 2), but teasing apart the strands and mechanisms for this, which involve the built and natural environment, practices and lifeways, as well as symbolic and interpretive aspects of place and its inherited meanings, is incredibly complex, and as Hummon notes, has been the work not only of environmental and social psychologists but also the domain of sociologists, anthropologists, folklorists, and architects (1992: 253). As a realm of study, place attachment is trans-disciplinary and encompasses both quantitative and qualitative methods. Some important work in place attachment has been simply highlighting these bonds across actual place-bound communities (Fried 1963; Proshansky 1978; Proshansky et al. 1983; Low 1992) and developing the conceptual apparatus to describe and make sense of the impact of place on human life (Irwin & Low (eds.) 1992), as well as discerning physical and social components in meaning (Stedman 2003), identifying symbolic and ritual aspects of place attachment across cultures (Low 1992), differentiating

10. Hidalgo & Hernandez 2001 offer some discussion of conceptual and definitional questions associated with place attachment. See also Guliani 2003 for attention to the specific forms attachment can take: “rootedness, sense of place, belongingness, insideness, embeddedness, attachment, affiliation, appropriation, commitment, investment, dependence, identity, etc. – seem to indicate not so much a diversity of concepts and reference models as a vagueness in the identification of the phenomenon” (2003: 138).

subjective preferences from meanings (Schroeder 1991), and observing differences at relative spatial scales and across demographics (Hidalgo & Hernandez 2001). If place's contributions to material and spiritual well-being are better understood, they can be better honored and safeguarded. Further, understanding the pathways of place-based meanings and attachment is useful for inspiring people to care about and advocate for specific places.¹¹

A recent development of this latter effort has been the application of environmental psychology to nature preservation and protection in findings that demonstrate that care for nature and natural places depends on early and frequent exposure to them (Chawla 1998; Chawla & Flanders Cushing 2007; Ewert et al. 2005). People tend to want to protect places that have particular meanings and personal significance (Manzo & Perkins 2006), underscoring how place attachment can be useful in conservation. Halpenny (2010) showed place attachment to be a predictor for pro-environmental attitudes.

Place attachment social science has also contributed to environmental education. Mitch Thomashow's work argues that environmental education and ecological awareness should rest not only on ecological knowledge but with an acquaintance with a sense of place (Thomashow 2002). Much of this work has reached wider audiences, perhaps most famously Richard Louv's *Last Child in the Woods* (2005). Louv's idea of nature deficit disorder—that the lack of time Americans (and particularly American children) spend outdoors, alienates them from nature and negatively affects mood, attention, and general well-being—has had popular uptake, inspiring The No Child Left Inside movement and other similar initiatives for outdoor environmental education and has turned attention to how connections and attachments to specific environments are forged and should be fostered at an early age.

1.2.2 Place attachment in literature

Of course, this social-scientific approach is only one way in which place attachment has been explored. The distinctive and defining role place plays in human life has its richest expression in literature and in the arts. Perhaps the most famous story of place attachment is also one of the oldest and most familiar stories in Western myth and literature: of Odysseus' return to his beloved Ithaca. But narratives do not have to arc homeward to enunciate places and to bring them to life as characters: What is *Ulysses* without Dublin or *À la recherche du temps perdu* without Combray?¹²

11. See, e.g., Vaske & Kobrin 2001; Vorkinn & Riese 2001.

12. I do not have the space or the expertise to elaborate here, but there are countless examples of influential literary places to be named. William Faulkner's fictitious Yoknapatawpha County is famous for its coherence across his works. Real life accounts, like Leopold's Sand County and Annie Dillard's Tinker Creek, are also important examples.

Though not a literary scholar, Jeff Malpas explores how place functions in famous literary examples to come to a clearer understanding of how place functions in the possibility of our real-life experience of the world. For Malpas, literary treatments of place help us attend to the complex significance of place and places and how it is only *through them* that worlds appear.¹³ For example, he suggests that Wordsworth's rendition of the Lake District:

must be understood in terms of a complex conjunction of factors involving the natural landscape, the pattern of weather and of sky, the human ordering of spaces and resources, and also those individual and communal narratives with which the place is imbued. While the possibility of human involvement in the world is given only in and through such a place, the unity of the place is also evident in, and articulated by means of, the organized activity of the human beings who dwell within it. (2004: 185)

Malpas thus uses Wordsworth and other place-focal writers to bring out how place both contains and is defined by such 'complex conjunctions of factors,' and as such, how place works to unify this complexity in our experience of it.¹⁴ From an ecocritical perspective, Lawrence Buell also draws on literature to flesh out place attachment. One of his main efforts at this is *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (1995), which is not accidentally organized around perhaps the most famous place in the Western environmental canon: the world of Walden Pond, as narrated through Thoreau's prose. Elsewhere, Buell highlights how the conventional reading of *Walden*—Thoreau's solitary movement *out of* society and *into* wilderness—at best only vaguely corresponds with the truth of Thoreau's account: the outskirts of Concord, Massachusetts were far from wilderness, and more to the point, home- and place-making—not life in the wilderness—should be taken as the book's most environmentally salient theme. *Walden* advances, as Buell puts it, a "reorientation of the spirit as a turning towards the largely unnoticed wild spots within and at the edges of the home place" (2005: 67).

Indeed, the meanings of home operate centrally in place attachment in literature, and as with Odysseus, some of the most profound examples of place attachment—from fiction and otherwise—emerge when the home place is lost. In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym explores the Greek roots of nostalgia as

13. There is fruitful overlap here with Martha Nussbaum's claims about the role literary narratives can and should play in moral philosophy. See her *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (1990).

14. When I return to philosophical treatments of place in the following chapter, we will come back to Malpas, who ultimately aims to show that place is the condition of possibility for human experience of the world and thus how our identities as individuals are tied up in it.

a longing for home (*nostos* meaning a “return home” and *algia*, “longing”) that did not originate in Greece but as a medical diagnosis by Swiss doctor Johannes Hoffer. Nostalgia, on Hoffer’s diagnosis, was a physical sickness that soldiers felt when away from their homelands (Boym 2001: 3). But the home place, as with most other places in environmental literature, tends to be small and highly localized, which, is at odds with a more global environmental sensibility. Buell observes how this limit in environmental literature reflects the centripetal bias of place attachment generally, that “place-attachment tends to thin out as the territory expands” (2005: 68), and as such, shows a limit of felt-place attachment as a foundation for nature protection.

Buell tries to remedy this bias by advancing a model of place and place attachment that, rather than radiating outwards from a single, established point in the world, expects a changing, temporally-inflected, and cosmopolitan idea of place and environmental citizenship. This also involves expanding the environmentalist canon to find accounts of place that open the “possibility of imagining placeness in multi-scalar terms: local, national, regional, transhemispheric; topographically, historically, culturally” (2005: 96). To this end he offers the example of Derek Walcott’s *Omeros*, an epic poem that recalls Homer’s *Odyssey* in Walcott’s native St. Lucia but whose postcolonial world spans the Caribbean and Mediterranean Seas, Europe, the Atlantic and its North American and African shores across several centuries. Lance Callahan writes that “*Omeros* poetically deconstructs the notion of “home” and refigures it in a form that incorporates a sense of permanent exile” and that Walcott does this programmatically, intending to “mutate the root assumptions of epic, and their attendant ideologies...subvert[ing] the most cherished principles underlying Eurocentric epic practice” (Callahan 2003: 64).

Nevertheless, the nature of attachment may be inevitably bound to specific, experiential, and personally significant spaces, even if the category of the local or of home is broadened and revised. In *The Lure of the Local* (1997) art critic and writer Lucy Lippard defines place in opposition to landscape: place has an inside-ness, a local-ness as experienced by those who live *in* it. Landscapes, by contrast, are experienced from the outside, viewed from a position of exteriority. She writes:

Most often place applies to our own “local”—entwined with personal memory, known or unknown histories, marks made in the land that provoke and evoke. Place is latitudinal and longitudinal within the map of a person’s life. It is temporal and spatial, personal and political. A layered location replete with human histories and memories, place has width as well as depth. It’s about connections, what surrounds it, what formed it, what happened there, what will happen there. (1997: 7)

For Lippard, the desire to be local, to know a place intimately, is what we are still striving for in our multi-centered—or postmodern—society. She is confident that this kind of internal experience of place will prevail over challenges from globalizing and homogenizing forces, because place is “the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere” (1997: 7), of the need for a depth of experience, a longitudinal knowledge of one’s surroundings, and a grounded sense of one’s place in them.

1.3 PLACE IN CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY

However, by others, the local is viewed as a liability rather than an opportune theoretical center. In a review paper from 2001, geographer Don Mitchell paired Lippard’s *The Lure of the Local* with the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle to bring out the inadequacy of the idea of the local at the closing of the 20th century: Seattle, in Mitchell’s view, showed that activism must simultaneously be engaged at multiple scales, linking location, region, nation-state and globe. (2001: 269-270). Mitchell is one of the leading cultural geographers who has expanded the work on place that humanistic geographers pioneered in the 1970s and 1980. Such work has attempted to locate the political and economic facets in the constitution and consolidation and experience of place and landscape, showing these to be constructed out of capitalist, racialized, and patriarchal structures and systems that do not uniformly represent or serve all groups (e.g., Harvey 1989, 1993, 1996; Mitchell 2001; Massey 1993; 1994; Cresswell 1994; 1996).¹⁵ David Harvey’s work illuminates how prevailing economic forces and material processes not only influence particular places but also shape how time and space are experienced by those living in them. In *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1989) he traced our prevailing, objective conceptions of space and time to the modernization and rationalization of the West following from the scientific and technological revolutions of the past centuries, arguing that

Since capitalism has been (and continues to be) a revolutionary mode of production in which the material practices and processes of social reproduction are always changing, it follows that the objective qualities as well as the meanings of space and time also change. (1989: 204)

Place, Harvey showed, will neither be uniformly experienced across places nor across times. In other work (1993, 1996) more than simply remarking about the loss of places in modernity and post-modernity, Harvey demonstrated how places,

15. See Cresswell 2004 for a more detailed but still concise overview of these developments.

as geographically fixed in space, do not easily accord with the uniformity and mobility of global capital. But rather than offering a solid resistance against these forces, places are instead reformed by them as commodities that must compete with other places for trade and tourism. In this way, global capital both erodes *and* constructs place by forcing its commodification for experience and consumption. It is evaluations like Harvey's that have led in part to the critique that the authentic and rooted sense of place Tuan and other humanistic geographers espouse is nostalgic and outdated. "What might the conditions of 'dwelling' be in a highly industrialized, modernist, and capitalist world?" (1996: 302), Harvey asks.

By contrast, Doreen Massey's work on place attempted to reconstitute place and places in light of the facts of global capitalism and its effects on our experience of them. In her famous essay "Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place" (1993), Massey asks how we can continue to think about places, understood as individualized and unique regions, while accepting that the flows and processes of global capital shape places and our experience of time and space, often in homogenizing ways. However, Massey argued that more than eliminating places, these forces actually reinstate place because they do not act uniformly on all places. Some places benefit from these uneven flows, others are marginalized by them. It is this differentiation that reinscribes place rather than flattening out the distinctiveness of one place versus another. Nor does the time-space compression articulated by Harvey (1989) affect everyone equally. The connectedness of place, for example, affords different things to the different individuals who move through them: an executive on a private jet is differently positioned with regard to place and mobility than is a refugee or a seasonal laborer:

This is, in other words, a highly complex social differentiation. There are differences in the degree of movement and communication, but also in the degree of control and initiation. The ways in which people are placed within 'time-space compression' are highly complicated and extremely varied. (1993: 63)

Massey thus advanced a progressive notion of place: place as a network or interchange rather than as a fixed and bounded site. Places are constituted by the people and things passing through them through time. In this way, place gathers rather than excludes, is hybrid and changing rather than defined and singular, and is always in flux. Place, for Massey, never has one "seamless, coherent identity, a single sense of place which everyone shares (1993: 66) but is instead constituted by an ever changing variety of overlapping and even conflicting narratives and experiences. Thus, place can remain intact and can arguably be enriched by the networking of

local places to the global, but its multi-dimensionality—the ways it will create or exacerbate inequalities—must too be considered as part of the meanings of place, generally and in particular.

In related work, Cresswell (1994, 1996) has shown how the ability to define and even feel safe in places tracks power relations. The work of Mitchell and other Marxist geographers has attempted to illuminate the power and class relations undergirding private and public landscapes and places. For example, Mitchell's *The Lie of the Land* (1996) focused on California's crop landscapes as a locus of labor, class, and immigration struggles for low-wage, migrant workers. In the work of Mitchell and some others, the concepts of place and landscape, which many had thought distinct, overlap more, and even converge. A 2009 review paper by Duncan and Duncan summarize landscape research this way:

Landscape research ranges from structural semiotics in which the researcher is an expert decoder of landscape to post-structuralist studies of historical and cultural differences in meaning, emphasizing ambiguity, multi-vocality, instability of meaning practices, the productive slippage and interplay of unpredictable power relations. (2009: 226).

These examples, while nowhere near comprehensive, indicate a movement away from the a universal experience of lived place that stirred humanistic geographers to an interest in understanding the political, social, and economic features that make and differentiate particular places for different groups and individuals. It is at this turn in cultural geography, from place towards landscape, that I will conclude this chapter's sections on place and place attachment. I turn now to the concept of the cultural landscape, which, again, was developed in geography in the 20th century.

1.4 (CULTURAL) LANDSCAPE

Long before the post-structuralist turn described by Duncan and Duncan, before landscape had entered the conceptual domain of human geography, landscape analysis had its roots in physical geography in the work of figures like Alexander von Humboldt. Humboldt was among the first to introduce the concept of landscape to the physical sciences from the realm of fine arts, where it enjoyed a distinguished tradition in landscape painting. According to Chunglin Kwa, Humboldt's observations of the natural world are deeply informed by his exposure to this artistic tradition: he consistently gleans insights about wholes (zones of vegetation, coastal profiles, soil composition, habitats) from the physiognomy of observable parts, which can often be viewed in a single glance. In abstracting patterns from specific

details to perceive holistic landscapes, “Humboldt’s gaze is the gaze of a painter” (2005: 153), suggests Kwa. Humboldt advanced a biogeographic understanding of the natural world: he discerned general relationships between biotic communities and the abiotic characteristics of regions in which they are found. The concept of landscape as a way of seeing influenced the holistic scale at which Humboldt observed the natural world, as evidenced by the global patterns he extrapolated from his extensive observations.

Humboldt’s contribution of a landscape view in physical geography was soon adapted by human geographers, some of whom, nearly equating the vegetative communities Humboldt had studied with cultural communities of humans, found in Humboldt’s work the foundation for environmental determinism. This was not true for all, however. American geographer Carl O. Sauer was influenced by Humboldt’s morphological approach to landscapes and sought to understand not only how physical geographies shape inhabiting cultures but how cultures impact and determine their natural environments. Sauer founded the influential Berkeley School of landscape studies and pioneered the morphological approach to analyze features of the cultural landscape scientifically, which according to John Wylie, “established landscape, and in particular cultural landscape, as a primary domain of analysis for human geography” through to the present (2007: 17). Sauer’s inductivist method relied primarily on a phenomenological reading of the physical characteristics of the landscape, which was supplemented with interview, archival, and scientific data to corroborate his observational interpretations. According to Duncan & Duncan, this morphological approach to landscape was, to Sauer, “objective, unpretentious,” and free from value-laden theoretical interpretations (2009: 227). The phenomena themselves revealed the histories of people in the landscape: the work of the geographer was to return to the field as often as possible, honing her powers of observation, to study them. Sauer’s work on cultural landscapes is most famously encapsulated in his formula: “Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, and the cultural landscape is the result” (1963: 343). This focus on the resulting cultural landscape—an integration of the physical and the human worlds together—marked a departure from the biogeographic focus of Humboldt and other geographers preceding Sauer, and human geography has since attended much more thoroughly to the cultural, rather than the physical, aspects of place and landscape. Nevertheless, for Sauer, landscapes were always material formations in the world, and he advanced geography’s role as observing, documenting, and studying these formations. “The field of geography is always a reading of the face of the earth” (1963: 393), he wrote.

Though also a methodological pioneer, Sauer was not the only or the first geographer to “read” landscapes to decipher the present and past. Geographers J. B. Jackson, D. W. Meinig, and Peirce K. Lewis followed a similar method. J. B. Jackson emphasized the role of participation in perceiving the landscape. The vernacular landscape, one of Jackson’s main conceptual contributions, is “the material world of ordinary life – the world of houses, cars, roads, sidewalks...people improvising and elaborating a life far removed from both metropolitan centres of power an abstract intellectual theorization” (Wylie 2007: 43). The vernacular landscape is one filled with meaning and symbol. Jackson attended to the marginal landscapes that other geographers ignored, to the fluid, energetic landscapes of technological and social change that dominated the United States in the middle of the twentieth century. Peirce K. Lewis, of Sauer’s Berkeley School, picked up on some of Jackson’s trends, and honed in on the reading of the landscape:

All human landscape has cultural meaning, no matter how ordinary that landscape may be...Our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears, in tangible, visible form. We rarely think of landscape that way, and so the cultural record we have “written” in the landscape is liable to be more truthful than most autobiographies because we are less self-conscious about how we describe ourselves...Like books, landscapes can be read, but unlike books, they were not meant to be read. (1982: 175, original emphasis)

With these approaches, landscape is a highly visual and, to varying degrees, meaningful ongoing record of cultural values, and the influence of Sauer’s inductivist approach to landscape morphology is evident. Recall that on Sauer’s view, landscape is not a lofty subject for study: it surrounds us in our everyday lives and is self-evident without extensive theorizing. For Lewis, landscape reading is diagnostic: the landscape reveals clues and truths about its respective culture. Even if these readers of landscape attend to cultural and symbolic meanings beyond Sauer’s empirical focus on artifacts and morphological patterns, they share the same grounding assumptions.

These early landscape studies have been highly influential in the way in which landscape is theorized and understood in the present, and landscape has increasingly become a way to come to know and understand human cultures in and with the environment. Depending on the field, the cultural landscape is defined and studied in a variety of ways that overlap and occasionally contrast. In anthropology, the cultural landscape is the site in which the social life of culture takes place, and as such, it does not are not generally feature as an object of study isolated from the life ways central to anthropological and ethnographic investigation. This

difference in method from Sauer's European and highly visual perspective, where the cultural landscape is read like a textual product of ways of life and nature together, has meant that place and cultural landscape, while not completely ignored in anthropology, have not become so focal as in geography.¹⁶ The fields of physical and cultural geography, by contrast and following Sauer, have oriented themselves around the cultural landscape approached it as the interweaving of human and natural features and pressures in a particular place over durations of time. The concept has also been adopted more recently in the physical and natural sciences to highlight anthropic pressures on landscapes and natural processes.¹⁷ Architecture, landscape design, and studies of the built environment have also been informed by the cultural landscape concept as the fusing of human practices and traditions with their natural surroundings. Designers like Christopher Alexander and Amos Rapoport seized upon historic and folk cultural landscapes as exemplars of human dwelling that respond to and skillfully craft the nonhuman world, and by studying such exemplars, they aimed to design cultural landscapes that were also organic and harmonious ways of living in and connecting with one's human and nonhuman surroundings.¹⁸ Cultural and vernacular landscapes, from a design perspective, contain patterns that have been honed over centuries and thus contain tried wisdom that can be gleaned from their study. For Rapoport and his Environment-Behavior studies, the cultural landscape represents an ideal form:

Cultural landscapes are thus ultimately a reflection of some schema of an idealized landscape given concrete expression through the application of systems of rules and how to do things...In this sense cultural landscapes approximate, however imperfectly, some ideal notion of ideal people living ideal lives in an ideal environment. (1992: 36)

While this approach will be of limited use for my dissertation, Rapoport's focus and language is helpful in reminding that cultural landscapes are not only viewed but *participated in*: that those involved in making and even those who recognize a landscape for its historical or cultural identity participate in a system of rules and identifications that bespeak the culture and its history in place. This can help

16. For work on this theme, see Hirsch & O'Hanlon (eds.), *The Anthropology of Landscape* (1995), and especially Peter Gow's chapter in that volume "Land, People, and Paper in Western Amazonia" for a discussion of the visual limitations of landscape in anthropology. For one example of the tragic limits of place in contemporary ethnography, see David Lipset's "Place in the Anthropocene" (2014).

17. See, for instance, Farina 1995; 2000. For a focus on biodiversity see Pretty et al. 2009 and for ecosystem services see Plieninger et al. 2013.

18. For example, see Alexander's *A Timeless Way of Building* (1979), the second volume of his Pattern Language project and Rapoport's *The Meaning of the Built Environment* (1980) and "On Cultural Landscapes" (1992).

explain why I, personally, am influenced by the defining cultural systematicity that makes, for instance, the upland fells recognizable as a cultural landscape even if I have not so much as seen these places in person. This is only to underscore how these places constitute and consolidate personal and community identity, a pathway that is often invoked and gestured at but rarely elaborated.

The cultural landscape is also an object of preservation. Natural and cultural heritage sites of “outstanding universal value” have been protected under the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)’s World Heritage Convention, which was enacted in 1972.¹⁹ However, in 1992, UNESCO specifically began considering cultural landscapes for preservation, and in 1993, Tongariro National Park in New Zealand was the first cultural landscape added to the World Heritage List. Here, too, the point is that cultural landscapes encompass the combination of cultural and natural heritage that had previously been preserved as separate entities. As Mechthild Rössler explains, cultural landscapes

... illustrate the evolution of societies and human establishments throughout the ages, as influenced by the advantages or the constraints of their natural and social environment. They are therefore an addition to, rather than a replacement of, mixed [natural and cultural] properties.²⁰

These developments expanded interest in cultural landscapes to history, heritage studies, and other related fields.

To make a rather crude division, we can understand the geographic and landscape-studies traditions as using the cultural landscape concept descriptively, that is, the cultural landscape as operating as a description of the world and the ways in which human and nonhuman factors commingle over time in distinctive ways in different places. (This might also prescribe a method of studying them.) But separately, there are traditions that weigh the concept normatively, that ascribe

19. The World Heritage Convention defines cultural heritage this way: “Cultural heritage refers to monuments, groups of buildings and sites with historical, aesthetic, archaeological, scientific, ethnological or anthropological value. Natural heritage refers to outstanding physical, biological, and geological formations, habitats of threatened species of animals and plants and areas with scientific, conservation or aesthetic value.” (Available online: <http://www.unesco.org/1972-convention-2/> Estonian National Commission for UNESCO no date.)

20. I first came across this reference in Heyd 2005 (p. 341) and am quoting Rössler almost verbatim from Heyd’s paper. See Rössler 2000 for a discussion of the types of cultural landscapes eligible for UNESCO protection.

value to the places on the basis of their *being* cultural landscapes.²¹ The most significant area to develop this register of the cultural landscape has been heritage preservation and related fields (archeology, memory and cultural studies, et cetera) that take the cultural landscape as a valuable object in its own right that deserves preservation. Heritage preservation, for example, does not always view the cultural landscape as living (as in cultural geography) but as a repository or archive of past meanings and traditions that merit preservation, protection, and interpretation.²² As such, cultural landscapes in this normative register do not simply refer to any landscape that bears traces of human inscriptions past or present, but specific instantiations—particular and exemplary places—that hold important meanings or are themselves significant artifacts of past and ongoing human cultures. On its broadest construction (following J.B. Jackson, for instance) cultural landscapes are the vernacular of human life in the world and so include carparks, highways, suburbs, and other unremarkable and even undesirable or regrettable places. These are, nevertheless, places that manifest the influence of particular human cultures in the nonhuman environment,²³ and are revealing of human ways of life, say, in late capitalism. However, the normative register of cultural landscapes is much more restrictive, and the term is used for sites already deemed valuable, usually for their uniqueness, history, beauty, complexity, et cetera.

More detailed and specified work on landscape offers finer distinctions than this. For instance, Marc Antrop's work, which offers a more historical perspective on cultural landscapes and landscape change, is remarkably helpful in clarifying distinctions between traditional and present day (or what he terms post-modern) cultural landscapes, explaining attitudes towards both and spelling out their specific merits. In his paper "Why landscapes of the past are important for the future" (2005), Antrop distinguishes between traditional landscapes, that is, "pre-18th century landscapes, which still have preserved many remnants and structures going back to a remote past" (2005: 23); industrialized landscapes (from the 19th-century through World War II); and post-modern (and post-World War II) landscapes that are "characterized by increasing globalization and urbanization"

21. Artnzen 2002 develops a similar distinction in his discussion of a broad and narrow construction of cultural landscapes in ecophilosophy: "...the broad conception that nature serves as a mere substratum, a recipient of human transformation, for the formation of the cultural landscape, whereas a cultural landscape in the narrow sense requires that nature through its conditions and processes somehow be a participant in its formation and development...it is cultural landscape in this sense that is of interest to the ecophilosopher, for it is a type of human imprint on the land that may well be consistent with an ethic concerned with the integration of humans with nature." (32-33)

22. See, for example, the essays in *Cultural Landscapes: Balancing Nature and Heritage in Preservation Practice*, Richard Longstreth (ed.), 2008.

23. And more recently, the field of discard studies that studies sites of use and waste and the wastescapes produced. See, e.g., Liboiron 2013 "How to read a landscape" and the Discard Studies Blog that she maintains: <https://discardstudies.com/>.

(2005: 23). Each type reflects the ways of life and demographics of the period of its creation. Traditional landscapes, the result of close ties to the land that “contain the complex history of a place or region,” (2005: 25) tended to be highly localized. They generally changed very slowly, contributing to the way in which specific landscapes were aligned with a sense of a homeland and regional identity. Industrialized landscapes arose out of demographic and economic changes and land and agriculture reforms in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Often, these cultural landscapes accomplished quick changes, for instance with social and technological revolutions and world wars, wherein the literal landscape and the geopolitical landscapes “completed the definite break with the past” (2005: 26). The post-war, post-industrial landscapes increasingly represent the forces of urbanization and globalization and as such, are modernist and tend to be more homogenous across places. But if, as this characterization shows, landscapes always change over time, what should we make of the specific concern about changes to cultural landscapes in the present? Antrop observes that it is the loss of “diversity, coherence, and identity” (2005: 21) characteristic of the stable and distinctive traditional landscapes that the move towards post-modern iterations usher in.

1.5 THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE IN PHILOSOPHY

How has the cultural landscape concept been approached in philosophy? Minimally, it must be said, as there is very little work that touches on the cultural landscape concept directly. But it has been the subject of growing attention, and I would suggest that the work that does exist engages both its descriptive and the normative registers.²⁴ On the descriptive side, there is a growing recognition of the fact of cultural landscapes even by those environmental philosophers who focus mainly on the overwhelmingly natural, or seemingly unhumanized, parts of the earth. Arguably, the entire anthropocene discourse in environmental thinking and philosophy could be understood in this frame: the accounting for the various, enduring, and ubiquitous ways in which humans have influenced the earth is to see the entire earth as a collection of cultural landscapes in varying degrees. A more particular example of this—with considerable ramifications in environmental philosophy—is the recent recognition that areas thought to be untouched wilderness in the New World are cultural: that is, that they were made through indigenous presence and habitation that Europeans did not at first perceive.²⁵ Of course, prescriptive ideas follow from

24. Separately, a few philosophers have argued for nature *as* cultural heritage. See Hammond (1985) and Thompson (2000).

25. And arguably are still ignored. For contrasting discussions of this example, see Adrian Phillips (1998) and Val Plumwood (2006).

these descriptions, and even the descriptions are not altogether uncontroversial (cf. Arntzen 2002). Turning to the normative register, some environmental philosophers begin expressly with the cultural landscape as a site of human values. Their aim is not simply to preserve these values or sites, but to explicate and unpack these values and the human/nonhuman relations that have given rise to them. I will discuss this treatment of the cultural landscape in some greater depth in the chapters to follow, but key figures here are Sven Arntzen, Thomas Heyd, Martin Drenthen, Glenn Delière, Paul Knights, and Marion Hourdequin,²⁶ as well as Edward Casey, Mick Smith, and Forest Clingerman, though for the last three, while their work is still relevant to studies of the cultural landscape, place is the more important term.²⁷ In their volume *Humans in the Land: The Ethics and Aesthetics of the Cultural Landscape* (2008),²⁸ Sven Arntzen and Emily Brady introduce the cultural landscape as “a common denominator of diverse forms of integration of humans and nature” (2008: 12), overcoming the problematic human/nature dualism that much environmental philosophy has tried to breach, and as such, is ripe for development in environmental philosophy. They make the strong claim that “the cultural landscape be made the focus of environmental philosophy, ethics and aesthetics” (2008: 13). I take this claim to pertain to both cultural landscapes in the descriptive and normative senses in that I take them to be saying that the fact that cultural landscapes are pervasive is an important fact for environmental philosophy (descriptive) and moreover that the particularly important cultural landscapes (normative) should be given central focus in environmental philosophy. Their claim is echoed in a paper in their 2008 volume by John O’Neill who also

26. Arntzen 2002 & Arntzen & Brady (Eds.) 2008; Drenthen 2009; Drenthen 2014a; Delière, 2014; Hourdequin, 2013; Hourdequin & Havlick (eds.) 2015; Knights 2014. Whereas these authors primarily focus on the cultural landscapes of Europe and of North America, Thomas Heyd is distinctive here in his extensive and prominent use of indigenous cultures and their relations with landscapes. See *Encountering Nature* (2007), also Heyd 2014.

27. Related consideration for the built environment (a term not completely synonymous with cultural landscapes but with significant overlap) also began to develop in environmental ethics somewhat recently. See the essays in Warwick Fox’s edited volume *Ethics and the Built Environment* (2000) and also Roger King’s “Environmental Ethics and the Built Environment” (2000) and Alasdair Gunn’s “Rethinking Communities: Environmental Ethics in an Urbanized World” (1998).

28. This collection is a great contribution to philosophy and the cultural landscape. Several essays focus on the particular practices and virtues associated with particular landscapes and particular etiquette associated with ways of engaging with the landscape. Clare Palmer explores what it can mean to ‘care for the land’ using Wainwright’s sense of the term and emphasizes how this kind of sentiment will encode for several, different, and conflicting practices or attitudes, depending on one’s relationship to the landscape. In her essay, Emily Brady praises traditional cultural landscapes made through traditional farming practices for their “particular forms of engagement through which we might discover the aesthetic and other values in nature and extend our own self-understanding” (2008: 123)—that is, that there are ways in which the cultural landscape is in a unique position with regard to offering these attributes. She compares traditional farming and industrial farming practices to bring this out. Brady suggests that these landscapes are dialectical: that they contain two interactions to bring out a new product wherein all three parties remain distinct and the product remains in process.

wants to flip the focus to put cultural landscapes in the forefront of environmental philosophy: "...we best think about environmental values starting with cultural landscapes" (2008: 24). O'Neill is careful to point out that this approach does not have to result in blind anthropocentrism complete or social constructivism:

The picture of a world in which humans see nothing but the reflections of themselves is a peculiar modern human conceit that our constructivist times tend to encourage. There is a core of environmentalism that is properly critical of that conceit. We live in a larger world of which human life is just a part and which forms a larger context for human lives. (2008: 39)

Another example of this broadening, though by distinctively different reasoning, can be found in a 2014 paper by Glenn Deliège. Deliège uses conflicts over management of biodiversity in cultural landscapes to clarify why nature is valuable and in so doing also shines light on why the cultural landscape is valuable. In the context of Europe, the landscape became what it is "through a delicate interplay between natural processes and human manipulation of those processes...so melded together that it is often hard to distinguish between the two" (2014: 109-110). Where environmentalists are often mistaken is in devaluing these landscapes on the basis of the human hand in their creation and maintenance. This "Midas complex" (2014: 120), Deliège argues, is based on a misunderstanding of what is valuable in nature: it is nature's endurance through time—great lengths of time—that makes it valuable. "Nature, left to its own devices, seems to have a kind of permanence; it seems to transcend the fleeting coincidences of time" (2014: 120). Related to this permanence, natural areas possess a strongly embodied meaning for Deliège:

Certain objects seem to hold a surplus of meaning, in the sense that they point to something beyond themselves while at the same time fixing attention upon themselves as unique and irreplaceable objects. In such instances, we can speak of objects having a "strongly embodied meaning": the meaning, of value, such objects have cannot be expressed or instantiated other than through their particular material manifestations, yet at the same time the meaning they have cannot be reduced to their particular material manifestations either. (2014: 111)

Based on Deliège's broad conception of natural areas, cultural landscapes will surely also count as having this strongly embodied meaning that points in the direction of a time horizon and endurance that is much longer and has "the patent of permanence" (2014: 113). Tellingly, on Deliège's view, natural and cultural

landscapes derive their value, at least in part, from the same source: from enduring over time. This is telling because the natural and cultural landscapes in question for Deliège are not usually distinct entities.

Another, and indeed one of the main values of the cultural landscape as explored by philosophers, is their identity value. Cultural landscapes are places that have comprised in an important way the identity of individuals and communities. Sven Arntzen (2002) writes:

They somehow represent or embody people's identity at the local, regional or national level or as members of an ethnic group. From this point of view, the preservation of a cultural landscape is motivated by people's need to maintain a sense of identity as individuals and as members of a community. This kind of preservation helps maintain a sense of belonging, which presupposes the continuity of lives and activities of the present with those of the past. (2002: 33)

Cultural landscapes, then, offer a form of continuity with the meaningful past, and this, Arntzen argues, can be a source of and context for meaning. Arntzen means *meaning* in the sense of the fitting together of parts and structures into an ordered or coherent whole, which

confers on each thing a certain significance as part of the whole. Meaning in this sense is much like "the meaning of life." A cultural landscape incorporates such meaning and so has identity value in that it provides a setting or context in which people can view their existence, lives and practices. When a cultural landscape's identity value is a reason for its preservation, the meaning associated with the landscape helps determine the manner in which humans ought to relate to land. (2002: 33)

Even if the cultural landscape does not necessarily perform the prescriptive role Arntzen suggests here, it is interesting to environmental philosophers for the meanings it participates in and transmits over time. In his work on the cultural landscape, Thomas Heyd points out that heritage is bestowed from the past onto persons in the present and is in this way like an inheritance, but it is an inheritance that is shared across groups:

by all those who belong to a nation, ideological affiliation, or other affinity group...As such, heritage belongs to some group in atrans-temporal manner: it is something to be enjoyed not only by certain people in this generation, but also by the relevant set of people across time, possibly for indefinitely long future periods. (2005: 340)

However, as Heyd points out, it is not clear how a cultural landscape should be preserved once it is designated worthy of such protection, and further, environmental philosophy, which has dealt almost exclusively with the protection and preservation of the *nonhuman* world, does not seem well positioned to answer this question. What Heyd proposes is a reconsideration of the nature of culture and conversely, the culture of nature (see Heyd 2007).

Paul Knights (2014) has argued that as a kind of inheritance, the cultural landscapes we are endowed carry a moral weight. Europe's cultural landscapes, made up of mosaics of meadows, heaths, pastures, woodlands (et cetera), have been valued for their offering of biodiversity and have thus been preserved and even restored on these grounds. Knights, however, argues that it is not only the biodiversity that is valuable but the landscapes and ecosystems that support this as they are *themselves* a rich cultural heritage, emblematic of the values of our predecessors:

The relationships that our predecessors had with the cultural ecosystems they created, cultivated and inhabited were pervasive: they bestowed vernacular names...wild species were harvested from them and formed the basis of local cuisines...folklore and mythology surrounded them...That our predecessors had such rich relationships with these ecosystems imposes [the] obligation on us to understand cultural ecosystems as the source of these influences (2014: 105).

The argument Knights mounts rests on an intergenerational contract we have to our predecessors and a claim that showing callous disregard for these landscapes actually harms the dead.²⁹ We thus have a duty to these places following out of our duties to those who preceded us. Along different reasoning, Martin Drenthen argues that cultural landscapes have not only historical and ecological significance but moral significance as well because "they are hybrids, that testify to the various ways in which human history and then natural world are deeply interrelated" (2009: 10). They speak to us about ourselves and our cultural histories and so debates about

29. Knights uses O'Neill's development of narrative ethics to ground this claim. Narratives both describe and evaluate lives, and this approach grants how many of our projects extend beyond the scope of our individual lives and how others can harm us by disregarding the things and projects we valued after we die.

nature will thereby tap into these. Drenthen's work frequently circles around the issue of legibility of the landscape and the task of reading and making sense of the natural and human world in its layers and imbrications.

Knights' and Drenthen's points overlap with another aspect that Arntzen and Brady discuss: that the cultural landscape operates as "a meeting place of the present with the past" (2008: 15). The cultural landscape offers a vast repository of signs, clues, and traces of human history and ways of life in consort with natural forces. As much as it is an archive, the cultural landscape also presses moral questions on us as readers of—or participants in—in its forms and meanings. "The manner in which we relate to the landscape involves deciding who we are and choosing who we want to be. It is a matter of determining identity, insofar as the identity of humans in a cultural context is inextricably linked to the past" (2008: 15). That is, in confronting the past through the landscape, we respond to the landscape, implicitly choosing how we relate to it. Questions of whether cultural landscapes are continued, disrupted, or transformed have become especially pertinent in ecological restoration. Decisions of how and what to restore relate not only to ecological criteria but also, usually more implicitly, to what features of a landscape's history matter to its continuity and human valuation of it. These kinds of discussion about cultural, or heritage landscapes gained more purchase in discussions of the Chicago Prairie Restoration (Gobster & Hull (eds.) 2000) and have impacted ecological restoration projects since. How the narrative of a cultural landscape or place more generally can or should be continued in restoration has been the subject of Marion Hourdequin's work on environmental restoration in complex cultural landscapes.³⁰ In one example, Hourdequin (2013) presents the case of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, a munitions facility-turned-wildlife refuge, to ask what the role the history—especially when the history of the of cultural landscape in question is not proud but ignoble—should play in restoration. If landscapes are part of the stories we tell about ourselves and our cultural histories as these philosophers claim, then how we treat them—whether we carry them on in restoration, embrace their inevitable change, or elect to disrupt them entirely—will be morally relevant.

Another environmental philosopher, Andrew Light, makes a parallel call for the deliberate incorporation of everyday, common places into environmental philosophy, of broadening environmentalism to embrace the quotidian and accessible:

30. See also her edited volume with David Havlik: *Restoring Layered Landscapes: History, Ecology and Culture* (2015) for a collection of papers related to this theme.

If environmentalism is to avoid becoming a special interest then environmental concern must not only be about our connection with the natural world but our connection with people, and hence based in our understanding that environmental problems go hand in hand with human social problems rather than representing a moral realm outside of those problems. (2007: 4-5)

He advises that thinking of place, rather than only of nature, invites consideration of the “storied relationship between people and the things around them” (2007: 18). On Light’s view, place offers a direct route of engagement in environmental philosophy that can be more inclusive by broadening the base of what counts as “environmental.”

1.6 CONCLUSION

Indeed, philosophers have begun to ask how we deal with cultural landscapes in nature protection, preservation, and restoration, and in this way have begun to engage with some of the work done by scholars in other fields. This is important work. This chapter has explored the conceptual background that we will later see rewilding is emerging out of, but an implication of this is that place and cultural landscape deserve more attention by environmental philosophers than they have yet received. We have seen how place has been treated in disciplines outside of philosophy—by humanistic geographers who emphasize the phenomenological and lived-in quality of place and who consider the built home the originary place; by cultural geographers who ask what other social relations constitute experiences of place and govern who does and doesn’t belong; and by social scientists whose work has tried to tease apart the affective but also demographic dimensions that inspire us to care deeply for certain places. We might be then moved to ask a more philosophical question of why place—and by extension, why the cultural landscape—can be so valuable in the first place. This is the question that will occupy most of the following chapter. In Chapter two, I continue exploring place by turning to existential philosophy to understand the fundamental role place plays in the human experience of the world.

PLACE AS EXISTENTIAL

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The wide applications of the concept of place have shown it as a versatile and rich concept: a general category that also fixes to and habilitates particulars and allows for rich tellings of its interiority, evocative detail, and thick description. Place has been a fertile concept, brought out in humanistic and cultural geography, the social sciences, literature, and environmental thinking. But how is it that place can be so broadly and productively studied and applied?

In the previous chapter, I surveyed some of the leading ways that the concept of place has been treated in other disciplines. These approaches have advanced thinking about place, but not in the specific existential way that place has been of interest in philosophy. We have seen some of the important developments in place-thinking, but we have not yet explored why place has featured in these fields—what about it makes it a significant concept that is often deeply meaningful and why it has enjoyed such wide purchase. To do this, we need to turn to philosophy and the grounding of place in an existential understanding of human experience in the world. That is the content of this chapter, *Place as Existential*. In answering why place is so meaningful, we will see that place is fundamental: that place structures human involvement in the world. The central thinker for developing the centrality of place in philosophy is Martin Heidegger, and I will rehearse his key ideas that have been influential in the development of place in philosophy, environmental and otherwise. After summarizing these major contributions, I then turn to environmental philosophy to consider several of the main avenues in which these ideas have been incorporated and pursued. How do these developments move place

into an ethical register; how has and can place include nature and the nonhuman; and does or how might an emphasis on place re-organize environmental ethics and its commitments?

2.1 HEIDEGGER & PLACE

The kinds of questions that impress themselves upon environmental philosophers—questions about nature’s value; of human duties towards nonhuman animals or entities; what virtues humans should cultivate in order to preserve or protect the natural world, et cetera—are not the kind of questions that Heidegger himself endeavored to answer. Nevertheless his thinking has had enormous impact on environmental philosophy, especially in the continental tradition. If environmental philosophy asks fundamental questions of how humans do and should live, how we dwell, how we are in the world, and what these things mean about the kinds of beings we are, it is deeply Heideggerian, and to many environmental philosophers, the movement from Heidegger’s ontological questions to questions of attitudes about technology in our contemporary lives or how dwelling can be environmentally sensitive, et cetera, is an obvious extension.³¹ For Heidegger, however, the question is always the question of being [*das Sein*]: what *being* means. He undertakes his inquiry into the meaning of being through Dasein, the mode of being that we as humans have, that is always already in the world, which is to say, always already in place. It is this close association between Dasein’s being and place that has led some scholars of Heidegger to claim that the question of place is just as central to Heidegger’s thinking as is the question of being.³² I will not endeavor to defend this claim; it is enough for my purposes that Heidegger concerns himself with spatiality and with place, and I will use his founding work to ground and explain the existential significance of place to our human experience of the world. I will present only some of Heidegger’s key ideas and concepts that are fundamental to work on place and philosophy deriving from him.³³ We see from Heidegger that place is

31. There is a great amount of literature here: some important contributions include Michael Zimmerman 1983; 1993; Foltz, 1984; Albert Borgmann’s *Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life* (1984); the essays in McWhorter and Stenstad’s edited volume *Heidegger and the Earth: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (2009); John van Buren 1995; Vincent Blok 2014; Bryan Bannon’s *From Mastery to Mystery* (2014); and David Storey’s *Naturalizing Heidegger* (2015).

32. The central and unrecognized significance of place to Heidegger’s thinking is the premise of Malpas’ *Heidegger’s Topology: Being, Place, World* (2006). John van Buren also argues this point in *The Young Heidegger: Rumor of the Hidden King* (1994).

33. This is meant as very brief sketch of place and spatiality in Heidegger that assumes some basic familiarity with Heidegger’s thought and terminology. For a more extensive treatment, see Malpas, *Heidegger’s Topology: Being, Place, World* (2006), and Malpas’ earlier work on place and space in *Place & Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (2004).

one of the fundamental structures of our experience of world. Place then develops into an important and broader concept that environmental philosophers have used and that I see as important to our present-day understandings of conservation and environment.

2.1.1 Dasein, Being-in-the-world, & existential spatiality

The connection between Dasein and world is hard to sever, even, as above, when even introducing the term of Dasein that Heidegger coined to designate and describe the kind of being humans are. Dasein can only be understood, as I intimated above, as being already in the world. And it is this co-relation that makes spatiality and place possible for Dasein. Heidegger references this even in the term ‘Dasein’ itself. *Da-sein*, in German, means there-being, but importantly, the *there* in this term is not meant in a way that says that Dasein is over there like an object might be ‘there.’ The *Da* of Dasein is not an indication of the ‘there’ or ‘where’ of a location or position, but taken with *sein*—being—indicates that the being *has* a ‘there.’ In his Zollikon Seminars, Heidegger explicates that the *Da* of Dasein—the *there* of being—“should designate the openness where beings can be present for the human being and the human being also for himself. The *Da* of being distinguishes the humanness of the human being” (Heidegger 1993: 126). Or, as Malpas explains, the meaning of Dasein conjures up Dasein’s own topological structure where its mode of being is “constituted in terms of its “there.”³⁴ Malpas is trying to show how Dasein, uniquely, is always *there* in the meaningful sense that the *there* bears on Dasein’s being. However, because of the kind of being Dasein is, any attempts to explicate the meaning of *Dasein* on its own will inevitably be limited and likely unclear. To make this clearer requires understanding that Dasein’s fundamental structure is being-in-the-world.

As Heidegger’s hyphenated wording suggests, being-in-the-world [*In-der-Welt-sein*] is a “unitary phenomenon” (H 53 p. 78),³⁵ and the full meaning of this phenomenon cannot be completely captured when the phrase is decomposed into its component words. Ultimately, *Being and Time* spells out this relationship in full,³⁶ although it takes most of the three-part work to accomplish this. It is enough at this point to examine the being-in [*In-sein*] component of being-in-the-world, which is meant in a specific way. As with the *Da* of Dasein, the being-in is meant

34. (Malpas 2006: 67) See also Malpas 2006: 48-51 for a more complete explanation of the *Da* of Dasein.

35. I will use H line numbers and page numbers from the 1962 edition of *Being & Time* when citing this text.

36. Worldhood and Dasein’s entity as being concerned with the average-everydayness, respectively, comprise the other pieces of the term, and Heidegger takes up these parts of his investigation later in *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1962).

not in the sense of which an object can be in a space that contains it, like the water that is in a glass or as in Aristotle's *topos* wherein earth or any object is contained by the space surrounding it.³⁷ The *in* of being-in derives from *innan*, to reside, and as we will discuss, of dwelling.³⁸ Hubert Dreyfus suggests that the *in* of *In-sein* is more akin to the *in* of being in love, an *in* that suggests involvement,³⁹ rather than, for example, being in the classroom, an *in* that suggests location.

But this is not to suggest that being-in does not have a spatial element. Dreyfus' point, and the point of differentiating the *in* of Dasein's being-in from the *in* of a cup in the cupboard, is to indicate that Dasein is the kind of being that is *involved in* its surrounding world. Dasein's being-in-the-world is indeed spatial, but this is because Dasein is importantly the kind of being that can encounter things and be involved with them. Dasein surely can be in space, rendered like the cup in the cupboard, e.g., when people are counted as residing in certain places in a census, but Heidegger notes that this kind of measuring is separate from Dasein's *own* way of being-in, and it is the latter, Dasein's being-in-the-world, that makes Dasein's existential spatiality possible.

Why is Dasein's spatiality existential? The reason for this is also the reason that separates Dasein as a kind of being from other beings that are mere objects in the world, namely that Dasein is the kind of being for whom its own being is an issue. Dasein encounters the surrounding world with an attitude of concerned absorption, which is to say that, simply, things matter to Dasein. "Dasein, when understood ontologically, is care" (H 57 p. 84), Heidegger writes. David Morris' rewording of this point explains care as an "existential comportment that inherently enwraps our being in something greater than ourselves."⁴⁰ In all of Dasein's worldly doings—in any way that Dasein does anything—the way Dasein comports itself towards the world is with care or concern, and as such, Dasein acts out of oneself into the world that is greater than ourselves. In explaining how care and concern shows up in our activities, Heidegger lists only a few of the ways in which the care he means is manifest:

37. *Physics IV*, 5, 212a20 (Aristotle 1983)

38. See H 54 p. 80: "The entity to which Being-in in this signification belongs is one which we have characterized as that entity which in each case I myself am [bin]. The expression 'bin' is connected with 'bei', and so 'ich bin' means in its turn "I reside" or "dwell alongside" the world, as that which is familiar to me in such and such a way."

39. Like being *in business*, Dreyfus' other example, being in love is a state of relation (Dreyfus 1991: 41). Business and love are not *places* one ever finds oneself in, but situations of involvement in which we find ourselves.

40. For Morris, place is this enveloping or enwrapping of our being in world (2004: 127).

...Producing something, attending to something and looking after it, making use of something, giving something up and letting it go, undertaking, accomplishing, evincing, interrogating...All these ways of Being-in have *concern* as their kind of being...leaving undone, neglecting, renouncing... these too are ways of concern. (H 56-57 p. 83)

All of these activities and doings, notably even those that are seemingly constituted by the *absence of concern*, are nevertheless expressions of Dasein's concern. But how do these, or Dasein's ontology of care, relate to Dasein's existential spatiality?

Dasein is spatial in a very particular sense that relates to Dasein's concern, and this is because Dasein's spatiality is shaped by de-severance⁴¹ [*Ent-fernung*] and directionality⁴² [*Ausrichtung*]. De-severance is what Heidegger calls Dasein's way of orientation such that when Dasein pays attention to a thing of concern it is *brought close* to Dasein. This bringing close removes the distance that severs Dasein from its object of care. But Dasein does not actually eliminate the spatial distance between itself and the object of its attention in de-severance. Rather, Dasein brings the object close *by its paying attention to it*; Dasein's attention and concern bridges this distance. Heidegger illustrates this phenomenon by examining how a man sees a painting that is on the other side of the room. Heidegger's point is that the man de-severs the painting *through* his attention to and involvement with the painting (H 107, p. 141). Despite its physical distance from him on the wall across the room, the painting is brought close to him through his de-severance, closer even than his glasses, which sit right before his eyes. John Pickles uses the idea of de-severance to contrast Dasein's existential spatiality with the form of spatiality we tend to think of:

Man's spatiality in being deseverant is precisely always being there alongside and with the activities in which the person is involved. For this reason, man cannot be said to move from one point to another in geometrical space, but only change his 'here.' Nor can distances be crossed because these are not fixed metrics, but are projected from the place man is concernfully involved. (1985: 167)

De-severance shows how distance, proximity, and spatiality for Dasein are determined by concern; they are not measurable distance in space. When Dasein is concernfully absorbed in an object in the world, its attention to that object makes

41. "Dasein is essentially de-severance—that is, it is spatial." H 108 p. 143

42. "Directedness with regard to right and left is based upon the essential directionality of Dasein in general, and this directionality in turn is essentially co-determined by Being-in-the-world." H 110 p. 144

it proximal. Through de-severance, Dasein makes things available to it. Dasein de-severs and brings the objects of its momentary care close; this is a way in which Dasein involves itself in places and in the world.

The second feature of Dasein's spatiality—directionality—expresses how Dasein is oriented in space, and this already shows up in Dasein's de-severance. When the man focuses on a painting across the room from him, he is able to bring it close to him through his de-severance only because of his directionality. That is, he can only focus on a painting (or anything else for that matter) because his attention has direction. Rather than being dispersed evenly over all of his surroundings, his attention is focused on particular things that concern him. This is Dasein's way of experiencing space, and this is how de-severance and directionality relate to the final element of Dasein's spatiality: region. The space of action for Dasein is what Heidegger refers to as region. Region is the way in which we organize space, although for Dasein, region is always prior to the idea of space; region is more primordial. Region is the space of the *zuhanden*; region is space as *zuhandenheit*.⁴³ When the man focuses on the painting, he draws it out of its region, which is on the wall, perhaps in a gallery, into his attention. Similarly, when I find that I need an aspirin, I go to the medicine cabinet—the region of the house that I know the medicines belong to. I direct myself to the region where I know the aspirin is kept. Region is the orienting context for the ready-to-hand. In this case, I actually physically do bring the aspirin close to me in order to ingest it. But directionality, de-severance, and region are the ingredients of our spatiality all the time: when fixating on a painting across the room, trying to make out a sign in the distance, or focusing in on a conversation we see taking place at a party so that we can overhear it without moving physically closer to the speakers. All of these examples show how we organize space out of our concern for things in the world. We do not simply encounter space as homogenous or as a blank matrix onto which we project meaningful regions. Regions are the way in which Dasein encounters space

43. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger makes the distinction between two modes of access Dasein has to world: the *zuhanden*, translated in English as the ready-to-hand, and the *vorhanden*, translated as the present-at-hand. Heidegger is claiming that things in the world show up to Dasein in one of these two modes: as *zuhanden*, entities disclose themselves as useful, or as handy. They show up in their usefulness. A classic example is that we encounter a hammer first as a tool for hammering; this is the mode of the *zuhanden*. But Heidegger's point is that it is not only tools that present themselves as *zuhanden*: the *zuhanden* is the primary mode in which Dasein has access to world. By contrast, the *vorhanden*, or present-at-hand, is a theoretical approach that is removed from the handiness or use of the entity Dasein encounters. We may take a detached, analytical or scientific attitude to an entity: perhaps we scrutinize the hammer to learn more about its properties. But Heidegger emphasizes that this mode is always secondary to the ready-to-hand approach: that things first appear to Dasein in their *zuhandenheit*, their handiness or readiness to hand. Thus, in claiming that region is the space of the *zuhanden*, Heidegger means that this is not a mathematical kind of space somehow outside of human life and experience, but rather region is the kind of space in which we are already immersed and that is already disclosed to us as meaningful because of our concerned involvement in it.

in the first place. Regionality is always in terms of where and how things belong with regard to our interests, projects, and concern. Out of these concerns and uses, regions arise. Regions organize the context of our activities; they group equipment together, as equipment is never in some place but is in a place where it belongs. But these regions are not added onto our understanding of space after the fact, like facts we would have to memorize about where things are and belong; rather, the world shows itself to us already in regions. In other words, our surroundings always are cast for us in terms of our projects and the things that concern us. There is no access to the world outside of this regionality.

Region also brings out the interpersonal, or shared character of space. For instance, if I directed a guest in my house, who was also in need of aspirin, to the medicine cabinet, she would likely be able to guess where in the apartment this could be found. The idea of keeping medicine in the bathroom is not an original idea I had when unpacking and ordering my apartment, but a received idea of where medicine belongs in a house. The medicine cabinet is often even a fixture of the bathroom; furniture that is installed and remains in place when tenants change. Guests to my apartment will likely expect to find aspirin there. Similarly, if I have run out of aspirin, I know in which stores and even which aisles of these stores to find it. We are able to discover regions of things in the world because regionality is importantly shared with others in the world.

Directionality, de-severance, and regionality comprise for Dasein its spatial being-in-the-world. They are equiprimordial for Dasein, that is, none of these modes is prior to the others, but they share the same level of immediacy or fundamentality in the human experience of space. This is evident in how the three interplay and cross-reference. Here-ness, for example, is constituted by the interplay of these modes of Dasein's spatiality: here-ness arises out of a spatial orientation towards what Dasein is concerned with, or what shows up to Dasein. In other words, it is obvious that wherever I am, that *that space* constitutes the "here" that I experience, but Heidegger's point is that each "here" is the spatial focusing of attention and engagement, and it is only from the modes of Dasein's spatiality that these, and thus any "here" can arise. Dasein's existential spatiality means that Dasein orients itself in the world through its concerned engagement with world, in each "here," and the things it encounters. This is what Being-in-the-world amounts to, and because the worldhood of the world is that which orients Dasein, we can see why speaking about Dasein without reference to the world in which Dasein is environed will miss Dasein's existential being and its existential mode of having space. The in-ness of Dasein's position is explicit, as Malpas points out: "In finding ourselves "in" the world, we find ourselves already "in" a place, already given over to and involved with things, with persons, with our lives" (2006: 39). Heidegger writes:

Dasein takes space in; this is to be understood literally. It is by no means just present-at-hand in a bit of space which its body fills up. In existing, it has already made room for its own leeway. It determines its own location in such a manner that it comes back from the space it has made room for to the “place” which it has reserved. (H 368 p. 419)

In being-in-the-world, Dasein *makes* space. This happens through all of Dasein’s activities, as modes of concern, which is the primordial structure of our way of being. Dasein is the kind of being that takes a stand on its being, and secondly, is the kind of being that finds itself always already engaged in, or wrapped up in things in the world. Things, for Dasein, are never only merely things: Dasein’s being is wrapped up in them and understands things in terms of their relevance for Dasein.

Translating these ideas into somewhat less abstract terms, in *Place and Experience* (2004) Jeff Malpas puts the idea of Dasein’s existential spatiality in touch with recent debates in analytic philosophy about mind, personhood, and agency. Bolstered as well with a few literary examples, Malpas defends place as the condition of possibility for human identity and engagement with the world. It is out of the experience of place that our subjective and objective senses of space can arise, as well as even the possibility of the social or of mental life. “Place is *integral to the very structure and possibility of experience*” (2004: 32, original emphasis), he writes.

Place is central in philosophy as well. Malpas locates in place the possibility for *any engaged* philosophical inquiry because it admits of our situatedness in the world.⁴⁴ Malpas also argues that because we are always already in place, situated in the world when we begin any inquiry, any inquiry, no matter how fundamental, arises out of this condition of situatedness in world. This is how Malpas argues that Heidegger’s mode of fundamental questioning,⁴⁵ which he takes philosophy to be interested in, is necessarily place-based. He connects this insight with other key

44. “To be given over in this way is to find ourselves already given over to a certain situatedness, to a world, to a “there.” It is to find ourselves already gathered into place. In this respect, we may say that questionability always presupposes *topos*, while *topos* always pre-supposes questionability” (Malpas 2006: 44).

45. “If we begin with the question of how it is that things can first come to presence, are indeed first “disclosed,” then our starting point would seem to lie in what can only be referred to as a fundamental happening that is the happening of presence or disclosedness—the happening of world—as such” (Malpas 2006: 15). Malpas also suggests that this means that the question of being—as it is a question at all—must also then be a question that relates to place: “For something to be what it is, however, is for the thing to stand forth in a certain fashion—to stand forth so that its own being is disclosed. Yet to be disclosed in this way is also for the thing to stand forth in such a way that its being is also open to question—for it to be possible for the question “what is it?”...to be possible” (Malpas 2006: 9).

spatial revelations in Heidegger's thinking and language: concepts like presencing [*Anwesen*], and clearing [*Lichtung*], and gathering⁴⁶ require a specific "there." (2006: 15). Malpas draws out the spatial character in the suggestion of gathering:

What is gathered is always gathered in its concreteness and particularity—it is "I" who is gathered, together with this thing and that...It seems natural, and inevitable, to describe such gatherings as a gathering that occurs in and through place since place names just such gathering in particularity. (2006: 16)

We have already seen how the "there" is central to our (Dasein's) being-in-the-world. Malpas highlights how this infuses Heidegger's thinking about philosophy, which is always a mode of questioning but that always will arise "only out of, and on the basis of, our own concrete existence" (Malpas 2006: 41). I take it that this point matters for anyone doing philosophy, whether Heidegger scholarship or otherwise, and it especially underscores the connection between Heidegger's philosophical ideas and environmental philosophy. Our human situatedness in place means that philosophy does not have to be applied, so to speak, to *environmental* questions,⁴⁷ if "environmental" refers to questions about how we are in or how we relate to or understand our surroundings. These are already philosophical questions; in asking them we are already engaged in meaningful inquiry and relation with our surroundings and our situatedness in the world, which is a world we share with others. But this situatedness, as Malpas points out, also raises its own questions and challenges: "...to be situated in this way is for that situatedness always to be in question" (2006: 42), which means that we have the challenge of understanding and appreciating this situatedness as a condition of possibility of asking but also a limitation on our asking. This question of access will show up again.

2.1.2 Dwelling

The specific way in which Dasein is situated in the world is elaborated by Heidegger in later writings. Concepts of space and place are even more obvious in these writings than in *Being and Time*, but as Theodore Schatzki observes, they take on a different aspect: "The analysis of the lived space of *Being and Time* does not resurface in the later work...Place and site are, instead, associated with...spaces

46. Malpas repeatedly uses the term gathering in reference to the happening of *Ereignis*. "Heidegger himself seems to have heard all three as included in "*Ereignis*": the idea of event/happening, of gathering/belonging, and of disclosing/revealing" (Malpas 2006: 216).

47. To be clear, with environmental I do not yet mean strictly ecological questions, though the broader, environmental questions of our surroundings and emplacement in the world will be of interest to many environmental (here, in the sense of ecological) philosophers.

with which human life is involved, in terms of how it proceeds” (2007: 52). This is best brought out in the theme of dwelling, which, in “Building Dwelling Thinking” (1951)⁴⁸ Heidegger develops as the way in which Dasein is on earth. However, dwelling might be thought of as a working out of the lived experience of space and place that Heidegger detailed in earlier works,⁴⁹ and as we have already seen (footnote 38) the idea of dwelling [*Wohnen*] was present in the etymology of Dasein in *Being and Time*.

Dwelling, as Heidegger explains in “Building Dwelling Thinking,” is “the manner in which humans *are* on the earth... To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell” (BDT: 147, original emphasis). However, dwelling has a specific character: Heidegger does not simply mean dwelling as living in a specific spot, but instead tracing the etymologies of dwelling [*wohnen*] and building [*bauen*], Heidegger recovers the meanings of sparing and preserving, of letting be, or in Malpas’ phrasing, of looking after, that comprise the nature of dwelling. Dwelling (and building) is another way of indicating how Dasein exists in the world as always immersed in it, through its engagements with its surroundings in such a way that it “safeguards each thing in its nature” (BDT: 149).

In order to highlight the centrality of dwelling to the existence of Dasein and to emphasize its significance, Heidegger inverts the common-sense relationship between dwelling and building in “Building Dwelling Thinking.” We are inclined to think that dwellings—the specific, built places where we live out our lives—would be the result of building. That we *build* dwellings seems to indicate that in this relation, building is primary and that only after building can we dwell. However, Heidegger makes the opposite claim: that it is only out of *dwelling* that building comes about. “We do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is, because we are *dwellers*” (BDT: 148, original emphasis) and “to build is in itself already to dwell” (BDT: 146). This inversion affirms the character of dwelling for Dasein as primary and prior to building. What can Heidegger possibly mean here? How can dwelling be prior to building when it seems that building and buildings must precede dwelling? Heidegger clarifies his meaning by explaining the etymology of building [*bauen*] to recover dwelling as one of its original meanings. Similarly, Heidegger traces the etymology of dwelling [*wohnen*] to recover its meaning of sparing or saving, by which he means letting something be and reveal itself as itself through this sparing. “Saving does not only

48. *N.B.* My citations of this and “...Poetically Man Dwells...” are from 1971 and I mark them as BDT and PMD respectively in my in-text citations.

49. Malpas notes this continuity, writing that ‘dwelling’ in later work “seems to refer us back to the idea we encountered in Heidegger’s earliest thinking, namely, the way in which our situatedness in the world is indeed something that cannot be separated from what we are and what is closest to us, from that which is most familiar and with which we are already engaged” (2006: 76).

snatch something from a danger. To save really means to set something free in its own presencing” (BDT: 150). We see that Heidegger means something specific in his notion of dwelling. Dwelling as saving and sparing as Heidegger is elaborating it is not simply living or residing but instead reveals something fundamental about Dasein. Dwelling, Heidegger claims, is “the basic character of human existence” (PMD: 215).

In an effort to bring this still opaque concept into greater clarity, Bruce Foltz suggests that Dasein’s being-in-the-world and its ongoing concern and involvement that constitute world detailed in *Being and Time* provide a parallel for understanding what dwelling means and consists of, writing: “Care and involvement correspond to what Heidegger later calls “conserving” and “saving”” (1995: 157). We have already explored the spatially existential character of Dasein’s being-in-the-world; we must also understand dwelling (and its derivative, building) as always established spatially, that is, in relation to place. This too has a very specific character for Heidegger: in “Building Dwelling Thinking” he elaborates place in relation to the gathering of the fourfold of the earth, sky, mortals, and divinities.⁵⁰ A thing has its place [*Ort*] when it gathers the fourfold. In his famous example of a bridge, Heidegger shows how built things, like a footbridge, *generate* place. Specifically, the place that the bridge occupies, and the banks of the stream that the bridge connects, only become place because of the gathering of the bridge:

The bridge swings over the stream “with ease and power.” It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only because the bridge crosses the stream. The bridge designedly causes them to lie across from each other. One side is set off against the other by the bridge... The bridge *gathers* the earth as landscape around the stream. (BDT: 152)

Place emerges out of the bridge’s gathering: “The bridge *gathers* to itself in *its own way* earth and sky, divinities and mortals” (BDT: 153, original emphasis). It is this ‘*own way*’ of the bridge that building and dwelling preserve. They safeguard the *bridge as bridge*, as a thing in its nature.

We can understand dwelling as the basis for the relationship between things like the bridge (and the places of gathering it generates) for which we care and our own existence, a relationship that Kirsten Jacobson argues is constitutive: She writes: “...we dwell in the things for which we care, and this dwelling is constitutive of our existence” (2004: 33). As with the being-in-the-world of Dasein, the in-ness is crucial here too: dwelling happens *in* the things. Place comes through dwelling,

50. See Heidegger BDT: 150-151.

and again, this is not abstract space onto which meaning is gathered or projected, but instead place happens *through* this gathering in which Dasein is dwelling. “The bridge does not first come to a location to stand in it; rather, a location comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge” (BDT: 154). This is how place only ever extends out of dwelling; it is not there first as a place where building might happen, where the bridge could go, for instance. If we are looking for a place to put a bridge, we are already operating with the attitude Heidegger brings out in dwelling, that is, we are already oriented towards the river and the banks: the place has already emerged through the notion of building that rests in dwelling.

However, dwelling and building, for Heidegger, are not sufficient to explain the formation of world. World-formation, for Heidegger, must also involve language and thinking. Language is that through which world can be disclosed to Dasein, which is to say that anything that can show up to Dasein is structured by and through language (1995; 1997). By this, Heidegger brings out the hermeneutic, or interpretive, relation Dasein necessarily has in all of its encounters and relations. This was already evident to an extent in *Being and Time*, as we saw that there is no possibility for Dasein to encounter the world in any kind of neutral way: Dasein is not an indifferent or objective observer who experiences entities in some bare, factual way. Anything that shows up to Dasein shows up *as something or other*: the hammer shows up as a hammer: its handiness overrides any objective or seemingly neutral way in which the entity could possibly appear to Dasein. Language, too, discloses things as things: language lets things be for Dasein. This is because language is not only a system of symbols and meanings that we learn to deal in only after encountering the world, but is much more fundamental. In his “Letter on Humanism” (1997), Heidegger famously claims that “Language is the house of being: in its home man dwells” (1997: 47). Gerard Kuperus rearticulates Heidegger by claiming that according to Heidegger, language is “the most important home that we dwell in” (2016: 47). It is beyond the scope of this work to flesh out fully the relationship between being, language, and dwelling that Heidegger intimates. Suffice it here to include that dwelling and building are never separable from the disclosure of the world language allows, and that this relation indicates Dasein’s embeddedness in a culture of thought and Dasein’s interpretative relation to world. Robert Pogue Harrison offers this explanation of dwelling’s relation to *logos*: “Without *logos* there is no place, only habitat; no *domus*, only niche; no finitude, only the endless reproductive cycle of species-being; no dwelling, only subsisting. In short, *logos* is that which opens the human abode on the earth” (1992: 200).

Because of its connection to the enframing [*das Gestell*] of the technological,⁵¹ dwelling has been seized upon, especially by environmental philosophers and place writers. In some cases, dwelling has been taken up by phenomenologists and developed as an avenue for exploring our embodied inhabitation of the world.⁵² In related and sometimes overlapping fields, dwelling has informed much place-based work, especially in humanistic geography,⁵³ sense of place,⁵⁴ and design and architecture.⁵⁵ This turn in post-Heideggerian dwelling is summarized well by Paul Cloke and Owain Jones: “Dwelling is about the rich inanimate ongoing togetherness of beings and things which make up landscapes and places, and which bind together nature and culture over time...and is *potentially* bound up with ideas of home” (2001: 651, original emphasis). Dwelling is relational, rich, and place-influenced enough to offer an aspirational way of being, alternative to the increasingly detached, mobilized, homeless, technological existence that some environmental writers and philosophers have linked to the degradation of the earth. As such, Heidegger’s notion of dwelling has been the subject of much interest to environmental philosophers.⁵⁶ Deep ecologists have claimed productive overlap between their views of non-dualistic, eco-centric metaphysics and the notion of poetic dwelling which they read as anti-technological and non-anthropocentric.⁵⁷ However, to read Heidegger as non-anthropocentric is not only to overlook the specific privileging of Dasein as world-forming⁵⁸ but also to ignore the general way in which Heidegger’s questioning of being is based in Dasein. In David Storey’s

51. In “The Question Concerning Technology,” Heidegger famously quotes from Hölderlin’s hymn “Patmos”: “But where danger is, grows/ also the saving power” (Heidegger 1977: 28) and from Hölderlin’s “In lieblicher Blaue”: “...poetically man dwells upon this earth” (Heidegger 1977: 34). Heidegger adopts this line “...Poetically man dwells...” for another essay on Hölderlin’s poem and on the theme of dwelling (see PMD: 213-229).

52. These developments are not necessarily environmental in the sense of being ecologically-oriented, others are. See Jacobson 2004; 2009, Trigg 2013; Mugerauer 1985; Abram 1997 for some examples.

53. Like Tuan 1974; 1974; 1977; and Buttimer 1976 already discussed in §1.1.

54. E.g., Norberg-Schultz 1980; Ann Whiston Spirn 1998.

55. See the essays in Seamon & Mugerauer (Eds.), *Dwelling, Place and Environment: Towards a phenomenology of person and world* (1985).

56. Some important works include many of the essays in *Dwelling, Place & Environment*, Seamon & Mugerauer, Eds. (1985); and *Heidegger and the Earth: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* McWhorter & Stenstad, Eds. (2009); some of the essays in *Eco-phenomenology: Back to the earth itself*, Brown & Toadvine, Eds. (2003); and Foltz 1995.

57. See Devall & Sessions 1985. Foltz also sees Heidegger’s metaphysics of nature as a possible ally with deep ecology, although he points to deep ecology’s scientific underpinnings as a point of divergence. See Foltz 1995. However, Heidegger’s thinking cannot align with a truly eco-centric metaphysics because of the ontological priority he grants Dasein: world is only disclosed through Dasein, and ignoring this would be another instance of the forgetting of being.

58. As compared to the animal, which is world-poor, and the rock, which is worldless, in the tripartite worldhood schema Heidegger elaborates. Heidegger, 1995 (part 2, chapter 3). Zimmerman echoes this idea when explaining human dwelling: “...we humans can never simply be at home as a bird is at home in its nest” (1985: 254).

words, this “ontological abyss between humans and nonhumans” (2015: 19) is never reconciled, in spite of the poetic approach and Heidegger’s decreasing preoccupation with being vis-à-vis Dasein in later work. Michael Zimmerman, who originally viewed Heidegger as compatible with deep ecology, was among the first to develop these affinities, with dwelling as one of the main points of affinity:⁵⁹ “Heidegger provides a basis for radical environmentalism insofar as he calls on us to remain open for the creative renewal of the Western wisdom tradition that offers a more appropriate understanding of Being—a new ethos in which to dwell” (1983: 128). Zimmerman developed the idea of “letting beings be” (1985: 247) he takes from the staying and preserving of dwelling in environmental philosophy as the possible ground for authentic, nontechnological, non-dominating alternative to the culmination of the technological worldview of the West.

However, Heidegger’s discussion of dwelling should not be construed in a simple, anti-technological way. Dwelling is the way in which Dasein is situated in the world, but this does not mean that dwelling has specifiable qualities that can be settled and achieved. Rather, dwelling is something that we continue to learn: “The real dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they *must ever learn to dwell*” (BDT: 161, original emphasis). Further, it is unclear from Heidegger’s other writings how dwelling could provide an alternative, untechnological way of being that avoids the challenging of nature as resource when the technological world picture is totalizing.⁶⁰ Separate from these metaphysical problems are criticisms that these ways of interpreting and developing the idea of dwelling are romantic, nostalgic, and exclusionary, and these roughly track the ways place as a concept has been problematized. I will address these in the following chapter.

BUILDING & THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

While many of the thinkers listed above have elaborated dwelling as a revised way of communing with nature non-technologically, dwelling also indicates a movement out and away from nature. Dwelling, while the way Dasein exists in the world, also speaks of the way in which Dasein *does* build. Dwelling is creative: dwelling as the ground for building allows for the concretization of place and places through what Dasein establishes and builds. Of course, because of the spatially existential relation of dwelling, the places we create through dwelling are always meaningful places. Bruce Foltz explains that building, as derived from dwelling, will be a reflection of Dasein because our buildings, like our being, is temporal. Foltz elaborates that buildings provide refuge, not only from the elements—nonhuman

59. Zimmerman later revised his view. See Zimmerman 1993.

60. See Blok 2014.

animals, too take refuge in shelters—but nonhuman animals do not participate in the meaningful way that Dasein accesses in building. Foltz argues that rather than taking protection from the world in dwelling, it is by the world that Dasein, in dwelling, is “protected and sheltered—sheltered from chaos, from meaninglessness, from placelessness” (1995: 160-161). Here again we see the meanings of building and dwelling operating on a separate register from the commonplace usage of the words. In claiming that buildings shelter Dasein from the chaos of meaninglessness and placelessness, Foltz is suggesting that there is more at stake in what building does than the factual, or crude architectural offerings of buildings. We not only build to take shelter physically but to make homes, to build world, and as such, the structures we build are vested with meaning and significance. Botond Bogner argues that building and dwelling respond to “an active human urge, involving a desire to participate creatively in the events of the concrete world around – an act by which people affirm their own existence” (1985: 189). In *Getting Back into Place*, the first of his two volumes on place in philosophy, Edward Casey discusses in considerable depth the variety of ways we have of making place. We establish and settle ourselves by building for the variety of moods and activities of human life and the diverse significances that buildings play—and that building has—in this creation.⁶¹ Here he echoes Foltz: “dwelling places offer not just bare shelter but the possibility of sojourns and upbringing, of education, of contemplation, of conviviality, lingerings of many kinds and durations” (Casey 1993: 112).

With a sense of the significance that building has in human life, we can then return to the idea of cultural landscapes I introduced in the first chapter with a greater understanding of why cultural landscapes are significant for understanding environmental identity. As we have seen, cultural landscape are landscapes whose histories are rendered visible and deemed valuable. The meanings of such places are less experiential and direct than other places; instead they are more reified through shared cultural meanings, narratives, and layers of history over time. As the materialization of human and cultural histories and values, cultural landscapes are recognized as being a particularly meaningful instantiation of place. Malpas, again, writes:

61. Casey has done the most of any recent philosopher to secure a place for place in the field. *Getting Back into Place* (1993) covers the place concept from a contemporary and phenomenological vantage. I will return to his discussion of wilderness from this book in the following chapter (§3.2). The second of Casey's books, *The Fate of Place* (1997), recovers place throughout the history of philosophy.

The ordering of the land is a matter...of the land as carrying on its face, in pathways, monuments and sites, a cultural memory and storehouse of ideas. Thus in almost any inhabited region one finds the stories that define the culture (or the cultures) of the people that live there to be ‘written in’ to the places and landmarks around them. (2004: 187)

Cultural landscapes, while a fact of human inhabitation, also exhibit and ground human dwelling in the world. We participate in them, and they offer ways of self-understanding and belonging. Although these places are made through our enduring relationships with the physical world around us, they are overwhelmingly human: cultural landscapes are generated through our ways of relating and understanding the world around it and ourselves in it in the present and through history. Cultural landscapes, in an important sense, manifest the ongoing tradition of building and dwelling humans participate and have participated in: they are concretizations of the not only the interactions and ways of relating with the nonhuman world over this time but also our way of inhabiting places, or placemaking, over time, which we should understand, after Heidegger, as a fundamentally existential practice. Bernd Jager writes that “The house, body, and city do not so much occupy space and time as generate them. It is only as inhabiting, embodied beings that we find access to a world” (1985: 216). Cultural landscapes too would fit into Jager’s description as the broader setting that make cities, farms, orchards, gardens, and forests, and all other mixings of the natural and built world inhabitable and familiar to us and that express the various modes of our being-in-the-world.

2.2 DEVELOPMENTS WITH PLACE IN ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

So far, this chapter has developed how, through Heidegger’s thinking, place has become an important topic in philosophy.⁶² However, there are several avenues in which environmental philosophers have developed the concept of place which do not rely strictly on Heidegger’s ontological work, on the existential Dasein’s being-in-the-world. The first three developments I discuss are such examples: they do not directly engage with Heidegger, nor do they even take as their foundation continental philosophy after Heidegger. In these examples, place is advanced as a corrective to overly rationalistic descriptions, appraisals, and epistemologies of

62. I could just as well have focused on the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who elaborated Heidegger’s existential spatiality through our body’s “anchorage in the world” (1962: 167) and whose work has also been taken up by environmental philosophers (see especially Brown & Toadvine (Eds.) 2003; Bannon 2014). Unfortunately this development is beyond the scope of this work.

the nonhuman environment and again differing from Heidegger's thinking, deal directly with the ethical implications of place. Such approaches draw on place because of its proximity to human life and experience: place is central to how we as humans register the world around us and ourselves in that world. Compared to space, which is abstracted and objectively quantifiable, place is felt and lived. As such, in the following accounts, taking up place offers the possibility of radical reformulations of standard analytic treatments of environmental knowledge and environmental ethics. In the first development, Christopher Preston has attempted to provide a more scientifically-informed account of the influence of place on our thinking by bringing together insights across developmental biology, affordance theory, ecopsychology, embodiment, and feminist standpoint theory. To cover the second development, I give a very short overview of bioregionalism, a specific approach in environmental ethics for organizing the world around local, physical places. Finally, in the third development, Mick Smith shows how place and its claims on us matter ethically and as such and our emplacement, taken seriously, offers an unavoidable critique on dominant ethical theory and its suggestion of a view from nowhere. Smith argues that the inescapability of place, and the influence it already enacts on our knowing and experience of the world, shows that place is already ethical and our ethical systems should respond to this in-built context.

2.2.1 Place as how & what we know

“Humans have for too long thought that knowledge lifts them out of their world. Environmentalists both inside and outside of the academic setting can profit from the suggestion made by Paul Shepherd half a century ago that there is “a strange and necessary relationship between place and mind.””

Christopher Preston, *Grounding Knowledge*: xiii

Christopher Preston's *Grounding Knowledge* (2003) does not attempt to unravel this “strange and necessary relationship” in a single volume, but as the epigram suggests, to bring attention to it. His book is an elaboration of convergent thinking and findings on questions of body, mind, knowledge, and place from an array of disciplines. Preston's vantage is epistemological, which is perhaps why he seems to go out of his way not to engage Heidegger's work on place. He finds in most of the history of philosophy a *neglect* of place that begins with Plato and the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions in Medieval philosophy, runs through Christian thought, the early moderns, Kant, and up to Quine. Western epistemology, on Preston's reading, has not only made the mistake of divorcing body from mind as others

have diagnosed,⁶³ but has divorced mind from world. Preston's project, then, resists this legacy of separation and aims to recuperate the epistemological significance of place.

Place, Preston claims, contributes to human identity through its effect on *how and what we know and believe*. He characterizes the strange relationship referenced in the Paul Shepard quotation as a cooperative one: "Thought, knowledge, and belief are not products of mind alone, but expressions of its integration and participation with the physical world that lies around it" (2003: 2). To substantiate these ideas, Preston constructs a broad, synthetic case, drawing from overlapping and complementary research in developmental biology, evolutionary psychology, affordance theory, and embodied environmental philosophy. He complements these accounts with post-modern developments in epistemology and examples from indigenous epistemologies of place. Whereas the history of epistemology in the West has endeavored to remove the contingencies and the specificities of place, time, and circumstance in order to establish universal and transcending knowledge, Preston's project of re-instituting place in epistemology finds support in feminist work on standpoint epistemology where the situation of the knower is recognized as constitutive of his or her knowledge. But whereas standpoint epistemologists have focused on social positioning, Preston emphasizes the physical: one's positioning in the geographical, ecological, and topological environments or surroundings. These aspects, Preston claims, have an affecting influence not only on our comfort and belonging in place but also on how we perceive basic categories like space and time. Because these are built into our perception, we often only realize their influence when the places we are calibrated towards are absent: when we find ourselves in what Preston calls a "dislocating experience" (2003: 89), that is, when we feel literally or metaphorically out of place. Preston vividly describes one such experience from his own life, as a visitor to Dry Bay and Mount Fairweather in Alaska:

It is a place of unusually massive scale. Visitors need time to adjust their perceptual faculties in order not to make grand errors of judgment...these visual confusions reached deeper than just my quantifications of distance and elevation. They resulted in changed relationship to my environment. Despite possessing the same body, I was quite unclear what constituted near or far. (2003: 90)

63. Criticism of mind-body dualism is widespread in environmental philosophy, ranging from Heidegger's *Being and Time* (1927) and Merleau-Ponty's *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) to Plumwood's *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993), to name only a few. See Chapter 8 for a discussion of Plumwood's critique.

Preston describes himself as feeling “culturally and perceptually out of place” (2003: 89) in the landscape, which ultimately demanded a drastic recalibration of his body’s sense of space and proprioception. Our bodies and minds, Preston is suggesting, are accustomed to and conditioned by the size and dimensions of the landscapes around us and that these affect the most basic of our perception of size and time.⁶⁴

Whereas other environmental philosophers are interested in place for its valence of meaning, Preston’s interest lies in the overlooked role place plays in human cognition. He advocates for a diversity of places, suggesting that place diversity affords diversity of human thinking, though this is basically as far as he is willing to go in suggesting a causal link between place and mind. The repugnant conclusion of environmental determinism turns up far too frequently in scholarship on place and mind historically. Preston is aware of this and the other risks that the concept of place seems to pose, and he avoids these by highlighting the creative and constructive ways in which we enable the effects of the places we find ourselves in to shape our thinking and acting.⁶⁵

However, Preston does not acknowledge the overlap, or ambiguity, between the physical features of place and those that we might call cultural. For instance, to pick up on his idea of dislocating experiences and extend it to my acclimatization to a new country, it is not only the physical geography or even the built environment—the size of the roads or landscapes or apartments in my adopted home of the Netherlands—that has made me recalibrate my sense of space, but maybe even more significantly the ways in which these spaces are different culturally: the closeness of persons in cafes, in aisles of the grocery store, or cycling alongside me on the *fietspad* that has condensed my sense of space and forced my adjustment to a smaller radius of “personal space” than what I was accustomed as a native of the United States. The cultural and the physical are not easily disentangled, especially when our experience of both is cultured and formed by interpersonal meanings and practices.

64. It is not only Preston’s omission of Heidegger but also the ideas of Merleau-Ponty on bodily space and schema that are striking, given these observations.

65. Lorraine Code’s ecological naturalism does similar work in epistemology, advancing place and practice based knowledges, although with more of a critical edge towards existing power structures and the role of knowledge in their construction and perpetuation. Her account shares many features and emphases with Preston’s although she also suggests that the ‘sense of place’ Preston thinks of as communal and shared may not in fact be as accessible to others without Preston’s individual privilege (i.e., as a white, able-bodied, highly educated, man (See Code 2005)). One of Preston’s main points is to encourage landscape diversity because it results in epistemic diversity, so while he would clearly embrace the differential experiences different factual emplacements generate, he may too quickly praise the diversity of such views rather than question and criticize the power dynamics implicit in producing these different views. Diversity of viewpoints, if such viewpoints are caused by oppressive power relations, are not on their own worth celebrating. Further, there are issues of whose experience and knowledge are taken seriously. Preston has the advantage of being in a position of cognitive authority that feminist standpoint theorists have pointed out that women, people of color, minorities, and the economically disenfranchised do not necessarily enjoy.

It is not that Preston fails to admit this overlap but that he fails to develop it. Place, for Preston, has less to do with the shared cultural meanings that place carries in it and that define our experiences of places⁶⁶ than it has to do with the way place presses on us physically or bears itself on us directly. The way our thinking is tethered to or rooted in the material environments that surround us, the way it informs our thinking and our psychology—these are not so much ways that highlight the ways in which place is a mediation of our experience of the world. But they make up an inevitable and significant part of place. However, we will have to wait for hermeneutic treatments of place (§2.3) to take up these crucial aspects.

2.2.2 Bioregionalism

Whereas we have seen Preston's work based in epistemology (and we will see Smith's work to be based in social and ethical theory), bioregionalism, as the name implies, takes its basis much more from the physical geography composing places and regions than other developments of place in environmental philosophy or ethics. As Donald Alexander notes, bioregionalism did not begin in philosophy at all but in conservation and environmental activist circles in the 1970s. Nevertheless, its affinities with Aldo Leopold's land ethic and its overtly normative orientation to place attracted the support of some environmental ethicists who brought the idea into discussion in environmental ethics (Alexander 1990; Berthold-Bond 2000).

Accordingly, bioregionalism is a movement that advances environmental thinking and consciousness (as well as governance and social society) around the locus of the physical and biological characteristics that define a bioregion. Bioregionalism recognizes the physical contexts of our human lives and societies and holds that our ethical and political commitments should reflect the places and communities out of which they arise. Farmer, writer, poet, and agrarian activist Wendell Berry defends a version of this sentiment: "The regionalism that I adhere to could be defined simply as local life aware of itself. . . The motive of such regionalism is the awareness that local life is intricately dependent, for its quality but also for its continuance, upon local knowledge" (1962: 65). As a movement, bioregionalism advocated that those not as rooted in place as Berry should learn to reinhabit the local, and that social, political, and ethical life could be reorganized around this kind of place-based reinhabitation. Berg & Dasmann, two of the founding advocates of bioregionalism, describe reinhabitation this way (cited in Alexander 1990):

66. Preston does include certain indigenous cultural traditions of place, especially as a contrast to Western spatiality.

Reinhabitation means learning to live-in-place in an area that has been disrupted and injured through past exploitation. It involves becoming native to a place through becoming aware of the particular ecological relationships...understanding activities and evolving social behavior that will enrich the life of that place...Simply stated it involves becoming fully alive in and with a place. It involves applying for membership in a biotic community and ceasing to be its exploiter. (1990: 162-163)

According to Berthold-Bond, the merging of the ethical with the ecological is a strand of only some versions of bioregionalism, and he finds latitude in the movement for a more nuanced exploration of the ethical interrelation between region and community. He writes:

Bioregionalism, in giving greater specificity to the “space” of nature, with which environmental ethics is concerned, extends this subversive element to the consideration of the actual “placement” of humans in regions of environmental space: bioregionalism subverts the mathematical, topographic, literalistic definition of place as objective geographic location—at least as a self-sufficient definition—and develops a new geography of place as experiential, subjective, and meaning-laden. (2000: 7)

Indeed, bioregionalism could be read as an 20th century update of *ethos*, where natural and social environments provide the context for and character of ethical life. However, a more common reading of bioregionalism picks up on its similarity with less-welcomed historical ideas. For example, geographer Steven Frenkel draws out bioregionalism’s legacy in environmental determinism. The suggestion that political boundaries should be carved up along natural ones and the “deterministic and instructional” (Frenkel 1994: 291) role that the land plays in guiding the social in bioregionalism makes Frenkel and others dubious that such a framework has anything to offer environmental ethics or geography that isn’t dangerously conservative. Missing from the bioregional approach is the existential dimension that make place and dwelling open-ended rather than retrograde and exclusionary and that will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter.

2.2.3 Place & remedial ethics

“Radical ecology seeks to reconstitute our ethical relations to natural others, it wants to produce a *sensus communis* that can be inclusive of humans and nonhumans. This requires a practical “ecological” sense that can only come from an awareness, a feeling, for what is fitting with respect to natural places and our nonhuman fellows.”

Mick Smith, *An Ethics of Place*: 216

Philosopher Mick Smith has used place as a powerful corrective to what he sees as overly rationalistic descriptions and appraisals of the nonhuman environment in the late 20th century. In *An Ethics of Place: Radical Ecology, Postmodernity, and Social Theory* (2001), Smith works from the concept of place in order to develop a “theoretical account that remains true to the spirit of radical ecology and yet is capable of engaging with modernity’s established problematics” (2001: 3). Smith is dissatisfied with dominant theories in environmental ethics, and he details the shortcomings of both axiological extensionalism⁶⁷ and biocentrism.⁶⁸ In Smith’s estimation, a fully developed ethics of place could be as groundbreaking for environmental ethics as was Carol Gilligan’s work vis-a-vis Lawrence Kohlberg in developmental moral psychology. By viewing boys’ and girls’ moral development as importantly different, Gilligan’s problematized the stages of moral development that Kohlberg—her mentor—had described, and thus radically expanded what counted as moral reasoning. Kohlberg had described a progression of moral development in six stages. Boys, who were more likely than girls to reason according to abstract ideas and principles (like those that show up in utilitarianism and deontology) were thus seen to achieve greater moral development, as Kohlberg’s scale progressed to this kind of reasoning. Girls, by contrast, were observed to be more concerned with the context of relationships and individuals in those relationships than they were with principle-based reasoning. But as such, girls did not tend to advance beyond the third stage of Kohlberg’s six. Gilligan argued that Kohlberg’s schema and methodologies were androcentric and failed to attend to the types of moral questions that tend to concern girls and the different ways in which they reason about moral questions. The outcome of this shift, Gilligan’s famous *In a Different*

67. This is more commonly referred to as moral extensionism, where ethicists argue, or have argued, for extending the sphere of moral considerability outwards from the human. Most famously, Peter Singer (*Animal Liberation* (1975)) and Tom Reagan (*The Case for Animal Rights* (1983)) inaugurated this approach, arguing for rights for certain groups of animals on utilitarian and deontological grounds respectively. This approach was taken up by other environmental ethicists, notably Paul Taylor and J. Baird Callicott who argued for the extension of moral consideration to all organisms with a *telos* (*Respect for Nature* (1986)) and the biotic community (*In Defense of the Land Ethic* (1989)), respectively, thus further extending the axiological framework of which Smith is critical.

68. cf. Freya Mathews (1993)

Voice (1982), speaks to her expansion of moral reasoning.⁶⁹ But it was not only the different voice of girls and women that the title references, but, as Gilligan notes, the kind of different voice *that tended to be heard* in girls' and women's moral deliberation:

The difference arose from the integration of thought with emotions and self with relationships. It was a voice that spoke from a premise of connectedness rather than of separateness; our lives are embedded in a network of relationships, as humans we are interdependent. (Gilligan 2014)

Even if his ideas are aspirational, his comparison to the Gilligan/Kohlberg case is apt and helps us imagine what Smith envisions is possible by an ethics of place, especially because the feminist mode of moral reasoning acknowledged and developed by Gilligan and others⁷⁰ ended up founding Care Ethics, a branch of moral theory that emphasizes care, interdependence, and particularity over justice, autonomy, and universality. Smith insists that an ethics of place “must revolutionize and reconstitute modernity’s boundaries and problematics” (2001: 152), and indeed, Smith sees place as analogously relational instead of rationalistic.

Space and place, as we saw in chapter 1, is hardly only an issue for philosophical conceptions of the human and for environmental ethics. Smith adheres to the common (though not unanimously adopted) characterization of place as the lived, the complicated, the ready-to-hand,⁷¹ versus space as the abstract, geometric, present-at-hand. Space, for Smith, has come about conceptually through modernity and abets the work of its projects. Accordingly, absolute space is malleable; it has no content of its own. Whereas place anchors specific identities and practices, is decidedly shaped by history and is colored by values, space is importantly none of these things: it is neutral, objective, empty of bias. For much of his work, Smith draws on social theory (Marx’s conceptualization of labour; Lefebvre’s conceptualization of space; Bourdieu’s *habitus*; and the modernization of space through modernist architecture⁷²). Under this characterization it is clear why Smith aligns the concept of space with rationalistic ethics that also aims for universalizability and abstraction. Can place be the ground for a reformed environmental ethic? This is the thrust of Smith’s work on place, which rejects the idea that the axiomatic, principle-driven

69. While Gilligan’s work was considered a breakthrough in feminist philosophy, it has been criticized for its gender essentialism (see, e.g., Sandra Harding’s *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?: Thinking from Women’s Lives* (1991)).

70. especially Virginia Held 2006 and Nel Noddings 1982

71. See footnote 42.

72. Smith has written elsewhere about Le Corbusier’s influence on this topic. See Smith 2001a.

approach found in philosophical ethics could possibly capture the particular and messy components of place, of where we live out our lives and commune not only with other humans but nonhuman animals and storied landscapes as well.⁷³

Smith's account of how this could look revolves around an ecological self that is similar to Gilligan's concept of the self and is also informed by Smith's readings of Judith Butler and Luce Irigaray. Smith sketches a self that, rather than characterized by autonomy and separation from others, can "relate to those others occluded by the current symbolic order" (2001: 174). This is a self that will "challenge the universality of modern man and seek to replace his tedious uniformity with a relational conception of ethics and the self that is sensitive to the vagaries and difference of sex and place" (2001: 173-174). An ethic of place as envisioned by Smith will always be a *pluralist* ethic: that is, it will always reach far into the context of the place in question and its particular history. Rather than aspiring to universal reach:

Ethical values need to be explained and justified in terms of their context and origins, their production and their reproduction in particularly social and environmental circumstances. This contextualization is...exactly what radical environmental approaches need and must support. (2001: 52)

Smith is building the case for place-based ethics that can encompass the parts of our ethical lives—relevant attachments, histories, emotions—that traditional environmental ethics omits or fails to countenance altogether, and that finds, in each place, what is significant and fitting to it individually.

2.3 PLACE & HERMENEUTIC ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

By showing how place always already is part of our knowing and relating, Smith and Preston have both tried to *re-place* the independent, detached, and displaced individual of traditional epistemological and ethical theory. They have brought to light the basal role place plays in our experience of the world, neglected by the view from nowhere traditions in ethics and epistemology. Hermeneutic environmental philosophers have taken place further yet, attending to the meanings generated in and through places and how place operates interpretively. How do we understand ourselves as emplaced, individually and culturally? How does our emplacement

73. "Instead of employing modernity's acontextual and disembodied rationality to order and direct our relations to others, this reconception of ethical being must speak of the constitutive relationship between an embodied ethical experience...and specific contexts...in this way we might develop a genuine "ethics of place"" (2001: 192).

position us vis-à-vis nature or in environments dominated by nonhumans? Like the previous two accounts, hermeneutic environmental philosophy too has been conceptualized as a corrective to environmental ethics that frequently misrepresents the issues of concern or is blind to the ways in which our concern for our environment or world manifests (Clingerman et al. 2013; Bannon 2014). But unlike Smith's and Preston's accounts, hermeneutic environmental philosophy—as hermeneutic—has its basis in phenomenological existentialism and here we can pick back up on the existential significance of place to our human experience of the world that we have already seen: the situated position Heidegger's spatiality worked out and that I elaborated in §2.1, the interpretive nature of understanding and being also from Heidegger, as well as the sense of ethics in ethos and meaning of place. In the following sections, I discuss two recent hermeneutic treatments of place, first by Forrest Clingerman (§2.3.1), who elaborates place as an already interpretive access to nature and world, and second by Martin Drenthen (§2.3.2), who focuses on the cultural aspects of place and through whose work I will expand place to include the cultural landscape.

2.3.1 Emplacement: Place, time, & identity

“Humans participate in interpreting and building the meaning of place...we are not simply observers, but rather are intertwined and enveloped in the specific places we interpret. We find some part of ourselves when we interpret nature, and the broader being of nature guides our self-interpretation.”

Forrest Clingerman, “Reading the book of nature: A hermeneutical account of nature for philosophical theology”: 82

Forrest Clingerman has written extensively on place in a hermeneutic mode. Place is of crucial importance to Clingerman as *a way of philosophical*⁷⁴ access to nature: he credits environmental hermeneutics as the “most adequate” way for philosophers and theologians to “nature” (Clingerman et al. 2013: 249), and he makes place the central figure in this: “environmental hermeneutics is the hermeneutics of the concept of “place” and actual places” (2013: 250). In this way, Clingerman thinks of place as standing in for the hermeneutic text. However, before approaching his hermeneutic ideas, we should pay attention why Clingerman thinks nature needs a particular point access and why place can accomplish this.

74. Clingerman's interests also span religion and environment and so writes about place from a theological perspective as well as from a philosophical hermeneutical one. Indeed, these foci often merge: see especially Clingerman 2008; 2009.

NATURE'S PARADOXES

The concept of nature is famously complex; Clingerman, pointing to the difficulties arising in our present cultural characterization of 'nature,' argues that these are even paradoxical.⁷⁵ First, we think of nature as simultaneously bounded in particular areas (that is, as wilderness-type places, as reserves, et cetera), but as also being boundless (in the sense of encompassing everything in the world or universe). Second, Clingerman observes that nature is simultaneously an abstract idea, but it is an idea that cannot be defined without reference particular places and instances, which makes it necessarily concrete. Thirdly, in the sense of natural laws that govern the universe, nature encompass all things; nature therefore contains or refers to the Totality of all things in the universe, but nature often famously represents the Other, the nonhuman (2008: 315). Perhaps the most difficult of nature's antinomies, especially from a hermeneutic vantage, is how we actually can conceptualize it. We as human beings are at once *in* nature, as nature is conceived as encompassing all of life, but in order to describe or characterize nature, we delimit it, and thus, must "in some sense—be differentiated from nature" (2008: 315). Clingerman elaborates our inside/outside position this way:

We are simultaneously transcending and situated beings, simultaneously active subjects without boundaries and passive objects within a definite place...we cannot understand nature without recognizing that any definition of nature must consciously account for our relationship to nature. (2004: 17)

Thus, the question for Clingerman is: How we can model nature in such a way that accounts for its paradoxical character and our paradoxical relation to it? His answer is the idea of *emplacement*,⁷⁶ which accounts for how we are present in nature and that our understandings of it are necessarily self-inclusive. We are physically *emplaced* in nature and so our experience of nature and our resulting conceptualizations of nature will inevitably be mediated through this experience.⁷⁷ This experience has subjective and objective aspects and addresses place on three

75. I do not take Clingerman here to be describing paradoxes in the sense of actually irresolvable problems; most of these difficulties can be explained by parsing out the different meanings of nature at work. However, in describing the ways in which our conceptualizations of nature are in certain ways self-contradictory, Clingerman shows how the concept of nature, taken as a whole, poses considerable and unresolved conceptual difficulty.

76. Emplacement is developed by Clingerman in the model of Ricoeur's idea of *emplotment*: simply, that we make sense of events and ourselves in these events by arranging them in overarching narratives that provide a meaningful whole by which to interpret its parts. See Clingerman 2008.

77. "Emplacement is the mediation that occurs in the activity of understanding, through a schematization of the elements of a place within various frameworks, through which we organize the elements of place into a meaningful whole" (Clingerman 2008: 316).

registers: first, *place*, which is “particular spatial and temporal situations of nature; second, *a* place, that is, “our relationship with the concrete elements of this situation;” and third, our *experience of* a place, by which Clingerman refers to “our sense of the different meanings of the whole that these elements make up” (2008: 316, original emphasis). Thus, Clingerman challenges the idea that hermeneutic explorations of place are only conceptual; rather they are founded in place as “a lived particularity, which has spatial and temporal materiality (2013: 245). Place is at once a conceptual category and is determined by particular, lived instantiations.

And indeed, the specificity of places is important for Clingerman. “A particular place, together with its objects, inhabitants, and visitors, can serve as an element of environmental philosophy” (2013: 250). This is familiar in the tradition of environmental philosophy where writing is populated with examples of famous wilderness areas, restoration sites, spaces of retreat into nature, sites contamination or sacrifice zones, et cetera. These places are proper nouns: they have names either known amongst a few, involved individuals or more broadly, as narrated in environmental literature or conjured in the environmental imaginary (Walden Pond; Sand County; Love Canal; Flint, Michigan, to name a few). These images and conceptualized places are always mediated on and mediating the particular, physical place: the particular instantiation informs the concept of place, and the concept helps us form a full understanding of the particular place we encounter. Clingerman summarizes this relationship this way: “We are challenged to think about thinking when we are emplaced in place” (2015: 250). What I take Clingerman to mean is that the experience of being in place, of being emplaced, opens up a channel of thinking because our emplacement is an embodied one, and it is only through place that we can understand our fundamental relation with/in world as being embodied. That is, it is only through place and being in place that we gain access to and can understand our experience of being in the world, of being embodied. Place, as Clingerman first suggested, already engages us in hermeneutical inquiry by raising these reflexive questions of access about ourselves in the world.

EMPLACEMENT & HERMENEUTICS

Clingerman’s concept of emplacement offers a way through one of the major challenges of environmental hermeneutics: navigating between, on the one hand, a naive realism that treats nature as an external and observable set of phenomena that has a given meaning, usually as scientific facts always independent of and prior to the human observer; and on the other hand, a social construct that makes nature a product of social convention where any meaning of nature is determined by human usages and meanings entirely. The hermeneutic view mediates between these two ontologies of nature that Clingerman defines this way: “Nature has independent

existence that can be explained, but it is also influenced and understood in light of the observer's perspective and experience" (2013: 248). Again, this takes account of the paradox of our conceptual access to nature and how we make sense of ourselves in it.

Thus far, I have paid little attention to time and temporality in sketching ideas of place in environmental philosophy. However, for Clingerman and his idea of emplacement, time and place are both implied. Clingerman claims that this is in part because nature, which is viewed as "static and adrift in time's flow," (2013: 246) seems simply affected by a time outside of it. Clingerman attempts to make time more visible in his writing, claiming that the occasions in which the temporal ruptures our experience of our otherwise timeless everyday life are necessary for our sense of place (2013: 246). Emplacement is not only positioning in place but in time, as being subject to the temporal structures of nature that shape our experiences. Place exists always already as our particular experience of a setting in space and time. Even in cities, shades of light and color change throughout the day and year; sounds of insects and birds tell the time of day; and generally we still succumb to daily rhythms of waking in the morning, sleeping during the dark hours when we have finished our work and when we "leave ourselves" (2013: 246) to dreaming until the transition into the dawn. Clingerman's narration reminds his reader of the persistence of the temporal signs in the everyday—of the diurnal tempo that the sun rise and set, and other matters of fact that even a city-dweller experiences—that provide a quiet and persistence assurance of the temporal. He writes: "in the everyday we still perceive the palpability of time" (2014: 247). For Clingerman, these reminders—the movement of days and seasons, the reliable tempo of the day and night—are basic temporal furniture that ground how we can experience a sense of place. In some way, our sense of place is constituted by a sense of time.

Already we see how Clingerman's project is deeply hermeneutical, but Clingerman fleshes out in even more detail the elements of individual, self-understanding place can offer by developing an extension of Ricoeur's narrative identity. This incorporates place and environment as components of an individual's sense of self, self-understanding, and as contributing to identity and narrative. Clingerman's extension is necessary to fill the observed oversight in Ricoeur's work, for anyone interested in place and environment as more than an un-intrusive and featureless backdrop against which human agents self-fashion and live out our lives.⁷⁸ Clingerman's move to broaden self-identity to include nonhuman factors is not, however, like familiar extensionist moves in environmental ethics, a move to widen

78. This, of course, is not unique to Ricoeur but common to most philosophers who are not self-described environmental philosophers.

the scope of moral consideration. Rather his point is that place and environment are always already critically involved in the creation of the human self and in self-understanding: by acknowledging that the self is always emplaced, “nature becomes more than a backdrop; *it is a participant in the narrative, an other that embodies memory, an other that locates imagination, and thereby an other that provides a constitutive element of selfhood*” (2014: 254, original emphasis). Clingerman thinks of place as the “multivalent competing narratives of individuals, relationships among individuals, and the whole itself” (2013: 248). However, these constitute place in a way that frequently falls below our explicit conscious awareness. Forming a sense of place is not a conscious cognitive process of piecing these parts together but appreciating place as already assembled of these relations.

Thus, place, for Clingerman, does profound interpretive work in environmental hermeneutics. He shows how the concept of place as a starting point reveals how we are always already interpreting nature, or even more broadly, our surrounding environment. Referencing the medieval metaphor of reading the book of nature, Clingerman claims that “to open up the book of nature means to read the text of place.”⁷⁹ Using place as a prism through which to understand nature or environment already makes an interpretive move in opening up our environmental surroundings as inseparable from our emplaced conceptualizations of them, and so too of ourselves as always situated in space and time in meaningful ways.

2.3.2 Cultural landscape in hermeneutic environmental ethics

Martin Drenthen also uses the conceit of reading nature in recent work and has developed hermeneutic environmental ethics along similar lines to Clingerman. Drenthen writes that hermeneutic environmental ethics “starts out from the assumption that the world we live in has significance because it is always already infused with meanings... [and] in order to grasp the full meaning of a particular place, one has to get involved in a process of interpretation. In that sense, landscapes⁸⁰ can be compared with texts” (2011: 124). Rather than adopting the “book of nature” metaphor, however, Drenthen has adapted the tradition of reading the landscape (or landscape legibility) from geography and natural history⁸¹ for the context of moral conflicts in environmental philosophy. At its most literal, Drenthen’s work of reading the landscape has treated landscapes as palimpsests, with different strata or layers deposited or inscribed over time. The figurative text of landscape

79. See Clingerman 2015: 212 for his revival of this idea in contemporary hermeneutics.

80. Drenthen writes about landscape in the tradition of landscape legibility and reading, but we should not take his use of landscape to signify a difference from the concept of place I have discussed in this chapter and will continue to use.

81. This is a much older tradition in geography (see e.g., P. K. Lewis 1982; D. W. Meinig (Ed.) 1979) and natural history (see May Theilgaard Watts 1957; 1971).

can thus be read and understood by these various layers, yielding similarly various interpretations and specific meanings, sometimes complementing, sometimes conflicting. Important in this entire process is the possibility of self-reflection and self-understanding it affords: because we are the ones reading and interpreting the landscape, these interpretations and meanings are also always self-interpretation. As Deliège and Drenthen suggest, this “allows us to understand ourselves and our position in the world differently, and hopefully also more appropriately and thoroughly” (2014: 103). There are two points to emphasize here: first, that the idea of interpretation as self-interpretation (which Drenthen takes from Ricoeur), is not meant in such a way that these objects of interpretation are separable, or even that they are objects, strictly speaking, at all. Self-interpretation always already occurs in hermeneutic interpretation and is the way in which interpretation, of environments, or of classical texts, is possible at all. The second point is related to this idea: Drenthen stresses that reading the landscape is not a merely a semiotic or descriptive exercise; the hermeneutic approach stresses a crucially different vantage:

Because the semiotic approach equals the reading a landscape with merely as the acquiring of information about the world ‘out there’, the semiotic idea of textuality is fundamentally unable to explain why people feel deeply connected and committed to landscapes...The semiotic reading shows why the story of certain particular landscapes may be considered more interesting than others, but it does not address why certain places appeal to us in a way that involves who we are. (2011: 130)

On the other hand, reading the landscape hermeneutically is always morally-valenced because it is interested in aspects of place and landscape that are morally relevant to our personal and cultural identities and thus our involvement in the world. Reflecting on place and landscape allows us access to “larger normative contexts” that O’Neill, Holland, and Light, in their volume *Environmental Values* have suggested are orienting (2008: 163). These authors, like Clingerman, emphasize narrative as the structure by which we make sense of ourselves in environments, and this idea has influenced how Drenthen considers history in the cases about which he writes (Drenthen 2011; Deliège & Drenthen 2014). Environments, for Drenthen (following O’Neill, Holland, and Light), are manifestations of the larger normative contexts in which we find ourselves and that give meaning and structure to our experience of the world (O’Neill, Holland, & Light 2008; Drenthen 2013).⁸²

82. Although it is not explicit in his accounts of place-meaning and legibility, Drenthen seems to share Willem Van Toorn’s belief that landscape legibility is itself normative: that being able to make sense one’s surroundings is important for a sense of belonging, which is necessary to the good life (Drenthen 2011).

One of the ways that Drenthen's work departs from other work on place is his focus on the broader context of historic and traditional landscapes and *cultural* identities rather than the individual's experience of place and its meanings. Drenthen frequently concentrates on the attachment people have to the places in which they are familiar or have lived out their lives and tries to understand better the reasons for their attachment (Drenthen 2009; 2011; 2013; 2015; Deliège & Drenthen 2014). That places and environments strike us as meaningful is the beginning of a hermeneutic approach to place. This starting point responds to Dasein's factual situatedness in place, which for hermeneutic environmental ethicists like Drenthen, has specific consequences for the method of ethics that Heidegger was never interested in elaborating. Like the place-based ethic of Mick Smith, Drenthen's approach also eschews abstract, principle-based moral accounts. Instead, the meanings that "beckon to be understood" (2013: 240) in the places we experience and encounter should be the core of our ethical focus. Engaging with them hermeneutically requires an ongoing explication and interpretation, as is the case with canonical texts that give rise to cultural associations and frameworks. As such, cultural landscapes offer paradigmatic cases of the environments that embody the larger normative context that Drenthen is interested in clarifying and re-articulating. He writes about such places of cultural historic importance: "Traditionally, places served as shared reference points: they both expressed and helped to support regional identities, thus providing human inhabitants with a means of identification and orientation" (2013: 227). This, of course is troubled by the waning importance of cultural landscapes as anchoring identity and the phenomenon of placelessness and non-places,⁸³ consequences of globalization and modernity. But so too are some reactions to this alienation from place, especially the impulse to conserve and consolidate cultural identity and history in the preservation and museumification of heritage landscapes.

Drenthen's way through the conflicts about which he writes and through such problematics of place and placelessness that comprise our "super-modern predicament" (2009: 305) is a regenerative one, using the landscape-reading method mentioned previously. He maintains that "an adequate hermeneutic of the landscape...has to acknowledge that our relation to the landscape is deeply historical" (2014a: 240) but at the same time, that the defining and important meanings of the past and regarding past landscapes and places may not indeed fit our present situation. The work of hermeneutic environmental ethics, as Drenthen sees it, is a bringing to light of the past meanings that continue to shape present day understandings. This happens through a clarification of these through deliberate

83. in Marc Augé's terminology. I will discuss these issues in more depth in Chapter 3.

articulation, and once thoroughly expressed, a questioning of whether these “old meanings in the present are still adequate to our understanding of our world” (2013: 241).⁸⁴

2.4 CONCLUSION: PLACE & PLACEMAKING

I have used this chapter to show how place fundamentally shapes our experience of the world by using Heidegger’s demonstration of Dasein’s existential spatiality, Jeff Malpas’ expansion of this, and his spelling out of how place shapes our experience of the world and all our engagements in it from the ground up. I take these related ideas about place as expressing its foundational significance for us as humans; such ideas have opened up place as a rich concept for environmental philosophers, and I have described several of the avenues that place-focused work have taken thereafter. Even if these developments do not engage Heidegger explicitly, the influence of his ideas on place informs most if not all of the subsequent developments on place in environmental philosophy I have described, and it is hard to imagine how environmental philosophy as it is today could have emerged without these insights that bring out the ontological significance of place and our constitution of being-in-the-world. Place has played an especially important role in hermeneutic environmental philosophy. In these developments, we saw how place as a fundamental way of structuring our experience of the world results in the emergence of specific cultural places and practices over time, arising out of modes of life and community in a shared place and time, and that hermeneutic environmental ethics does the work of questioning whether, as Drenthen put it, “old meanings in the present are still adequate to our understanding of our world” (2013: 241).

This dissertation, following Drenthen, enacts one such questioning with regard to the meanings instantiated in cultural landscapes. How do these meanings—meanings that have contributed to individual and cultural identities—face up to large-scale changes in the environment? How does rewilding challenge received ideas of place and cultural landscape? What I will claim, to an extent, also follows Drenthen’s work: he has argued that rewilded, or ‘new nature’ landscapes, can also be interpreted as cultural landscapes, not because they sit easily with traditional cultural landscapes but rather for the *oppositional* meanings they hold. These are not cultural landscapes in the traditional sense of places that convey historic meanings and where people feel strong identity and attachment, but exactly the opposite: they challenge this sense of belonging:

84. For particular examples of these, see Drenthen’s discussion of Zeeland cultural identity in the face of changing water regimes (Drenthen, 2014a) and of cultural attitudes (specifically of various parties from Germany and the Netherlands) to the presence of wolves (Drenthen 2014).

In new restoration projects along the rivers, ‘inhuman’ places are being created where one can truly feel ‘out of place.’ But, in a sense, that mirrors who we are ourselves! In that way, we can experience ourselves in these places as beings that are, in some sense at least, out of place. In these places we can be the ‘natural aliens’ that we truly are. Paradoxically, with such an interpretation the empty void takes a new meaning again! (2009: 303).

My dissertation includes this ‘inhuman’ place aspect of rewilding, but it will also include rewilding viewed from other aspects. My contribution will be argued along the lines of place, more specifically, the making of place, or *placemaking*. I have used this chapter to draw out why place is fundamental to us, individually, existentially, and to show why, from this starting point, place has been so important for environmental thought. We have seen how place became an important theme in philosophy and its influence specifically on environmental philosophy. However, if place consists only in the *established*, albeit meaningful areas in which we live our lives, then it is clear that we will lose places as times change. There must be more to place, if it is to respond to the ways in which places alter throughout time, themselves responding to environmental and social changes. Without necessarily taking on the normatively-laden meanings of dwelling that I have surveyed above, I want to suggest instead that the relationship between dwelling and building signals one way in which places change: as places are made in the processes of dwelling and building, we can see place as essentially hermeneutic, or interpretive, and we can draw out a notion of placemaking. Placemaking, the making of places, has to be an element of the idea of place. Our transformations of the world, our making or performing of place, arise both out of the received traditions we have of these places, their meanings, and their immanent practices, but these do not have to be unconscious rehearsals. Though they can be unconscious, so too can they be self-reflective and deliberative; they are open to change and revision, they can be—and are—contested. The next chapter will expand on placemaking as an alternative to received ideas of place as fixed in time, nostalgic, and thus waning in relevance.

BROADENING PLACE

3.0 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I claimed that place is the fundamental, existential way in which we experience the world. We have seen the breadth and scope of the applications and uses of place in philosophy, environmental thinking and literature, geography, and social psychology; however, equally pervasive and difficult are the criticisms lodged against the concept and the problems it raises. This chapter begins by covering some of the prevailing strands of criticism against the place concept. Addressing these criticisms will help broaden the concept so that a more progressive, open-ended notion emerges out of the problematic, received idea. A major component of my response to these challenges rests in the idea of placemaking, which, of course derives from place but also offers a creative potential vis-à-vis place. Placemaking represents the possibility we have to remake places and our ideas of them, and it represents the way in which our being-in-the-world and the ways we inhabit world are never finished or complete but are always ongoing, alive, and fundamentally open to questioning. Place and its attendant, creative idea of placemaking enable a clearer, more incisive focus on the components that go into making places, and a greater clarity should inspire reflection and discussion about how these processes go. Making room for these broader, more open notions against conservative and static received ideas of place will be the work of this chapter.

3.1 PLACE, POSITION, & POWER

Although we saw in the first chapter how the ideas of place and landscape have significant overlap in geography and in cultural heritage, the criticisms lodged at the respective concepts are strikingly divergent. By and large, landscape receives ideology critiques, that is, critiques about how landscape as an idea already frames the world in specific terms, terms that separate and empower the viewer over the viewed, and as such perpetuate and entrench imperialist, masculinist, classist power relations.⁸⁵ These questions of who is able to view the landscape and thus participate in its construction and ascendancy subtend political questions about space, landscape, and power. Related to this are other problematizations that inquire how views of landscape, naturalized in painting especially, are always already mediated instruments of cultural power. Landscape, especially through painting, already interprets that which it represents.

Why, on the other hand, does place generally escape these kinds of critiques? I suspect that the main reason is that they hinge precisely on an important difference between landscape and place: the role of perspective that shapes the former and is differently construed in the latter. Built into landscape is perspective: I view any landscape by looking out at or over it, a vantage that enables a perspectival distancing of the observer from the observed. Even in its colloquial usage, place is not so perspectival: I am, more often than not, immersed in the place that I observe, and more often than not, I am participating in place at least as much as I am observing it. Place, as we saw in the previous chapter, is our borne out of our situatedness in the world and our ongoing participation in it and its meanings, even if this below the level of our awareness all the time. In an avenue that I did not pursue⁸⁶ but that speaks directly to this point, the embodied nature of place as developed by especially Merleau-Ponty and his followers, expands on the centrality of bodily space in our experience of the world, a perspective that does not pertain as easily to landscape.⁸⁷

This is not to say that place is altogether immune to ideological critiques, but that these tend to work in different ways, based more out the way place quietly perpetuates power dynamics related to certain bodies and how these bodies are or

85. See, e.g., W. J. T Mitchell (Ed.) *Landscape and Power* (1994), for a collection of essays on these themes, as well as Ann Bermingham's *Landscape and Ideology: The English Rustic Tradition, 1740–1860* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), Barbara Bender's collection *Landscape: Politics & Perspectives* (1993).

86. See footnote 61 in chapter 2.

87. It should also be said that the concept of cultural landscape specifically is less impacted by ideology critiques to which landscape more generally is subjected. See Finn Arler (2008) for a democratic consideration of the cultural landscape and Emily Brady (2008) for the role of engaged practices that contribute to the aesthetic of cultural landscape.

are not permitted to participate or be reflected in certain places. One of the most influential of these critiques was made by geographer Gillian Rose in *Feminism & Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (1993). Rose criticizes humanistic geography for its masculinist treatment of space and its perpetuation of idealized notions of place, and more specifically, of home that have been adopted in the humanities more broadly. By masculinist, Rose means that geography unreflectively adopts the position of men without accounting for this bias. As a consequence of ignoring the positions of women, Rose charges that the concept of place that geography paints

is not one that many feminists would recognize...it is conflict-free, caring, nurturing, and almost mystically venerated by the humanists. It seems that the humanistic notion of place has little to do with women: its masculinism marginalizes alternative accounts of place. (1993: 56)

Rose's criticism here is geared towards the humanistic thinkers (Yi-Fu Tuan, Anne Buttner, David Seamon, et cetera) whose approach treats the experience of place as pre-conscious and pre-conceptual, felt and not thought, beyond language, and thus somehow beyond analysis (1993: 60-61). Rose particularly draws out how in this way, place is feminized, pointing not only to the implicit connection made to femaleness through the language of emotion and feeling associated with place (vs. space) but also to explicit references to mother- and childhood in characterizations of place and our longing for home. This longing is often taken to be a fundamental attribute of human existence, and in some cases is compared to a yearning for the original place of belonging and perfect dwelling that is suggested to have existed in childhood or in the womb. The place tradition, Rose argues, has both implicitly and explicitly associates itself with "the fantasized maternal Woman" (1993: 57).

Rose has two main points in her critique: the first is an epistemological critique of the discipline of humanist geography which assumes its masculinist position to be exhaustive and objective. (In this is a paradox: that the subject of its knowledge—the feminized place of human geography—is also taken to be fundamentally other and unknowable.⁸⁸) Her second point, which also relates to the masculine subject position she diagnoses in humanistic geography, is that place generally and the place of home specifically are characterized without respect to their gendered aspects and the unequal power relations that determine how they

88. "Its [Humanistic geography] claims to knowledge depend on a form of rationality which still assumes that objectivity is the touchstone of true knowledge. That rationality is constituted through a contrast with an Other" (Rose 1993: 60).

are experienced. Home is not universally a center of authenticity and belonging, but, for many women historically and even in the present, a site of confinement, precariousness, and oppression.

Similar to Rose's critiques, though in the context of environmental philosophy, Val Plumwood has also problematized place. She contends that the built-in privileges that place often affords have justice dimensions that are intensified in a context of globalism and globalized environmentalism. In her article "Shadow Places and the Politics of Dwelling" (2008), Plumwood cautions against particular strands of the place-based discourse, especially certain flavors of bioregionalism that seek to secure one community over and against others and as such can never achieve the "ecological form of consciousness" (2008: 139) to which they aspire. Inquiring about the power relations that already set place and place-related priorities off from other concerns, she asks: "Is the ability to maintain access (unproblematically) to a special homeplace and to protect it not at least partly a function of one's privilege/power in the world?" (2008: 140). But whereas others eschew the place concept for these kinds of reasons, Plumwood acknowledges that should we not want to dispense with place based on these concerns, nor could we even if we wanted to. Rather, the necessary work is separating forms of the place discourse out from those that are false, disconnected, constructed out of commodity culture and thus advanced as "innocent, and singularistic" (2008: 140) notions of place. Her critique is a call for a critical bioregionalism, that

must help make visible north/south place relationships, where the north/south pole operates as a correlate of (various different kinds of) privilege, exemplifying certain relationships of domination metaphorised as place, especially sacrificial and shadow or denied places. (2008: 141)

But because Plumwood recognizes the continued legitimacy and even necessity of place, she also advances ideas for its recuperation, which we will return to later in the chapter.

Importantly, we should note that the two feminist critiques—from Rose and Plumwood—are not aimed at place *per se* but at the place tradition of their respective disciplines. In both geography and environmental philosophy, the approaches to studying and knowing place have been biased by the position (of relative power and authority) of those doing the conceptual work. Both critiques remind us that the question of *who* is making places, both physically and conceptually, should always remain in mind and that ways of knowing place can be as marginalizing as the omission of marginalized places and their populations altogether.

3.2 PLACE VERSUS (?) WILDERNESS

“Place patently does not guarantee ecocentrism,” (1995: 253) Lawrence Buell writes, representing the suspicions held against place by those in environmental and conservation quarters. Indeed, most work on place and its challenges, for reasons that should be clear following the previous chapter, is based in and around thoroughly humanized places. In the literal sense of being structured by and around human perception, place works out of an anthropocentric framework,⁸⁹ and the question of how place obscures and conflicts with environmental concerns pertaining to non-humans will be one of the tensions place creates in this dissertation. I will argue later that rewilding offers novel ways of remaking place through the inclusion of nonhuman others, but at this point, the challenge posed to place by the concept of wilderness will be the focus.

My effort to bring the place concept into contact with rewilding, generally speaking, is an attempt to bridge and at the same time, put in tension, two traditions in environmental philosophy: the tradition of place as existential that I have presented in the second chapter with the new iteration of the wilderness tradition evident in rewilding. Because I am constructing place rather loosely, I understand wilderness as a way of conceiving of place and of making place (I’ll defend this later in chapter 6); wildernesses, especially as delineated in national parks or designated wilderness areas, are indeed places in their own right. Nevertheless, wilderness is frequently invoked to describe or name places that are importantly not the domain of humans but are spaces other to human settling and appropriation. Edward Casey, in *Getting back into place: Toward a renewed understanding of the place-world* (1993), also considers wilderness within the ambit of place, in fact the book’s fourth part is dedicated entirely to wild and wilderness places. Its epigraph is taken from Gary Snyder’s *The Practice of the Wild*: “Our relation to the natural world takes place in a *place*. (Snyder, cited in Casey 2003: 186, emphasis in Casey). With this, Casey indicates that he is not convinced that the dyadic terms in which wilderness has been understood as oppositionally paired with place are philosophically productive. One of the first methods Casey uses to turn this around is to seize upon the margin, where Nature (which Casey capitalizes in this section), usually taken as the “unassimable other” on the fringe of culture, encompasses ideas of culture instead of the other way around. “What if the supposed margin [Nature] is itself a center?” (1993: 186).

89. Though this is not to say necessarily that nonhuman animals cannot have their own experiences of place. One especially rich demonstration of this is the chapter on the philopatry, or the love of home, of endangered Little Penguins (*Eudyptula minor*) in Thom van Dooren’s *Flight Ways* (2014).

Nature and wilderness indeed serve as the center of Casey's exploration of place in this section of the book, although his attempts to foreground these and put cultural considerations secondary perhaps remain aspirational. The familiar, the cultural, is re-centered even in Casey's phenomenological experiences of wilderness as desolation, which specifically means the loss of an accustomed center and displacement from familiarity. Specifically, Casey notes the derivation of the word *wilderness* to being bewildered, lost, and to feeling astray. Disorientation is one of the main features of wilderness etymologically, and this is connected to the ways in which wilderness is the opposite of culture and cultivated lands. Casey, however, suggests this dichotomy is too clear cut: in fact, wilderness was also historically used to designate a maze or labyrinth in the middle of a park or a garden (1993: 189). And as his approach is phenomenological, he shows how access to wilderness will always be attained through the familiarity of one's own body, even if this familiarity then results in the disorientation of being in a place of wilderness where one is unaccustomed and does not belong. But even in the most foreign and disorienting wild spaces, the body's gesture is the *a priori* structure through which the enviroing world is experienced and apprehended. Thus, the logic of the body and its inbuilt directionality (that Casey explicates earlier in his explorations of embodied character of place) is that through which the world inheres. This is a difficult tension. For while the familiar body is always the point of access of wilderness, and as such, an ineliminable center, Casey is working against the domocentric belief that "the most significant motion is from built places into the natural world, as though this latter were some secondary realm, a mere outpost of human experience to be entered belatedly and on tenterhooks" (1993: 186).

Etymologically and historically, Casey draws out the "deep imbrication" of culture and wild nature through numerous examples and his extensive commentary. Wilderness and culture have a complex relationship and we cannot easily "get around the cultural" (1993: 230). His suggestion is instead to try to understand the relation not as opposing poles of utter wilderness—where humans are categorically and definitionally excluded—as one extreme, and of culture in the world—where humans are an essential presence and where wilderness is only ever pictured for us through cultural understandings and appropriations—as the dyadic other. As has been frequently observed, even the wildest places on earth exist as places, at the very least circumscribed by the cultural as such. In most cases, human presence, even when not a defining feature, is detectable:

The merest footpath embodies an intention to move through the wilderness in a certain way and toward a certain destination, both of which are culturally determinate. A bare lean-to in a forest is a concrete symbol of the collective character and purposes of the civilization that has made it possible, and is a form of dwelling. (1993: 234)

The respective poles of complete wilderness and complete culture may be only hypothetical imaginings, if they are possible at all. The mixings of culture and of nature, the “dense coalescence of cultural practices and natural givens” (1993: 253)—what also might be known as the cultural landscape in all its varieties already discussed—Casey refers to as the “thickening” that happens in between these poles. Wendell Berry’s cultivating plow thickens, Casey claims, as does Thoreau’s habit of walking through the woods outside of Concord: it is not only the traces of his route but that “his ambulatory activity subtly reshapes the natural world through which he moves” (1993: 253). Casey’s thickening requires a two-way traffic of coming and going, of witnessing and of reciprocally being witnessed, which, hermeneutically, he suggests increases or augments the being of both:⁹⁰ “Nature becomes more and other than it was before the building of the hut, and the hut is enhanced by its emplacement in the woods” (1993: 254).

Another mode of enculturation, or the *placing* of wilderness, that Casey draws out is its framing in human temporalities. The thickening of the cultural landscape, of course, requires that its reciprocity continues throughout time: it is as much the bending of human tasks and practices, of acclimatization to the natural cycles, as it is the coming to know, inhabit, and appropriate the natural givens through a human timescale, a calendarizing of world. The temporal will not feature so pronouncedly in my treatment of place or rewilding, though the *re-* of *re-wilding* arguably implies an in-built temporality. In the closing of *Getting Back into Place*, Casey meditates on this getting back, this *re-turning* or *re-inhabiting*, to point out how these synonyms (returning and reinhabiting) are both temporal *and* spatial: “What we get *back into* is a place where the journey can come to an end in space and time” (1993: 297, original emphasis). *Re-wilding*, by contrast, is not so obviously spatial as these other words: it would be more so if the coinage had been the clunkier *re-wildernessing* instead. However, the following chapters will show how rewilding has as much to do with place as it does with time.

90. [*Zuwachs an sein*] Casey refers here to Hans-Georg Gadamer’s idea that “Every picture is an increase in being” (1994/1960: 148) of that which it depicts.

3.3 PLACE-SPECIFIC CRITICISMS

3.3.1 Relevance of place

Although landscape is frequently the subject of the ideology-critiques already mentioned, it is not generally subjected to the critique of irrelevance frequently lodged at place in the 20th and early 21st centuries. Is place still a useful and productive concept, or is placelessness an inevitable condition of modern or postmodern life? This question, or critique, has taken several forms in the past decades: perhaps most famously, Edward Relph's *Place and Placelessness* (1976) described the growing placelessness of our postmodern world. Such placelessness arises when significant and distinctive places disappear and are replaced by homogeneous, vapid, nondescript sites, and even houses and dwellings, that lack the unique histories and contexts that make a place a place. Relph was writing in a western context and mainly uses images and examples from Europe and the United States, but his diagnosis is placelessness as a global problem, caused in large part by the forces of globalization, modernization, and mobility that have connected the world and defined the second half of the 20th century but also homogenized it. Place, for Relph, has specific normative content; his use of the concept of place roughly tracks the normative register of cultural landscapes I distinguished in chapter 1 (§1.4). Relph points out how these special places, valued for meaning in a world increasingly full of meaningless places, are also ironically put at risk because efforts to preserve them as they are rob them of their living meanings by museumifying them.

Anthropologist Marc Augé does similar work in his short volume *Non-places: An Introduction to Supermodernity* (1992/2009). Augé argues that supermodernity, characterized by an acceleration and overabundance of events, of space, and of individualization, has led to the creation and reproduction of what he terms non-places. He explains the non-place idea this way: “If place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place” (1992/2009: 63). Compared to (anthropological) places, where “inscriptions of the social bond...or collective history...can be seen” (1992/2009: viii), Augé's non-places are “spaces of circulation, consumption, and communication” (1992/2009: viii), sites that lack a unique identity in part because any historical or contextual relationship they bear to their surroundings is attenuated if it exists at all. These are the sites that dominate the globalized, post-modern world of the late 20th and early 21st centuries—airports, suburbs, shopping malls—what Relph would consider as examples of placelessness. While the work of both thinkers has been taken to be raising the question of the continued relevance of place, Augé adopts a more

sanguine tone in his observations than does Relph, who seems concerned with a loss of authenticity and the loss of meaningful experiences in the proliferation of placelessness he detects. Relph's definition of place alone signals the normative weight he puts on the concept of place:

Places are fusions of human and natural order and are the significant centers of our immediate experiences of the world. They are defined less by unique locations, landscape, and communities than by the focusing of experiences and intentions onto particular settings. Places are not abstract concepts, but are directly experienced phenomena of the lived-world and hence are full with meanings, with real objects, and with ongoing activities. They are important sources of individual and communal identity, and are often profound centers of human existence to which people have deep emotional and psychological ties. (1976: 141)

Whereas placelessness implies the complete absence of place, and as such, the lack of the profound and defining centers of exchange and of meaning Relph takes them to be, Augé's claim about non-places is different. Augé makes clear that non-place should not be understood as place's antithesis, rather, that place and non-place operate as poles: "the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity is ceaselessly written" (1992/2009: 64). The spaces of supermodernity are, perforce, different than the spaces (or better, places) of modernity, and although Augé's commentary highlights the comparative superficiality and identitylessness of the nonplace, he is in no way suggesting that the modern and pre-modern place should or even could be carried over into supermodernity.

For Relph, much more than for Augé, placelessness poses a threat to place that could be overcome. Relph takes placelessness to indicate both an environment absent of significant places but also an "underlying attitude which does not acknowledge significance in places" (1976: 143). Such an attitude works to erode the meaningfulness of places by replacing them with the uniform and alienating spaces constitutive of placelessness. Relphian places, as sponsoring authentic relations with the self and world, are already ethically vested, and Relph's concern about placelessness suggests that geographers, architects, and planners might work to avoid a world completely devoid of place. However, it is this concern, and to a lesser extent, Augé's commentary about the growing obsolescence of place in supermodernity that *underscores*, rather than undermines, the continued relevance of place. Place, taken broadly, as an existential means of accessing and engaging in a world, can describe both Augé's anthropological, or modern place and supermodernity's nonplace. Similarly, the condition of placelessness Relph describes

relies on the notion of place, as an anchoring of *some* kind, in the world. Whether the conditions of place can be satisfied in postmodernity, whether there is a respite for a feeling of global rootlessness and alienation both thinkers convey, rather than indicating the irrelevance of the concept of place, these questions show that it is all the more relevant, though perhaps that it requires revisiting and updating. We will see in later sections of this chapter how place can be revisited and revised with the idea of placemaking (§3.4).

A second strand of the relevance critique comes out of environmental thinking regarding place. Place, it seems, is not the correct scale or approach to address or encompass environmental problems: Western environmentalism has arguably always been global in scope.⁹¹ In a 2008 titled book *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet*, Ursula Heise argues against the former and for the latter: that the emphasis that environmental thinking has given the sense of place “as a founding ideological principle or a principal didactic means of guiding individuals and communities back to nature” is a “visionary dead end” (2008: 21) and it instead must foster conceptions of natural and cultural places that are set in the context of the planetary. Her critique, like Buell’s of place attachment (§1.2.2), looks towards imaginative genres (Heise includes film as well as novels) to expand the remit of the environmental, in this case to accentuate the interconnected and interpenetrating character of local places and ecologies within global networks. Nevertheless, the point here seems to be that it is from an external vantage, rather than the inside-ness of a lived place, that many environmental problems appear, and even attempts at accentuating their connectedness, of drawing out networks, tends to have the same, external vantage, a view from no place.

Asking how the anthropocene calls the idea of place—and its attendant notions of territoriality and belonging—into question, anthropologist David Lipset shows how the concept of place remains central *because* of the challenges that the anthropocene poses to it: “Anthropocene ethnography certainly calls the logocentrism of place into question. It calls into question the optimistic view that privileges place as a timeless medium through which people sense and understand nothing less than who they are as moral persons” (2014: 238). However, Lipset argues that the context of the anthropocene changes the *mood* of place as particular, usually subaltern places are made precarious by climate change and other emerging environmental threats. For communities in these places, like the subjects of Lipset’s ethnographic work—Papua New Guineans living amongst the Murik lakes—

91. I concur with Heise’s alignment of the major environmental problems the movement identified (e.g., overpopulation, sustainable development, the ozone hole, and most recently, global climate change) with the possibility of seeing the planet as a whole for the first time from the famous blue marble pictures taken by astronauts aboard Apollo 17, as well as through technological and scientific developments that enabled a seeing or a knowing of the world picture.

physical threats to place also amount to threats to cultural meanings, to social and symbolic orders, to the moral personhood resident in these mangrove lagoons. Lipset warns that in these ethnographic contexts, the anthropocene casts place “in a dark, conditional mood...where tragedy, that is to say, the loss, rather than the creation, of meaning, may be foreseen” (2014: 217).

3.3.2 Nostalgia & Place

The most frequent criticism registered against ideas of place relates to how place stands in relation to itself and to other places throughout time. The first, how place relates to itself through time, we can call the *nostalgia critique*. The nostalgia critique suggests that place generally rests on nostalgic, backwards-looking, outdated, quaint, and often romanticized ideas about places. Indeed, this criticism has merit to it. Valuations of place, especially in the sense of place as a specific, distinctive region or area, frequently rest on idealized and often bygone characteristics. Heidegger, especially his mentions of the hut in the Black Forest, frequently receives the nostalgia critique, as do some treatments of Thoreau's *Walden*. The worry of this criticism is that place, when it is invoked, is invoked to talk about idealized places like forest huts or thriving, local communities, but that these places are not and should not be taken to be representative of all places, and more frequently than not, these places, if they ever existed at all, existed only for some, and existed only in the past. Thus, the nostalgia critique of place takes it as manifestation of a longing for a way of life constituted by small, localized, fulfilling place-experiences and practices, ideas of belonging and dwelling that misrepresent the lives that any of us is capable of living in the modern, post-modern, or anthropoceneic age. The nostalgia critique of place implies that place holds as an ideal the time when people had greater attachment, identity, belonging in and knowledge of the place where they lived. This is place as a rooted, grounding, and value-embedding existence that modern travel and communication have undermined.⁹²

Related to, and often overlapping with, the nostalgia critique is might be termed the *exclusionary critique*: that conservative readings of place have frequently been employed to restrict human membership to a specific place. This kind of critique also is often lodged specifically at the use of Heidegger's thinking on matters related to place. Heidegger's unrepentant involvement with National Socialism and his antisemitism cannot be ignored, especially when the focus on his ideas concerns the themes of place, dwelling, and belonging are tied up in the language of homeland [*Heimat*], blood and soil [*Blut und Boden*], and the fatherland [*Vaterland*]. Nor are concerns for place's provincial, xenophobic, and exclusionary susceptibilities

92. Doreen Massey's progressive notion of place (§1.3) is one of many ways of responding to the nostalgia critique of place.

unique to Heidegger's Nazism, though this is a pronounced case that requires special attention. Whether Heidegger's philosophy, specifically his philosophy of place, can be divorced from his repugnant ideological views, in addition to lying far beyond the scope of my dissertation, is not a question I am qualified to address. For a word on this, I rely on Jeff Malpas' handling of these questions, as Malpas has made Heidegger's spatial and placial relevance central to Malpas' own scholarship of Heidegger.

In writing a text like *Heidegger's Topology* and assuming that, at the date of publication, Malpas had been up to date with Heidegger scholarship on the questions surrounding his philosophy in the political context of the 1930s,⁹³ Malpas implicitly answers the question that Heidegger's philosophical ideas are worth attention despite the taint of his Nazism. Malpas addresses the issue by making it something of a teaching moment: his resolution is that Heidegger demonstrates precisely, pronouncedly, how place-based thinking can be "politically reactionary and "dangerous"" (2006: 18). On the one hand, Malpas has to account for the difficulties Heidegger's political avowals present for his philosophy of place, on the other hand, he has to assert why they are not insuperable and argue against those who, on his view, have too quickly dismissed Heidegger's philosophical project because of his rotten politics. What I will focus on here is how Malpas shows that Heideggerian concepts of place do not have to be backwards looking let alone xenophobic or ideologically informed and that they can be read independently of Heidegger's personal ideological commitments. This happens most concisely in Malpas' paper "Rethinking dwelling: Heidegger and the question of place" (2014), wherein he examines ideas of dwelling and of place based on misreadings of Heidegger. This is what I will look to as a guide for thinking productively about place and placemaking.

3.3.3 Malpas: Dwelling misconstrued

In the previous chapter, I alluded to the variety of disciplines that have picked up on the significance of dwelling as drawn out by Heidegger. Dwelling is a prevalent theme, but not all of the developments out of dwelling can be considered in keeping with Heidegger's thinking. In fact, Malpas, expressing his criticism of some of these developments, refers to the notion of dwelling as a "devalued currency" that has "become a barrier" to adequate thought about place, our relationship with place, and to late Heidegger (2014: 15). In this paper, Malpas is mainly targeting Christian

93. The most damning evidence to date came in 2014 with the publication of Heidegger's *schwarze Hefte*, or Black Notebooks: diaries that Heidegger had requested remain unpublished during his life. In them, Heidegger cancels any doubt of his deep-seated antisemitism and any hope that he aligned himself with National Socialism only out of self-interest and opportunism by revealing his conviction in the conspiracy of "Weltjudentem" (World Judaism) and his linking of metaphysical questions with race.

Norberg-Schultz and his essay “The concept of dwelling: On the way to a figurative architecture.” Norberg-Schultz was influential in the uptake of dwelling amongst architects and designers (see Norberg-Schultz 1980, also Spirn 1998), but he is not alone in a reading of dwelling that, according to Malpas, valorizes both it and place generally. In this common misreading, dwelling and place unproblematically bestow a rich and meaningful identity, a sense of belonging, and a harmony with one’s surroundings. But to find in place a source of identity that is deterministic, unavoidably exclusionary, and beyond any individual’s control is to misread the questioning character of Heideggerian place. Nevertheless, place, belonging, and identity are tied together, and Malpas shows how a different reading hinges on how one understands Heidegger’s notion of belonging that undergirds identity. Identity, in Heidegger’s essay “The Principle of Identity,” is a belonging together. Malpas explains how this could either be read as a ‘belonging *together*,’ which emphasizes the unity of those together: the standard way of taking belonging, the “‘representational’ approach according to which belonging is grounding in the unity of that which belongs” (2014: 19). But alternatively and correctly (according to Malpas): to read this as ‘*belonging* together,’ emphasizes the relationally of belonging, and so making identity based on relationality, and so also “essentially tied to *difference*” (2014: 18, original emphasis).

This is, of course, an inverse of the way in which we commonly understand identity, where identity is numerical identity or sameness. But this is not how Heidegger meant it. Malpas writes: “As Heidegger presents matters, identity is never just a matter of the self-sameness of the thing, but always directs us towards the thing in its relationally - to the thing as it both gathers and is itself gathered” (2014: 19). As such, identity is never fixed but is always being re-negotiated and worked out, and this relates to the topological character of being.⁹⁴

that we belong *to place* is to affirm the way in which our own identity, our own being, is inseparably tied to the places in and through which our lives are worked out - which means that we cannot understand ourselves independently of the places in which our lives unfold even though those places may be complex and multiple. To say that we belong to place is also to affirm, once again, the questionability that lies at the heart of human existence. In belonging to place we are drawn into the questionability of place, the questionability of dwelling, the questionability of our own identity, rather than into some secure and comfortable residence in which questioning has somehow been brought to an end. (2014: 22).

94. Malpas connects these two through the event of appropriation, *Ereignis*, which is not only temporal but exists within a spatial realm (2014: 19).

Malpas' discussion provides answers both to the relevance and nostalgia critiques of place. Place, as the ground of ongoing questioning, must always be open to change and revision, and thus will never be a settled, finished concept or particular site but will always be open to the ongoing encounters with other people and things in the places where we find ourselves. As such, it cannot lose relevance: its relevance is continuously renewed through interminable questioning. The way that place loses relevance is that a particular conception of place—one with fixed qualities, or frozen in time—is taken to stand in for all places or any place.

3.4 PLACEMAKING

Considering place in this way opens it up as a productive interpretive ground for understanding human relations in the world. Moving from the Heideggerian terminology that Malpas deploys into my own, dwelling raises a question to which place is always subjected and where place always also serves as the realm of questioning. Placemaking is the asking and answering the question of dwelling. Placemaking is the creative and ongoing ways in which places are taken up, understood, consolidated, and reproduced.

Some of the most literal examples of placemaking come from Isis Brook, who promotes a personal, embodied defense of the value of place and of placemaking (2003; 2012). Embodied practices, she claims, can help us prevent placelessness and inauthentic or banal places because they actively engage us in creating and maintaining places that house us and have meaning for us. This rests on an exercise of environmental virtues that “reintegrate ourselves into the material fabric of the world” (2012: 109). Brook is well aware of the problems of nostalgia and exclusion that some place-practices enact. She is one of the few scholars who write about place who are willing to grant nostalgia a role in our human impetus to make places, especially to make our homes, and she takes seriously and examines nostalgic impulses instead of ignoring or discounting the experience. For Brook, feeling out of place and wanting to make ourselves feel more comfortable or at home in a foreign place is not an experience we can gloss over: it speaks to the profoundness of place in our sense of self and of world, and it is not something that rationalistic decision making can ease for us, as Brooks notes is often implied. Nor do we escape the place-baggage simply by shifting our focus to a scientific frame. Brook shows that ecology is not, strictly speaking, free from the problematic associations with place: that nostalgia, exclusion, and xenophobia also taint ecological projects. She is not the first to problematize the language of invasive, exotic species, but her questioning of gardening and the impulse “to make here like there” brings out the values that otherwise remain obscure in scientific or ecological reasoning.

Placemaking covers a vast array of activities and practices that instantiate place and places that are less obvious and deliberate than the means Brooks identifies. The term is used most frequently in planning and urban design to describe the intentional and often collaborative ways in which neighborhoods and other public spaces are designed with the well-being of individuals and communities in mind.⁹⁵ What I will focus on, however, will not necessarily be the places of human life and interchange. In fact, most of the places under consideration are places where humans do not typically belong, and so will not be described at the register of personal, emplaced experience but at a level of greater remove. The placemaking I will discuss in the dissertation will be the various forms of placemaking that I argue rewilding performs. Placemaking as I represent it will include the concrete, tangible, corporeal ways in which places are made—like the mowing practices that maintain fields for grazing, and the grazing of those ungulates that make the place in a particular way. But it can also be decisions or ideas that influence decisions about how to maintain a place. In a completely idealized way, placemaking can be almost entirely abstracted story-telling about a place in such a way that it is highlighted and parts of its history are preserved or recovered. These are the shared, conceptual makings of place that of course include physical parts and nonhuman others. I focus on *placemaking* to emphasize the extent to which even wild or rewilded places are made into places through our tradition of ideas about what nature is, and the ways in which nature is interpreted and understood. Rewilding, for its express emphasis on the nonhuman, the idea of self-willed land, and its inheritance of wilderness ideas and meanings, challenges the idea of place. The aim of my argument is to put forth this frame—of place and placemaking—for thinking about environments and conservation in order to bring out certain elements. I am using place, and specifically placemaking, in the context of rewilding to frame the discussion differently and emphasize aspects of the environments in question that otherwise would not be as visible. By framing rewilding as placemaking, I mean to highlight the ways in which these rewilded places are the same time, at least in part, places of human making and the inherent tension in this combination. As we will see, rewilding follows directly in the wilderness tradition of environmental philosophy, which has not been generally organized around humanistic or existential questions of place and tends instead to eschew such notions. In later chapters, I aim to expand placemaking to include the

95. The Project for Public Spaces defines placemaking this way: “As both an overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a neighborhood, city, or region, Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, Placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, Placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution” (The Project for Public Spaces 2009).

nonhuman, that is, I aim to illustrate how placemaking is not strictly the work of humans but that it already includes the presence and impact of nonhumans. But I use the term in order to push in two directions simultaneously: to emphasize rewilding as in some crucial ways a human project driven by human questions and interests (even if not self-interest necessarily, but curiosity, et cetera) but also to broaden placemaking in such a way that there is greater consideration of even the wildest types of conservation and making of place that humans participate in in the anthropocene.

Placemaking and the implication that place is *performed* through rewilding highlights the activity involved in place becoming place. Place should be understood in the sense of our always making and remaking place; place and our relation to it is fundamentally creative and active.⁹⁶ Place as made and as performed coincides with one of the key recognitions of the anthropocene: that the world is impacted and made over by human activity, intentional and unintentional. At the same time, this is in tension with another realization the idea of the anthropocene has brought: the reality of a world that is outside of human control and intentionality. In an introduction to a recent journal issue on Place and emotional geographies, Tom Bristow and Lilian Pearce make this very point:

Changes to species and ecosystems, to seasons and cycles will soon—if they have not already—contort our relationships with place, requiring us to rethink notions of belonging in order to guide ethically responsible, affectively informed actions that account for humans, non-humans and future generations. (2016: 1)

This means that place will be performed in new ways. I posit that rewilding is one (or three) of these ways, although these three are not completely novel.

3.5 PLACEMAKING & REMAINING PROBLEMS

How does the idea of placemaking respond to some of the problems of place we have encountered so far? Recall the argument by Paul Knights for the for the protection of the cultural landscape I referenced in the first chapter.⁹⁷ The problems that arise within Knights' argument strike me as representative miniatures of the problems with place that this chapter has already discussed. For one, it is a difficult sell to

96. Although we receive place passively as well. My point, however, is that place is generated out of our projection of ourselves and the selves of others in space and time at an existential level, and that at the level of shared, or cultural place or landscape, our relation here too is also creative.

97. based on an intergenerational contract, see §1.5

argue that the dead can be harmed, and even if we should take seriously certain obligations to them out of respect, these are surely outweighed by other, perhaps more pressing and demanding obligations we have to the living, whether human or nonhuman. Nevertheless, Knights' argument tries to capture the intuition that some places matter to us on the merit of their age and history and that they embody human intentions and motivations, care and diligence, and ways of being in the world that are significant to us, and we feel that we have an ethical obligation to preserve these places not only for reasons of aesthetics or education. The biggest issue, however, with Knights' argument, is that taken to its logical conclusion, it does not seem to allow for the large-scale change to places that were valued historically. Put simply, that some artifact was valued in the past is not sufficient grounds to value it in the present. If we have been gifted agricultural landscapes that have been sculpted by unsustainable ecological practices, or perhaps unjust economic practices (for instance, the plantation and slave system in the American South), it does not seem that we have any obligation to the previous owners or practitioners of these places, all things considered.

Placemaking should not be conceived as the narrow, duty-bound continuation of the old and inherited but an ongoing examination and questioning of what kinds of places we are already complicit in making and a consideration of how we stand in relation to places of meaning from the past. Knights' argument offers a reminder that the process of placemaking is not one in which we are ever unhinged from the past or entirely free of its gifts and burdens.

We might also return to Plumwood's idea of shadow places (§3.1) from earlier in this chapter. Part of placemaking in a global age will require the remembering of the shadow places that are otherwise overlooked, and as Plumwood urges, are inseparable from our lives: "These places remote from self, that we don't have to know about but whose degradation we as commodity consumers are indirectly responsible for, are the shadow places of the consumer self" (2008: 145). Plumwood, drawing on indigenous advice,⁹⁸ argues that these places, just as much as the places where we find belonging and attachment and where we live out our lives, that we cherish and work to safeguard, these shadow places are just as much *our* places, for which we have to account and take some responsibility. The disregard of other places—that in a globalized economy, provide much of the world's fuel and food, that supply the resources and exploitative economies that manufacture and transport clothing, furniture, housing materials, that absorb the waste—is aided by the view of place that champions one's own and ignores all others. Plumwood claims that this disconnection "between a singular, elevated, conscious 'dwelling' place and the multiple disregarded places of economic support" (2008: 146) is one

98. from Bill Neidjie (1989)

of the best present-day examples of the mind/body dualism pervasive in western thinking and thus also mars “our concepts of identity, economy and place” (2008: 146). Our attachment to the places we already find ourselves invested in can be deepened by a recognition of their connectedness to the shadow places that haunt them.

Malpas’ discussion of Heidegger expanded the sense in which identity does not require sameness but that belonging is a relation to those others with which one belongs. However, the questions of belonging in or to place and how placemaking accords with belonging should not be taken as entirely resolved. Belonging itself is a troubled idea, as indicated above by Plumwood’s concerns about forms of place attachment, as well as by others thinking about the global environment in the early 21st century.⁹⁹ In one recent example, art historian Robin Kelsey offers a redefinition of the term *landscape* as the fantasy of *not* belonging to the world, of being able to withdraw from it so as to view it as a whole one can apprehend. This on its own does not differ greatly from other, ideology criticisms of landscape, but Kelsey emphasizes how this fantasy of not belonging has a specifically ecological character. Borrowing a term from geographer Denis Cosgrove, it is the fantasy of not belonging and as such not being subjected to the “suffocating embrace of ecology.”¹⁰⁰

What do I mean by a fantasy of not belonging? A fantasy of being apart, fundamentally different, of not fitting in. I mean a fantasy of having other concerns, destinations, and domains. I mean a fantasy of being insulated from the effects of our actions on other terrestrial beings, of being free of our obligations to them. (2008: 207)

The perspectival privilege landscape affords, and that Kelsey charges that we eagerly adopt, signals “a special desire to treat the terrestrial environment as if it were a picture, something apart from us that we can own and view” (2008: 205), and for our distance, we are excused from or forgiven by. If Kelsey is correct about landscape, then perhaps place and placemaking force a reinscription of ourselves into the places we wish to distance or exculpate ourselves from. How placemaking

99. Of course, belonging is fraught with many of the same problems I have already discussed regarding place in this chapter. Compounding these are the issues of estrangement or anxiety brought on by ecological threats, fears, or experiences of displacement. For more on the world as inhospitable, see the work of Nigel Clark, especially *Inhuman nature: Sociable Life on a Dynamic Planet* (2011). For the ecological uncanny, see Timothy Morton’s *The Ecological Thought* (2010). Conversely, see Emily O’Gorman (2014) for more optimistic and imaginative suggestions about belonging in the anthropocene.

100. Cosgrove cited in Kelsey (2008: 204).

might accomplish this through rewilding, which seems utterly indifferent to human belonging, remains to be seen and will be the subject of the final part of the dissertation.

3.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have reviewed several of the leading criticisms of the concept of place. We saw from Gillian Rose and Val Plumwood that received ideas of place in geography and philosophy have been used to privilege certain perspectives and groups while obscuring others. A more inclusive and dynamic notion of place is necessary to avoid perpetuating these injustices as well as to account for our relations to the places of wilderness: Edward Casey worked in this direction. I then argued that Augé's and Relph's commentaries on place in the late 20th century underscore its continued relevance, although they are usually invoked to argue for the growing obsolescence of place. In the face of nostalgic and xenophobic critiques of place, specifically in connection with Heidegger, Jeff Malpas' correction of misreadings of dwelling and identity helped us formulate a conception of placemaking that answers to the dynamism of concepts of place and by so doing makes place itself more expansive and open-ended. Placemaking helps address nearly all of the problems raised regarding the received idea of place except one: is belonging still a feature of place and place relations in times of ecological anxiety and displacement, and is not rewilding another force acting towards that displacement? In the following chapters, we will examine rewilding as placemaking to see what this means for the places made through rewilding and for relations of belonging. But before this, we will turn to received ideas of wilderness and to the emerging concept of rewilding itself in the dissertation's second part.

Part 2

WILDERNESS & REWILDING

WILDERNESS CONTEXT & MEANINGS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In the opening to his essay “The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature” (1998), environmental historian William Cronon observed that wilderness is “a fundamental tenet—indeed, a passion—of the environmental movement, especially in the United States” (1998: 471). It is for this reason—the extent of its appeal, the tenacity with which the idea of wilderness is revered by conservationists—that Cronon’s views in challenging this orthodoxy would seem heretical to many. Indeed he was correct in anticipating this; the essay, and the challenges it lodged against the wilderness idea were and still remain controversial. Wilderness, as he suspected, is so important to so many that even subjecting its meanings to reflection and deconstruction—thinking about wilderness as a *received idea*—was viewed as a challenge to its basis in realism and an affront to its preservation. In this chapter, which draws largely on the historical analysis of the concept that Cronon presented in his seminal essay, I examine some of the deeply entrenched meanings in the idea of wilderness, received meanings that Cronon locates in historical and cultural ideas about nature. A central aim in the following sections will be to explore why wilderness has been and continues to be such a source of fascination, and because of that, controversy. I focus on two essential but interrelated aspects of wilderness that have shaped its meaning over time: first, the idea of wilderness as separated from society (§4.2), and second, the idea of wilderness as Other (§4.3). I discuss how these have been challenged by Cronon

and others, overviewing the debates surrounding the idea of wilderness and the prospect of ecological restoration in environmental philosophy (§4.5) as a context out of which the strategy of rewilding could emerge.

4.1 FRONTIER & WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE & IDEAS

Before we can turn to Cronon's deconstruction of the received wilderness idea, it will be helpful to have a clear idea of what Cronon and others have deconstructed: what the received wilderness idea *is*. There are many, many places to find this: the canon of wilderness writing is extensive and well known through its famous proponents like John Muir, Henry David Thoreau, Aldo Leopold, and Robert Marshall (to name a few)¹⁰¹ who extoll nature and wilderness in generally lengthy narratives documenting their personal and often transformative experiences in and of it.¹⁰² But we can find a more succinct account of the character of wilderness in what is now one of the most famous pleas for its protection, a letter from 1960 by American writer Wallace Stegner. Stegner was writing to the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission to urge the protection of wilderness areas, especially in the western United States. His letter predates the main body of law on which US conservationists have come to rely to protect wilderness and other nature areas,¹⁰³ and as such, his defense of wilderness is based in its recreational, experiential, and symbolic significance to Americans, motivated by an attitude of stewardship of this aspect of American heritage. In the passage that follows, Stegner is referring specifically to Robber's Roost, a remote canyon in Utah.¹⁰⁴ Stegner writes:

It is a lovely and terrible wilderness, such as wilderness as Christ and the prophets went out into; harshly and beautifully colored, broken and worn until its bones are exposed, its great sky without a smudge of taint from Technocracy, and in hidden corners and pockets under its cliffs the sudden poetry of springs. Save a piece of country like that intact, and it does not matter in the slightest that only a few people every year will go into it. That is precisely its value. Roads would be a desecration, crowds would ruin it...

101. More recent canonical wilderness writers include Gary Snyder and Edward Abbey.

102. See especially Muir's writings on Hetch Hetchy Valley in 1908 and his adulations of the growing National Park System in *Our National Parks* (2006), although any of Muir's writings feature wilderness centrally. Thoreau's essay on Mt. Ktaadn, which I will introduce later in the chapter (2009) is the best example of his wilderness writing. See also Leopold 1998 and Marshall 1998.

103. The US Wilderness Act was passed in 1964; the National Environmental Policy Act in 1969; the Endangered Species Act in 1973; the National Forest Management Act in 1976, to name some of the most significant pillars of legislation.

104. Robber's Roost is famous in American folklore as one of several hideouts used by Butch Cassidy, the Wild Bunch, and other bandits on the Outlaw Trail in the Old West (Nichols 1995).

those who haven't the strength or youth to go into it and live can simply sit and look...[or] they can simply contemplate the idea, take pleasure in the fact that such a timeless and uncontrolled part of earth is still there. (1960)

These few lines of Stegner's letter convey the ardor with which American wilderness is praised and defended by its proponents as well as a sense of what they take to be its essential characteristics: its antithesis to technology and human uses; its remoteness and wildness; its absence of people; its uncommon and harsh beauty; its integrity; its timelessness.

Stegner's broader thesis in the letter is that wilderness preservation is important because of the unique relationship Americans had in their historic encounters with wilderness when settling the country and in the present as a place of refuge from an increasingly urbanized life. He represents the idea that wilderness has shaped Americans through this history, and that in a crucial way, wilderness sustains the spirit of the American people, a version of a much older idea, originally put forth by historian Frederick Jackson Turner. Turner claimed, in 1893, that the experience of the frontier—of the margin between what had been settled and the yet unsettled wilderness—was distinctively American, and as Turner claims, Americanizing:

The frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. (1893)

And for Turner, just as the frontier transformed individual colonists, so too did it transform the culture of the fledgling nation. What became known as Turner's frontier thesis was the idea that it was not the cultural inheritance of the Old World but the frontier experience of the New—of settling the west, of encountering and overcoming wilderness—that was the single most important element in forming American society and democracy. The experience of forging west, of facing primitive conditions, and settling the country piece by piece had, according to Turner, instilled in Americans specific values and traits—for instance, of self-sufficiency, egalitarianism, suspicion of formalized government—as well as shaped the political institutions that emerged. As such, the closing of the frontier, announced by the US Census Bureau in 1890, marked the closing of the “first period of American history” (1893).

Stegner's letter is indication that the idea of the frontier, as Turner predicted, would last long after its closing. Stegner taps into the themes of cultural formation and inheritance that Turner first described. What Turner may not have foreseen was

how his frontier thesis and the declaration of the closing of the frontier inspired the protection of wilderness in the US. Or, put another way, it was the *idea* of the frontier and its meanings that Turner helped articulate that made way for the emergence of the *idea* of wilderness as we know it now. In the early history of the United States, that is, before the closing of the frontier (and Turner's essay), wildernesses had been viewed not with reverence but with considerable antipathy. In his 1967 study, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Roderick Nash charts the attitudinal change towards wilderness over the country's history, beginning with the first settlers, who expected America to be or at least to contain god's promised land. When they arrived and found the wilds of America to be formidable and dangerous instead of the bounteous Eden they expected, the prevailing idea of wilderness changed accordingly, shifting from that of a promised land to a godless desert, a sinister barren, hostile to human life and projects. Wilderness was hazardous not only for its threats to the body but to the soul: these, and thus the wilderness, had to be overcome. Nash writes "Clearly, the American wilderness was not paradise. If men expected to enjoy an idyllic environment in America, they would have to make it by conquering wild country" (1967: 26). This attitude—of wilderness as a thing to be conquered—prevailed amongst colonizers in the United States into the 19th century. For settler moving westward to cultivate and settle the land, wilderness was exactly the thing that had to be tamed. Simply, as Nash explains: "The pioneer, in short, lived too close to wilderness for appreciation" (1967: 24). In the life of the settler, wilderness presented a bewildering threat and posed a constant obstacle to be vanquished.

However, the closing of the frontier, was, according to William Cronon, one of two elements that transformed the conception of wilderness, that sacralized it. The frontier had always been conceptualized vis-à-vis wilderness: as defined by the US Census Bureau, the frontier was the line where civilization ended and wilderness began, the line, west of which, population density was lower than two people per square mile (Turner 1893). And as such, to be on the frontier was to be encountering the wilderness, which was at once a threat, as Nash described, but also a possibility for a free life, eked out of a seemingly unspoiled, unoccupied territory: a life that could be self-made and self-determined. The closing of the frontier, commingling with the idea of the sublime—a growing European romanticism for certain kinds of nature in the 18th and 19th centuries—is what, on Cronon's account, turned the threat of wilderness that defined the settler experience into the *idea* of wilderness that resembles our present-day conception, as something rare and valuable and worth preserving. Cronon writes: "In the myth of the vanishing frontier lay the seeds of wilderness preservation in the United States, for if wild land had been so crucial in the making of the nation, then surely one must save its last remnants as

monuments to the American past—and as an insurance policy to protect its future” (1998: 479). The closing of the frontier threatened the end of wilderness, and with this idea in mind, Americans were inspired to preserve pieces of this seemingly untouched, primeval land that predated their arrival on the continent and had shaped their existence there.

4.2 WILDERNESS AS ONTOLOGICALLY SEPARATE

The character of wilderness portrayed in Stegner’s letter is thus what is now considered traditional wilderness, or what has been called the *received idea* of wilderness. One of the most quintessential aspects of this received idea is that wilderness is valuable because it is outside of and separate from places and cultural landscapes—areas that are outside the borders of cultivated and meaningful sites and regions (even if this separateness then holds an important relation to the character or spirit of the country’s population). Cronon’s historical narrative helps explain why this is: that wilderness preservation in the US began as an effort to save the not-yet settled and that wilderness could only be the parts of the US that had not been inhabited in the colonists’ expansion westward. This separation of wilderness from the human and from human places is one of the most enduring meanings of wilderness. Stegner’s letter, for instance, implies that a lasting human presence is not only out of place in Robber’s Roost but altogether inappropriate. Even more basically, this idea is located in the way wilderness has been defined. Robert Marshall, trying to clear up definitional confusion around the word as early as 1930, specified that he uses wilderness “to denote a region which contains no permanent inhabitants, possesses no possibility of conveyance by any mechanical means and is sufficiently spacious that a person in crossing it must have the experience of sleeping out” (1998: 86). This prefigures the language that was set down by conservationist Howard Zahniser in the US Wilderness Act. Passed into law in 1964, the Wilderness Act established the National Wilderness Preservation System and codified the criteria by which lands could qualify for designation as wilderness. Under such designation, these lands would then be federally managed and maintained as public lands and in such a way as to preserve the “wilderness character of the area.” The Wilderness Act defines wilderness as such:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval

character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. (United States Wilderness Act of 1964)

In the language of the law, the separation from humans is the deciding criterion: wilderness can only be designated in the absence of pronounced human influence.

Against the backdrop of this now-famous definition, Robert Chapman has more recently distinguished the related but still different notion of *wildness*. Chapman rehearses the language of the Wilderness Act to specify what wilderness is: “[wilderness is] where the earth and its community of life are untrammled by man,” and as Chapman notes, this “can be reduced, acre by acre” (2006: 466, 471).¹⁰⁵ That is, there are places of wilderness in the world, often formally designated as such, and as will be discussed, these generally depend on the present and historic absence of humans. According to Chapman, we should understand *wildness* as that which “reveal[s] unbounded, limitless life with incalculable potential for ‘creative’ complexity” (2006: 468). That is, wildness could consist in the grass and other volunteers growing in abandoned city lots, in flowers growing on hillsides and meadows, in animal fierceness, but it could be human too: a raging party is wild, emotions can run wild, et cetera.¹⁰⁶ Wildness is the broader of the two: while humans can participate in wildness, wilderness is defined in exclusion to human presence and influence.

Thus, this separation of wilderness from civilization or the human pervades its canonical meaning. Additionally, we can see this playing out in tangential discussions in environmental philosophy that prefigured the wilderness debate of the 1990s. Two important papers in ecological restoration, by Robert Elliot and Eric Katz, offer arguments that rigorously defend this meaning of wilderness

105. cf Aldo Leopold's remark that “Wilderness is a resource which can shrink but cannot grow... creation of new wilderness in the full sense of the word is impossible” (1968: 199).

106. Irene Klaver writes: “Wild is the smoke rising, tuning in slow movements, tracing out invisible currents of air with its gray white elegance before disappearing. Wild are the tracks of the mountain lion and the deer in the snow and the scratches on my arms and legs, painful traces of following the animal tracks through the thickets of their trajectories...Untamed and not named, the wild escapes the frames of our knowledge.” (2008: 485)

without writing about wilderness as such. Instead, both philosophers organize their ideas around ecological restoration, opposing it on grounds that relate to specific ways in which wilderness is separate from human places and makings. Elliot established himself as one of the first critics of ecological restoration in a 1982 paper where he claimed that ecological restoration amounts to “faking nature.” Elliot’s argument for this idea is based on the specious claims restoration projects implicitly make. Specifically, what Elliot terms the “restoration thesis” claims that in restoration projects, “the destruction of what has value is compensated for by the later creation (recreation of something of equal value)” (1982: 81). This thesis is found at the heart of reclamation projects permitted on the basis that they will restore or replace the nature that the project disturbed or destroyed in the first place. Elliot cites one such project that promised that engineers and landscape architects would be able to rebuild “the creek to the same standard as before. Boulders, bends, irregularities, and natural vegetation have all been designed in the new section” (1982: 82). Elliot, himself sympathetic with environmentalists who, opposing such plans, realized that their opposition appears “obstinate” or “selfish” (1982: 83) because it lacked any compelling utilitarian argument.¹⁰⁷ Elliot’s point is that there *is* something valuable lost in these projects. The restoration thesis is flawed because this loss is not compensated: replacements are *not* of equal value. His phrase “faking nature” alludes to the core of his argument, which he illustrates through the example of works of art. Like a forged painting, a restored piece of nature lacks the value of the original because, like the work of art, part of the value of the original was on account of its genesis and history. A forgery, even a forgery that is visually indistinguishable from the original work of art, does not have equal value to the original precisely because it does not have the same origin. Through a series of thought experiments, Elliot demonstrates how causal genesis plays a part in establishing the value of nature and wilderness areas. But important here is the specificity of this genesis: Elliot argues that we value wilderness—that wilderness has value—because it provides an unbroken continuity with the past that made it.¹⁰⁸ No matter how convincing the restoration, it will be less valuable because this continuity will have been broken, and this is not something that can be restored. In explaining Muir’s esteem of Hetch Hetchy, Elliot writes:

Muir regarded the valley as a place where he could have direct contact with primeval nature...not just because it was a place of great beauty, but because it was also part of the world that had not been shaped by human

107. Especially when they often improvements over the original through promises of more species diversity through reintroductions, the creation of objectively better habitat, et cetera.

108. Elliot stresses that this is not on the basis of naturalness alone.

hand. Muir's valuation was conditional upon certain facts about the valley's genesis: his valuation was of a, literally, natural object, of an object with a special kind of continuity with the past. (1982: 86)

This past is a primeval, nonhuman past, and it is this past that separates us from nature: "We value the forest and river in part because they are representative of the world outside our dominion, because their existence is independent of us" (1982: 86), Elliot writes. Wilderness is valuable—we value wilderness—because it represents the ever-shrinking portions of the world through which we can encounter history that is not ours.

In a 1992 paper "The Big Lie: Human Restoration of Nature," Eric Katz followed up on Elliot's critique, observing that despite Elliot's compelling points, conservation policies continued to be designed around the normative premise that "humanity should repair the damage that human intervention has caused the natural environment" (1992: 390). Katz, like Elliot, found this premise flawed, but he advanced a different approach to correcting it. According to Katz, the idea that natural value can be recovered in restoration projects is based on a "misperception of natural reality" (1992: 391) that misconstrues the value and role of humans in natural environments and assumes that natural environments are the kind of thing that humans can fix. For Katz, this is the "big lie" of restoration: restoration projects are passed off as "natural," when they are really artifacts, namely, that they are designed and implemented by humans, in accordance with human interests. This hinges on an ontological difference between nature and humans, and accordingly, natural objects and artifacts. Humans and our artifacts, always guided by human intention, are thus different from nature and natural objects, which have no guiding functionality or *telos*. Anything that humans make, Katz claims, is "created for human use, human purpose—[it] serve[s] a function for human life" (1992: 392). This difference means that humans cannot repair nature; any restoration becomes artifact because it is human-designed. Nature, on Katz's view, is "defined as being independent of the actions of humanity" (1992: 395), and though he admits that natural objects and artifacts exist on a spectrum, he nevertheless stands by a conception of the "natural" as the "objects and processes that exist as far as possible from human manipulation and control" (1992: 396). The first part of Katz's argument against ecological restoration is this claim of an ontological

difference between humans and nature.¹⁰⁹ The second part, and what Katz seems to interpret as a consequence following from this division, is that restoration amounts to another technological fix,¹¹⁰ borne out of the presumption that “whatever the problem may be, there will be a technological, mechanical, or scientific solution” (1992: 391). This displays an attitude of arrogance that Katz traces to the “insidious dream of the human domination of nature” (1992: 391). He writes: “Once we dominate nature, once we restore and design nature for our own purposes, then we have destroyed nature—we have created an artifactual reality, in a sense, a false reality, which merely provides us the pleasant illusory appearance of the natural environment” (1992: 396).¹¹¹

4.3 WILDERNESS AS TRANSCENDENT OTHER

It is worth noting that both Elliot and Katz use the conceit of *deception* as the linchpin in their respective arguments against restoration. This makes restoration even more normatively freighted than it would be otherwise: instead of an honest category mistake, restoration is *forging* or *lying*, which I think is telling of the tenor of the debate over restoration and the underlying conflict about the meanings of wilderness. The language that Elliot and Katz use in defending the separateness of nature and wilderness from humans suggests something inviolable about this difference. If we look closely at Katz’s explanation in the final quotation (above), he suggests that one of the reasons that we value nature as nonhuman—and this is the other key aspect of wilderness that I want to emphasize in this chapter—that nature is an Other that always remains outside of human control and jurisdiction. However, we risk destroying this Otherness if we replace the world around us with human artifacts and machinations. Katz’s implication here is that the Otherness of nature provides meaningful resistance against the construction of an all-too-human

109. Wayne Ouderkirk is one of the critics of the non-traditional dualism of Katz’s view, wherein “human intentions place humans outside of nature in some way” (2002: 127). Citing Plumwood’s observation that dualisms are structurally hierarchical, Ouderkirk criticizes Katz’s dualism for privileging the natural over the human. Katz responds to Ouderkirk and claims that he does not make “any general claims about the respective values of the poles of this dualism” (Katz 2002: 142). But the “*difference in value*” (2002: 142, original emphasis), rather than the privileging of one value over another Katz insists he is emphasizing, at least in the context of ecological restoration has obvious hierarchical implications. He reiterates this when he suggests simply, that “as much as possible, we humans *leave nature alone*” (2002: 143, original emphasis). By Katz’s reasoning, non-interference is the best way humans can respect nature.

110. Other examples of technological fixes that Katz offers are chemical fertilizers to boost food production, hydroelectric dams to further exploit waterways as energy-generating resources.

111. See Delègue 2014 for a compelling counterargument to Katz’s thesis.

world. A world that bends to our whim is a “false reality.” Preserving some sense of this Otherness is one of the enduring and pervasive motivations for wilderness preservation.

We have already seen this history in the fearsome and sublime idea of wilderness described by Nash and Cronon (§4.1). The Otherness of nature was an especially popular interpretation of wilderness by Transcendental philosophers like Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Thoreau wrote much more frequently about his experiences in the semi-solitude (but general safety) of Walden Pond than the sublime wilderness: the sojourn to Walden Pond was an attempt to step out of civilization, to reject the increasingly industrialized and technological thrust of American life and embrace Arcadian ways of life in nature. Nevertheless, Thoreau also wrote about his confrontation with what he perceived as the truly wild. Thoreau’s journey to the summit of Mount Ktdaan is one of the most famous examples of the Transcendent Other of wilderness.

Nature was here something savage and awful, though beautiful. I looked with awe on the ground I trod on, to see what the Powers had made there, the form and fashion and material of their work. This was the earth of which we had heard, made of Chaos and Old Night. Here was no man’s garden, but the unhandelled globe...¹¹² We walked over it with a certain awe, ... here not even the surface had been scarred by man, but it was a specimen of what God saw fit to make this world.. ... Talk of mysteries! – Think of our life in nature, – daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it, – rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! The solid earth! the actual world! the common sense! Contact! Contact! Who are we? where are we? (2009: 63-64)

Thoreau’s “unhandelled” is Zahniser’s “untrammelled:” wilderness is where humans do not belong. See how Mount Ktdaan for Thoreau intimates primeval wilderness, the Earth as the “form and fashion and material” made by super-natural powers. Cronon cites this affecting passage in his description of the ambivalence towards the wildness of wilderness—that in its threat to us we also wonder at it—that marks the romantic attitude towards nature and its manifestation of the sublime. In Glenn Delière’s analysis of the same passage, Thoreau’s experience illuminates how the Other of wilderness offers us the possibility of making “successful contact

112. Omitted from excerpt: “It was not lawn, nor pasture, nor mead, nor woodland, nor lea, nor arable, nor waste-land...It was Matter, vast, terrific – not his Mother Earth that we have heard of, not for him to tread on, or be buried in – no, it were being too familiar even to let his bones lie there – the home this of Necessity and Fate. There was there felt the presence of a force not bound to be kind to man. It was a place for heathenism and superstitious rites – to be inhabited by men nearer of kin to the rocks and to wild animals than we” (Thoreau 2009: 63).

with a transcendent external reality” (2016: 416), which Delière argues is necessary for meaning-making. His interpretation draws on exactly the character of the Otherness of wilderness that has long marked wilderness meanings in the west and that Katz hints at:

the possibility of resistance to and negation of our desires that reality shows its externality...Precisely because nature on Mount Ktdaan seems to resist all attempts at humanising, at being made sense of or appropriated by humans, Thoreau is convinced that he is shown true nature, that he has succeeded in having a contact with a reality beyond himself, with something transcendent. (2016: 417)

Indeed, this opportunity to commune with something grander than oneself, older, larger, and more forceful than oneself continues to be an important aspect of the protection and advocacy of wilderness in the present. The Otherness of wilderness, although less formidable, persists in present-day romantic attitudes towards wilderness, which Cronon encapsulates this way: “For many Americans, wilderness stands as the last remaining place where civilization, that all too human disease, has not fully infected the earth...Seen in this way, wilderness presents itself as the best antidote to our human selves” (1998: 471).

4.4 DEBATING WILDERNESS

However, the emphasis put on the Otherness of wilderness in the received idea of wilderness is precisely the problem Cronon (and others) have with the concept. On Cronon’s account, this is a problem for two main reasons. First, because it obscures how wilderness is “the creation of very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history” (1998: 471). That is, decisions to preserve wilderness areas, to set them off as places where ‘man is a visitor and does not belong,’ are indeed political and social decisions borne out of the precise combination of historical factors and meanings that Cronon, Nash, and others have elucidated. Wilderness, Cronon charges, is “not a pristine sanctuary where the last remnant of an untouched, endangered, but still transcendent nature can for at least a little longer be encountered without the contaminating taint of civilization. Instead it is a product of that civilization” (1998: 471). Cronon’s arguments amplified other versions of this critique that charged that not only are wilderness areas the product of civilization but moreover wilderness preservation is an imperialist and ethnocentric

project of the West (Guha 1989), and the idea of wilderness in the new world has its basis in the expulsion, decimation, and dehumanization of indigenous populations (Chief Luther Standing Bear 1998; Plumwood 1998).

The second problem Cronon points out results from the first. He argues that the preservation of wilderness on these sacralized grounds harms the prospects of protecting other, less majestic environments. Setting ourselves squarely outside of wilderness makes us prone to think that only these rare and special environments are worthy of preservation and protection, not the environments where we live and work and spend most of our time.¹¹³ Upholding wilderness as nature *par excellence* devalues other environments that do not appear so pristine.¹¹⁴ Valuing wilderness primarily on the basis of our absence from it condemns more trammelled land to disregard. According to Cronon, we mistake wilderness for the solution to our environmental problems when it actually “is itself no small part of the problem” (1998: 472). This argument, as I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, sparked off considerable controversy. Although Cronon was voicing ideas that were already circulating in the fields of environmental philosophy and history,¹¹⁵ the publication of his “Trouble with Wilderness” essay precipitated a new turn in the discussion: conversations about wilderness culminated into the full-on wilderness debate in reaction to this deconstruction of the wilderness idea.¹¹⁶

Reactions to this turn took two general forms.¹¹⁷ Many environmental philosophers and conservationists (e.g., Michael Soulé, Eileen Crist, George Sessions, Donald Worster, Holmes Rolston III) came to the defense of the idea of wilderness that they perceived to be under attack. In the same year that Cronon’s essay was originally published, Michael Soulé and Gary Lease published *Reinventing Nature? Responses To Postmodern Deconstruction* (1995), a series of essays assembled

113. Robin Kelsey writes that the wilderness excursion, which is precisely how we are able to experience wilderness, perfectly exemplifies the (landscape) fantasy of not belonging (§3.5): “In the recesses of our wilderness parks...our brilliantly colored plastic tents, backpacks, and parkas, our portable stoves, our excessive noise, our fearlessness, our freeze-dried food...our relief at *getting away from it all*: these things speak to our belonging elsewhere. We are just passing through and will do so again. These mountains and lakes belong to us but not we to them” (2008: 212, original emphasis).

114. There is much that has been said critically by Cronon and others about this appearance and how it is mistaken. It is generally recognized now that humans have been inhabiting, influencing “every part of the globe” (Gómez-Pompa & Kaus 1992: 273), even the parts that seemed pristine to the European settler-colonists following 1492. The problem this poses for the idea of rewilding, especially in North America, is a topic I do not have the space to explore here but intend to address in future work.

115. e.g., Guha 1989; Devenan 1992; Gómez-Pompa & Kaus 1992.

116. The best resources on the wilderness debate are the extensive edited volumes *The Great New Wilderness Debate* (1998) Callicott & Nelson (Eds.), and *The Wilderness Debate Rages On* (2008), Nelson & Callicott (Eds.).

117. Arguably, a third form consists of the conservation biology defense of wilderness, which we will see as it relates to rewilding in chapter 6. Additionally, see e.g., Cafaro 2001; Soulé & Noss 1998; Foreman 1998.

as an “interdisciplinary synthesis on the nature of nature—one that is neither left nor right, positivist nor relativist, but one that rejects some popular fads in academia” (1995: xvi). These ‘fads’ Soulé and Lease criticize in their preface as well as throughout the volume are postmodern ideas like Cronon’s that, in their view, contest the reality of wilderness, nature, or anything outside of human experience and understanding.¹¹⁸ But their worries, and the worries of other wilderness defenders, are more often pragmatic than epistemological: they see Cronon and others dismantling the foundation on which wilderness protection is based. By alleging that wilderness was nothing but a cultural construction, deconstructionist thinkers were only abetting the real enemies of wilderness protection, labeled by Soulé and Lease “the capitalist right (the wise use movement” who “ask society for a license to maximize short term profits from the aggressive exploitation of natural resources” (1995: xv). By showing that nowhere is untouched, and that instead all of the earth, wilderness included, is to some extent produced through human decision and activity, wilderness deconstruction risked eliding wilderness uses with exploitative ones. Phil Cafaro insists that the distinction in kind between “the effects of a few thousand backpackers and elk hunters in Montana’s Bob Marshall Wilderness and industrial road building and tree harvesting on adjacent portions of the Flathead National Forest...means the difference between preservation and destruction” (2001: 6). George Sessions summarized the juncture of the wilderness debate this way:

The great debate that now has to be waged, that will decide the fate of the Earth in the near future, is between a Disneyland theme park mega-technological consumer future with transnational corporations in Control, and one in which human societies have been scaled back, humans live sane biophilic lives, and huge sections of wild Nature and biodiversity have been protected and restored. (1996: 52)

As Sessions sees it, the debate that wilderness deconstructionists had opened up was a consequential one, not as Cronon might have intended about meanings of wilderness and the viability of the idea in conservation, but about an authentic and thereby sustainable future on earth or a phony one, of simulated and corporatized environments.¹¹⁹ Eileen Crist, like Soulé and Lease, criticized the “intellectual

118. In their words: “The deconstructionist view...asserts that all we can ever perceive about the world are shadows, and that we can never escape our particular biases and fixed historical-cultural positions” (1995: xv).

119. The worry about this latter kind of environmental future is also very present in Higgs’ work on restoration (2003; 1997). We do not have to accept Elliot’s and Katz’s ontological arguments to recognize the impact their concerns about falseness and inauthenticity have had on the restoration literature.

looking glass” (2008: 501) of postmodern constructivism.¹²⁰ These trends, which, she wrote: “focus on the “social history *of* nature” at a time when the catastrophic impact of “social history *on* nature” is swelling, are a distraction from “the main event” (2008: 513, my emphasis) of the growing threats to life on earth. Further, that these thinkers do not follow their own ideas to their logical conclusion to realize that they too are socially and historically contingent makes Crist suspect of them as little more than insidious anthropocentrism that will ultimately “humanize” the entire earth (2008: 501).¹²¹

4.5 ENGAGING RESTORATION

The other, less direct but more promising response emerging out of the wilderness debate was a turn in ecological restoration. Whereas human involvement in restoration, as we saw from Elliot and Katz, had previously been viewed in terms of forgery or artifice, the growing movement by the mid-1990s was a recognition and embrace of the human potential in the practice. One of the key figures in this turn was pragmatist Andrew Light, whose arguments against Katz specifically (2005), softened the hard line Katz and Elliot had drawn against restoration. Light argued that most of Katz’s claims rest on a dualist ontology, and if this is rejected, most of the objections Katz mounted to restoration can be dismissed as well. Light grants that some restorations, like the ones motivating Elliot and Katz, are used to justify environmental destruction—these Light terms *malicious restorations*—but it is not the case that all restorations can be characterized as such. By rejecting Katz’s objections, Light carves out a space where restoration can also be *beneficial*. Beneficial restorations are those that take place to repair damage that has already occurred, never—as Elliot and Katz worry—those that use the promise of future restoration to rationalize present damage or destruction. Picking up on Elliot’s art conceit, Light compares the beneficial restoration of nature to the restoration of works of art that are aging and in disrepair: in these kinds of cases, restoration is a necessary way of taking care of a valuable object whose continued existence relies on that care and maintenance. Moreover, the contributions of restorations can themselves be positive—they can reaffirm a “positive community with nature” (2000: 108) and

120. Crist’s criticism reaches beyond Cronon, applying also to thinkers like Bruno Latour, Steve Hinchliffe, Donna Haraway, David Demeritt, who have brought out the social and political aspects not only of nature’s meanings but also of science and knowledge production.

121. Little came in response to these defenses of the wilderness idea, perhaps because the version of the postmodern constructivist that most of these defenses attacked was a straw man. One of the problems with these characterizations, Mick Smith points out, is that they often lumped different groups of thinkers together (e.g., Marxists, postmodernists, deconstructionists), failing to differentiate the diverging views (Smith 2001).

forge relations of “ecological citizenship” (2000: 98) rather than only amounting to negative, deceptive and dominating contributions as Elliot and Katz insist. In other, related work (Light & Higgs 1996), Light and Higgs expand the focus of what restoration as to include aesthetic, political, cultural, and technological spheres, as well as the ecological context of the restoration. Some restorations (i.e., not corporate or malevolent ones) offer the possibility for egalitarian and cooperative political and social relations amongst human and nonhuman communities that can reshape our relations with the natural world.

Light is not the only philosopher to reply to Katz: Collette Palamar responded to his worry that restoration necessarily amounts to a human domination of nature. She argued along ecofeminist lines for *restorashyn*, that is, restoration that is explicitly neither dominating or dualistic. Palamar, like Higgs, Jordan, and others, recognizes the social and political dimensions of restoration, but she goes a step further to caution against restorations that recreate the exclusionary and dominating patterns and practices in their social and political dynamics that caused the original harm. (Palamar 2006). Donna Ladkin, similarly, advancing non-dominating restoration, draws from Stephanie Mills’ *In Service of the Wild: Restoring and Re-inhabiting Damaged Lands* (1995) to suggest several key amendments for restoration: viewing humans as co-creators who can also learn from the landscape; respecting the agency and projects of the land; and only embarking on projects that are aimed to increase land health and biodiversity are ways to avoid the possibility of human domination in restoration (Ladkin 2005: 204).

Ladkin (and Mills’) suggestions are very much in line with one of the key figures in this turn towards human involvement in restoration, William Jordan, who put forward a vision of restoration that highlighted instead of minimizing its human dimension. Jordan criticizes the environmentalism influenced by the wilderness tradition and characterized by

a severely limited relationship characterized by an ethic of “minimal impact” and the admonition to “take nothing but pictures; leave nothing but footprints.” The concern here is almost exclusively for the landscape and hardly at all for the human participant, and the resulting relationship... is largely nonparticipatory, and engages only a small fraction of human interests and skills. (1994: 21)

The act of restoration, for Jordan, can redeem this attenuated relationship. Restoration is performative: it not only repairs damaged ecosystems but can craft a better relationship between humans and nonhuman nature by inviting human engagement and in establishing new rituals and revitalizing old ones. For example, Jordan points to the prescribed burns of the prairies of the Great Plains and

Midwest as “more than a process or a technology, it is an expressive act—and what it expresses is our membership in the land community. The implication is that we have a role here: we belong in this community, and so perhaps we belong on this planet after all” (1994: 28). On Jordan’s view, restoration returns humans as participants to the environmental milieu that the leave-no-trace wilderness ethic has cut us out of.

The most prominent figure in this turn is Eric S. Higgs who has championed the social and cultural values that influence and shape restoration and advanced a value-sensitive view of restoration. Based on Albert Borgmann’s idea of focal practices,¹²² Higgs elaborates the idea of focal restoration in his 2003 book *Nature by Design*. As with the developments in restoration already mentioned, Higgs’ approach sees a positive value in the act and practices of restoration, and his account of how these fit into the specifics of ecological restoration is the most developed of any of these writers. One of his most important contributions is his resuscitation of the idea of design, which had previously been something of a dirty word in restoration, “conjur[ing] the worst of our technological impositions” (2003: 272). Instead design, like the other human elements of restoration, should be embraced and brought to light. Higgs argues, emphatically: “*We need to acknowledge that restoration is fundamentally a design practice*. Abnegation is not the proper path—we should celebrate and enlarge our skills and wisdom in restoration design, not bury it under a patina of ecological accuracy” (2003: 274, original emphasis). To be clear, Higgs is not at all advancing the kind of dominating restoration of Katz’s technological nightmare. First of all, Higgs’ design practices in restoration are very strongly informed by the ecology of the restoration context, not human preferences. But to deny that restoration is designed by human practitioners is not only more honest; its self-awareness enables reflection on design and what makes for good and bad design in ecological restoration.¹²³ Furthermore, design, as Higgs means it, does not have to be human-centric; Higgs proposes what he calls *wild design*: design that accounts for nonhuman nature, not merely as ecosystem services provided for humans, but in terms of its own flourishing. Wild design acknowledges the overwhelming of human intention (design) in restoration projects “by the fecundity and diversity of ecological processes” (2003: 284). In this way, Higgs pays more attention to the nonhuman elements of ecological restoration than other writers I have mentioned, who have focused on how to make the human end of these processes sustainable, inclusive, political, and even celebratory. But Higgs doesn’t go too far: restoration is not aimed at turning nature over to itself as

122. See Borgmann 1984.

123. See Higgs’ discussion of ecological integrity, historical fidelity, focal practices, and wild design in Higgs 2003 chs. 4, 6 & 7.

quickly as possible: Higgs, like the other writers, is invested in the continuation of the relations of stewardship, care, and sustained management in restoration. The idea of wild design, then, should not be read as the movement for *ever-increasing* wildness in a restoration project but instead as a managing of the tension between the human design element and the nonhuman wildness element, not such that the latter increases or is given ever-wider latitude, but that a kind of balance between the two is maintained. “We need to acknowledge that restoration is an intervention in natural process; the greatest and most demanding challenge is to figure out how our actions, our designs, can work alongside natural processes” (2003: 284). The *alongside* is operative here for Higgs, and indeed he concludes *Nature by Design* by defending restoration as a dialogue between (human) restoration practitioners and natural processes. This metaphor is telling, because a dialogue is always envisioned as an ongoing, responsive relation.¹²⁴ Wildness is present in restoration, and the task of the restorationist exists in part to mediate and moderate this wildness. But it is specifically this new attitude of humans and wildness co-existing and conversing that Cronon’s critique of wilderness called for: this is thought to be a much more sustainable and honest model of human nature interaction, one that does not obscure our presence and history and aims but owns up to them, and tries—going forward—to correct the ways in which our human practices have been environmentally destructive.

4.6 CONCLUSION

Nevertheless, the fascination with wilderness and wildness that has been so pervasive may not be addressed in kind of model Higgs puts forth. And despite the problems brought out in this chapter, this fascination persists, evident in the themes and debates in environmental ethics and conservation. In the following chapter we will see it reappear in rewilding, which in some ways is a reformulation of many of the wilderness themes of this chapter. However, it is not so straightforward, and the following chapter, which provides a detailed look rewilding’s usages and meanings, will bring out some of its complexity.

124. In a co-written article on wild design in park management, Higgs and Hobbs underscore how wild design is about maintaining the balance between the human and nonhuman element, not about phasing human participation out over time: “Wild design operates on the insight that a tension between intervention and wildness requires maintenance. Too much emphasis on human values will deflect attention away from ecological integrity, and pure consideration of wildness will miss the critical participation of people in intervention.” (2010: 237)

REWILDING'S MEANINGS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

What does rewilding mean? The seeming self-evidence of the term actually belies the wide array of meanings that rewilding has taken on. Questions of definition and of scoping out the boundaries of the term have been the topic of several papers already (Jørgensen 2015; Ward & Prior 2016; Cloyd 2016; Prior & Brady 2017; Gammon forthcoming¹²⁵). This chapter is a review and discussion of rewilding's existing definitions. Emerging alongside, and as I will suggest, within, its primary meanings are secondary notions of rewilding, and my aim here is to include these alongside the dominant, conservation usages in an effort to represent rewilding in its full breadth. My interest is in exploring the concept rather than in proposing or defending a definition for the term. I do suggest, however, that the additional meanings of rewilding demand that the term is conceptualized more broadly than others have argued for. Conceived of in this way, rewilding as a term can encompass the various meanings already in circulation, meanings that are necessary to understanding the cultural interest in rewilding as an emerging environmental phenomenon.

This chapter is meant to be a comprehensive discussion of the variety of meanings of rewilding (§5.1), from which I will distill the defining aspects of rewilding. Though I do not offer a definition of my own, I argue for a cluster conceptualization of rewilding (§5.3) that can encompass the emerging secondary

125. This chapter is an adapted version of a paper that has been accepted for publication in *Environmental Values* (Gammon, forthcoming).

notions of the term (§5.2.3). With the more general overview of rewilding efforts and aims this chapter provides, we will be better positioned to focusing on rewilding through the vantage of place and placemaking in the following chapters.

5.1 DEFINITIONS OF REWILDING

How has rewilding been defined to date? Most of its meanings cohere around describing a specific kind of ecological restoration, though, even this leaves the term broadly and variously defined. This is evident in the paper by environmental historian Dolly Jørgensen “Rethinking Rewilding” (2015) that laid the classificatory groundwork for the term by differentiating six uses of rewilding in the scientific literature ranging from the appearance of the term in 1999 through her paper’s publication in 2015. I begin the chapter with from her classifications, providing at the very least, the definition and context she has categorized. Then I will return to broader definitions put forth for rewilding while finally introducing other, secondary meanings and usages that have emerged around the term that do not show up in Jørgensen’s typology.

5.1.1 North American rewilding

Jørgensen begins with the “three Cs” definition put forward originally by Soulé and Noss in 1998. In their definition, rewilding is based on trophic cascade and island biogeography models that dictate that large predators (carnivores) regulate the food chain; that they need large, central reserves of land (cores) for hunting and for territory; and that these reserves need to be connected so populations can move and interchange (corridors). Jørgensen designates this brand of rewilding as “Cores, Corridors, and Carnivores,” but I will refer to this as *North American rewilding*. Jørgensen summarizes its definition and time horizon:

Under this earliest rewilding concept, the wild is the time when large carnivores were abundant in North America. Rather than define when that was...the three C rewilding does not assume that a time prior to human settlement is the baseline, even though the exclusion of humans from the reconstituted core areas is often presumed. (Jørgensen 2015: 483)

I will return to this iteration of rewilding in much more detail in the following chapter.

5.1.2 Pleistocene rewilding

The vague and comparatively recent time horizon¹²⁶ in North American rewilding differs considerably from the second type of rewilding classified by Jørgensen: what she names “Pleistocene mega-fauna replacement,” and what I will call *Pleistocene rewilding*.¹²⁷ According to Jørgensen, Pleistocene rewilding dates to a commentary from 2005 in *Nature* where authors Josh Donlan et al. advance this as its general definition:

The idea is to actively promote the restoration of large wild vertebrates into North America in preference to the ‘pests and weeds’ (rats and dandelions) that will otherwise come to dominate the landscape. This ‘Pleistocene rewilding’ would be achieved through a series of carefully managed ecosystem manipulations using closely related species as proxies for extinct large vertebrates. (2005: 913)

Pleistocene rewilding specifies the time and ecosystem condition that it aims to restore, namely, the late Pleistocene, approximately 13,000 years before the present. Donlan et al. suggest that because this date marks the arrival of the first Americans to the North American continent from Eurasia, this baseline is “less arbitrary” (2005: 913) than the 1492 date usually employed in North American conservation that marks European settlement. There are some similarities, however, between Pleistocene and North American brands of rewilding, which is to be expected if for no other reason than the fact that Dave Forman and Michael Soulé are among the twelve authors of the 2005 commentary in *Nature*. The most significant of these is the emphasis on trophic cascades as scientific justification for both rewilding strategies. However, for its distant time horizon and its emphasis on the reintroduction of species that have long been extinct and are now commonly considered exotic, Pleistocene rewilding represents the most extreme version of rewilding and pertains mainly to North America (though it should not be confused with North American rewilding) with the exception of Pleistocene Park in Siberia. It is not surprising, then, that Pleistocene rewilding garners the most controversy of any rewilding strategies or ideas, and it has sustained interest and attention since its entrance into the conservation discourse in 2005. Noting this trend, Jørgensen writes: “A least

126. Soulé and Noss point to the fairly recent loss of the wild with the extirpation of the wolf in Yellowstone National Park in 1926 (1998: 22), but it is unlikely that a single year, or a single species, could be pinpointed as the desired time horizon. Instead we can assume it is 1492 or later.

127. I differentiate North American Pleistocene Rewilding, which is only proposed and has not been enacted, with Pleistocene Rewilding in Siberia in chapter 7.

one scientific article using rewilding to mean the return of Pleistocene megafauna to North America has appeared every year since 2005” (2015: 484). I will return to Pleistocene rewilding in more depth in chapter seven.

5.1.3 Taxon replacement on islands

In addition to its continued discussion in the scientific literature, Pleistocene rewilding has yielded a spin-off rewilding strategy. A few papers following shortly after the Donlan et al. 2005 Pleistocene rewilding commentary propose adopting these ideas in the separate field of island ecology, where reintroductions are frequently attempted to replace or restore extinct or endangered species. In Jørgensen’s categorization, *Taxon replacement on islands* is directly attributable to Pleistocene rewilding, though its timescale differs considerably. Jørgensen explains: “Under this version of rewilding, the reference time period is before human contact and settlement of the islands” (2015: 484), though the precise date varies on each island’s history of settlement and extinction.

5.1.4 Captive breeding & release

The fourth type of rewilding, and least relevant to the focus of the dissertation and to the contemporary discussion of rewilding, is named by Jørgensen as *Captive breeding and release*. Jørgensen’s review found only four papers that use the term rewilding in this sense. This use differs from all of the other usages in that there is an animate subject of this kind of rewilding: in this usage, the individual that is freed from captivity is rewilded, whereas, in all of the other types and examples of rewilding that Jørgensen classifies, rewilding is taken to pertain to the level of ecosystems or landscapes or general areas that are restored. Jørgensen suggests that the reference point for captive breeding and release rewilding “is the time at which the captive populations were created” (2015: 485).

5.1.5 Landscape restoration rewilding

This and the next type of rewilding as categorized by Jørgensen are, for my purposes, the most important, and together encompass what I take to be the mainstream, popular use of rewilding in the present. The first of the two, *landscape restoration rewilding*, relies heavily on trophic theory and calls for the reintroduction of keystone faunal species that have been extirpated or endangered. Geographically, rewilding of the landscape restoration type is most common in the UK, particularly Scotland, with one notable exception of a paper that argues for a restoration of the key ecosystems of the Arabian Peninsula through rewilding. Though falling outside of the purview of Jørgensen’s scientific literature review, the rewilding projects in the UK, especially related to the reintroduction of beavers and boars, have gained

perhaps the most attention and public support of all of the rewilding strategies advanced thus far. Landscape restoration rewilding differs from North American rewilding in its geographical emphasis and its inclusion of non-carnivorous species, and it differs from Pleistocene rewilding in its timescale, which is far more open-ended though still in direct reference to extirpation as caused by human presence.

5.1.6 Spontaneous rewilding

Whereas all of the other meanings of rewilding Jørgensen chronicles involve deliberate, active human management, which includes the intentional curbing of human influence or stepping back of management, *spontaneous rewilding* happens independently of humans. I take the term from environmental historian James Feldman, who coined *spontaneous rewilding* in reference to the Apostle Islands in North America (Feldman 2010: 35). The geographic fact of this coinage I take to be unimportant to its usage and is instead an indication that rewilding of this type is not limited to continental Europe, though it is most common there. This final type of rewilding, which Jørgensen refers to as “productive land abandonment,” describes the increasing wildness evident in areas that were previously cultivated or settled that flourish when humans abandon them. In spontaneous rewilding, the sudden absence of human presence and activity allows natural succession, otherwise held in suspension, to continue. In the short term, spontaneous rewilding counterintuitively leads to a *decrease* in structural and biotic diversity as forests replace meadows and fields and the specialist grasses, flowers, and insects adapted to these habitats are outcompeted by generalist species that thrive without special maintenance or protection.¹²⁸ This kind of rewilding is considered the least deliberate of the types of rewilding Jørgensen categorizes and is often seen as a consequence of demographic changes in human populations, mainly due to aging and increasingly urbanization, as well as to the intensification of agriculture since the second world war more than as a consequence of conservation measures. Because spontaneous rewilding is by definition not deliberate, there is no restoration timescale. Nevertheless, Jørgensen points out that a baseline is still operational: all of the instances in the scientific literature acknowledge the “extensive environmental modification from agricultural practices and forest clearance since the Neolithic in Europe. Rewilding is thus seen as a return of land to a pre-clearance state” (2015: 484-485), she concludes.

In practice, spontaneous rewilding is often combined with or used as the justification for landscape restoration rewilding and species re-introductions (Navarro et al. 2012). Rewilding Europe, the largest conservation organization dedicated to rewilding, works from the premise of land abandonment throughout

128. Höchtl et al. 2005; Navarro et al. 2012.

Europe to advance rewilding efforts more broadly. “Europe is changing,” the Rewilding Europe website reads, and land abandonment is listed as the first reason to take advantage of the opportunity for rewilding in the early 21st century, alongside the rise in nature tourism and shifts making European policy more amenable to wilderness and rewilding initiatives (Rewilding Europe 2015).

5.2 REWILDING AS SELF-WILLED LAND

It is commonplace in review articles about rewilding, after an overview of its various denominations (Pleistocene, top-down trophic cascade rewilding, spontaneous rewilding, et cetera), for the author then to sum up, somewhat sketchily, the common theme that runs through rewilding in all of its iterations (Lorimer et al. 2016; Van Maanen & Convery 2016; Corlett 2015; Prior & Brady 2017). For instance, according to Lorimer et al., rewilding boils down to “maintaining, or increasing, biodiversity, while reducing the impact of present and past human interventions through the restoration of species and ecological processes” (2016: 40). The broad stroke by which Van Maanen & Convery paint rewilding is its significance to many as “a counter movement against the humanisation of nature” (2016: 305). Prior and Brady sum up with “a process of (re)introducing or restoring wild organisms and/or ecological processes to ecosystems where such organisms or processes are either missing or are ‘dysfunctional’” (2017: 34). These characterizations, even if they are somewhat sweeping, are helpful in providing a sense of the general thrust of rewilding that sometimes gets buried in the finer-grained distinctions we can draw about its aims and types. And as we see, these summations all mention or even center on the relaxing or diminishing of human control of ecosystems and the resurgence of wilder, nonhuman members or processes.

One pervasive theme of rewilding that merits elaboration in greater depth is the idea of self-willed land, which is often presented in rewilding discourse as the best, single defining aspect of rewilding, uniting more cases of rewilding than any other criteria or aspect. Indeed, this is how self-willed land is often presented in rewilding discourse. Rewilding produces self-willed landscapes, not in the sense of land with its own intentionality, but in the sense of being governed by natural processes.¹²⁹ The idea of self-willed land as the conceptual core of rewilding has been most ardently supported by Mark Fisher, one of the founding members of the Wildland Research Institute, based at the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom. Fisher is not himself an academic, but he maintains the most regular blog about rewilding —www.selfwilledland.org.uk— out of personal and professional

129. I will discuss these in more depth in chapter 6.

interest. Writing in the context of nature and wildlands protection in the United Kingdom, and sometimes, comparatively, mainland Europe, Fisher is a fierce critic of conservation in England for “nature grooming,” that is, the preservation of highly manicured and artificial landscapes through policies that favor farmers and estate owners and choke out any wildness that might otherwise have existed in the landscape. Fisher’s criticism, while more severe and forthright than others’, nevertheless voices the same idea: that conservation has been too managerial, too hands on, and that instead of managing ecosystems to preserve current species assemblages, we should allow for wilder landscapes by stepping back and letting natural processes take over again. Most basically, for Fisher, rewilding rests on the idea that nature, left unimpeded, can and will rebound and express itself, so to speak, in ways that humans are not in command of. Self-willed land exists “for its own sake,” Fisher has written on his home page, and this can be revived if land is ceded again to “wild nature” (Fisher, no date).

Fisher did not coin the phrase, however: self-willed land instead appears to date to a 1985 paper by Jay Hansford C. Vest contesting the commonly provided derivation (Nash 1967) of wilderness as *wild-deor-ness*, that is, the place of wild beasts. Instead, Vest suggests that it derives from Old Gothic tongues, and the meaning in this language tradition took wilderness not to mean place of wild beasts but rather, “self-willed land’...with an emphasis on its own intrinsic volition” (1985: 324). That is, that wilderness originally meant land that willed itself and was not under human domination or domestication, not land where wildlife lived. In this “will-of-the land” conception—wilderness—demonstrates a recognition of land in and for itself” (1985: 324), Vest writes. Writing about contemporary meanings of wildness, Jack Turner echoes this, writing that “a place is wild when its order is created according to its own principles and organization—when it is self-willed land” (1997: 112).

Vest and Turner are writing about wilderness and wildness respectively, but the term self-willed land has gained its greatest purchase through the development of the idea of rewilding. Even the more scientific literature that doesn’t use the term “self-willed” specifically nevertheless represents this idea, usually with emphasis on natural processes and the ways through which nature is organized when humans are overseeing this organization. In many cases, the term has normative overtones, suggesting that human management has suppressed the land, and that, given the chance, true nature will return if human domination ceases. The implication, with all of these usages, is that rewilding entails a loosening of human control—a controlled decontrolling of ecological controls, in Klaver et al.’s phrase (2002:14)—that makes room for the full scope of action of nonhuman landscapes, assemblages, or individuals. Mark Woods’ definition of wildness has been quoted in reference

to definitions of rewilding because he articulates exactly this: "...the autonomy of the more-than-human world where events such as animals moving about, plants growing, and rocks falling occur largely because of their own internal self-expression that is independent of civilized forces" (2005: 177). (It should be clear that his use of 'autonomy' is not meant in the sense that the word is used in canonical ethical theory, just as self-willed land is not ascribing intentionality to rewilded landscapes.) Picking up on Woods and bringing his definition to wildness bear on definitions of rewilding, Ward and Prior argue "The identification of nonhuman autonomy" (2016: 133) is what all examples of rewilding coalesce around.

Interest in rewilding and its meanings has not been exclusive to academics or academic publications. Rewilding's biggest booster, after all, is British journalist George Monbiot. Monbiot defines rewilding concisely as "the mass restoration of ecosystems," (Monbiot 2015) but importantly, this has implications for ecosystems in question *and* for the lives of humans involved. Elaborated, Monbiot's definition has two interrelated meanings:

- (1) Rewilding, to me, is about resisting the urge to control nature and allowing it to find its own way. It involves reintroducing absent plants and animals (and in a few cases culling exotic species which cannot be contained by native wildlife), pulling down fences, blocking the drainage ditches, but otherwise stepping back. (2013: 9-10)
- (2) The other definition of rewilding that interests me is the rewilding of our own lives. ... [I]f we have spaces on our doorsteps in which nature is allowed to do its own thing, in which it can be to some extent self-willed, driven by its own dynamic processes, that, I feel, is a much more exciting and thrilling ecosystem to explore and discover, and it enables us to enrich our lives, to fill them with wonder and enchantment.¹³⁰

The self-willed land theme is present here in the definition's first part. But importantly, rewilding for Monbiot is not only about self-willed land: rewilding is also reflexive—that is, it involves his life and the ways he attempts to re-engage himself with the world around him and the wilder ecosystems he champions.

130. This half of the definition comes from an interview in *Orion Magazine* (Sahn & Monbiot, no date) because it is more succinct than Monbiot's wording in *Feral*.

5.3 REWILDING BROADENED BUT NOT PLASTIC

Expansions like this trouble Jørgensen. She argues that rewilding advocates have “tended to conflate several of the discrete scientific uses of rewilding into one environmentalist program” (2015: 486) and points to uses that combine parts of the various scientific definitions she has elaborated as evidence. The loss of its original, scientific meanings threaten rewilding’s definitional precision, and more significantly, Jørgensen worries that such uses render rewilding plastic: used so indiscriminately and inconsistently that by meaning almost anything, it loses its meaning altogether:¹³¹

As a plastic word, rewilding has been able to capture the public imagination... Rewilding may become the go-to blanket solution to environmental problems. The asocial and ahistorical plastic nature of rewilding as a concept makes it sound imperative and futuristic, yet it lacks specific content. (2015: 486)

Of course, Jørgensen’s observations about the usages of rewilding in environmental and activist contexts are correct: the term is used more loosely in what she considers non-scientific discourse than in published articles, and in ways that mix and match meanings from her scientific typology, even adding new meanings to them, as with Monbiot’s definition. But her concern is hyperbolic. Far from being definitionally bankrupt, there are salient meanings we can and should observe emerging from the variety of usages and discourses on rewilding. Lorimer et al. suggest as much when they write of the “shared ethos” of rewilding projects, even though these projects indeed span “a range of different goals, contexts, approaches, and tools” (Lorimer et al., 2015: 54). Nevertheless they manage to sum up rewilding as “an ambitious and optimistic agenda for conservation” with projects that share an ethos of “maintaining, or increasing, biodiversity, while reducing the impact of present and past human interventions through the restoration of species and ecological processes” (2015: 40). Similarly, Ward and Prior, who respond directly to Jørgensen’s paper, contest her claim that rewilding has become plastic. They argue instead that the manifold usages of rewilding coalesce meaningfully: “We believe that the identification of nonhuman autonomy as being central to ‘rewilding’ brings...coherency and clarity to the term as both a theory and set of related practices” (2016: 133). In one of the few papers to date on rewilding in environmental philosophy, Jonathan Prior and Emily Brady (2017) review projects being done under its mantle and offer a

131. Jørgensen relies here on the work of Uwe Poerksen who has made this point about such terms as *consumption, development, and modernization*.

definition of rewilding as “a process of (re)introducing or restoring wild organisms and/or ecological processes to ecosystems where such organisms or processes are either missing or are ‘dysfunctional’” (2017: 34).¹³²

There are indeed meaningful things that can be said across the various projects and usages of rewilding, and identifying these can help clarify the term. But before I expand on rewilding’s other salient themes, I want to work in the opposite direction: to broaden rewilding even further to countenance the meanings of rewilding circulating outside of academic discourse so as to include these in its themes. My motivation for this is in part disciplinary: environmental philosophy since its inception has been rooted in and motivated by real environmental challenges as well as in the general philosophical tasks of questioning and inquiry about human engagement in the world. Even less than other branches of philosophy, environmental philosophy cannot afford to be purely academic: our work must be informed by ecological science and maintain connection with environmental concerns, questions, and understandings of broader publics in order to be relevant. Hermeneutic environmental philosophy particularly takes up the interpretive task of distilling and illuminating how ongoing environmental debates and meanings reflect ourselves and how we can understand ourselves in and through our interactions with the nonhuman world. Situating my inquiry under this general heading means that it is not only academic definitions that I take to be important to the work of understanding rewilding, though these might dominate its usage. Rewilding, more than other environmental terms, has seemed to resonate outside of its academic usages, and hermeneutic environmental philosophy urges a sensitivity to this. Meanings of rewilding that are developing in a wider environmental discourse will be obscured if we fail to attend to rewilding as an emerging phenomenon or movement in environmental thought. These meanings take rewilding to be a self-reflexive act, specifically broadening rewilding to include humans and human culture directly.

5.3.1 Emerging, secondary notions: Reflexive & Primitivist Rewilding

REFLEXIVE REWILDING

There are two secondary uses of rewilding that are crucial to a broader understanding of rewilding, the first of which I have already mentioned. Though informed by conservation biology and ecology, George Monbiot’s vision of rewilding is as much about rewilding human life as it is about rewilding British landscapes. He writes in *Feral*:

132. Ward & Prior (2016) also adopt this definition.

Some people see rewilding as a human retreat from nature; I see it as a re-involvement. I would like to see the reintroduction into the wild not only of wolves, lynx, ... and – perhaps one day in the distant future – elephants and other species, but also of human beings. In other words, I see rewilding as an enhanced opportunity for people to engage with and delight in the natural world. (2013: 11)

Monbiot's enthusiasm for rewilding as a conservation practice is interwoven with his own personal narrative of ecological boredom and the opportunity to rediscover wildness in the extremely domesticated landscape of the United Kingdom. Such experiences reawaken for him a "genetic memory" (2013: 60) that he insists continues to be part of the psychological endowment humans have evolved over millennia that equips us for environments much wilder than those where we live out our lives in the present. Rewilding oneself, or as I term it, *reflexive rewilding*, is a re-discovery of this potential by contact and connection with wilder conditions than we are used to, and is ultimately for the sake of humans.¹³³ For Monbiot, rewilding as the restoration of defunct ecologies is the condition of possibility for his human-centric meaning of rewilding: humans need encounters with a wilder world in order to experience the personal rewilding Monbiot sees as important for our well-being.¹³⁴

A very different construal of reflexive rewilding might be found in terms of the personal micro-biome. Geographer Jamie Lorimer has paired rewilding of ecosystems with the rewilding—or reworming—of one's gut, situating both movements in a larger, "probiotic turn" that reconfigures biopower in the anthropocene. Like the rewilding of macro-ecosystems, rewilding of the gut (which individuals achieve through introducing, through various means, symbiotic bacteria or helminth worms to their body) endeavors to transform the ecosystem by letting a healthier degree of "wildness" return.¹³⁵

PRIMITIVIST REWILDING

Rewilding has another, even more obscure meaning within an anarcho-primitivist counterculture that exists on the fringe of environmentalism in the United States.¹³⁶ There is no central group to speak of, but this movement for rewilding can be seen

133. Even in justifying wolf reintroduction, Monbiot maintains that "if rewilding took place it would happen in order to meet human needs, not the needs of the ecosystem. That, for me, is the point of it. Wolves would not be introduced for the sake of wolves but for the sake of people." (2013: 179)

134. Monbiot is only one example; see Bekoff 2014 for reflexive rewilding that considers itself "compassionate conservation" (2014: 60).

135. See Lorimer 2017.

136. Similar self-sufficiency movements exist, to a smaller extent, in Europe, but they tend not to self-describe as rewilding or be as overtly political.

in a some small pockets, wherein rewilding means becoming freer and more self-sufficient, of liberating oneself from the entanglements of capitalism and domestic life and getting back not to the land but to the wild. This is the wilding, or rewilding, of human culture, or as I term it, *primitivist rewilding*.

One of the larger and better organized primitivist groups, Wild Abundance, operates in North Carolina.¹³⁷ Wild Abundance organizes year-round educational programs in eco-homesteading and holds an annual rewilding, primitive skills, and community building event around the summer solstice of each year called the Firefly Gathering. Primitivist rewilding involves a specific vision of nature and the relation of humans in it articulated in the Firefly Gathering manifesto:

We believe that people, just like the rest of the other-than-human world, fill a special place in the web of life. We are rooted in the land through our dependency and hunger, sense of belonging and gratitude, and the responsibilities we feel deep inside. (Bogwalker & Salzano 2015)

On this version of rewilding,¹³⁸ in order to be whole and fully actualized, humans have to learn to overcome the artificial and toxic ways we have separated ourselves from nature. Seduced by lives of “corn syrup, cheap beer, and giant plastic houses... we are separate, primed and prepped for the particular box that culture finds for us,” their Manifesto argues.¹³⁹ The thesis of the Manifesto is that such lifestyles alienate humans from nature, and that this alienation implicates us in and blinds us to the destruction of nature. To remove ourselves from this destructive cycle requires that we re-acquaint ourselves with the natural world by learning skills that enable self- and community-sufficiency without relying on the standard means of employment and economy. “We must connect with what it has meant to be human when humans were a functional part of the web of life,” the Manifesto urges.

Rewilding in this primitivist sense pertains to the individual human and to first-world human societies rather than to ecosystems. This diverges significantly from any of the scientific or academic meanings reviewed thus far, and even

137. Portland, Oregon also has an active rewilding community (Rewild Portland, 2016). Its director, Peter Michael Bauer (also known as Urban Scout), lectures and gives classes on primitivist rewilding and moderates www.rewild.com. See Urban Scout, *Rewild or Die: Revolution & Renaissance at the End of Civilization* (2008). Similarly, see Miles Olson, *Unlearn, Rewild* (2012). The Dark Mountain Project, a group of writers and artists interested in the narratives of ecological and economic uncivilisation, sits somewhere between primitivist and reflexive rewilding. See, for instance, its Manifesto, titled *Uncivilisation*: <http://dark-mountain.net/about/manifesto/>.

138. Rewild Portland articulates similar views in its core values: <http://www.rewildportland.com/about/#more-2>

139. Though never expressly specified, the details mentioned here (plastic houses, corn syrup, etc.) suggest that the ‘Us’ is meant to refer to those engaged in the consumptive lifestyles of the first world, particularly in the United States.

Monbiot's version of reflexive rewilding—its nearest cognate—does not share in its radical cultural critique. Unlike primitivist rewilding, Monbiot's reflexive rewilding is compatible with the necessities and even luxuries of contemporary lives in the global north.¹⁴⁰ However, that both of these meanings entail some kind of reimagining of not just human-nature relations but also the societal lives of humans in the 21st century indicates that there is something beyond rewilding as a strategy of ecological restoration that we should consider.

Rewilding in all cases entails a re-envisioning, and what is re-envisioned and how this looks will vary depending on the type of rewilding. However, I want to suggest that re-envisioning and its associated discontent are as much a theme of rewilding as are other criteria more commonly associated with rewilding as ecological restoration. My suggestion is not that these expanded meanings are well-defined or well-examined with respect to the context of rewilding as ecological restoration, nor do I suggest that they should overtake this context. But ignoring them misses a shade of meaning to which even the more conventional uses of rewilding sometimes make allusions, even if vaguely or in an unspecified way. Specifically, these fringe, or secondary usages make explicit a discontent with which the more mainstream instances of rewilding and environmental thinking resonate.¹⁴¹ It is for this reason that maintaining rewilding as a single term that encompasses this breadth of usages is important.

5.4 A CLUSTER CONCEPTUALIZATION OF REWILDING

Rewilding, at this point, is not in need of definitional housekeeping: I do not share Jørgensen's worry that variety in meanings and usages necessarily waters rewilding down. Instead, we should embrace this breadth as indicating something about rewilding as a contemporary phenomenon in environmental philosophy and environmentalism generally. Expanding our inquiry and conceptual purview to include and interrogate rewilding in this way takes seriously the hermeneutic effort of interpreting the state of affairs it finds in this discussion. I suggest, then, that we consider conceptualizing rewilding in such a way that we can accommodate varieties of its usages and allow comparison across these varieties without ballooning

140. Monbiot makes this explicit in an Op-Ed in *The New York Times*. See Monbiot 2015b.

141. I have in mind writing like Richard Louv's acclaimed *Last Child in the Woods*, which does not address rewilding directly, as well as writing that does. For instance, Steve Carver suggests that rewilding should be thought as a continuum, ranging from "rewilding lite" to "rewilding max" (Carver 2014: 10). Wouter Helmer, the co-founder of Rewilding Europe, coined the phrase "Waanzinnige oases," or insane oases, to describe the character of rewilded, or new, natures (quoted in Drenthen, 2009). Drenthen elaborates: "the[se]...are places where we can escape from the overabundance of societal orders and regulations" (303).

the concept to meaninglessness, and for this, I suggest looking to the cluster concept, which philosopher of aesthetics Berys Gaut has famously advanced in his definition of art.¹⁴² Gaut explains: “A cluster account is true of a concept just in case there are properties whose instantiation by an object counts as a matter of conceptual necessity toward its falling under the concept.” That is, a cluster concept is a concept that has multiple defining characteristics or aspects, none of which is necessary to the definition. These characteristics count toward something falling under the concept in the sense that if some of the characteristics are present, the concept is instantiated. There are no jointly necessary and sufficient conditions, but there are disjunctively necessary conditions in that some criteria must be satisfied (i.e., characteristics present) for the concept to be instantiated.¹⁴³

What characteristics should count towards a concept? Here, Gaut recites Wittgenstein’s advice on definitions, “Don’t think, but look!”¹⁴⁴ We must attend to the way the concept is currently used in language when considering what counts as characteristics of a cluster concept. In this way, Gaut’s cluster account is similar to Wittgenstein’s famous idea of family resemblance, though in other ways, Gaut differentiates his account from the Resemblance-to-Paradigm definition of art.¹⁴⁵ Still, one of the affordances of the cluster account is that it can include characteristics from other accounts without holding them as exhaustive. I suggest we adopt the same approach to conceptualize rewilding: we can work from extant definitions and add to these the secondary notions from non-academic work to yield a broader, more encompassing, if working concept of rewilding that responds to its various meanings and more general usage.

I have tried to capture, in no particular order, the eight, overlapping aspects of rewilding that might comprise it as a cluster concept:

1. **Rewilding restores ecosystems.** Rewilding, like restoration, is aspirational: it aims to undo harms wrought to ecosystems and by so doing, restore them to a state of health and functionality. I suspect that Jørgensen sees this aspect as a necessary condition to rewilding, but even her type, *Captive breeding and release*, would not necessarily satisfy this.

142. Gaut 2000. See Adajian 2003 and Meskin 2008 for discussions of this premise and of the success of Gaut’s account. Although I am not attempting a definition of rewilding, Gaut’s cluster definition seems applicable because the current gamut of rewilding definitions is not yet broad enough to encompass the range of meanings rewilding entails, meanings which I take to be important for fully understanding the practices and intentions of rewilding.

143. Woods & Moriarty 2001 similarly defend a cluster concept in discussing exotic species.

144. Wittgenstein, quoted in Gaut (2000: 28).

145. On Gaut’s view, the Resemblance-to-Paradigm account is incomplete because it does not include justifications for choosing the particular art works based on the paradigm in question. Additionally, the Cluster Account avoids resemblance, which Gaut views as potentially vacuous: “anything resembles anything in some respect or other, since it shares some property with it” (2000: 25).

2. **Rewilding decreases the degree of human intervention in and management of ecology.** Rewilding departs from ecological restoration broadly conceived, as restoration often involves active and ongoing management. Instead, rewilding tries to convey an ecosystem back to a state where it can sustain itself. The idea of self-willed land already discussed speaks to this characteristic. (This could also apply to primitivist or reflexive rewilding, especially with Lorimer's claim of rewilding (or re-worming) on the scale of the human microbiome.)
3. **Rewilding is defended ecologically by trophic cascade theory.** On this theory, the presence or absence of a species in the food chain, a wolf, an otter, et cetera, is shown to command an entire cascade of effects in the ecology of its habitat. There is notable disagreement amongst rewilders if cascades are driven by predators or herbivores¹⁴⁶ but there is a general commitment to trophic cascades as regulating ecology.
4. **Rewilding (re)introduces species.** Trophic cascades cannot work if too many species are absent. The reintroduction of locally extinct species, especially high impact, or keystone species, is one of the most frequent examples of rewilding where human intervention and oversight is required at early stages to catalyze the process.
5. **Rewilding is focused on process** rather than on a specific result or end point, which differs even from adaptive methods of restoration (see Cordell et al. 2016). The removal of human impediments to natural processes and their restoration is key to rewilding. Once these are set in motion, rewilding is thought to continue in perpetuity through these processes.
6. **Rewilding is oriented towards the future.** Though some rewilding projects establish specific historic baselines for ecosystem functionality (e.g., Pleistocene, pre-agriculture), rewilding does not aim to recreate landscapes in some idealized past form. This is perhaps best supported when rewilding is linked with the provisioning of ecosystem services, but this claim often seems to do rhetorical work in expressing a vision of a future where humans make room for a wilder, more dynamic and self-regulating natural world.
7. **Rewilding involves nonhuman autonomy.** This aspect could be considered a rephrasing of aspect 2, especially as described by Prior and Ward: "the restoration of autonomous biotic and abiotic agents and processes is realised through the

146. E.g., Soulé & Noss 1998 versus Vera 2000.

(oftentimes gradual) relinquishment of direct human management of the wild organisms or ecological processes in question” (2016: 133). However, it is not only or even necessarily the absence of human intentionality in rewilding but the presence of nonhuman autonomy that is central.

8. **Rewilding reimagines the identities of humans in relation with non-humans.** This criteria applies most obviously to reflexive and primitivist rewilding, but this can also be seen in several other types of rewilding (e.g., species re-introductions; re-worming).

Again, my aim is not to advance a definition but to point out that the conceptual space rewilding already claims is broader than current definitions recognize. My suggestion is that, at this point, rewilding should be understood as a cluster of related characteristics, as this brings out precisely this quality of rewilding as term emerging in academic and popular use that is still fuzzily defined. One of the apparent difficulties with these meanings as they are currently applied is that an aspect of rewilding can refer to different registers (e.g., to the individual, the ecosystem, et cetera) but that because the meanings often apply to both registers simultaneously, they cannot easily be separated out. In other words, there is not a group of meanings that apply to the ecosystem level and another group that apply to the rewilded self; some of the same aspects apply—not accidentally—I suspect, to a rewilded self as to a rewilded ecosystem. For instance, Monbiot’s rewilded self does not easily detach from the rewilded ecosystem that he finds inspiring precisely because these two registers are interrelated. The re-wormed gut, on its own, seems insufficient for rewilding, but for Lorimer, it represents part of a larger rewilding trend of “controlled decontrolling of ecological controls” (Klaver et al. 2002: 14). Conceptualizing rewilding as a cluster not only permits for the variety of meanings that I have surveyed, it also brings into view the complex interrelationships of these meanings. Additionally, the cluster concept can expand or shrink.¹⁴⁷ As we continue to discuss—in and out of academia—what rewilding means and what counts as rewilding, firmer definitions and necessary and sufficient criteria may emerge, but at this point, the work I mean to do and try to encourage in this introduction is not so much border policing as it is reflective deliberation about what we take rewilding to mean.

147. One strand that I have not considered here is literature. Aaron Cloyd claims that the “expansion of a rewilding conversation... has not reached far enough” (2016: 61) and wants to include fictional and science-fiction literature in the rewilding discourse.

5.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have attempted to do two somewhat opposing things: on the one hand, I have attempted to provide a comprehensive definitional overview of rewilding to familiarize readers with its breadth and to distill from the variety of meanings discussed what I take to be its most significant ideas. On the other hand, I have argued against the firm definitional boundaries that others have erected around the concept. On the basis of the breadth of meanings and usages already in circulation, I have argued that rewilding resists simplification and that we should not confuse breadth with linguistic plasticity or meaninglessness. In advancing a cluster conceptualization of rewilding, I have pushed to expand academic use of the term even further, to encompass secondary notions that are also already in circulation, although not in the ecological literature. As I have suggested in the final section of the chapter, there is still work to be done in delineating rewilding's meanings. I will not do that here, however. Now, acquainted with the many meanings of rewilding, and acquainted also with place thinking and wilderness philosophy, we move into the third part of the dissertation, where these lines of thought come into direct contact. In the three final chapters I turn to individual instances, or cases, of rewilding, to argue not that rewilding is antithetical to place but that rewilding itself offers ways of placemaking.

Part 3

REWILDING AS PLACEMAKING

WILDERNESS REWILDING

6.0 INTRODUCTION: REWILDING VERSUS PLACE?

We enter the third and final section of the dissertation with a more complete understanding of the meanings of rewilding from the previous chapter, a sense of rewilding's conceptual inheritance from wilderness philosophy, and a broadened sense of the concept of place. In this section of the dissertation I argue that place is made through rewilding, that rewilding is placemaking. However, this alone says very little about the kinds of places that rewilding creates, especially given the great diversity of usages that pertain to the term, as seen in chapter five. The following three chapters each detail a particular way in which I argue rewilding performs place: *wilderness rewilding* in chapter 6, *experimental rewilding* in chapter 7, and *place-regenerative rewilding* in chapter 8.

This chapter begins with rewilding that is inspired by wilderness and that I argue aims to make or reify wilderness. These are the least controversial examples of rewilding but the most controversial examples of places. This chapter is an examination of what goes into the making of these rewilding places: how rewilding of this kind works, its frequently-given justifications, and from these, what I suggest it aims towards. I argue that rewilding performs placemaking even in these wilderness examples. As such, this chapter re-interprets wilderness as place.

Immediately, this seems problematic. As we saw in chapter 4, wilderness stands in contrast to place as unappropriated, unhumanized, untrammled. Wilderness is precisely areas that have been (or at least seem to have been) spared human presence, where humans are not invited to feel at home and are instead temporary intrusions.

This is most famously enshrined in the definition of ‘wilderness’ put forth by the United States Wilderness Act of 1964, which I quoted at length (§4.2), that carves up wilderness and place as opposing categories. Recall:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.¹⁴⁸

Place, as we have seen, as a fundamental character of human experience of the world, is how we understand, and in this way, how we appropriate our surroundings. Wilderness is set off from place, as a way of attempting to preserve the seemingly untouched parts of the world from our appropriation and use.

But as I will show, this distinction simply does not hold. Wilderness and wild places require human activity to keep them as such, and indeed conservationists go to great pains to keep wilderness seemingly free from human intrusion and appropriation, which often means obscuring (although not necessarily intentionally or deceptively) the human labor required to preserve wilderness and promote rewilding as self-willed. At the center of rewilding is the assumption that the best thing we can do for nature is to leave it to its own devices. If its ecological processes are intact, then these will play out on their own in the best possible way. Rewilding, then, seems exactly the opposite of placemaking because it attempts (in an ideal form) to sever any relation between humans and wilderness by outsourcing, so to speak, wilderness management to natural processes. Nevertheless, I will show how even these cases, which downplay or omit human involvement, are examples of placemaking. What kinds of places result—wilderness places—I will suggest are paradoxical. The wilderness places that rewilding makes (or aims to make), completely removed from human influence and appropriation, nevertheless rely on human influence and appropriation. In the frame of place and placemaking, this brings out an even stranger paradox with place: that somehow we desire to create places where we are not at home and where we do not belong.

The beginning of this chapter corresponds with the beginning of rewilding as a phrase and an idea. In the first section (§6.1), I introduce its American origin, its early proponents, and the context of its coinage. Especially compared to the conservation movement preceding it, rewilding has been articulated expressly though its guiding ecological principles, and I argue that by grounding this nascent movement in robust conservation and ecological science and as such, reformulating the American conservation movement around scientific justifications for wilderness preservation,

148. Wilderness Act of 1964, Sec. 2 (c).

its founders were trying to put rewilding on an unassailable footing, especially as the idea of wilderness was facing significant dispute. Moreover, rewilding's reliance on self-perpetuating ecological processes eliminates the management roles that humans have played in preserving and sustaining wilderness areas, especially in North America. Thus, rewilding, in an ideal form, is the reclaiming of lands in such a way that wilderness places are made entirely separately from humans.

However, I argue that despite its distancing itself from wilderness ideals through its emphasis on scientific justifications, rewilding still rests on key ideas of wilderness. I use a few cases to bring these out. First (§6.3), I look at one of the most well-known examples of wilderness rewilding—the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park in the US—to illustrate how the language of rewilding very frequently involves the same wilderness rhetoric from previous moments in conservation, especially in value-laden descriptions about rewilded places. Rewilding, though purportedly premised on ecological functionalism, still invokes concepts like wholeness, integrity, and balance and promises places that are re-made as wilderness places, even after humans have disturbed them.

The second example (§6.4) involves an example of wilderness rewilding as it has been imported in a different context: I discuss Rewilding Europe, the largest rewilding organization in Europe and the reintroduction of European bison in the Carpathian Mountains, especially using the comparison Minhea Tanesescu has drawn between the functionalist and essentialist narratives invoked in reintroduction. Again we see that arguments from scientific reasoning are not sufficient to explain the efforts and motivations of wilderness rewilding projects: they also appeal to notions of authenticity even in creating new wilderness areas.

Finally, to show how the meaning of wilderness as spaces where humans are only ever visitors and to which we cannot belong is still very much at play in rewilding, I draw on James Feldman's account of the Apostle Islands (§6.5), a site of spontaneous rewilding in Northern Wisconsin after centuries of human inhabitation and extractive uses of the land. Feldman, a historian, illuminates the historical, political, and economic conditions under which spontaneous rewilding was able to happen in the Apostle Islands. My point in this example is not merely to reveal the self-contradiction of rewilding efforts or to scold their proponents for their inconsistency (nor is it Feldman's). Rather, the self-contradiction shows us how meaningful it seems to be that there are wilderness places, that is, places that do not contain evidence of human lives and experiences, that there is some Otherness that opposes our modes of dwelling and belonging and being at home. The lengths to which conservationists seem to go to preserve the idea of these spaces/places, to enable wilderness areas, itself speaks to how significant these wilderness places must be. Nevertheless, this is paradoxical: it is a performative contradiction to labor to create places that obscure human labor and seem entirely other to human effort and

striving and appropriation. These wilderness places still are tied to transcendental ideas of wilderness and reveal that somehow we long for places that are devoid of us. Placemaking highlights that in these examples, we make these places not only through the harnessing of nonhuman efforts and natural processes but also through our own elaborate work. It shows rewilding as a human activity defined by the clearing out of these places. Wilderness rewilding turns out to be an evacuation of place. Thus, absent of any traces of human presence or artifact, these places are made into empty places through rewilding.

6.1 WILDERNESS REWILDING: REWILDING'S ORIGINS

“A cynic might describe rewilding as an atavistic obsession with the resurrection of Eden. A more sympathetic critic might label it romantic. We contend, however, that rewilding is simply scientific realism, assuming that our goal is to insure the long-term integrity of the land community.”

Michael Soulé & Reed Noss, “Rewilding and biodiversity:
Complementary goals for continental conservation”: 26

Beginning with this type of rewilding—wilderness rewilding—also allows us to cover in greater depth the original coinage of the term and the context out of which it arose. Rewilding found its way into the vernacular of American conservationists by the late 1990s. Geographer John Hintz, who wrote his doctoral dissertation on the politics of nature conservation and rewilding in the case of grizzly bear reintroductions,¹⁴⁹ locates the emergence of rewilding in the confluence of Arne Naess’ deep ecology imported into a North American wilderness protection context and the budding field of conservation biology that was professionalized in the 1980s. The formalization of this convergence was The Wildlands Project, a new conservation organization founded in 1991, and its affiliate magazine, *Wild Earth*, which was also started in this year (Hintz 2005: 82).¹⁵⁰ The magazine is significant in the telling of rewilding because it documents, in print, rewilding’s conceptual

149. Hintz, 2005. Parts of Hintz’s dissertation were published in 2007: see Hintz & Woods 2007.

150. The Wildlands Project marks a conspicuous shift away from the tactics and ideologies of Earth First!, the radical and controversial environmental anti-capitalist group that disbanded in 1990. Earth First! was inspired in part by direct action and Edward Abbey’s idea of monkeywrenching as well as civil disobedience and was criticized some cases for tactics of dubious legality, in others for repugnant views e.g., naming humanitarian disasters in other parts of the world as natural results of human overpopulation. (See, for instance, Daniel Conner’s column “Is AIDS the Answer to an Environmentalist’s Prayer?” in *Earth First! the Radical environmental journal* (1987). For a historical overview of Earth First! in the context of American wilderness politics and the emergence of the Wildlands Project, see chapter 6 of James Morton Turner’s *The Promise of Wilderness* (2012). The Wildlands Project, which was founded by Dave Foreman, previously a member of Earth First!, was a more moderate turn in conservation and wilderness advocacy in the US that, as Turner notes, tried to distance itself from the stances associated with Earth First!.

formation and culmination during the 1990s.¹⁵¹ One such important predecessor to the eventual provenance of rewilding as a term and a movement was the articulation of the Wildlands Project's mission statement and vision in a special issue of *Wild Earth*.¹⁵² Dave Foreman, John Davis, David Johns, Reed Noss, and Michael Soulé, the preparers of the mission statement, wrote that the Wildlands Project aimed "to allow nature to come out of hiding and to restore the links that will sustain both wilderness and the spirit of future human generations" (1992: 3). The nature they had in mind specifically was "pre-Columbian populations of plants and animals" that they believed the North American continent still could and should support (1992: 3).¹⁵³ The mission statement criticized wilderness protection for the sake of human purposes alone, as this had resulted in wilderness areas that were "ideally suited to non-mechanized forms of recreation" (1992: 3), not the protection of wildlife populations and the ecological and evolutionary processes needed to sustain them. Existing wilderness areas were too small and too homogenous for this. The authors argued instead for larger, and comparably more varied tracts of wilderness so as to achieve nonhuman, ecological aims: "We reject the notion that wilderness is merely remote, scenic terrain suitable for backpacking. Rather, we see wilderness¹⁵⁴ as the home for unfettered life, free from industrial human intervention" (1992: 4). In what Hintz calls the "Big Wilderness" model of preservation that this mission statement espouses, tracts of space large enough to function as reserves for diverse wildlife serve as the centerpiece, around which three other types of land revolve. These (1) core reserves are connected by (2) biological corridors that allow for passage between the reserves and interchange of populations. Buffer zones (3)

151. Almost all of the *Wild Earth* archive is available online through the Environment and Society Portal, which also archives issues of *Earth First!*, *Alarm*, and *Live Wild or Die*. <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/mml/collection/ef>

152. *Wild Earth*, Special Issue on the Wildlands Project: Plotting a North American wilderness recovery strategy (1992), Dave Foreman, editor. This issue also contained articles detailing the relationship between *Wild Earth* and the Wildlands Project the Wildlands Project's land conservation strategy, elaborating some of the ideas articulated in the mission statement, and a series of regional conservation proposals.

153. This benchmark is of course a famous one for ecological restoration debates; many restorationists argue against such a historic baseline, and as we'll see with North American Pleistocene rewilding (chapter 7), others are interested in restoring even more ancient ecological conditions.

154. Later, they define wilderness with these three characteristics: "[1] Extensive areas of native vegetation in various successional stages off-limits to human exploitation. We recognize that most of Earth has been colonized by humans only in the last several thousand years. [2] Viable, self-reproducing, genetically diverse populations of all native plant and animal species, including large predators. Diversity at the genetic, species, ecosystem, and landscape levels is fundamental to the integrity of nature. [3] Vast landscapes without roads, dams, motorized vehicles, powerlines, overflights, or other artifacts of civilization, where evolutionary and ecological processes that represent four billion year of Earth wisdom can continue. Such wilderness is absolutely essential to the comprehensive maintenance of biodiversity. It is not a solution to every ecological problem, but without it the planet will sink further into biological poverty" (1992: 4).

surround the reserves and corridors to insulate them from (4) the intensive centers of human population and land use through agriculture, industry, and dwelling (2005: 69). As Hintz notes, this four-parcel (or reserve-based) model is evidence of the increasing influence of conservation biology—and its prevailing themes of biodiversity; the integrity of ecosystems; and the preservation of evolutionary processes under models of island biogeography—on nature protection in the US in the late 20th century. Core reserves, the main idea, are seen as necessary to accommodate the spatial needs of the large animals that will live there but are also motivated by a worry about the fragmentation of processes that make and sustain nature as the Wildlands Project conceives of it.¹⁵⁵ Cores then are intended for the recovery and recuperation of natural processes. These processes will, in turn, outshine cores altogether in the next iteration of these conservation biology ideas in the concept of rewilding.

When rewilding finally does emerge in the wilderness protection vocabulary, it will be slightly different from this four-parcel model set out in the Wildlands Project mission statement. It is, however, a clear conceptual heir. The first use of ‘rewilding’ that Jørgensen notes in her review article, shows up in 1991 in *Wild Earth*; the first use of rewilding in the scientific literature in 1999 in Denver University’s Law Review¹⁵⁶ (Jørgensen 2015: 485). But neither of these usages really mark the definitive introduction of the term: the instances from 1991 are brief and ill-defined, and Foreman’s law journal article rehearses the ideas advanced by Wildlands Project founders, Michael Soulé and Reed Noss a year earlier in their seminal article “Rewilding and biodiversity: Complementary goals for continental conservation.” Also published in *Wild Earth*, this piece from 1998 is the first crystallization and defining of the rewilding idea in print: this is when and where rewilding gets put on the proverbial map. Soulé and Noss introduce a contrast between, on the one hand, biodiversity conservation as was and is still commonly practiced in conservation biology—focused on “vegetation or physical features, diversity and the protection of special biotic elements” (1998: 19)—and on the other, rewilding, which, on their view emphasizes “the restoration and protection of big wilderness and wide-ranging, large animals—particularly carnivores” (1998: 19). Rewilding, as introduced here, is “the scientific argument for restoring big wilderness based on the regulatory roles of large predators” (1998: 22).

155. See MacArthur & Wilson 1967.

156. “Rewild” or its present participle form, “rewilding,” appears three times in the 4th issue of *Wild Earth* from 1991/1992: once by John Davis in an editorial about wilderness conservation in the US (Davis 1991/92), and twice in a wilderness proposal article for the Adirondacks and Finger Lakes regions in New York (Biltonen & Bonney 1991/92). In 1999 It appears in Foreman’s article “Rewilding North America” published in Denver University’s Law Review.

In this introduction, Soulé and Noss situate rewilding as the fourth and latest development in the modern conservation movement in the United States, representing a culmination of the three previous stages of conservation.¹⁵⁷ Rewilding, as Soulé and Noss introduce it, can be effectively summarized by the three Cs of Cores, Carnivores, and Corridors (1998: 20), where insights from each of the preceding movements in American conservation, taken *in toto*, seem to lead to rewilding (1998: 22). In a sentence, “the rewilding argument posits that large predators are often instrumental in maintaining the integrity of ecosystems; in turn, the large predators require extensive space and connectivity” (1998: 22). Notably, the specific prescription of separate areas for human use has dropped out from the Wildlands Project mission statement (although this is still implied in rewilding), as has the mention of buffer zones. Instead carnivores, the large predators that regulate the ecosystem, show up in mnemonic trifecta of the 3 Cs defining rewilding. Carnivores are prioritized for their role as keystone species, that is, species that have a significant impact on their surrounding ecology and whose presence or absence affects disproportionate change to that ecology. Keystone species do not have to be carnivores: as Soulé & Noss note, any species “that provide[s] critical resources or that transform[s] landscapes or waterscapes, such as sea otters, beavers, prairie dogs, elephants, gopher tortoises, and cavity excavating birds” can count, although, “in North America it is most often the large carnivores that are missing or severely depleted” (1998: 22). Top-down regulation by carnivores is a central feature of North American rewilding, but the overriding emphasis on trophic cascades, whether they are driven by predators or herbivores, is one of the key features of almost all iterations of rewilding. This is because trophic cascades are one of the main natural processes understood to drive ecological systems. As we have already seen, this idea is commonly designated by the phrase *self-willed land*, that is, landscapes and ecosystems as they would operate in the absence of human intervention and management. In his book *Rewilding North America* (2004), Dave Foreman, one of rewilding’s original—and to this day, staunchest—supporters, shows how this idea can be recovered from ancient meanings of the word *wilderness*: “If we go back to Old English and earlier, ‘wilderness’ literally means ‘self-willed land,’ or ‘place of wild beasts.’ These literal translations hold the essence of the idea of wilderness”

157. The preceding movements are: (1) Monumentalism (roughly equivalent with the wilderness protection movement), which focused on the preservation of large, scenic areas of the US and resulted in the National Park System and the Wilderness Act and framed nature protection terms of expansive nature reserves (cores). The context of nature reserves, though never entirely absent from modern conservation in North America, was overshadowed during the second wave of modern conservation, (2) biological conservation, which turned attention to the protection of ecosystems rather than large tracts of land, and the importance of biodiversity and hotspots and carnivores as umbrella species for diversity (carnivores). (3) Island biogeography, which merged with conservation biology, showed the importance of connectivity between reserves for population health (corridors). (1998: 19-22)

(2004: 192).¹⁵⁸ For Soulé and Noss, the idea of self-willed land is expressed, again, in more ecologically-couched terms, in the idea of an ecosystem being guided by the regulatory pressures that are internal to it. “Rewilding,” they write, “is a critical step in restoring self-regulating land communities” (1998: 23).

6.2 THE QUESTION OF WILDERNESS

Rewilding was emerging out of the big wilderness movement in the United States in the 1990s, which was around the same time as the debates about wilderness in environmental history and philosophy were in full swing. (Chapter four gave some indication of how fraught these debates were.) However, rewilding’s ecological underpinnings offered a way to secure wilderness conservation against this barrage of criticism that claimed wilderness to be a received idea, a human construction anchored in romantic, masculinist, and colonialist ideologies. Foreman, whose conviction in wilderness protection never faltered,¹⁵⁹ defended “the real wilderness idea” in an essay of the same name against the received wilderness idea, which he claims was “invented and then lambasted by Baird Callicott, Bill Cronon and other deconstructionist social scientists” (2008: 381). Foreman makes clear that he has little time or regard for conceptual analysis or debates about language, meaning, and the history of specific ideas that philosophy engages in; the meaningful work to be done in conservation is “on the ground” (2008: 381) or in the “real-world”:

Wilderness and biodiversity conservation are not airy-fairy flights of romantic fantasy to recapture a mythical past of purity and goodness, but real-world efforts to protect self-willed land from damage by increasing population, expanding settlement, and growing mechanization. (2008: 396)

As seen here, Foreman invokes biodiversity along with wilderness to lend scientific credence to the latter. And scientific credence was a formidable response to the “deconstructionist social scientists” Foreman sees himself standing against and their suggestion that wilderness, rather than universally recognized, is the product of a particular socio-historical context. Where arguments about the importance of wilderness for human recreation and spiritual renewal and its unbroken natural history were being weakened in the wilderness debate, the argument from ecological

158. cf. Vest 1985. See §5.2.

159. Foreman is among the most resolute of the scientific realists in this debate. See for example “Wilderness Areas for Real” (Foreman 1998) and *Rewilding North America* (2004).

function about integrity and intact natural processes was harder to dispute. Foreman credits Soulé and Noss for putting the scientific ground under wilderness preservation through the idea of rewilding:

What Soulé and Noss have done here is of landmark importance for the wilderness conservation movement as well as for those primarily concerned with protecting biological diversity. They have developed the *scientific basis* for the need of big wilderness area complexes... Big wilderness areas are not only necessary for inspiration and a true wilderness experience, but they are absolutely necessary for the protection and restoration of ecological integrity, native species diversity, and evolution. (2008: 395, original emphasis)

Rewilding was also able to skirt the issues of history, origin, and ontology that had troubled ecological restoration and wilderness; in rewilding, the prior conditions are irrelevant to whether or not rewilding is achieved (or can be said to be in progress). The name itself admits of its messy history: re-wilded sites may not have always been wilderness, but they can be rewilded simply by allowing the flourishing of the significant natural processes that once defined them. The criteria rest on ecological functionality. Questions about the history of the place, its previous management or use, or the metaphysics of nature are avoided by rewilding's shortcut through ecological function and natural processes.

Recalling this chapter's epigraph, where Soulé and Noss credit rewilding as "simply scientific realism" (1998: 26), we can see that rewilding's inception had much to do with providing scientific and seemingly unassailable protection for the wilderness conservation. Hintz, more thoroughly than I have here, delves into the scientific tendencies of the rewilding movement in the US and its claim of wilderness as "ecological necessity for the conservation of biodiversity" (2007: 177). He compares competing plans for grizzly bear reintroduction in the Bitterroot Mountains to question what he calls the "ideology of nature" hidden in rewilding proposals. For example, Hintz argues that population viability analyses—a very popular metric in conservation biology—"black-boxes" (2007: 185) the workings and results of the conservation model, and at his most critical, accuses The Wildlands Project of conflating rewilding and carnivore conservation as a "wily strategic maneuver" (2007: 180). The core of Hintz's problem with rewilding is that its "ideology of nature buttresses the dubious assumption that (biocentric) science and (socioeconomic) politics are separate realms" (2007: 187). Hintz's aim is not to argue against wilderness protection but to argue against its opaqueness and its implicit claim that science is ideology-free. Wilderness protection does not escape politics by being grounded in science. Hintz wants to open up the scientific methods and decision making processes to examination because these too are political. The

following sections of this chapter work do vaguely similar work, although not through examining the politics and ideologies of conservation practices. Instead, I try to draw out how the scientific reasons for rewilding are not doing all of the work and that rewilding also trades on older meanings of wilderness.

6.3 WOLVES IN YELLOWSTONE

In 1995, seventy years after the last wolf had perished there, Yellowstone National Park, in the western states of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho, again became home to the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*).¹⁶⁰ Following a reintroduction plan supervised by park biologists, forty one wolves from Montana and Canada were released into the park between 1995 and 1997. In the following years, wolf numbers increased, peaking at 174 in 2004, then stabilizing around 100 animals (Tobin 2015). What made the reintroduction notable, though, was not only the success of the introduced wolf population but the dramatic impact the wolves had on the numbers and distribution of other animal and plant species that scientists reported. This is exactly the idea of trophic cascade theory on which rewilding espoused by Foreman, Soulé, Noss, et al. is based: that keystone species, usually predators like wolves, trigger cascading effects throughout the ecosystem because they introduce greater competition amongst predators and because their prey act differently to avoid predation, which alters other species dynamics down the food chain.¹⁶¹ In this case, the wolf reintroduction aimed to undo the effects of wildlife policies that had been unfavorable towards carnivores—both inside and outside of national parks—and had nearly eradicated the wolf in the continental United States by the middle of the 20th century. Reintroducing the wolf to Yellowstone was intended to put the numbers of elk (*Cervus elaphus*) in check, numbers that had soared since the death of the park's last wolf in 1926. Elk numbers dropped after the wolf reintroduction in 1995, and other changes occurred too: populations of beaver (*Caster canadensis*) and American bison (*Bison bison*) increased, as did aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), willow (*Salix spp.*) and cottonwood trees (*Populus spp.*) (Ripple 2012), which provide important nesting sites for birds and other wildlife. Yellowstone biologists also report that the grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*) population increased after wolves were reintroduced (National Park Service 2016). The reintroduction effort has been generally heralded as a success.

160. For a concise history of the wolf reintroduction efforts in Yellowstone as well as an overview of the legal battles surrounding its listing and delisting in endangered species lists, see National Park Service: Wolf Restoration Continued (no date), available at <https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/nature/wolfrestorationinfo.htm>.

161. The definitive source on trophic cascade theory is Terborgh & Estes 2010. For more on trophic cascade theory as the basis for rewilding see Svenning et al. 2016.

Its acclaim has been widely circulated on the internet, in no small part because of George Monbiot's narration of the success story in a TED talk he delivered about rewilding in 2013 (Monbiot 2013b). The effusive talk is titled "For more wonder, rewild the world" and has also been put to music and images of wolves in the wild (Monbiot 2014). In it, Monbiot explains how wolves, understood as predators that kill many species also, less expectedly, "give life to many others." He talks the audience through the trophic cascade where wolves alter not only elk numbers but elk behavior, which affects the vegetation of the riverbanks, which allows more trees to grow, which invites song birds and migratory birds to nest, et cetera. "Trophic cascades," he says, "tell us that the natural world is even more fascinating and complex than we thought it was," and Monbiot's conclusion is that the wolf population ends up affecting the shape and flow of rivers, erosion, and ultimately the park's physical geography. Monbiot was sharing the findings of biologists like William Ripple and Robert Beschta,¹⁶² who concluded in a paper on post-1995 aspen growth in Yellowstone:

Predation and predation risk associated with large predators appear to represent powerful ecological forces capable of affecting the interactions of numerous animals and plants, as well as the structure and function of ecosystems. Thus, the preservation or recovery of gray wolves may represent an important conservation need for helping to maintain the resiliency of wildland ecosystems, especially with a rapidly changing climate. (2012: 213)

Much of what makes this narrative so compelling is that it affirms generally held beliefs about the interconnectedness of ecosystems and the interdependence of all of their parts. Put wolves back in their spot, see how the rest of Yellowstone springs back to life. In a special issue of *Yellowstone Science* on the wolf reintroduction, the park biologists herald this as "a new era in Yellowstone," claiming that "This new time may be the most "natural" in all of Yellowstone's long history" (Smith et al. 2016: 6). But notably, the wolf reintroduction has become a story that conveys the scientific success of the rewilding effort in Yellowstone while also packing in normative descriptions that do not strictly belong to the scientific narrative of ecological functionalism. In Dave Foreman's telling, the elk became "lazy and lackadaisical" without the wolves and mountain lions:

Their behavior changed so much, it was hard to call them elk...However, with the recent reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone, elk have become elk again. They're awake! They're moving. They're looking over their shoulders.

162. See Ripple & Beschta 2007; Beschta & Ripple 2009; Beschta & Ripple 2012.

They aren't loafing in big herds in open river valleys. Wolves have changed elk behavior for the better—to a more natural set of behaviors—and are thereby bringing integrity back to the ecosystem. (2008: 122)

The wolves restore the naturalness—the rightness—of a wronged ecosystem. At another point, Foreman summarizes: “Restoring large carnivores begins to heal ecosystems. It’s that simple” (2008: 124). Contrary to Monbiot’s claim that rewilding shows us how the natural world is “even more fascinating and complex than we thought it was,” it actually doesn’t seem so complex at all: on his or Foreman’s telling, rewilding is straightforward, even blindingly obvious. Articles about the wolf reintroduction online also convey the implication that wolves have singlehandedly saved the day. “How reintroducing wolves helped save a famous park” at the BBC,¹⁶³ “How the return of just 66 wolves rejuvenated Yellowstone’s entire ecosystem” at Aeon,¹⁶⁴ “Wolves and Rivers: How One Species Can Transform an Ecosystem” at One Green Planet¹⁶⁵ are some of the most evocative headlines.¹⁶⁶

Already some scientists have disputed the simplicity of the story as Monbiot, Foreman, or other media have presented it. Even more recent findings on the wolf reintroduction complicate the narrative, suggesting that the size or the duration of the effects of the wolf on other parts of the ecosystem may have been overstated (Kauffman et al. 2010) or that narrative of the lone wolf sitting atop the trophic cascade is an oversimplification and that many other factors are involved (Schmitz et al. 2000). While the science behind the trophic cascade theory is not generally in question, reviewing some of the papers that complicate the narrative, Emma Marris speculates that:

This story is popular in part because it supports calls to conserve large carnivores as ‘keystone species’ for whole ecosystems. It also offers the promise of a robust rule within ecology, a field in which researchers have yearned for more predictive power. (2014: 159)

163. BBC Future 2014

164. Aeon (no date)

165. One Green Planet (no date). For even more sensationalist coverage see Bravo (no date) and Hollenhorst 2016: “Are wolves a ‘miracle’ in Yellowstone? Science seeks answers” which despite the headline is actually better than it seems.

166. While in these examples the value-laden language appears at the level of rewilding advocacy or in journalism, biologist David Mech worries that these sentiments also pervade the underlying science: “Although most biologists try to resist making value judgments, not all have managed. For example, two scientists highly active in conservation biology wrote that wolves “may also have had top-down positive effects on the abundance of certain prey, such as pronghorn antelope.” But who is to say whether more or less pronghorns are “positive?” If more pronghorns are a positive development, what about more elk or bison? Are more or fewer coyotes positive? Fewer coyotes might release more mesocarnivores..., but the mesocarnivores might kill more birds. Is this positive or negative?” (2012: 147).

Both of these reasons may be true. But I suspect that at least part of the reason the lone wolf narrative has been so compelling is because of the way the scientific account has been padded with normative descriptions and edifying language that moves the scientific account into another, moralistic register. Told this way, the clear implication is that harms have been redressed and the integrity of the whole has been regained. Whether or not the scientific account has been oversimplified is not crucial to the point I want to make with this example. I am more interested in these implications, how the narrations of the scientific account, regardless of their simplicity or complexity, rest not only on the scientific facts and principles but also on value-laden language and implications about the return of the wolf. The scientific story becomes a renewal story, a rejuvenation story, of reestablishing a harmonious, balanced ecology by reinstating a carnivore. This is in part because of the way in which scientific findings are reported to publics and circulated, especially on the internet. But I suggest that rewilding is actively advanced by activists like George Monbiot and Dave Foreman on these morally-valenced narratives. This is not to criticize them or to call them out; both would admit that wilderness rewilding is conservation, and as such, will yield prescriptions and will be voiced in strongly normative language. But here I am trying to show how current, supposedly science-driven rewilding projects are scaffolded by and inadvertently rely on romantic meanings attached to wilderness, and my claim is that it is these morally-valenced narratives that activate those meanings.

The wilderness rewilding of the wolf reintroduction example, while exemplifying the aim and processes of rewilding as elaborated by Foreman, Soulé, Noss, and its other founders, also begins to show how we can speak of places being made through even through wilderness rewilding. We can see how rewilding seems to perform place through nonhuman means, but that the wilderness places it attempts to make rest on meanings of wilderness that predate and exceed rewilding's overt basis in conservation science. In the next section, I turn to the European context where wilderness ideas and scientific reasonings are also present in rewilding projects, although in somewhat different iterations. Even in a European context, arguments from ecological function are insufficient to explain all of the motivations of rewilding projects, and the attempts to make wilderness places in Europe show how authenticity and other extra-scientific aspects are implicated in rewilding narratives.

6.4 WILDERNESS REWILDING IN EUROPE

Rewilding underwent some permutations when it appeared in the European context.¹⁶⁷ Whereas in the United States, rewilding corresponded with an increased emphasis on biodiversity, in Europe, rewilding's emphasis on trophic cascades and natural processes led some conservationists to challenge the what they perceive as the exaggerated and even misconstrued idea of biodiversity that has dominated the European conservation framework since the 1990s. Unlike biodiversity in the United States, which, largely, is found in the reserves where humans are not, present biodiversity in Europe is very often the product of coevolution in human cultivated and shaped landscapes. Cultural ecosystems in Europe, more than their wilder counterparts, have benefited from the current biodiversity protection regime. Christof Schenck (2015) writes critically of this, claiming that protection of biodiversity has perversely resulted in

...the protection of cultivated lands. While most places across the globe focus their conservation efforts on protecting existing areas of natural habitat, European efforts lean toward the conservation of gardens, orchards, heath, meadows, white storks, marsh orchids, and the like...“biodiversity” became a new justification for active conservation management that included grazing, mowing, burning, and clearing. (2015: 98-99)

Whereas in the North American context, rewilding seemed to emerge out of the conservation trends that preceded it, in the European setting, the rewilding departs significantly from the preceding protection regime. Nevertheless, many conservationists have embraced its ideas, built on trophic cascades and natural processes and, like Schenck, have become critical of the current policies. For Schenck, again working from ecological reasoning, *wilderness* preserves biodiversity, because preserving biodiversity should not be about keeping certain, important rare species alive—as happens in cultural landscapes—but by allowing the dynamic interaction of levels of diversity. The biodiversity framework, he argues is plagued by “a number of fundamental conceptual errors” (2015: 99) and fails to account for diversity on any other measure besides species count. Schenck claims that instead biodiversity metrics should include “the natural diversity of genes, species,

167. See Keulartz 2016 for a comparison of “Old World” vs. “New World” conservation strategies. He suggests that in the Old World, cascades are bottom-up, the restoration baseline is in the Holocene, and farming and cultivation are blamed for extinction. In the New World, cascades are top-down, the restoration baseline is in the Pleistocene, and prehistoric hunting is blamed for extinction.

and ecosystems...They emerged from natural processes, and only by allowing the processes to continue will we be able to keep the biodiversity we inherited” (2015: 100).

It wasn't only the influence of American rewilding enthusiasts that shifted some efforts in Europe towards the idea of self-willed land and larger-scale landscapes and processes, however. Schenck also credits Germany's National Parks that slowly experimented with the resumption of natural processes in their stewardship. Rangers started letting felled trees decompose, forest fires burn themselves out, and they banned hunting from an increasing number of parks: “It soon became wilderness that was shaped and managed only by “the will of the land” itself” (Schenck 2015: 102). Van Maanen and Convery point out the Dutch practices of water management and nature development also had an influence on strands of rewilding in Europe: “The naming of rewilding reflects an older practice of former experiments with ‘nature development’ with strong roots in the Netherlands going back to the 1980s” (2016: 17).¹⁶⁸ The Oostvaardersplassen, arguably the most famous example of rewilding (which I will discuss in chapter 7) is in the Netherlands, and Rewilding Europe, the largest rewilding organization in Europe, is based there as well. Again, exhibiting differences from American initiatives, Rewilding Europe puts greater focus on local, usually tourism economies that they expect will operate in these regions. According to their mission statement:

Rewilding Europe wants to make Europe a wilder place, with much more space for wildlife, wilderness and natural processes[,] Bringing back the variety of life for us all to enjoy and exploring new ways for people to earn a fair living from the wild.¹⁶⁹

And this is a fair encapsulation of their work so far. Rewilding Europe does not rely entirely on the spontaneous rewilding of abandoned landscapes, although it frequently cites land abandonment, especially of prior farm and agricultural lands, as one of the main justifications for rewilding in these regions (Navarro & Pereira 2012). Although carnivores are involved in some of the sites, the larger focus tends to be on grazers and vegetation as well as on how traditional cultures and human economies can be sustained by these ecological changes.

One of Rewilding Europe's initiatives is in Romania, in the Țarcu Mountains, at the southern end of the Carpathian Mountain Range. By the conservation charity's own description, this project is one of its wildest: despite the history of human use

168. I discuss this in §8.4.1.

169. Rewilding Europe (no date a). Not all of Rewilding Europe's projects would easily fit under the mantle of wilderness type rewilding I am describing here.

and inhabitation, the Carpathians, especially the Southern end of the range and especially in the context of Europe, are far less cultivated than most of Europe. As a result, the Carpathians contain “the largest areas of Central and Eastern Europe’s remaining ancient forests, stunning biodiversity, the highest concentration of large carnivores, and the largest unfragmented forests” (Promberger & Promberger 2015: 242-243). Barbara and Christoph Promberger write: “In short, the Carpathian Mountains are considered the “green backbone of Europe,” the “green pearl,” and “Europe’s last wilderness”” (2015: 242).

Not all of Rewilding Europe’s projects typify wilderness-type rewilding. Many projects visibly and intentionally participate in the preservation of cultural landscapes and the maintenance of the local economies of the respective sites, and even the Țarcu Mountains rewilding project includes rewilding tourism and other engagements with the community in its goal. This project, nevertheless, with nonhuman wildness and wilderness at its center, still performs wilderness-type placemaking, especially through its emphasis on restoring populations of the European bison (*Bison bonasus*), or wisent, to the core reserve that Rewilding Europe has established in the Țarcu Mountains. Already more than 30 bison have been released.

The European bison and its conservation has a convoluted and fascinating history.¹⁷⁰ In present-day Europe, two subspecies exist: the Lowland bison (*B. bonasus bonasus*), listed as vulnerable, and the Lowland-Caucasian bison (*B. bonasus caucasicus*), listed as endangered.¹⁷¹ Bison conservation began in the 1920s as the European bison population neared extinction: in 1924 there were only 54 European bison in the world; the last free-roaming individual died in 1927 (Rewilding Europe 2014). As such, because it has depended entirely on captive breeding programs, bison conservation has revolved around population genetics and the preservation of genetic purity over time. This has meant avoiding cross-breeding with populations that have American bison lineage or that have been interbred with cattle as well as keeping the two sub-species breeding lines distinct. Rewilding Europe’s part in bison conservation is comparatively recent: they proposed in 2014 to have “a herd of at least 500 bison living in freedom by 2025 in the Southern Carpathians” (Rewilding Europe 2014), but even present-day conservation efforts are driven by genetic considerations: these will be Lowland-Caucasian line bison. What these

170. For a short history as pertains to Rewilding Europe, see Rewilding Europe’s Bison Rewilding Plan. For an overview of the *B. bonasus* breeding and reintroduction program, see Perzanowski & Olech 2007. See Chapter 1- The Royal Beasts of Białowieża in Simon Schama’s *Landscape & Memory* (1995) for a cultural history the Białowieża Forest and its bison.

171. according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened species. In 2000, the Lowland population had 931 living individuals and is increasing. The Lowland-Caucasian had 714 and has decreased 20% since 1990 (Rewilding Europe 2014: 18).

projects are aiming for is wildness: “Once released into the wild, these bison will not be additionally fed, so that they will become a full part of their natural ecosystem and the natural processes in the area” (Rewilding Europe 2014a).

Analogous to the wolf in Yellowstone, the release of bison in the Carpathians is motivated by ecosystem function: the idea of the bison is to maintain the current landscapes, a mosaic of grasslands and forests, which have been shaped through the grazing pressures of the animals traditionally kept in this region. The contexts, of course, differ enormously: bison are not carnivores; they have been absent from the area for more than 200 years; and more like domestic livestock, they owe their existence to an elaborate breeding program. The procedures for re-introduction are much more extensive than in Yellowstone, in part because the elapsed time between the last living bison in Romania and the 2014 reintroduction is much longer (252 years). Additionally, these populations will live in much closer proximity to people than the Yellowstone wolves, and as Minhea Tanasescu points out, because these animals have not ever lived together as a population, they will have “no shared experiences and memories, and therefore no shared culture” (Tanasescu, no date: 13). Tanasescu reports on his fieldwork observing the bison reintroduction efforts in Romania, and he deconstructs the experiments in breeding wild animals for reintroduction.¹⁷² He identifies species essentialism and ecological functionalism as the “logically incompatible” justifications for breeding decisions. Rather than translocating wild populations of bison that carry some small percentage of American bison DNA but that otherwise do not require human help in adaptation or feeding, Rewilding Europe opted to introduce European bison bred from captivity, bison that will require a great deal more aid in adjusting to their lives in the Carpathians. It is highly unlikely that bison containing a small percentage of American bison DNA will have any appreciably different effect on the grazing ecology of the areas to which they are introduced. It seems, then, that there is more at play in these decisions than the functionalist argument for ecosystem integrity on which Rewilding Europe generally relies. Tanasescu writes:

Rewilders want to introduce these animals because they find them beautiful, awesome, iconic... The rewilding argument...is that through the use of wild animals we can manage landscapes and recreate wilderness. However, the use of wild animals, particularly where they have to be recreated or reintroduced, doesn't seem to be fundamentally tied to what they are supposed to do, but rather with who they are. (no date: 17)

172. Tanasescu's paper also covers the back-breeding and introduction of heck cattle as a proxy species for the extinct auroch, although this is not based on fieldwork (Tanasescu, no date).

The idea of wildness that these bison represent in the Carpathian ecosystem, Tanasescu argues, cannot be reduced to their functional role in restoring the previous historical processes. If this was the only aim of the project, the hybridized bison would suffice; indeed maybe even mowing would suffice. However, the genetic component, which signals the authenticity of these animals over another, functionally equivalent group, again shows that there is often more to rewilding than the ecological foundations it claims to be staked on. As in the Yellowstone case, rewilding makes wilderness places by playing on extra-scientific meanings—of balance and harmony when an ecosystem has its trophic cascades refilled, or the authentic, original wilderness that is restored when pure, European bison are reintroduced to it. The making wild of these places is not only accomplished through the reinstating of ecological function but also by tapping into historic meanings of wilderness.

6.5 REWILDING THE APOSTLE ISLANDS

The final example I will discuss in this chapter is of a wilderness rewilding project that is not strictly speaking driven by the ecological requisites that defined the prior cases of species reintroduction. We have seen from these cases that there is more to wilderness rewilding than argument from ecological function, and this final case will show the length to which conservation goes to achieve places that are seemingly free of human influence and history. The final example is the case of the Apostle Islands, which William Cronon has written about and which historian James Feldman—from whom I will draw—has written about even more extensively. The Apostle Islands are located off the coast of Wisconsin in Lake Superior: across the great lake is Ontario, Canada. This area, which became the Gaylord Nelson Wilderness Area in 2004, is similar to other wilderness areas in the United States in that it was previously inhabited by humans and acutely shaped by these inhabitants.¹⁷³ Its main difference is the amount of time that has elapsed since people have made homes and livelihoods there. As Feldman details in *A Storied Wilderness: Rewilding the Apostle Islands* (2011), although their current appearance belies their past, the islands have an extensive history of human use and inhabitation. The largest island was a key trading post for French traders beginning in the 17th century; Ojibwe people have inhabited the region for centuries and continue to use it for food and resources. The islands were logged, quarried, farmed and thoroughly dwelled in

173. The misunderstanding that European colonists encountered an uninhabited wilderness in what became the United States has now been widely acknowledged and corrected. See, e.g., Devenan 1992; Cronon 1998; also Plumwood 2006. See also Haywood 2007 for a brief discussion of the Clearances in Scotland, another example of cultural dispossession in the context of rewilding.

by the Europeans who settled there, as evidenced by the numerous lighthouses and other historic buildings on the islands, even into the 20th century, and the waters fished as recently as the 1980s. Feldman reports that the islands were rejected for inclusion in the National Park Service system in 1930 because of the obvious signs of resource exploitation that had occurred in the region. Landscape architect Harlan Kelsey, appraising the islands and representing the National Park Service's 1930 decision, wrote:

The ecological conditions have been so violently disturbed that probably never could they be more than remotely reproduced...The hand of man has mercilessly and in a measure irrevocably, destroyed [the islands'] virgin beauty... the project does not meet National Park Service standards. (Kelsey cited in Feldman 2011: 7)

However, Kelsey's judgement proved incorrect: by 1970, the 22 islands became the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore by an act of Congress, and by 2004, 80% of the National Lakeshore became the Gaylord Nelson Wilderness Area (Feldman 2011). For the absence of permanent settlement, the diversity of flora and fauna, and the presence of old-growth forests and variety of ecosystems, the Apostle Islands resemble other wilderness areas in the United States. They are similarly well travelled by thousands of tourists who visit each year to kayak, hike, and camp. But they are remarkable for the evidence of recent human life and livelihood that remains in the otherwise uninhabited area, a reminder that wilderness often has an extensively storied human history. Amidst the forests, bogs, and beaches, an attentive visitor can see and read the signs of past human inhabitation: overgrown quarries, sandstone lighthouses, old country roads, or "an ancient automobile rusting amid the weeds" (Cronon 2003: 38). However, many visitors to the islands will never encounter traces of the logging camps or quarries in the interior of the islands, especially because the National Park Service has expedited the appearance of wilderness by removing old buildings and other signs of life (Feldman 2011). James Feldman considers the conversion from commercial forest to wilderness area an example of rewilding. But it is human interference, direct and indirect, that Feldman emphasizes in the Apostle Islands rewilding narrative:

How did the logging- and fire-scarred wasteland...become a wilderness in just a few decades?...The rewilding of the islands was...not simply the result of ecological processes left to play out on their own...Ongoing choices about how to value and use the islands shaped the rewilding of the Apostles... As

the state consolidated its authority in the region, it managed the islands to create a landscape valued for its recreational and scientific qualities, a landscape we today call wilderness. (2011: 7)

Feldman's thesis is that rewilding, instead of a cessation of management, is rather a *transition* in management—from a regime of productive uses (e.g., resource extraction, farming, fishing) to consumptive ones (e.g., tourism, recreation). Feldman reinterprets the common narrative of rewilding as the absence of human influence to demonstrate that rewilding is actually management of a different albeit less obvious kind. To understand rewilding only as negation—as the diminishing or altogether absence of human presence—obscures the political dimensions that direct any land management policy. Rewilding, Feldman shows, is not the absence of such policy but instead a meaningful and effecting intervention in place.

Feldman's account spells out explicitly the logistical and political conditions that enabled the spontaneous rewilding of the Apostle Islands that are otherwise omitted in the spontaneous rewilding narrative. As Feldman argues, even before the federal government acquired the land that would become the Gaylord Nelson Wilderness Area in 2004, the state increased its jurisdiction over the region through the tightening of zones for fishing and hunting and through processes of rural zoning. In this way, the state instantiated itself through regimes of legibility, whereby, according to Feldman, the state became visible as a bureaucratic, managing state through its organization and ordering of nature and human populations. This organization was not only through resource extraction—those days were coming to an end—but instead through legal protections extended to certain areas, restricted hunting and fishing seasons, their permitting, et cetera. These kinds of measures increased the reach of the state through its increasingly powerful jurisdiction over and articulation of protected nature.

Wilderness, whose etymology as that uncultivated land outside of the sovereignty of the state,¹⁷⁴ then is overturned in this example; Feldman effectively shows how wilderness is made wilderness *through the jurisdiction of the state*. “A wilderness landscape, a place where activities are rigidly prescribed, is a legal one” (2009: 43), he writes. To be clear, Feldman is not claiming that rewilding or wilderness protection derive solely rough the legal designation of wilderness alone, nor strictly from the policies of a managerial state, although in the context of the United States in the 20th century, this was a prevailing force. He also points to other factors: “the railroad executives trying to lure fare-paying passengers onto their trains, wealthy urban sportsmen looking to secure access to game fish, and Gaylord Nelson protecting his chances at re-election” (2009: 43). Nevertheless, the

174. See Casey 1993: 188-191.

protections that the state can extend to an area in designating it a wilderness area were in the case of the Apostle Islands the overriding influence on its transition from a landscape of extraction to a landscape of seeming wilderness. Feldman's main point is that it is not ecological processes alone that allow for rewilding to happen, even when the rewilding appears to happen spontaneously or without direct intervention. Rather, we must also look to "the way that people intend to use the newly wild places—and which people do the using" (2009: 43), as these are part of the processes of rewilding as well.

These revelations about the Apostle Islands and about rewilding as a deliberative, even intervening process are important in understanding rewilding as wilderness placemaking. Feldman's insights about the social and political conditions that enable rewilding to happen are important in telling the full story of any rewilded place, and they serve as a reminder that even spontaneous rewilding, which appears to occur out of non-intervention, still involves various political and social decisions and conditions. These facets, brought out in Feldman's account, undergird the kind of place concept I want to bring attention to. In the Apostle Islands, my claim is that wilderness rewilding is performed through the perpetuation of "the view of the islands as a wilderness, a place valued for a specific type of recreation" (Feldman 2009: 39). In other words, there are specific meanings already in circulation for wilderness, certain ideas about what takes place and does not take place in wilderness areas, what they look like, what belongs there, et cetera, and rewilding in the Apostle Islands rested on the embrace and perpetuation of those specific meanings and land uses over others. As the Apostle Islands were converted into a place valued for wilderness recreation, they were emptied out of their previous uses: signs of the extractive economies and inhabitation on the islands faded or were actively removed over time. They went from a conspicuously inhabited and even "logging and fire-scarred wasteland" (Feldman 2011: 7) to a place that could pass as wilderness because of its gradual emptying of human presence and artifact. The recreation uses of the Apostle Islands that Feldman emphasizes are, in other words, an evacuation of the Apostle Islands as they had been used and lived in. It is not a negation of human presence, but an orchestrated removal of it.

What I want to bring out of Feldman's account is how much rewilding, as self-willed land, obscures the human labor that is required to make rewilding possible in the first place. This is not to say that advocates of rewilding are being disingenuous or deceptive. We should not let go unnoticed, however, how significant the self-willed-ness of rewilding is, how rewilding hinges on, is premised on, and defined by nonhuman change and direction and expression. This is its core; this is what it wants to re-locate in places that might have been human previously. So while wilderness, or what is aimed for in wilderness—transcendent Otherness and radical

separation—may not require nature as ontologically pure wilderness, never touched by human hands and histories, as rewilding finds that this otherness surfaces even in these places that have been handled, it insists that the recovery of this wildness cannot be through human means.

The example of the Apostle Islands shows that rewilding does not challenge the concept of place; instead rewilding *rests* on concepts of place to make or remake place in a certain way. By edifying and consolidating the particular place of the Apostle Islands, rewilding is *placemaking*, and it follows a familiar script: it relies on and reproduces the conceptual meanings of place enshrined in the wilderness tradition, especially in the context of North American wilderness preservation. The place-making of the Apostle Islands accomplishes the aims of rewilding: it frees natural processes and dims traces of human settlement in the aim of landscapes that appear absent of people and removed from human use and culture. Even while granting Feldman's points that decisions to rewild are political and take place in political space, the example of the Apostle Islands shows how wilderness appears to reclaim places as human presence drops off and human artifacts decompose in place and blend into the landscape, or are removed actively. The Apostle Islands became (or is becoming) a wilderness place through the process of rewilding, and in this way, rewilding means the overtaking of human sites by the dominance of natural processes. Rewilding here enacts the 'Leave no Trace' wilderness philosophy popularized in the early 20th century. This mode of rewilding does not substantially differ in its aims or achievements from wilderness preservation: it rehearses the established place-meanings already ascribed to wilderness areas: that is, that these areas preserve important nonhuman spaces, humans are visitors only, and these places and their nonhuman inhabitants are importantly other to us. Rewilding, in this and similar instances, necessarily relies on and preserves specific ways of relating (or not) to such areas, ways that have been pre-defined by historical ideas about wilderness and appropriate human relations to it. As Feldman points out: recreation or a source of inspiration or of natural beauty are promoted, agriculture and resource extraction are not. Rewilding in this mode of place-making is quite conservative, recapitulating, on the register of conceptual place, the meanings of place we ascribe to and cherish in wilderness.

6.6 CONCLUSION: EMPTY PLACES

These examples show us that despite rewilding's insistence on scientific reasoning, that it is interested in ideas of wilderness as the robust, self-sustaining nonhuman arenas of the world that exist outside of human control and where humans are only visitors. As such, rewilding promises the restoration of places that bear

human impact through the suggestion that ecological function and the profusion of ecological and evolutionary processes restores a site. According to what makes wilderness wilderness (the absence of human influence), any human influence must hide itself. If ecological functionality was all that mattered, there would be no need for this self-concealing maneuver. Rewilding, like the transcendental legacy of wilderness preservation before it, rests on a non-relation between humans and wilderness. By attempting to sever the relation between humans and wilderness places in obscuring the work that goes into making them, rewilding tries to recover the separate, older places of wilderness that have always been exterior to human dwelling. In this way, wilderness rewilding makes places that are artificially empty, a very strange way of placemaking indeed. The amount of labor involved in maintaining this illusion speaks to the significance of this illusion: we must see from this that the ideas of wilderness, even if they are defined in opposition to humans, still are important places for humans. Paradoxically, we are drawn to making places where we do not belong. Wilderness rewilding shows that we are still interested in and moved to create places where humans are not at home or directing the ecology: places that are empty of us.

PROVING GROUNDS: EXPERIMENTAL REWILDING

7.0 INTRODUCTION

Two of the most remarkable examples of rewilding, the Oostvaardersplassen in the Netherlands and Pleistocene Park in Siberia, like the wilderness places of the previous chapter, challenge from the outset the idea of place as a site of human or cultural dwelling or presence that is imbued with meaning and significance. These sites are clearly not sites of human inhabitation; because they are wild in some sense they are not rich, cultural or historical places in the traditional humanistic sense. They are distinctively not humanized or humanizing and instead are commonly presented as unbidden, removed from human management, unpredictable, and for these reasons wilder than even other rewilding sites. However, in this chapter, I argue that the making of these two reserves in particular—the Oostvaardersplassen and Pleistocene Park—constitutes placemaking of a very particular type, what I term experimental placemaking. Humans are relegated to the perimeter, but place is made through the act of experiment, wherein a particular question is put to the place's ecology. What I want to bring out in interrogating them is that despite their disavowal of human presence, these places are designed specifically for the purposes of answering questions *we* are interested in answering. Paradoxically, by inquiring about our absence in these places by staging experiments in them, rewilding makes place in this specific, strange, and distinctively experimental way. But, as we will see, these places are still open-ended. This, in large part, underpins the efforts in rewilding in these sites that are picked up in rewilding efforts more broadly, but this also separates these examples from a third example under consideration in this chapter.

The placemaking of these examples hinges on what is at stake in the experiment that each site performs: I argue that rewilding at these sites is designed as an experiment to test very specific questions about historical ecology. While these are scientific questions, if we examine them closely, we see that they are not strictly empirical questions: they ask questions of historical ecology to ascertain larger-than-scientific points, or put otherwise, they ask about the history of nature through the lens of ecology. Motivating this is an underlying interest in determining what these places would be like if humans had not interfered in them: an interest in ascertaining what wildness is. In this chapter, I describe the histories and particulars of the Oostvaardersplassen and Pleistocene Park in turn, as well as questions, peculiarities, and conflicts pertaining to each location. After this exposition, I focus on the respective historical ecological questions each case asks to interrogate these questions not only for their scientific content but for the moral aspects that motivate them, even if these are not explicitly given in either case. I compare these existing cases to a proposal for Pleistocene rewilding in North America that is importantly *not* experimental—as I am defining the term—because it takes its central ecological historical question as already answered. Nevertheless, like the two existing cases, it shares a focus on the question of human impact—“of how nature looked when the megafauna was still intact” (Frans Vera, personal communication)—and thus the question of what would have been otherwise had our ancestors not effected the ecological impacts they did.

7.1 OOSTVAARDERSPLASSEN, THE NETHERLANDS

Perhaps the most famous rewilding project, the Oostvaardersplassen (OVP), a nature reserve outside of Amsterdam in the Netherlands, exists in a landscape that, in a literal sense, is only decades old. The OVP is in Flevoland, the youngest Dutch province, on land that was reclaimed from the sea only in the 20th century. Following the severe flood of 1916, Minister of Transport and Water Management Cornelis Lely proposed to enclose part of the Zuyderzee in dykes, to prevent future flooding events.¹⁷⁵ This project, which created the new IJsselmeer lake, was completed successfully, and afterwards, a second project began, to create more agricultural lands in North Holland by draining some of the new lake. New polders were created therein, and the polder on which the OVP is now situated dates to 1968. Once wrested from the water, the area was slated for industry; using this area as a nature reserve was never the original idea. But before development could

175. See Zwart 2003 for a historical analysis of Dutch attitudes towards nature and the impact of these attitudes on agriculture, land reclamation, and politics.

begin, graylag geese (*Anser anser*) started congregating among the reeds and marshes during their molting periods in the summer. This was an unexpected event with an even less expected result: the continuous grazing pressure of the geese prevented the succession of larger plants and trees, keeping the area marshy and thereby providing a habitat for other nesting birds. This outcome was entirely inconsistent with the prevailing ecological thinking of the time, which held that the ecological conditions (available vegetation, water levels, local geomorphology, et cetera) would drive the behavior of geese and other animals, not the other way around. The effects of the geese were remarkable because they showed that grazing animals not only respond to the environmental pressures of their surroundings but that they actually shape their environments. Ecologist Frans Vera, who was working on related topics in his PhD at the time, took an interest in the area, recognizing that it was not only providing valuable habitat for rare birds but that the site itself was an ecological novelty: “Nature showed a side of itself there that we in the Netherlands no longer knew” (2000: xiv), Vera wrote in 2000 about the emerging Oostvaardersplassen. Staatsbosbeheer (the state forestry service) also became involved, and after some debate, the area became a nature reserve in 1983.

The geese, whose grazing was crucial for the maintenance of the marshes, relied in turn on the open grasslands adjacent to the marshes of the area for nesting. Keen to ensure the continued flourishing of the geese populations, Vera and Staatsbosbeheer saw an opportunity to experiment further with grazing ecology to maintain the grassland ecosystem. According to Vera in work published from his findings, grazer diversity translates into vegetation diversity, as “The range of feeding strategies of the different species of ungulate constitute a system of checks and balances, preventing any single type of vegetation from becoming totally dominant” (2009: 33). Thus, under Vera’s and Staatsbosbeheer’s jurisdiction, larger grazers were brought to the site, ungulates that might be in similar ecosystems under more naturalistic conditions. In 1982, 35 Heck cattle (*Bos taurus*) and in 1983, 27 Konik ponies (*Equus ferus caballus*) were introduced to the OVP. In 1992, they added 54 red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) in efforts to continue diversifying the grazing impact (Smit et al. 2010).

7.1.1 Oostvaardersplassen as experiment

Thus, as the Oostvaardersplassen emerged as a nature reserve, it also emerged as an experiment. Vera and others were interested in testing out what the effects would be of introducing semi-domesticated grazers—proxies for the species that would have grazed similar areas tens of thousands of years ago—before agriculture dominated the landscapes of Europe. As such, Heck cattle were introduced as a modern-day equivalent of the auroch (*Bos primigenius*), which went extinct in 1627, and Konik

ponies deputized for the extinct tarpan (*Equus ferus ferus*). The OVP was conceived precisely in experimental terms, and the proxy animals played a significant part in designing this experiment. In the following extended passage from his preface of *Grazing Ecology and Forest History* (2000), Frans Vera describes the questions that led the OVP ecologists to reintroduce grazers to the site, thus inaugurating the OVP as an experimental site:

The question asked by a number of biologists, including myself, at the time was whether these species [indigenous grazing fauna, e.g., roe deer, aurochs] have played a role on land...in other words did these animals with their consumption as part of nature create the living conditions for the European biodiversity? Would this include the species of plants and animals and biotopes, such as grasslands, that we in Europe only know nowadays from cultivated landscapes? If that were possible, then we believed that this was an inviting and challenging perspective for nature conservation. Therefore, we proposed an experiment to reintroduce the disappeared large ungulates. (2000: x)

Within the boundaries of the OVP, Vera investigated two inter-related hypotheses: first, Vera's famous open-canopy, or "wood-pasture" hypothesis, that the vegetation of primeval Europe formed a mosaic of shrub, grasslands, and trees, with the canopy held open by grazing ungulates. On Vera's view, the presence of ungulates changes the successional progress: succession is cyclical, meaning that the landscape will be formed of a patchwork of grasses, shrubs, and forests that cycle between these forms over time. This contradicts the conventional wisdom, the closed-canopy or "high forest" hypothesis, which holds that succession from grasslands and shrub culminates in forests. Accordingly, lowland temperate Europe is understood to have been densely forested until the beginning of agriculture (approximately 6,000 years ago) when trees were cut and humans began domesticating grazers. On this view, such activities opened up the canopy, giving rise to pasture-like ecosystems throughout Europe. Vera's unorthodox view created a stir in paleoecological circles and is still contested.¹⁷⁶ The attendant but separate hypothesis being investigated in the OVP was that the semi-domesticated grazers (i.e., the Heck cattle and Konik ponies) would redevelop the "natural characteristics" of their wild ancestors simply by being left alone on the reserve and could thus become more than proxies in keeping the canopy open (Vera 2009: 33). These two, together, generated a third hypothesis, which Vera also formulated in the preface to *Grazing Ecology & Forest History*: "Could we redevelop nature, i.e. create the pre-conditions that lead to

176. See Bradshaw et al. 2003; Birks 2005.

modern analogies of that nature which has disappeared through cultivation?” (2000: xv). Although it had yet to be named rewilding, the experimental question at the center of this third hypothesis is now the premise that many rewilding projects assume to be true: that there are recoverable, somehow original or earlier, self-perpetuating, naturalistic conditions that rewilding projects can set in motion and restore.¹⁷⁷

By conventional standards, the OVP is a very odd experiment if it qualifies as one at all. It lacks the controlled conditions of the laboratory—the space generally associated with the experiment.¹⁷⁸ Perhaps it is more akin to a field site, but still, the OVP has not been closely monitored as field sites generally are. Nor have circumscribed experiments been designed and conducted in the reserve. For its renown and uniqueness, the record of peer-reviewed scientific publications on research in the OVP is scant.¹⁷⁹ In claiming that rewilding in the OVP is experimental, I am admittedly using the term *experimental* loosely: there are not, strictly speaking, experimental design procedures in place to test scientific hypotheses as in standard, replicatable, scientific experiments that take place in the lab or field. However, the experimental status of the OVP, beyond its inception and experimental design as explained above, has also been remarked on by some geographers, who consider the OVP as the paradigm case of experimentation in the anthropocene. Jamie Lorimer has written extensively on the OVP, and with co-author Clemens Driessen, claims that the OVP is a “wild experiment” that typifies anthropocene environmentalism (2013: 169). They assess the idea of an experiment not in strict ecological terms but

177. There is surprisingly little controversy on this point. Ian Rotherham (2014) is one of the few who disputes this assumption. The ecological ideas that underpin rewilding, on Rotherham’s account, are fundamentally flawed. Firstly, Rotherham argues that the ecologies of our present, in England and elsewhere, are what he calls eco-cultural, that is, the product of millennia of co-evolution between the human and nonhuman where humans are implicated in countless complex and irrevocable ways. Stepping back, or abandoning landscapes *à la* rewilding will not bring us back, to quote Rotherham, “to some sort of reversion to a mythical, former, pristine condition of pure ‘nature’, but to a plethora of degraded, species-poor, secondary successional endpoints” (2014: vii). Thus, rewilding is premised on mistaken metaphysical presuppositions, which should be familiar, where humans and nature are discrete, and that an intact, non-humanized nature exists and will be revived in the absence of humans. Secondly and relatedly, Rotherham claims that rewilding is a misnomer for its implication that there is a primeval, wild state of nature that could be recaptured. Instead, human intervention in the natural world has been so profound, long-term, and pervasive that deciding, at this point, to curb human influence by ceasing management, that is, deciding to rewild, will not produce an ecological state that is any more “natural” than its pre-rewilded state. “Even to not intervene is a positive intervention,” Rotherham writes. “The question therefore is concerned with the type of our human interventions in nature and the responses to the changes that follow” (2014: ii).

178. Kohler describes the laboratory as a “placeless place,” in that it erases the specificity of a place so as to achieve conditions neutral towards the experiments that take place in them (cited in Lorimer & Driessen 2013: 170).

179. Although the area is monitored by nature organizations and governmental entities, as Glenn Deliége pointed out to me. Much of this work is presented in the Natura 2000 Management Plan for the Oostvaardersplassen (Kuil et al. 2015).

from the vantage of socio-ecology and human geography, considering the politics of experimentation in conservation, the permeable boundaries of the reserve, et cetera. Geographer Bruce Braun draws on and expands their idea of the OVP as a wild experiment,¹⁸⁰ however, Braun construes ‘experiment’ very broadly, and he claims that all rewilding counts as experimental because of the human construction of nature involved—necessarily—in rewilding projects. He writes:

Yet, what does it mean to rewild when there is no wild nature that can stand as the place from which the authenticity of any such effort is to be judged? By definition, rewilding can only ever be an experiment in composing the wild, an experiment in making ‘new’ natures, in which the conservationist is always already implicated in the reality that he or she makes. (2015: 108)

I agree with Braun’s verdict that in a certain sense—namely the way they are created—these examples of rewilding depart notably from the other modes of rewilding as placemaking I have been elaborating in the dissertation. However, Braun misses one of the most distinctive features of the OVP when he argues that the anthropocene signifies the irrelevance of baselines because there is no “Nature” available any longer for guidance or reference. In rewilding, he writes, “[ecological baselines] no longer make sense when it comes to knowing and inhabiting socio-ecological worlds...In the place of nature we have the image of a fully worked-over world, and the proliferation of natures that are invariably marked by human activity” (2015: 107). Indeed, the OVP is a strange mix of human and nonhuman activity—a compelling example of one of the many new, socio-ecological, small-n natures that compose the world in the anthropocene, but Braun has failed to notice that the task of securing an ecological baseline is at the heart of the OVP experiment. To fully understand this, we have to understand the defense Vera submits for his open-canopy (or wood-pasture) hypothesis, why he thinks we could have been mistaken about historical ecology for so long, and ultimately, why this matters.

7.1.2 Shifting baseline syndrome

Vera’s hypothesis is a direct challenge to the conventional understanding that lowland, temperate pre-agricultural Europe was densely forested before humans settled and agriculture began. But how does Vera think that this incorrect theory could have been the leading view in historical ecology for so long? How could the standard view be so misguided?

180. See Braun 2015 “From Critique to Experiment? Rethinking Political Ecology for the Anthropocene” for his discussion of the experimental turn in geography.

The reason Vera provides for this misunderstanding is the idea of shifting baseline syndrome, which was coined and introduced in the context of fisheries management by Daniel Pauly.¹⁸¹ The basic idea of shifting baseline syndrome is that public and scientific perceptions of the natural conditions of environments change over time. This is because these perceptions are not tethered to some incontrovertible reference point but are instead informed by personal experiences with nature. As the natural environment gradually declines, we are prone to lower the standards of perceived natural conditions over time, and we eventually and unwittingly embrace a “degraded natural ecosystem to be the normal state of nature” (Vera 2000: 98). Thus, there is a gradual and generational shift in what forms and conditions of nature are considered worth preserving or restoring, as each generation perceives as “natural” the impoverished conditions of nature it inherited.¹⁸² In the case of fisheries, an increasingly lower number of fish in an ecosystem over time is taken as healthy, and as Pauly puts it, there is a “gradual accommodation of the creeping disappearance of resource species, and inappropriate reference points for evaluating economic losses resulting from overfishing, or for identifying targets for rehabilitation measures” (1995: 430). In a TED talk on the same subject, he gives an even more concise explanation of the phenomenon: “We transform the world but we don’t remember it. We adjust our baseline to the new level, and we don’t recall what was there” (Pauly 2010).

Vera argues that the shifting baseline syndrome is to blame for the consensus view that the landscapes of primeval Europe were densely forested. This view arose and became the baseline for natural conditions, according to Vera, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, informed by the ecological conditions of the day, when almost all of Europe was under cultivation. The consensus view involved three key assumptions: first, that people disturb the natural conditions by cultivation activities like plowing, cutting, and grazing; second, that the natural, forested conditions of nature rebound when such activities are discontinued; and third, that the herbivores implicit in these activities follow natural succession and do not drive it (Vera 2009: 99).

The idea shifting baselines explains why we can be mistaken in our conventional views on primeval, or even less-degraded nature, but it does not provide evidence for Vera’s competing hypothesis about landscapes in pre-agricultural Europe. To

181. See Pauly 1995. Vera elaborates the idea in considerable depth in *Grazing Ecology and Forest History* (2000), an adapted publication (in English) of his PhD thesis, as well as in a 2009 article, “The Shifting Baseline Syndrome in Restoration Ecology.”

182. In a separate context, Raymond Williams (1973) observes cultural nostalgia for “Old England” to follow a similar pattern. What he terms the “escalator” effect is the historical ride through accounts of successive generations wherein each generation longs for the supposedly ideal past that preceded them, and the occurrence of the ideal past gets pushed further and further back in history.

defend this view, Vera assembles a fascinating array of evidence drawing on not only ecological science but on etymological analysis of historic legal records from the middle ages. When a landscape is described as a “wood” in these documents or in other writings from the time, it conjures up for the 21st century reader a landscape thickly grown with trees, like the closed canopy-concept Vera is arguing against. *Wood* derives from the Old German and Old Dutch, but, crucial to Vera’s argument, its meaning has changed over time. When we encounter “*Wald*” or “*woud*” in Old German or Old Dutch texts respectively, we are mistaken to think that these terms describe a landscape like the one we have in mind now. Referring to grazing and land use records, Vera shows that in these documents *wood* would have also referred to areas with shrubby vegetation and even areas that were entirely treeless, like bogs, grasslands, and areas where animals fed (2009: 101). Similarly, while forest is synonymous with wood in the present, Vera points out that the meaning of *Forestis*, from which forest¹⁸³ derives, has nothing to do with the density of trees, but was “a legal concept that described or confirmed royal rights concerning ownership to the uncultivated (= wilderness)” (2009: 100). We project our present-day, restrictive meanings back in time if we fail to appreciate these etymologies.

The etymological analysis is secondary, however, to the main body of evidence Vera provides for the his hypothesis: a reconstruction of the composition of vegetation in primeval Europe through pollen records. Pollen deposits show the dominance of oak trees and other light-seeking species during the periods in question, and because these species are abundant in the record but are outcompeted in a light-scarce environment, Vera concludes that the landscape must have been parklike, or the oak, hazel, and hawthorne and other light-seeking plants would not have been able to thrive in the landscape at the levels they did.¹⁸⁴

7.1.3 *Terra ex nihilo*

The evidence Vera marshals for his open-canopy idea, while based in ecology, is mainly historical: after all, the question of what the landscape of lowland primeval Europe looked like is not as easily testable as other kinds of ecological questions that pertain to present ecological assemblages. But this is precisely how the OVP is essential to this question: it offers a place to test it and see the hypothesis play out in the present. The OVP is of course not primeval Europe, but because of its extremely recent origin, it is an area that does not bear on its landscape the legacy of hundreds of years of cultural imprints and influence. Paradoxically, though literally human-made as the polder on which it sits was wrested from the sea through human reclamation projects, the OVP is unlike the Dutch landscapes that surround it

183. Also *forest* in Old French, *foreest* in Old Dutch, and *Forst* in Old German.

184. See chapter 6 of Vera’s *Grazing Ecology & Forest History* (2000).

in that it, is has not been formed by agriculture and other selective and shaping human practices that dominate the natural history of all of the Netherlands and almost all of Europe. In the traditional sense, the OVP is not a cultural landscape. It is as close as one might hope to get to *terra nullius*, or even *terra ex nihilo*, which provides an ideal place to interrogate questions of pre-human, or human-absent ecology. From its reclamation it has been mainly acted on by nonhumans: the ecological processes catalyzed by greylag geese inspired Vera and the other scientists to experiment further with questions of grazing and succession, and while Vera and other scientists unmistakably interceded in introducing the Heck cattle, Koniks, and red deer, aside from bounding the site off and keeping humans out, there have been few human interventions in the OVP.¹⁸⁵ The OVP, then, functions as the proving ground for Vera's hypotheses about the canopy and the active role the grazers will take in making and maintaining the site. Vera is clearly confident about the general outcomes of the experiment: his conviction, as his hypothesis holds, is that the introduced grazers will ultimately hold the canopy open. However, it still functions as an experiment: there is uncertainty about the outcome, as there would be with any experiment. The questions the OVP interrogates are open, empirical questions. And related to this, the site has additional elements of unpredictability. For example, specific results and information, like carrying capacity of the cattle, horses, and deer fluctuate yearly, due to weather and other conditions that make food available or scarce. And while bird species are monitored more closely now than they had been earlier in the experiment's history,¹⁸⁶ the species of birds nesting or visiting the OVP for part of the year will change over time. Only under these conditions could the mating of sea eagles (*Haliaeetus albicilla*), birds that arrived in the OVP without any human help, be considered the "crowning glory"¹⁸⁷ of the reserve in a 2010 book of wildlife photography and laudatory essays on the OVP put out by the Staatsbosbeheer. "Here nature is unadulterated; it has free reign, doing its own way, just as it did when the area spontaneously emerged, with hardly any human intervention."¹⁸⁸

185. See Klaver et al. 2002 for discussion of the conflict over human intervention for the sake of animal welfare and other controversies from the OVP.

186. Following an unanticipated crash in spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*) numbers in 1996, species monitoring efforts increased (Lorimer & Driessen 2013).

187. Vera writes, in an essay in the book, "My dream has come true! When I see this master of balance [the sea eagle] stretch his magnificent wings I feel as if I'm soaring above the OVP myself, beyond the horizon of the familiar" (in Smit 2010: 37).

188. Smit 2010: 9. Its critics point repeatedly to the very exact regulation of water levels at the OVP as evidence of the site's ongoing management by humans.

This characteristic of the OVP is precisely what is important as experiment rewilding: the OVP is open-ended. The reserve has developed and will continue to progress in unforeseen ways, and this is important to the success of the experiment.¹⁸⁹ Vera and others are trying to see what happens when these grazing processes are left in motion without interference from agriculture. So while it centers on a baseline, it differs importantly from conventional restoration projects that aim at restoring ecological conditions to some pre-disturbance state. Instead, the experiment of the OVP recovers information about what the historic baseline was by testing what happens under certain ecological conditions, not in recreating and maintaining specific historical ecological conditions. These are precisely open-ended: otherwise the experiment would not be an experiment and thus would not be able to test Vera's various hypotheses. Again, I recognize that the kind of experiment I am describing in the OVP does not conform to conventional experimental practices and the soundness of such science can be debated. What I am trying to describe is that the OVP functions as a kind of experiment that sets the scene for nature to play out on its own, to disclose itself, and according to Vera, only under these conditions can his hypotheses about the historical ecology of Europe be answered. I have named this chapter proving ground because that is how I think we should understand the cases of experimental rewilding as functioning: as the places where ecological questions are tried out, but also because these questions have broader import: as places of naturalistic and moral significance. I will address these larger implications in the second half of the chapter. First, though, I will introduce the second case of experimental rewilding.

7.2 PLEISTOCENE PARK, CHERSKI, SIBERIA

A lesser known but equally compelling case of experimental rewilding is located in the Arctic circle: in Chersky, Siberia. Pleistocene Park is the brainchild of one man, Sergey Zimov, who with the help of his son, Nikita, leads a team of support researchers and coordinates collaboration with visiting scientists. Like the OVP, questions of historical ecology are central to the experimental operation of rewilding in Pleistocene Park. Arguably adhering much more closely to the practices and

189. Here I do not mean that its outcomes could not be predicted by ecological theory but that there are not pre-determined conditions or criteria that the OVP's ecology is steered towards.

design of standard experimentation than does the OVP, rewilding in Pleistocene Park is an experimental reserve that specifically investigates the conditions of the ecological past, in this case, the Pleistocene.¹⁹⁰

In 1980, geophysicist Sergey Zimov established the Northeast Science Station in Siberia where he could conduct research in pre-historic and present-day climate change and its impact on the Arctic landscape. (Zimov 2005: 796). The experiment of Pleistocene Park followed from this research and dated roughly to 1988 when Zimov fenced off a 160 km² of forest, shrub, meadow, and lake with aims to restore the mammoth steppe ecosystem of the Pleistocene through the reintroduction of grazers. What became Pleistocene Park is positioned 40 km from the Northeast Science Station in an even more remote location; the area is accessible by boat in the summer months and over the snow when the rivers have frozen in the winter. Originally, Zimov received funding for the Park from the Pacific Ocean Institute of Geography, which was one of the largest geographic institutes in the Soviet Union, although that dried up when the Soviet Union collapsed. Nevertheless, Zimov was able to keep both the Park and Science Station open through a combination self-funding with assistance of some small European grants that helped pay for the translocation of some species. In 1996, Zimov registered the Northeast Scientific Station as a private company, which allowed him to commit to the more experimental aspects of Pleistocene Park and step up the restoration project (Davletyarova 2013). This was when the first enclosure was erected. In 2004-2005, Pleistocene Park expanded to 1600 hectares.

Zimov had been introducing species to the Park in the 1990s. He began with forty Yakutian horses, a semi-wild and robust breed capable of surviving in the open during Siberia's winters—when air temperatures can fall below -70° Celsius—because of their short stature, long winter hair, and metabolism.¹⁹¹ But establishing a grazing population in Siberia's punishing climate is a challenge, and even these hardy animals did not fare well at first. Nearly three quarters of the original herd died in the first year: fifteen fell prey to wolves and bears, twelve ate poison wild hemlock growing in the area, and two managed to escape the park, to make the

190. The Pleistocene is a geological epoch dating from 2.6 million years ago to roughly 11,600 years ago, when the Holocene began. The biota of the Pleistocene, generally, is quite similar to present-day biota that makes it especially interesting in the context of rewilding is the Quaternary extinction event that separates the Pleistocene from the Holocene.

191. With rewilding as the aim, Zimov did well to choose the Yakutian horse. Genomic analysis of the Yakutians (Librado et al. 2015) shows them to be recent arrivals to the Siberia and thus remarkably fast adaptors. Rather than from the native horses that inhabited Siberia until the Holocene as was commonly assumed, the data suggest that Yakutian horses most likely descend from Mongolian horses that were introduced to the area only around 800 years ago. This makes them one of the fastest adapting species to the conditions of the Arctic, using similar evolutionary strategies as mammoths and native humans who are also adapted to the extreme cold.

thousand kilometer journey to return to their original grazing area. Zimov was not deterred, however. He acquired more horses, and soon they learned to avoid the threats of plant and predator. Their rates of reproduction now equal or exceed the death rates. Some of the horses visit the cabin where the park's caretaker lives; all of them are occasionally given grain to supplement their salt intake. Now they are joined by musk ox, recruited from Wrangel Island, 1000 km away in the Siberian Sea, reindeer, a few moose, wapiti, and bison from North America. In 2014 Zimov opened second trial area, Wild Field, in the southern, Tula region of Russia. Now Nikita, Sergey's son, serves as director of Pleistocene Park. The park hosts many visiting scientists each year.

7.2.1 The Mammoth steppe ecosystem

Yakutia, Siberia, where Pleistocene Park is located, is one of the coldest places on earth. Siberia, constituted by a mix of tundra, forest, and swamp, is generally is thought of as barren, frozen, and inhospitable. It was not always this way, however. The fossil record shows Siberia to have been much more ecologically productive in the Pleistocene, when it was a semi-arid grass steppe dominated by large grazers.¹⁹² In an article in *Science* from 2005 in which Zimov explains his reasoning for Pleistocene Park, he writes that Siberia was “relatively unscathed” by the global glaciation events of the Pleistocene. Instead, he writes, “vast dust-covered plains and valleys dominated the landscape. Mammoths, woolly rhinoceroses, bison, horses, reindeer, musk oxen, elk, moose, saiga, and yaks grazed on grasslands under the predatory gaze of cave lions and wolves” (2005: 796). Because reindeer and similar browsers survived into the Holocene but other species—grazers that comprised huge herds in their prime—did not survive, it is surmised that the loss of this megafaunal biodiversity was related to changes in vegetation brought on by climate change. The geologic boundary between the Pleistocene and the Holocene corresponds with a warming of the climate that changed the composition of vegetation in favor of lichens, mosses, and shrubs preferred by browsers like reindeer. However, Zimov holds a view that it was not only climate but also the changing role of *Homo sapiens* and other *Homo species* that affected this shift from grassland to mossy forest. He posits:

Homo [species] ended up assuming the powerful role of ecosystem terminator. The mammoth ecosystem was the first large-scale victim, but the global destruction of grasslands only accelerated in the Holocene when people invented agriculture and began raising cattle. (2005: 797)

192. Here I am highlighting only a few details of an extensive and much more complex and in some respects contentious ecological story.

This explains the evidence that many species, including mammoths, bison, horses, and musk oxen, weren't wiped out at the end of the Pleistocene but in fact survived for several thousand years during the Holocene. The actual extirpation of these species from Siberia syncs with the advances in hunting technology humans developed, especially the widespread use of lances, spears, and arrowheads. Zimov's hypothesis is that once humans became adept at hunting large game, they hunted the tens of thousands of grazing fauna out of existence in Siberia and that this eventuated the loss of the mammoth steppe ecosystem. He also suggests, like Frans Vera, that the direction of ecological change is driven by grazers rather than by biotic and abiotic environmental conditions: top-down rather than bottom-up.¹⁹³ Embracing Vera's open-canopy hypothesis, Zimov postulates that the Pleistocene grazers, through their grazing of grass and trampling and fertilizing of the soil, were maintaining the ecosystem as the productive grassy steppe. The Pleistocene grasslands, he claims, would have persisted into the Holocene "had the great herds of Pleistocene animals remained in place to maintain the landscape" (2005: 798).

The main scientific goal for Pleistocene Park, then, like the OVP, is to interrogate a question of historical ecology. Zimov is explicit in his aim "to determine more precisely the role that Pleistocene animals played in maintaining their own ecosystem" (2005: 796). I will return (in §7.3) to the role of this questioning in the constitution of rewilding in Pleistocene Park, but there is a second, more tangible goal from which the primary scientific goal cannot be divorced. Pleistocene Park is also motivated by concern about climate change and is an experimental attempt in preventing or at least mitigating changes to the global climate.

7.2.2 Climate mediation of the mammoth steppe restoration

The Arctic is one of the most important theatres of climate change: warming faster than the rest of the world,¹⁹⁴ the effects of climate change are already more pronounced there than in other regions. This is especially worrisome because of the huge amounts of methane trapped in the permafrost in the Arctic. A warmer Arctic means a melted permafrost and the release of this methane (CH₄), a greenhouse gas four times as potent as carbon dioxide. This would add substantially to our already dangerous anthropogenic emissions, and some worry that the large scale release of carbon from the permafrost, sometimes referred to as a "carbon bomb," could push the climate system across a critical threshold and into an unstable state

193. Although this top-down pressure differs from the predator-driven cascades promoted by Foreman and other North American rewilding proponents because it places, herbivores not carnivores, at the top, the direction of pressure (that animals drive ecosystem processes and shape ecosystem conditions) is the same.

194. See, e.g., the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)'s "Arctic Report Card": <http://www.arctic.noaa.gov/Report-Card/Report-Card-2016> (NOAA 2017).

(Wolf 2008). The melting of the permafrost, then, poses a threat to overall climate stability. Zimov, who has spent his career studying changes to the past and present climate, thinks that the restoration of the mammoth steppe can contribute to climate mitigation because the pasture ecosystem protects the permafrost and thus prevents its carbon stores from escaping into the atmosphere. Restoring the ecology of the mammoth steppe, then, is not only useful to fill in the gaps of our paleoecological knowledge but to help prevent runaway climate change as well. Zimov defends this project in a Manifesto he has written about mammoth steppe restoration.¹⁹⁵ He explains that the permafrost is meters deep and made up of mammoth steppe soils, which are blanketed only by a much thinner layer of non-permafrost soil. Once it has been started, there is no way to stop the process of the thawing and release of methane from these soils artificially. However, “pasture ecosystems can,” (Zimov no date: 9) Zimov claims, if we rehabilitate their natural processes.

These processes work in several ways. First, grazing, by horses, bison, and other ungulates, promotes the growth of fast-growing grasses that stabilize the soil and prevent continued erosion. Second, seemingly counterintuitively, the snow that covers the permafrost in the winter months actually warms the permafrost because it insulates it from the air which is much colder than the snow. But, as Zimov explains in his Manifesto:

Animals in pastures, looking for food, excavate and trample all snow several times each season, causing it to condense and lose its heat-insulating abilities. Therefore the introduction of animals on pastures cools permafrost temperatures by 40° C, which can stop or substantially slow down permafrost degradation. (Zimov no date: 9)

The data showing the difference between permafrost temperatures inside Pleistocene Park as compared to outside the park are preliminary and have not yet been published, however, Zimov has observed considerable differences in soil temperature, which suggests that the presence of the grazers indeed keeps the permafrost cooler than otherwise. The final factor is related to canopy cover. As Vera’s open-canopy hypothesis holds, the presence of grazers reduces the overall coverage of large vegetation like trees and shrubs. Because trees and shrubs are darker in color than grasses, they have a greater heating effect as they absorb more solar radiation. By preventing the colonization of the tundra by larger plants with darker foliage, the grazers indirectly keep the tundra cooler and prevent melting permafrost.

195. In English, titled ““Wild Field” Manifest.” Both the original in Russian and an English translation are available through the Pleistocene Park website: <http://www.pleistocenepark.ru> (Zimov no date).

To save the permafrost, as Zimov intends, would require millions of grazers, as only at this scale would the transformation of the ecosystem from the shrubby tundra of the present to the pastures of the Pleistocene mammoth steppe be possible. Although he is not working at such a scale in the present, he notes that much of Russia, unsuitable for agriculture, could be “transformed into highly productive pasture ecosystems” (Zimov no date: 9).

7.3 EXPERIMENTAL REWILDING & THE RECOVERY OF “REAL” NATURE

Although its aim of climate mitigation through the protection of the permafrost distinguishes it from all other rewilding initiatives, Pleistocene Park’s primary goal, which, in Zimov’s words is: “to reconstitute the long-gone ecosystem of the Pleistocene epoch that supported vast populations of large animals including mammoths, horses, reindeer, bison, wolves, and other large predators” (2005: 796) makes it very similar to the OVP. As I have argued, both reserves use species reintroductions as a form of experiment to test hypotheses about historic ecosystems. Both experiments rest on successional theory, and both are inspired by the same thinking about historical ecology. Further, and what I aim to bring out in this section, is that underlying the scientific reasoning both examples are motivated by is the suggestion that there is a real nature whose wild essence is recovered through these rewilding experiments. Rewilding in these cases is interested in recovering the truth of nature that manifests through wildness for epistemological and moral reasons.

One of the ways in which this underlying motivation appears is with regard to an even more recently established branch of Pleistocene Park, a field site named Wild Field, that Zimov and his team opened in 2014. Although Zimov’s Manifesto pertains to his mammoth steppe restoration efforts broadly, the manifesto is named Wild Field Manifest and Zimov makes Wild Field its main subject. Wild Field is on the other side of the country from Pleistocene Park- in the Tula region, 250 km south of Moscow, and it differs in some respects from Pleistocene Park. As the Zimov’s website explains, Wild Field does not require the “long term transformation of vegetation and soils” (Pleistocene Park 2014) necessary in Pleistocene Park, and land in the Tula region is amongst the least expensive in Russia, making Wild Field

the far less expensive¹⁹⁶ and demanding venture. The Zimovs have purchased 300 hectares of land to create Wild Field, half of which is fenced, on which they have introduced Kalmyk horses, wapiti, sheep, and roe deer with plans also to include Kalmyk cattle, yaks, and mouflons.¹⁹⁷

Another important advantage of Wild Field is its relative accessibility. Whereas Pleistocene Park is extremely remote and difficult to reach, Zimov envisions that Wild Field might eventually be a destination, like the Serengeti, for safari tourism. He writes in the Wild Field Manifesto: “Millions of people fly to Africa to see animals that are not in cages, but in the wild. Similarly, Wild Field can be visited by train on the weekend. It is important to show our kids real wild nature – the nature of their ancestors” (Zimov no date: 10). While the experiment of Pleistocene Park uncovers how “real wild nature” worked in the Pleistocene, Wild Field specifically was created to put those findings—*real wild nature*—on display. Wild Field demonstrates for the wider public “how real nature should look like” (Pleistocene Park 2014). In Wild Field, the wildness rewilding recovers seems to be marshalled for epistemological and educational purposes.

There are obscure moral implications to be found in Pleistocene rewilding as well, at least according to Zimov’s Wild Field Manifest. The Manifesto advances fantastic ideas about the role of humans in nature as he tracks the status of *Homo sapiens* through prehistoric time and into the recent past. In the Manifesto’s narrative, humans ascend from the lowly status of scavengers who, Zimov ventures, were not widely respected by other animals because we smelled of onions and thus did not appear the most “desired prey,”¹⁹⁸ to the top of the food chain when we became skilled hunters who drove other species into extinction. Zimov’s views of present-day human status also have their basis in ecological hierarchies and biological conditions. As it is a Manifesto, Zimov makes these observations and speculations the basis of his prescriptive claims about mammoth steppe restoration and about the role of humans in this natural order. He claims that “We [humans] don’t have a gene of zealous masters of Earth, this, same with many other things we have to learn” (Zimov no date: 6), which, like much of the Manifesto, is obscure

196. The Zimov’s restoration projects are largely self-funded but increasingly crowd-sourced: in March 2017 Nikita Zimov launched a kickstarter campaign to raise US\$106,000 for mammoth steppe restoration. The project was described on the kickstarter website as: “The world’s best plan to bring back a vanished ice age ecosystem and save the world from a catastrophic global warming feedback loop.” See <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/907484977/pleistocene-park-an-ice-age-ecosystem-to-save-the-world>. The project succeeded, raising US\$110,000.

197. Taken from Pleistocene Park’s website: “Opening of the new reserve “Wild Field”” (Pleistocene Park 2014)

<http://www.pleistocenepark.ru/en/news/14/>

198. Zimov no date: 4. That humans, endowed with strong livers, were able to eat onions, garlic, sorrel, and other pasture weeds, enabled us to specialize in these high caloric foods that were inedible to grazers. (Zimov no date: 3).

in its meaning and without any elaboration. Here, strangely, Zimov overlooks the profound change in the relationship between *Homo sapiens* and nonhuman animals that he is inaugurating in Pleistocene Park: animals that are reintroduced for the express purpose of protecting the permafrost by restoring the mammoth steppe ecosystem. This differs considerably from the kind of relationship humans and nonhumans would have had 30,000 years ago, when the latter were made prey because of humans' growing acuity with tools, community, and communication that gave our ancestors an edge in hunting. Now, instead, the approach of Pleistocene Park cultivates certain nonhuman animals for their specific ecological functions, that the animals themselves become the instruments of experiment, both in protecting the permafrost and conducting tests on historical ecological hypotheses. This is starkest in a recently designed logo for Pleistocene Park where the woolly mammoth is pictured as a tool to fight global warming (see *figure 1*). Even without the de-extinction of the woolly mammoth,¹⁹⁹ Zimov's projects seem to accomplish precisely that which he expresses skepticism about in the Manifesto: that humans can achieve the role of "zealous masters" (Zimov no date: 6) of an ecosystem. Nevertheless, "Real wild nature," whether as harnessed by humans for geoengineering or protected by humans and shown off as a glimpse to eco-historical tourists of the world our ancestors experienced, is what Zimov is after and seems to think that Pleistocene restoration of the mammoth steppe can refurbish us with.



Figure 1. Pleistocene Park Logo

Vera's views are far more restrained than those of Sergey Zimov, but Vera also believes that the experiment in the OVP uncovers what "real nature" is. His ideas about this are most readily found outside of his strictly scientific writing in interviews or public

199. This is a fascinating side feature of Zimov's vision of the Mammoth Steppe restoration but I will unfortunately not be able to address it here.

comments, where he makes claims about “real nature”²⁰⁰ or that investigating the structure of historic vegetation in the OVP helps bring us “closer to the truth;”²⁰¹ closer not to the truth of the matter on this academic question, but closer to the truth of what nature is.

Vera gestures towards this idea in the concluding paragraph of *Grazing Ecology and Forest History*, where he argues for prioritizing rewilding, or redevelopment of wilderness areas as in the OVP the “highest priority,” trumping any other agriculture or nature policy objective. He writes there:

Allowing the wilderness to develop once again is very important for cultural conservation, as well as for safeguarding biodiversity. After all, the wilderness shows us the framework within which our cultural landscape developed. *It is only by knowing the wilderness that we can understand our cultural landscape.* (Vera 2000: 384, original emphasis)

There is nothing notable about an ecologist advocating for the mode of nature protection he believes to be best, of course. But Vera’s reasoning for why wilderness (through rewilding) should be prioritized, beyond biodiversity protection, is important. Here we see that the straightforward scientific question of knowing what real nature looked or looks like has a normative dimension too: Vera insists that this matters so that we can put cultural landscapes in their proper historical context and correct the category mistake where we have misunderstood cultural landscapes as nature. This is an attack on the standard view in Dutch conservation that considers human-shaped landscapes to count as nature and thus merit protection for their contributions to biodiversity, ecosystem services, et cetera. Vera’s insistence on the truth of nature—Vera’s certainty that this is truth—verges past scientific curiosity and seems to have moral implications. He repeatedly emphasizes that agriculture is human-driven selection and is thus an incursion into “real nature,” which was pre-agricultural. Witnessing “real nature” will reveal the extent of the difference between this and our cultural, agricultural landscapes, a difference that for Vera seems to have a significance beyond matters of scientific fact. However, Vera never explains why it matters that we know the difference.

But what is its point? What is the point of excavating an ecology that has not been subject to human agriculture? Is it an exercise in self-knowledge? Humility? Abnegation? Why is it important that we see the difference play out at all, when the conditions under which it plays out are so extremely contrived? I think that

200. See Wolf 2012:20; Marijnissen 2010.

201. Originally in Dutch “Maar kijkend naar wat we geconstrueerd hebben en hoe planten en dieren daarop reageren, kunnen we onderzoeken met welke constructie we dichterbij de waarheid komen.” Marijnissen 2010.

whatever answer Vera supplies would be self-defeating: whatever the answer is, it matters for *us*; it matters because we are curious about the world without us, about what wildness can mean or would look like. This is self-defeating because the entire work of the experimental frame, for Vera, is to clear ourselves out of the picture: to make space for the world in our absence.

I have argued thus far that the framing of the experiment in these examples of rewilding investigates hypotheses about historical ecology, that is, they ask specific historical questions and are driven by scientific curiosity about prehuman ecological conditions. They have advanced their ideas about rewilding and experiment with the assumption that rewilding is not cultural in the sense that agriculture and other incursions into the landscape are cultural or selective, that they are somehow outside of the human practices of making and affecting world. Henry Buller contests that there is a nonhuman, real nature center to be found in rewilding that animates it, as Vera, Zimov, and others suppose. Instead, he claims that rewilding “locates itself within an ontological confidence in the distinctiveness of ‘Nature’ yet, by its very own practice, encultures ‘Nature’ at every turn” (2013: 189). Vera and Zimov highlight rewilding as experimental so as to foreground these experimental sites as the places where real nature can return. The human role in these is in clearing the way, making sure the conditions are set, making ourselves scarce, and stepping back to observe. But this framing as experiment, which puts us outside of the experimental bounds, is exactly the movement that makes this rewilding practice enculturating.

7.4 CONTRAST CASE: NORTH AMERICAN PLEISTOCENE REWILDING

Regardless of their interest in different periods of historical ecology, Both Zimov and Vera consider their respective experiments to have broader implications for conservation in correcting popular views about what counts as “real nature.” They advance specific conservation prescriptions that follow from their ecological ideas, and the idea of a real nature that can be recovered through rewilding certainly extends beyond the empirical scope of their respective experiments and into some vaguely moral ideas. However, Vera and Zimov do not see their experiments in rewilding as yielding moral *prescriptions*, which is what we see in the next section.

I have argued that the OVP and Pleistocene Park are experimental ways of placemaking because through these examples, through the testing of specific historical questions—through experimenting—rewilded places emerge that, on the views of their proponents, allow for the return of wildness or real nature. I have

tried to emphasize that both of these examples are open-ended, and indeed, that this open-endedness is how they suppose that real nature or wildness is able to emerge: this is the nonhuman wildness that these experiments make room for. Even if, for instance, Vera has very detailed predictions of what will happen in the OVP as rewilding plays out, the point is that the OVP is the space in which the natural processes in which Vera is interested are given free rein. That the questions he asks about historical ecology are not answered in advance, is, I would argue, crucial to the operation of the OVP, which is why it is central in my account of experimental rewilding. In an effort to illustrate this out more clearly, I conclude the chapter with a contrast case: a case that resembles what I have described as experimental rewilding but that fails on this critical point. North American Pleistocene rewilding does not ask but instead *takes as answered* a question of historical ecology, and thus extrapolates historical ecology to the present and future.

Another important dis-analogy with the previous cases is that both the OVP and Pleistocene Park actually exist. North American Pleistocene rewilding remains only a hypothetical proposal for future rewilding, one that is nevertheless extremely controversial.²⁰² This case, then, is restricted to the imaginations of its proponents (and its opponents), and its most succinct and manifest basis is found in a 2005 commentary in *Nature* by C. Josh Donlan et al. and a 2006 expansion of this paper in *The American Naturalist*. The authors of both papers propose what they acknowledge is “a bold plan” that preserves “some of our global megafaunal heritage” and offers an alternative vision for twenty-first century conservation biology” (2005: 913). Namely:

The idea is to actively promote the restoration of large wild vertebrates into North America in preference to the ‘pests and weeds’ (rats and dandelions) that will otherwise come to dominate the landscape. This ‘Pleistocene rewilding’ would be achieved through a series of carefully managed ecosystem manipulations using closely related species as proxies for extinct large vertebrates. (2005: 913)

The plan they espouse involves reintroducing locally extinct species or their ecological proxies to recreate the Pleistocene ecosystems from around 13,000 years ago. This is familiar: although the historical benchmark differs with the OVP,²⁰³ Pleistocene Park is interested in roughly the same timeline, though of course the species in

202. See Keulartz 2016 for some discussion of the opposition it has attracted. While I do not address it here, the opposition to the proposal brings out in exaggerated form many of the elements of the debates around rewilding in other, existing projects as well.

203. The Oostvaardersplassen is interested in recovering ecological conditions from the Holocene rather than the Pleistocene.

North America differ from both other cases because of its location. Donlan et al. would reintroduce missing species or their ecological proxies in three stages: first, non-controversial species like the Bolson tortoise (*Gopherus flavomarginatus*)—already being repatriated in a studied site in New Mexico²⁰⁴—that represent large gains with nominal costs and little potential for public dispute, would be reintroduced. Bactrian camels (*Camelus bactrianus*), which are now endangered in the Gobi Desert, could be moved to North America and serve as proxies for the extinct Camelops, the camelid genus that has been extinct since the Pleistocene, all the while aiding in camel conservation efforts. Even easier is representing the wild horses, also extinct since the Pleistocene, either by the current wild horses in the US or by moving endangered populations of Przewalski horse or onagers, Asiatic wild asses, to North America and protecting these translocated populations.

The second stage of the proposal is more contentious, although Donlan et al. suggest that this stage too could begin immediately. In this stage, they propose to re-introduce cheetahs, elephants, and lions²⁰⁵ on private estates, noting that many of these animals already exist in captivity in North America. They admit that establishing larger populations that live in wilder conditions will be a challenge, but they see this proposal as a serious and feasible effort to rectify the absence of North American megafauna and safeguard critically endangered megafaunal populations throughout the world.

The final stage of their proposal is the formation of “ecological history parks, covering vast areas of economically depressed parts of the Great Plains” (2005: 914). By fencing wildlife in, these parks would operate like an African safari, offering tours and guided admission in an effort to stimulate the local economy. This bears a remarkable similarity to the end result of the OVP and Zimov’s Wild Field: rewilding sites based on the reserve model where tourists may visit but are generally kept out of the habitat.

7.4.1 Justifications & closed questions

Given the striking similarities with the OVP and Pleistocene Park, how does Donlan et al.’s vision of North American Pleistocene rewilding differ from the experimental mode of rewilding? While it seems to mirror the aims and strategies of the two experimental cases, I suggest that it departs from the experimental mode of rewilding

204. Donlan et al. 2005: 913. “Restoring North America’s largest surviving temperate terrestrial reptile to its prehistoric range could bring ecological, evolutionary, economic and cultural benefits, with no apparent costs” (2005: 914).

205. The African cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) is closely related to the extinct American cheetah; Donlan et al. propose both Asian (*Elephas maximus*) and African (*Loxodonta africana*) elephant introductions to replace the mammoths, mastadons and gomphotheres once found in North America; and present-day lions (*Panthera leo*) would stand in for the extinct American lion (*Panthera leo atrox*).

because of the justifications given for the project. The case for North American Pleistocene rewilding is based not only in ecological and evolutionary reasoning but also, its proponents claim, on ethical and aesthetic grounds. To elaborate these, the authors present four observations about the state of conservation²⁰⁶ to which their project responds constructively. First, they observe that human influence is evident everywhere on earth. This, is of course commonly observed and motivates much of the anthropocene discourse specifically and environmental discourse more generally in the 21st century. Second, Donlan et al. find that environmentalists and environmentalism are too gloomy and beset with narratives of loss. Again, they are not the first to remark about the tenor of environmental discourse, to worry that such a tone does little to garner support, or to advise a more optimistic tack.²⁰⁷ Third, they point to the fact of declining human populations in some areas of the US. Like the parallel claim made about land abandonment in Europe in support of rewilding these tracts of land, this claim is made with no explanation about where these populations are declining or why but uses this trend in support of their ideas. Finally, and ethically most interesting, Donlan et al. claim that humans were at least partly responsible for late Pleistocene extinctions, which leaves us, their ancestors, with “an ethical responsibility to redress these problems” (2005: 913). This claim rests on what has been known as the overkill hypothesis, more specifically, the blitzkrieg hypothesis, put forth and staunchly defended by Paul S. Martin, that humans, moving into North and South America in the Pleistocene were responsible for the rapid extinction of the megafauna through selective hunting.²⁰⁸ Others attribute the quaternary extinctions to climatic change, so like Vera’s open-canopy hypothesis, there is not a consensus view in the paleontological community of what factor(s) caused these extinctions. But whereas the OVP, as I have argued, was designed to test Vera’s hypothesis, and in the same way, Pleistocene Park was designed to ascertain similar information about historical vegetation composition and herbivory dynamics, North American Pleistocene rewilding rests on the *veracity* of Martin’s overkill hypothesis. Rewilding in this case would not perform an open-ended experiment to test this idea but assumes it as a premise in order to justify the project. Rewilding then becomes our ethical obligation: a means to rectify historic harms humans have caused, and Donlan et al. suggest that through rewilding, these harms can be undone or at least redressed. Unlike this explicitly

206. Although they are writing in the context of North American conservation, their observations might also be said to apply to European conservation.

207. This attempt at reframing the doom and gloom narrative is common in the ecomodernist discourse (See, e.g., Asafu-Adjaye et al.’s *Ecomodernist Manifesto* (2014) but not unique to this environmental subcommunity. Other appeals can be seen in the environmental ethics tradition (e.g., Treanor 2014; Coeckelburg 2015).

208. Martin, *Twilight of the Mammoths*, (2005).

ethical case, I do not take Zimov or Vera, or the projects they respectively represent, to be claiming a relationship of ethical reparation wherein humans might undo past wrongs through rewilding. As I have elaborated above, these experiments are motivated by some moral interest, but they are not prescriptive in the specific sense that North American Pleistocene rewilding is. Guided by open-ended scientific inquiry, these experiments instead rest on an assumption that “real nature” will show itself through rewilding, but that this process has first to be allowed to play out: prescriptions and moral implication, if they are to be offered at all will be based on the results. By contrast, North American Pleistocene rewilding starts from the position of conclusions about extinction events and human wrongdoing and treats rewilding as a way of making reparation for the harms we’ve caused.

7.5 CONCLUSION

All three experiments seem to be driven by a curiosity for a natural order: they all home in on the period in ecological history immediately before human disruption in each respective landscape and inquire about pre-human conditions wherein we can ascertain what nature would do in our absence. The rewilded places I have described are strange: like the empty wilderness places of the previous chapter, they seem to self-contradict: it is only through formulating and framing rewilding experimentally—through making these places—that the question of the conditions of our absence can be answered and real nature can apparently emerge. Again rewilding amounts to self-denial: the rewilding experiment is devised and conducted for us and by us; while posing as separate from human control and influence, these experimental places are actually forged out of human activity and interest. Experimental rewilding is at once an attempt to recover nonhuman conditions that allow “real nature” to emerge and nevertheless an expression of human curiosity about wildness, about our absence. Thus, this type of rewilding too makes places that are defined by human absence. However, whereas wilderness places attempt to sever any relation that humans have with their creation and existence, experimental places are set up through the experiment: the experiment provides the condition of possibility for rewilding. While this relation is tenuous, there is still some direct connection between humans and these rewilded places, and moreover, a connection that those directing the rewilding experiments are not trying to obscure or deny. In the final chapter, we will see the relation between human activity and places of rewilding develop into its fullest instantiation: placemaking where human activity and livelihoods are actively involved in rewilding and this correlation challenges both rewilding and the concept of cultural landscapes.

PLACE-REGENERATIVE REWILDING

8.0 INTRODUCTION

Despite having formulated this dissertation around the conflict between rewilding and the cultural landscape, notably neither of the two previous modes of placemaking that rewilding performs—wilderness placemaking nor experimental placemaking—engage with the cultural landscape, either conceptually or materially. What we have seen instead is that these kinds of rewilding *reject* the cultural landscape and attempt to replace it or undo it. Rewilding in these cases implicitly and sometimes explicitly, attempts to erase human sites and markings, hide human labor, and deliver empty places, or to create the conditions where experiments can take place about what these landscapes looked like before they became inscribed and formed by human dwelling and culture. Both cases, it seems, are driven by a curiosity about a world *without*, or *prior to* the creation of cultural landscapes. While I have argued that these modes nevertheless are a way of placemaking and as such also create cultural landscapes of a kind, they are not cultural landscapes in the traditional sense of the term, and indeed they challenge these kinds of places. We might say that these modes of rewilding put forth, or create new cultural landscapes by *not being concerned* with what is at stake with traditional cultural landscapes. These, then, are cultural landscapes of unintentional negation: they are made through the undoing or overwriting of places of established human meaning as imposed on nature. Many advocates of rewilding would contest that what rewilding produces are cultural landscapes at all, and indeed, we have already seen that they are organized around this paradox.

However, what these cases—and the views they espouse of cultural landscape—ignore, is how the notion of the cultural landscape might be defined positively rather than only negatively. In other words, the cultural landscape might be characterized in terms of what actually constitutes it instead of only by what it precludes or lacks. The ecological perspective tends towards the negative characterization, viewing cultural landscapes in terms of ecological degradation or impoverishment.²⁰⁹ This view ignores that cultural landscapes can be conceptualized positively, specifically in terms of the human appropriation of them that has made them into *meaningful* places, sites with lengthy and rich human histories, and signs. Cultural landscapes are not simply places where the wilderness no longer exists but manifest the melding of human lives and ways of living with nonhuman elements and features. This exchange, or in Casey's terms, this thickening, shows ways in which we as humans have appropriated place and built our worlds: they constitute how we can feel at home in a landscape or recognize it as familiar and inhabited, even if a particular place has never been a home to us. Just as places that appear devoid of human presence are important to us, so too are places of belonging, again, even if they are not ours in particular but indicate that human life has taken place there. In this final chapter, I turn to what I consider a third type of rewilding, a type found in places where people are living and that engages these places as the context of historical and current human life. This final type of rewilding asks what rewilding can be if it is to answer to these place-dimensions of human meaning.

However, I argue that this type of rewilding can be situated within a critique of the concept of the cultural landscape as such. I will discuss the way that this critique of the cultural landscape has been put forward by philosopher Val Plumwood and how show her work can be enormously instructive for rewilding efforts: following Plumwood, rewilding can be seen to be reanimating the landscape, first by recognizing or reappearing nonhuman agency that has been overlooked or written out of our conceptualizations of it, and secondarily, by providing an idea of the revision of the environmental cultures that have subdued or eliminated the nonhuman other to which rewilding might aspire. I will work both of these insights out in turn, looking first to a prominent example of beaver reintroductions in the United Kingdom (§8.2.1), and then to the making of a new cultural landscape in the Netherlands (§8.4). In both of these we come up against the limitations that rewilding is constituted by, but we also see how rewilding offers a possibility for *reformulating* the cultural landscape: rewilding, in some instances, challenges how we establish and understand the particular places that cultural landscapes are, especially by reconsidering who and what is in them and who and what make

209. Notwithstanding, of course, the defense of the cultural landscapes especially in Europe put forth on the basis of their unique biodiversity offerings. See, e.g., Bignal et al. 2000; Höchtl et al 2005.

them. Thereby, rewilding can be the creation of new environmental cultures. In the second example we see that this type of placemaking can be reflexive and self-aware: it recognizes the landscape of its making as being made rather than trying to obscure or minimize this placemaking. Further, these examples bring out how rewilding, like placemaking, conceptually, is never finished. Rather, it is located in the inherent, ineliminable tensions between humans and nonhumans in remaking the cultural landscape.

8.1 CRITIQUING THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Defining our wilderness experience as a quest for the presence of wild nature, not the absence of humans, creates conceptual space for the interwoven continuum of nature and culture, and for that recognition of the presence of the wild...both in wilderness and in places closer to home...

This may be what we need to help us end the opposition between culture and nature, the garden and the wilderness, and to come to recognize ourselves at last as at home in both.

Val Plumwood, "Wilderness Skepticism & Wilderness Dualism": 684

Following her earlier work on the dualism implicit in concepts of humans and nature (Plumwood 1993; Plumwood 2002), philosopher Val Plumwood homed in on one important manifestation of this dualism, one that she saw as gaining popularity through academic work in the humanities as well as through policy directives.²¹⁰ This is the concept of the cultural landscape and the subject her 2006 paper: "The Concept of a Cultural Landscape: Nature, Culture, and Agency in the Land." Plumwood acknowledges that recent use of the concept has been part of a well-intentioned and long-overdue effort to correct the misrepresentation of wilderness as primeval and pure (see §4.1). For example, considering the wilderness areas of the US and Australia as *cultural landscapes* instead of as wilderness importantly recognizes the agency and humanity of the indigenous people who inhabited and influenced these landscapes prior to colonization, and it dispels the myth that these places were virgin or untouched. This brings valuation of these places and their human-influenced histories closer to the ways in which the cultural landscapes of Europe have long been recognized and celebrated. However, Plumwood argues that this corrective has had the consequence of "den[ying] creativity to nonhuman species and ecosystems" (2006: 120). Cultural landscapes are understood in a way that grants agency primarily, if not exclusively, to humans, in effect, disappearing the nonhuman factors that are also of great influence. As Plumwood explains, this has to do with both terms in the phrase: 'cultural,' in its general usage, is taken

210. Plumwood's article is framed around the 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment Report (Plumwood 2006).

to mean ‘human,’ (even if we acknowledge that not only humans have cultures). The phrase *cultural landscape* itself exemplifies this: they are defined precisely in recognition of the longitudinal human dimension in inhabiting and shaping them, in contrast to wilderness or natural landscapes where humans have played a negligible, or non-existent role. The other half of the phrase, ‘landscape,’ has been repeatedly problematized for its colonialist and anthropocentric power dimensions, epistemologies, and for the disembodied positioning its vantage requires (See, e.g., the essays in W. J. T. Mitchell’s *Landscape and Power* (1994); also Cosgrove 1985). Plumwood’s concern is a synthesis of these: that ‘landscape’ affords agency only to the viewing or surveying humans and never to the land or its multiple contingents and, as a result, that ways of knowing are largely restricted to the visual. The landscape concept, then, is also complicit in enforcing the hierarchy between humans and nature that the cultural landscape idea promulgates.

But the problems with the component parts of term should come as little surprise, as this dynamic follows from when ‘cultural landscape’ was originally coined a term. Recall from my discussion of the term’s origin (§1.4) that geographer Carl O. Sauer originated the concept in his influential essay, “The Morphology of Landscape” (1925), with the famous formulation of culture as the agent, natural areas as the medium, and cultural landscapes as the result. The reciprocity of Sauer’s theory was groundbreaking: in bringing out the *mutual* influences of nature and the culture in the making of landscape, he challenged the theories of environmental determinism popular in geography in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Nevertheless, the way that Sauer’s model registers the nonhuman—as the medium on which the active humans work out their influence—typifies Plumwood’s point about the ignoring of nonhuman nature the cultural landscape concept has perpetuated. In it, the nonhuman component is constructed as that passive entity which is acted on or that receives human influences: the agencies of these parts obscured, denied, or eliminated. In reference to Sauer’s definition Plumwood writes:

There is no room here for natural forces as significant creators of or elements in the land. All landscapes that come within the imaginary of a human actor thus get to count as cultural, part of his sphere of influence, claimed as human property...Is there no conflict, no lack of fit, between human designs and the character of the land? (2006: 121)

Plumwood doesn’t detail the developments in the use of the concept through the 20th century, but instead goes on to describe the ways in which the modern cultural landscape concept obscures the agency of its nonhuman parts in recent environmental thought. This works through the continued hyperseparation,

or exclusion, of humans from nature, a theme that Plumwood develops more extensively in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993). Plumwood here traces dualistic thinking in conceptions of human vs. nature (and also masculine vs. feminine, reason vs. emotion, among many other dualisms) to ancient thinkers and shows how a dualistic metaphysic structures our present day concepts that oppress both sides. Beginning with Platonic idealism, Plumwood argues how nature historically has been conceptualized by its radical exclusion from the sphere of the human and of human culture²¹¹ and made the lower term in the human/nature dualism. This is most pronounced in the Cartesian rift between (lower) substances determined by mechanism (body, nature, animal) and the substance of the rational soul, which is not so constrained. Importantly, on the Cartesian picture, there is no continuity between these two substances, leading to the hyperseparation and unbreachable hierarchy of mind and culture over body and nature.

A further effect of this dualism (as well as one of the ways in which it is maintained) is through the suppressing or ignoring of the agency of the lower term. One key means of this is what Plumwood terms *backgrounding*, a framing of the labor or contributions of the nonhuman (or other lower term) in such a way that they are devalued and overlooked.²¹² Nature, the lower term in the human/nature dualism, then serves as the unobtrusive background, the pliant environment or negative space to the activity and achievements of the agential human.²¹³ And indeed, Plumwood argues the cultural landscape concept enforces this backgrounding of nature. Although it consists of both human and nonhuman players and influences, discussions of cultural landscapes almost always highlight the *human* role in these, making human agency seem primarily if not solely responsible, self-sufficient, and the decisive element at work.²¹⁴ This is the case even when the cultural landscape is celebrated for its conjoining or interweaving of the human and the nonhuman. The iconic cultural landscapes—the hedgerows and dry stone walls of the United Kingdom, the terraced fields of Portugal, the Dutch polders—are comprised by human *and* the nonhuman: the hedges and stones, the sheep and other livestock the walls are made to contain, the orchards and their pollinators, the fields and the

211. “Platonic philosophy is organised around the hierarchical dualism of the sphere of reason over the sphere of nature, creating a fault-line which runs through virtually every topic discussed: love, beauty, knowledge, art, education, ontology” (Plumwood 1993: 81).

212. Plumwood notes that the labor of women and other oppressed groups is also frequently backgrounded.

213. There is an interesting parallel here to the way in which Petran Kockelkoren argues that nature has been ignored by early hermeneutic thinkers, especially Dilthey, as *a priori* meaningless: “In contrast to human life, nature is depicted only as an inorganic, physical substratum which humans have to take into account in the conditional sphere of continuing their own existence” (Kockelkoren 1994: 103).

214. To reiterate, this is in part because the concept is used to correct mistaken perceptions of seemingly untouched or wilderness landscapes by bringing out their human elements. See Plumwood 2006: 134–137.

wind and the water that define these borders—these are also, Plumwood would insist, impactful agents. But the cultural landscape concept, by tending to focus on the *human* elements—through histories of these places, biographies of their key (human) figures, accounts of the practices, skills, or trades, that sustain them, et cetera—disappears the nonhuman contributions.²¹⁵

How does Plumwood suggest that such dualisms can be overcome? Most of the strategies she puts forth are suggestions at undoing the particular pernicious ways in which the dualism manifests. One example, from her 2002 work *Environmental Culture*, advocates that we attempt to bridge the gap between the concepts or substances that have, hitherto, been though incommensurable. As other philosophers have tried to think the mind in the body and the body in the mind,²¹⁶ Plumwood insists that mind should also commingle with what has been thought inanimate nature. Plumwood advances a weak “intentional panpsychism” (2002: 180) to find the “elements of mind in the dualised contrast class of materiality” (2002: 179). She argues that this does not necessarily end us in an “anthropomorphic ‘respiritualisation’ of nature” (1993: 136) as some contemporary views had proposed (strong pantheism, process metaphysics, and some essentialized versions of feminism, all of which Plumwood rejects). Instead, the alternative to mechanism she would like to see

should aim to find cultural ways to recognise and celebrate the play of intentionality and agency in the world (and for regaining sensitivity to the particularity and agency of place especially), but preferably ways which do not show disrespect for the otherness of nature by inscribing that agency with the cast of the conscious human mind. (1993: 136)

Beyond this invocation to allow for intentionality in nonhuman nature and the “many-dimensional” (1993: 139) relations that this will engender, Plumwood does not elaborate much.²¹⁷ What will these interactions be like? Rather than answering questions, she poses them: “How much must we leave for the other? How much can we expect to share? Here there is not just one play of exchange between self and other, but multiple, contextual ones” (1993: 139). Indeed, the inauguration

215. I adopt Plumwood’s unusual use of appear and disappear as transitive verbs instead of the customary construction where something is made to disappear/appear.

216. See Plumwood 2002: 179.

217. She is more committed to the specifics about her weak panpsychism in *Environmental Culture* (2002) where she proposes a teleological account of nature’s agency and mind. See Plumwood 2002 chapter 8. See also Bryan Bannon’s alternative response to teleology while still supporting her dialogical interspecies ethic (Bannon 2009). I steer us away from the panpsychism suggestion because this is outside the scope of this chapter and dissertation.

of these relations ask many more questions than they answer, but that is exactly the point: there is no guarantee of how these relations will go, whether they will be mutually beneficial or even one-sidedly beneficial, and

we may often have to settle for that of respectful but wondering strangers...
The earth other is a being whose company may be fearful or enticing, fruitful or bitter, intimate or indifferent, but whose presence is always more than the nullity and closure of the world presented by mechanism. (1993: 139-140)

There has, of course, been a movement in the past few decades to internalize the otherwise externalities associated with environmental damage, the most popular of which is the concept of ecosystem services. Although, ironically, in the ecosystem service model, acknowledgement usually comes in the form of quantification and monetary appraisal, and it is doubtful that these accountings of nature as ecosystem service actually capture what Plumwood would argue are ‘services’ that are too essential for survival to price. Nevertheless, this at least does the work of acknowledging and crediting the invaluable natural contributions. But pricing services is not the only way in which to start to credit nonhuman contributions.²¹⁸

In light of Plumwood’s critique, rewilding seems like a promising effort in refocusing attention on the agency of the nonhuman and redefining landscape—even cultural landscape—as co-produced. While I will not argue for the weak panpsychism that Plumwood alludes to, I suggest that nevertheless rewilding can be seen, in certain cases is, as an effort at re-appearing the nonhuman agency in nature and landscape that has been ignored, or in other cases, as an effort at replacing agency that has been extirpated. How can we recover the nonhuman agency that the cultural landscape has largely disappeared, one way or another? I

218. One excellent effort at crediting has taken place recently in historical accounts that write back into the history the nonhuman factors that have been overlooked in the canonical histories. Two exemplars of this are William Cronon’s *Nature’s Metropolis* and Virginia De John Anderson’s *Creatures of Empire*. In *Nature’s Metropolis*, a historical ecology of Chicago and the Midwest during the 19th century when they were both settled and rapidly developed. The book is a defense of the thesis that “if we wish to understand the ecological consequences of our own lives—if we wish to take political and moral responsibility for those consequences—we must reconstruct the linkages between the commodities of our economy and the resources of our ecosystem” (Cronon 1991: xvi). Relatedly, Anderson’s history of colonial America demonstrates how nonhuman animals—and the clashes in colonialist and indigenous worldviews vis-à-vis animals as livestock—shaped not only the landscape of the new world into which they and the practice of domestication itself were imported, but the ways in which the colonial societies developed internally and in relation to Indian societies. As she points out “livestock seldom figure at all in the narrative of colonialization, and when they do they usually serve as part of the scenery rather than as historical actors” (Anderson 2004: 1-2). She frames the book around an allusion to Macbeth, comparing conventional narratives of colonialization that omit the transformative role livestock played to a staging of Macbeth “without the scenes in which Banquo’s ghost appears. The ghost has no speaking role, but it is nevertheless central to the plot” (2004: 3).

want to suggest that rewilding—interested in letting nature back into domesticated and managed spaces and as fixated around the idea of self-willed land—already seems to heed Plumwood’s call to reappear nonhuman agency, however unaware rewilding advocates might be of her work. Especially if we focus on nonhuman autonomy as the single mantle under which Ward and Prior (2016) argue the diverse aims and projects of rewilding can be unified,²¹⁹ there is significant and fruitful overlap with Plumwood’s ideas. However, as far as I can tell, no one has observed the convergence between rewilding and Plumwood’s critique of both the dualism between humans and nature and the cultural landscape as an example of this dualism *par excellence*, nor has any effort been made to recruit Plumwood’s critical ecofeminism to support or inform rewilding. I try to bring these together in this chapter. Not only does Plumwood’s account buttress rewilding initiatives with compelling normative reasons for caring about the presence of the nonhuman and for revising the concepts that have obscured them,²²⁰ but her work also helps us to take seriously the tension that rewilding’s premise of self-willed land creates between rewilding and cultural landscapes. Eventually, towards the chapter’s end, we see that only in this tension can we begin to think about the environmental culture(s) that rewilding might inaugurate.

8.2 REAPPEARING NONHUMAN AGENCY: MISSING & REINTRODUCED SPECIES

What does it mean to reappear nonhuman agency in the landscape? How can rewilding be a strategy of this? One of George Monbiot’s anecdotes provides a very literal example of such an effort. In explaining rewilding and his enthusiasm for it, Monbiot frequently returns to a hypothesis in paleoecology that he finds fascinating and illuminating.

Why is it possible to lay a hedge? In other words, why did trees evolve to survive the mangling that traditional hedgelayers inflict on them? They almost sever the living wood, twist it, split it and trample it down. Yet, the trees bounce back, as lively as before. Why do most deciduous trees in Britain and Europe coppice and pollard: sprout from wherever the trunk is broken? (2015a)

219. Also, as we will see, Ward & Prior are very aligned with Plumwood for their interest in human efforts to reestablish and coexist with the nonhuman.

220. And, of course, human agents who have also been disappeared by concepts of nature and masculinity, femininity, indigeneity, and other underprivileged groups. Plumwood’s ecofeminism shows itself to be inseparable from concern for any oppressed party. See Plumwood 1993.

The answer Monbiot eventually supplies to all of these rhetorical questions is the elephant. The now-extinct straight-tusked elephant (*Elephas antiquus*), to be precise, along with other massive browsers like rhinoceros, hippopotamus, and aurochs, lived in what is now the UK and Europe during the last interglacial period. Paleoecologists hypothesize that the trees and shrubs that still exist in these regions are likely as hardy and grazing-resistant as they are because they evolved in the company (or competition) of these animals and their aggressive feeding habits. This insight truly changes the way in which Monbiot approaches the ecosystem, causing him to reconsider the ecology of places he thought he understood, or to which he had given little thought. As Monbiot reinterprets England's ecology in light of the absence of these megafaunal agents from a previous ecological time, landscapes that had previously never shown themselves to be incomplete show up to Monbiot with glaring omissions. It is this reason—the change in perspective that reimagining or remembering elephants affords—that compels so much of Monbiot's message about rewilding. Even if the elephant cannot return to the UK, Monbiot recommends “thinking like an elephant” in the present time (Monbiot, 2015a).²²¹ For instance, land managers should allow for a little more havoc in the landscape: that dead and dying trees remain and decompose *in situ*, that brambles are permitted to grow, that brush is not cleared away, that some disorder is invited in. Recovering the agency of the nonhuman, for Monbiot, is instructive, in that he learns how to read its ecology, and this suggests a course of action for rewilding. There is an affective element as well—Monbiot finds the reminders of the ghosts of ecosystems past to inspire both wonder and sorrow. He writes: “Even if these speculations do not lead to the reintroduction of elephants and rhinos, do they not render the commonplace astonishing?...that the mark of these animals can be found in every park and avenue and leafy street, infuses the world with new wonders” (2013: 93). But at other moments, these ecosystems are not reminders of wonder but of loss and of the comparative ecological poverty of the present: “Wherever we go, we walk in the shadows of the past...Ours is a ghost ecosystem, adapted to species that no longer live here” (Monbiot 2015). Regardless of its optimism or its gloominess, the project of remembering the role of past and present nonhuman animals in the landscape, of restaging these landscapes in terms of their presence or absence, brings with it a novel understanding of the world and of its parts and processes.

221. See Lorimer & Driessen 2013 for a parallel in the Oostvaardersplassen. In the absence of predators, population control of the reserve is done “with the eye of the wolf” (2013: 174): by shooting the sick and weaker animals who would likely not survive the winter, rangers mimic the behavior of wolves who would prey on the less fit individuals.

Monbiot's concern with elephants, sometimes presented as evidence of the radicalness of his rewilding vision, illustrates an exercise actually very common to rewilding, much of which we have already witnessed. In its attempts to fill in the ecological gaps or to rebuild trophic cascades, we can see that one of the main occupations of rewilding is the attempt to restore missing members to the ecosystems from which they have been excised. Albeit with less exotic animals and generally with an eye to more recent ecosystems, rewilding initiatives are frequently organized around the identification of a missing ecological agent and efforts to bring back this missing agency through reintroduction. This is the case in the famous wolf reintroductions to Yellowstone National Park; with proxies like Heck cattle and Konik ponies in the Oostvaardersplassen and in other sites across Europe, with the mammoth and yakutia horses, et cetera in Pleistocene Park, with the bison in Romania, and with all sorts of other recently extirpated animals and even insects, as in the re-establishment of native bumblebee populations in the UK (Prior & Brady 2017). Rewilding already works by seeing landscapes as potentially repopulated and remade by the nonhuman and by bringing back the pieces—either agents or processes—that are wanting from this vision. Thus, rewilding is already practiced at literally reanimating the landscape by ceding some ground to make room for the agency of the nonhuman others it reintroduces.

But what happens when these reimaginings and reintroductions are not confined to wilderness or nature areas but take place in areas where humans live and work? The question, then, is what happens when ground is not ceded to rewilding but instead cultural landscapes become a possible ground of interaction? (Plumwood 1993: 163) This is the case in sites where people and their livelihoods still remain but where nonhuman agency is also present and recognized. Situating the work of rewilding in the cultural landscape and thus of making this a ground of interaction is and will continue to be an ongoing challenge, and indeed it is an open question altogether if such a ground is possible. Are the reintroductions that rewilding centers around possible without completely compromising or undoing the cultural landscapes, landscapes that often have only come in to existence through the extirpation of the threats of nonhuman agency and that have been built around their exclusion? The example I consider next, the Scottish Beaver Trial, has successfully reintroduced nonhuman agency to the cultural landscape on a small scale. However, we also find that the central tension between rewilding in the cultural landscape also limits its success.

8.2.1 The Scottish beaver trial

The Eurasian Beaver (*Castor fiber*), extirpated from the UK more than 400 years ago by overhunting, has proven a promising option for reintroduction and rewilding in the UK and elsewhere. Building dams and lodges, felling trees, and increasing riparian habitat, beavers are a keystone species with a disproportionate ecological impact, and of course, a visual one too; they are frequently referred to as ecosystem engineers for the conspicuous way in which they construct their surroundings. In recent years, pockets of interest in reintroducing beaver populations have formed throughout the UK: in England, the Devon Wildlife Trust began a five year trial in 2015 when they introduced a breeding population in a local reserve area to enthusiastic public support, and similar reintroduction efforts may begin in Wales (Halley et al. 2009). In Scotland, the Tayside Beaver Study Group in Scotland monitors an unlicensed and thus more controversial beaver population despite some opposition,²²² and an environmentalist couple, Louise and Paul Ramsey, leads grassroots support of beaver reintroductions by keeping two pairs beavers in a very large enclosure on their property and encouraging ecotourism²²³ and through public advocacy of other reintroduction efforts.

The reintroduction effort that has been the focus of most recent attention, however, is the Scottish Beaver Trial (SBT), which was completed in 2015 under the jurisdiction of Scottish Natural Heritage, and deemed “an outstanding success” by its managing ecologists, as written about in *The Guardian* (Aldred 2015). This trial, which began in 2009, was intended see whether beavers could live and breed alongside human populations in this area and to get a reading on public attitudes towards reintroduction initiatives.²²⁴ In it, sixteen Eurasian beavers were translocated from Norway, quarantined and screened for disease, and then released by the Scottish Wildlife Trust and the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland to various release sites, all in the Knapdale Forest in western Scotland. The individual beavers, as well as the changes they affected in the landscape, to other animals, to insect populations, and even to nearby scheduled monuments, were monitored over the five year trial through a program developed by Scottish Natural Heritage in collaboration with conservation specialists from around the UK.²²⁵

222. See Harrington et al. 2015, the report generated on behalf of Scottish National Heritage.

223. See their website: <http://www.bamff.co.uk/beaver-project> (Bamff Estate, no date).

224. For details about the trial and its findings, see the final scientific report from the Scottish Natural Heritage (Harrington et al. 2015).

225. Beaver ecology and impact on otters were monitored by the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit at the University of Oxford; fish were monitored by the Argyll Fisheries Trust; Dragon- and damselflies by the British Dragonfly Society; woodlands by the James Hutton Institute; lake and river habitats by the University of Stirling; socio-economic impacts by Scotland's Rural College; water chemistry by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency; scheduled monuments by Historic Scotland.

Any such mammal reintroduction trial was unprecedented in the UK.²²⁶ However, the trial modeled other efforts where previously threatened populations of the Eurasian beaver in Europe, Russia, and Asia have been secured through some combination of stricter biodiversity protections and reintroductions.²²⁷ The Scottish Natural Heritage report provides these examples as context for the Scottish reintroduction effort but also to signal the Eurasian beaver as a resilient animal that might flourish again in Scotland as it does in Northern Europe. For the Scottish trial, the criteria set out for success were based on “the ability of the reintroduced population to sustain itself, the effects of the beavers on biodiversity, the economic effects of the beavers, and the cost of their reintroduction and ongoing management” (Harrington et al. 2015: i). And on these measures, the trial has widely been considered successful and its findings presented almost entirely positively. The Eurasian beaver was named 2017’s “Wildlife Success of the Year” by BBC Countryfile Magazine, an influential publication in UK Conservation in its annual popular vote (BBC Countryfile 2017), and there is evidence to suggest that rather than causing or exacerbating inland flooding—one of the primary concerns the public registered about beavers in the UK—beavers and their dams actually reduce or prevent flooding while contributing to more biodiverse river and wetlands. Many conservation organizations have urged the reintroduction of the beaver throughout the UK for these reasons.²²⁸ But the most significant outcome from the trial was the Scottish government’s decision in November, 2016, based on the findings of the SBT, to grant native status to the beavers, giving them protection under Scottish law. This is the first time in Scotland that the status of native has been re-extended to a reintroduced species.

There is indeed much to commend about the beaver trial: if we are interested in recovering the agency of the nonhuman, the beaver seems like an obvious place to start, as beavers are famously characterized as industrious, and they make their contributions to the landscape obvious. Indeed, if rewilding is a way of reappearing nonhuman agency within the cultural landscape, the SBT seems to do exactly that. The trial is about the presence and impact of the beavers, and their labor is expressly

226. As explained in the report Scottish Natural Heritage issued to the government: “The Scottish Beaver Trial at Knapdale was the first time that a government-approved release of a former native mammal species into the wild had been attempted anywhere in the UK” (Harrington et al. 2015: 9).

227. According to one of the SNH reports (Gaywood et al. 2015), at least one million beavers live in 25 countries in Europe, up from only around 1200 in the early 20th century (2015: 10). Similar protection and reintroduction efforts in North America of the Canadian beaver (*Castor canadensis*) have also been extremely successful in restoring beaver populations. See Holtmeier 2015 for a comprehensive and yet succinct account of the successes and challenges of beaver reintroductions in the United States and throughout Europe in the past century, especially pp. 382-393.

228. See, e.g., the 2015 position statement of the Mammal Society (Mammal Society 2015) and John Vidal’s article in *The Guardian* (Vidal 2014).

the point. As a new, or long-lost member of the British landscape, the presence of beavers is now celebrated and has become popular through outreach, school trips, ecotourism, and the mascot of the trial. Kim Ward and Jonathan Prior highlight the SBT as one of two examples of rewilding projects²²⁹ that, in their estimation, exhibit rewilding's center in "more-than-human-autonomy" (2016: 133). They see the trial as potentially "a forerunner for the rewilding of beavers within the rest of the UK" (2016: 134). What is especially significant about the SBT—where it differs from other rewilding examples—is that the SBT is located in or near places where humans and the reintroduced beavers co-inhabit and will have to coexist. In this example of rewilding, it is not uninhabited wilderness places but rather traditional and prized cultural landscapes that are at stake, which is precisely what makes the SBT—and rewilding—interesting for Ward and Prior: they emphasize that rewilding is about entanglement and human co-inhabitation alongside the active and agential nonhuman that "celebrate[s] nonhuman autonomy in rewilding as fundamental to the creation of experimental, forward looking conservation futures" (2016: 134). And indeed, because people live and farm in areas proximal to the reintroduction sites, it remained an open question during the Scottish trial if the presence of beavers would threaten the area's agricultural productivity or trouble its residents. This question was only exaggerated by the truly dynamic role of the animal that noticeably changes landscapes not only through the construction of dams and lodges but also through thinning woodlands that are adjacent to water. The trial was reported a success despite these possible conflicts. Public opinion of the trial was largely favorable, in large part because of the ongoing outreach and education efforts also coordinated by Scottish Natural Heritage in conjunction with the trial.²³⁰

Here, I want to acknowledge that the SBT has taken a first and important step in rewilding in the landscapes of the River Tay. However, I want to claim that this is not enough, that the nearly conflict-free reintroduction of beavers neither completely satisfies what I'm suggesting Plumwood would require for finding a ground of interaction, nor—and perhaps more centrally—does this achieve what rewilding ultimately seems to be interested in achieving. In fact, my claim is that the

229. The other example they use is the Oostvaardersplassen.

230. The labor of the beavers was combined with this extensive and ongoing coordinating human labor, as Ward and Prior point out: "[Deliberative consultations] took place in 1998, 2000, and 2007 – implicating humans (and the autonomy of non-humans) in the development and success of the Trial from the start... The extensive human labour that went into this process, and the continuing importance of community involvement...highlights...the premise that humans and non-humans are inextricably linked." (2016: 134)

fact that the trial went so well might itself undermine its goals. My claim, otherwise put, is that conflict is going to be a part of rewilding in cultural landscapes because there is no way around the different interests involved.

8.3 LIMITS IN CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REWILDING

Monbiot's visualization of elephants in the landscape can provide a hint of why this is. As I have suggested, the remembering of extinct species that Monbiot does is one way of reanimating the landscape with the nonhuman, and it is a helpful exercise in understanding the ecology of a landscape in terms of its less obvious and often altogether absent influences. However, it will be of limited use to efforts of rewilding in the cultural landscape. Monbiot's reading interprets the landscape strictly in light of evolutionary biology: he makes sense of the present *exclusively* in terms of its ancient (and nonhuman) past. While it is perhaps true that hedgerows now are only possible because of the co-evolutionary events that occurred tens of thousands of years ago, it does not follow that hedgerows, as fixtures of the current cultural landscape, can be explained by appealing to long-extinct elephants. We need much more than paleoecology to understand hedgerows: namely, a more recent history of the landscape that includes the human practice of building and tending them. Monbiot's elephant visualization not only attempts to recover nonhuman agency, it attempts to recover an intact, undisturbed, historical ecology and use that to explain the present and as a reason for reverting the present to this state.

The SBT works in a similar, though far less extreme, way, by cutting across recent history in attempts to recover the period when beavers inhabited Scotland. While most of the public views the beaver trial favorably, it is notable that the one party holding negative views towards reintroduction efforts is farmers. Farmers have a vested interest in the continued existence of the landscapes that sustain their agricultural ways of life, and so it is not a coincidence that they are less enthusiastic about changes to this landscape than the general public, remaining generally unconvinced about the reintroduction of beavers. Some have voiced outspoken opposition to the trial, and many worry about the profound ways in which the beavers engineer the landscape, especially the increased risk of flooding to agricultural lands. The National Farmers Union of Scotland (NFU Scotland) cites "practical and financial grounds" (NFU Scotland 2015) as reasons for opposing beavers in the landscape and have stipulated that it will be unacceptable to farmers if the beavers have "an adverse impact on farmland" (NFU Scotland 2016). So while the SBT has been praised for its integration with local communities, it seems as though farming communities and their landscapes have been intentionally kept at a remove from the reintroductions so as not to invite changes and ensuing conflict. While a

pragmatic solution, this does not seem to satisfy the aims of rewilding, if rewilding is to work from the “premise that humans and non-humans co-exist and coinhabit the same space” (Ward & Prior 2016: 134). If the most sensitive cultural landscapes have to be kept off limits from rewilding, then there is more work to be done yet.

To be clear, I am not arguing that rewilding is only successful when it pervades all cultural landscapes, even the most sensitive, but that this rewilding effort falls short because it does not adequately confront one of the main conflicts inherent in rewilding in *this* cultural landscape. The attempt to minimize the impact of beavers in the agricultural landscape is an understandably pragmatic but ultimately limiting strategy to avoid conflict that could shut down reintroduction initiatives. And while this strategy seems to benefit both parties in the short term, it is unclear that if in the long term *either* party be well-served. The concern here is the same as with Monbiot’s elephants: attending to only one distant and disconnected historical moment of the landscape will fail to address the conflict head-on as it does not recognize the positive claims of the farmers and others invested in the cultural landscape in its current, un-wilded iteration. In the same way that Monbiot’s re-imagining falls short, so too does the cordoning off of the agricultural landscapes and the farmers’ perceptions of their significance. From the perspective of those vested in them, these cultural landscapes require no restoring; they are already whole, integral places pregnant with meaning and challenge. Rewilding does not undo some environmental mistake: beavers do not make the landscape more whole. Although the SBT takes place in the context of these places, by failing to take these conflicts seriously, it ignores the legitimacy of the ways of life that made them, which indeed have been negotiated through the interplay with the nonhuman—sometimes through its extirpation—that have constituted the history of these places. These are ways of living in the cultural landscape that are more than just accidental to the region but constitutive of it.

Further, ignoring this conflict also undermines the argument for rewilding. The SBT has downplayed the possibility of disruption and conflict that the beavers pose, instead suggesting that their reintroduction brings huge ecological gains at little or no cost and citing successful re-introduction efforts elsewhere. But this seems to undercut the very idea of rewilding. If the reintroduction of a species poses no real risk and instead serves as an undemanding provider of ecosystem services, it’s hard to see how this amounts to rewilding at all. Rewilding that promises that changes will be negligible, entirely positive, or even that they can be known with certainty in advance, cuts against its own central ideas and aims. Rewilding in this case hinges on the agency of the beaver; efforts to downplay this agency, to minimize its threat of change at the same time undermines the claim that this *is* rewilding, that this truly makes room for nonhuman agents to exercise

their agency and for nature as self-willed to show itself again. The promise of this kind of rewilding, then, circumscribes its limits as well. In other words, to the extent that nonhuman agency can be afforded space and license, rewilding can be embedded in the cultural landscape. But that possibility for rewilding goes only as far as this agency can be allowed. So while the beaver reintroduction seems to pose the perfect opportunity for the re-emergence of nonhuman agency, it is exactly this agency and its ability to affect change that is objected to by those who oppose rewilding. Advocates of the trial cannot have it both ways: they cannot on the one hand, push a rewilding agenda that tries to recover nonhuman agency and bring back nonhuman ecosystem engineers that have the capacity to affect real change to the landscape, and on the other hand assure worried farmers that the beavers will certainly only be a beneficial presence.²³¹

Rather, following Plumwood, the complementary but also dissonant ways in which human labor and beaver labor are linked should be brought out. We cannot expect that the needs and interests of the beavers, or any other nonhuman others that make our landscapes along with us, will perfectly track human needs and interests (nor should we assume that human needs can ever be represented singularly). Reappearing the agency of the nonhuman will also result in opening up and drawing attention to the sites of ill-fit: the times and situations wherein interests do not correspond with each other but instead conflict. Surely if this agency is to express itself in the sense that rewilding advocates (as Plumwood would surely want to see), this will not be entirely predictable and it will likely pose points of conflict with human interests. Representatives of the SBT and advocates of reintroduction do not ease this conflict by ignoring that it is a possibility and by minimizing what conflict does emerge, especially in a case when human inhabitants have no personal experience or historical knowledge basis on which to draw in adapting their practices to these kinds of possible changes. We might even credit the farmers for responding more adequately to the introduction of the beaver, even if the farmers' worries are not borne out by the beavers' impacts. Both parties for and against beaver reintroductions could have clearer, more candid conversations about what this will mean for the cultural landscapes in question. Such has been indicated by Kim Ward, in an interview about her research: "...When rewilding takes place we need to see how conflicts can be negotiated with the local community. Rewilding needs to be holistic, it can't just be solely conservation-led" (Ward quoted in Merrill 2015).

231. Writing precisely about the increased risk of conflict rewilding brings, Mateusz Tokarski suggests that we should not try to avoid such conflicts but embrace them as part of living with discomfoting wildlife. He writes that such experiences "carry with them possibly physical and certainly emotional danger, might be necessary to truly transform our beliefs, identities, and commitments" (2017: 117). For a full defense of this idea see Tokarski 2017.

The way in which rewilding might reconfigure cultural landscapes, that is, around human coexistence with nonhumans that the Scottish Beaver Trial presents, will have to recognize the agency of the nonhuman and accept that in rewilding, the cultural landscape will likely change. Reintroductions, if they are decided upon, cannot be understood as simply replacing what once was; this is neither likely to represent the complexity of the ecological and social contexts, nor is does it seem to respond to the spirit of rewilding efforts. Instead reintroductions would be better served if they were recognized as the opening of a new series of interactions, the dynamics of which cannot necessarily be predicted or predicated on past ecologies. To its credit, the SBT reconfigured in an obvious way the *physical* place of the trial but more importantly, it offers an example of how rewilding can reconfigure place on the conceptual register by including and highlighting the nonhuman as co-creator alongside—and thus not at the exclusion of—human participation and presence in the landscape. Rewilding, rather than expelling or expunging past or present human activities in a landscape, can be understood to re-involve humans with nonhumans and remake place conceptually around the idea of a shared and co-created space. The SBT actualizes Plumwood's criticism of cultural landscapes and can help revise who and what we think are responsible for the creation of the cultural landscape. However, this still does not answer to the concerns of people who are heavily vested in the cultural landscape and do not want these places to be reverred to restored to an earlier ecological period, and as such, this will inevitably open up conflicts with those who value the cultural landscape in its current form, with its current species and processes. Material or conceptual rewilding of the cultural landscape is likely to encounter resistance from farmers and others whose livelihoods but also identities and built worlds cannot easily co-exist with nonhuman species and forces that they have kept out and whose presence is more a threat to their home than an exciting opportunity to restore past ecosystems. The SBT, like many other cases of rewilding, seems to treat human history as extraneous to the task at hand. There is then, inherent to these projects, a tension between a corrective reimagining of the landscape so as to account for and include nonhuman agents on the one hand, and the adequate recognition of the these places as having human histories and that their present iterations cannot be excised of these histories entirely. Rewilding in the cultural landscape will face these limitations that can undermine the extent to which it can do this work of reanimation and reconfiguration, but we must understand these challenges as inherent to the initiative.

8.4 A NEW CULTURAL LANDSCAPE: NEW NATURE IN THE NETHERLANDS

However, as I suggested, the reappearance or reintroduction of nonhuman agency is only the first part of what Plumwood's insights offer for rewilding: there is another aspect of pursuing rewilding of the cultural landscape, still following Plumwood. The second part is based in Plumwood's suggestion of finding "cultural ways to recognise and celebrate the play of intentionality and agency in the world" (1993: 136), which I suggest can mediate the defining tension between the pulls of human history and of reappearing nonhuman agency in rewilding. Although strategic reintroductions and restorations may be an important first move that can reanimate landscapes, we have seen their limitations vis-a-vis rewilding and their failure to take these landscapes and the question of history seriously. Whereas reintroduction efforts are appropriate in certain places and rewilding might proceed this way especially when there is such a clear candidate as the beaver, there is second way in which rewilding might be envisioned as the making of new environmental cultures, which are collaborative and even celebratory interplays between the human and the nonhuman. This is what I will focus on for the remainder of this chapter.

Plumwood has developed an account of what environmental culture would look like in her work of the same name (Plumwood 2002). Environmental culture, unlike the current rationalistic and nature-denying culture of the west, is developed, firstly, through the resituating of the human in ecological terms, and secondly, the resituating of the nonhuman in ethical terms (2002: 8). There is considerable overlap between what Plumwood advances in her working out of this idea and what I am suggesting for rewilding, but I will not spell this out here. Instead, given the context of rewilding, I will push the idea of environmental culture in a specific direction, specifically emphasizing the *culture* of environmental culture. Here, it is worth returning to the root of *culture*, from the Latin *colere*, to till or farm. Edward Casey reminds us:

The very word *culture* meant 'place tilled' in Middle English, and the same word goes back to Latin *colere*, 'to inhabit, care for, till, worship' and *cultus*, 'A cult, especially a religious one.' To be cultural, to have a culture, is to inhabit a place sufficiently intensive to cultivate it—to be responsible for it, to respond to it, to attend to it caringly. (1996: 33-34)

Reaching back to these roots should remind us that the fundamental way in which we are and have been embedded in the landscapes under consideration is cultural in the sense of tilling and reaping, but also of cultivating, building, and dwelling. Accordingly, rewilding efforts, when they take place in the cultural landscape,

should reflect a consideration for the histories of these landscapes and the way in which we are still involved in living out of these histories in the making and remaking of these places.

In the remainder of the chapter, I illustrate efforts made towards these ideals with the final case I will discuss: the Millingerwaard, a rewilded floodplain in the Netherlands. In the next sections, I introduce the Millingerwaard in the context of Dutch conservation with attention to three aspects that make this case unique amongst rewilding projects. I will bring out how these three aspects are important to the new environmental culture that might emerge out of rewilding. First, we see another way of recognizing the agency of the nonhuman: that the changes to the landscape, while functionalist or utilitarian, respond to a growing awareness of our human dependency on the nonhuman and the asymmetry of its forces over and against human efforts. This is related to the second aspect: how this case directly responds to the greater environmental context in which it and rewilding is situated. And finally and again related to the previous two aspects, I argue that the placemaking of the rewilded Millingerwaard is reflexive: that it takes account of itself as a human, social, and cultural practice, a rewilding *project*, and thereby is responding to how this place has been made and should be continued. Specifically, this case considers and presents the history of the place as part of its rewilding efforts. This position, self-aware of its own historicity, enables a possible balance between the tensions I discussed in the previous section—attempts to recover nonhuman agency without overwriting or disregarding the histories of the landscapes being rewilded. Thus it questions what rewilding is and does in the context of 21st century environmental thought and action.

8.4.1 Room for the River & nature development in the Netherlands

Natuurontwikkeling, or nature development, to many sounds like a contradiction in terms: nature, as we have seen, is famously if controversially understood as the absence of development in the sense of construction, infrastructure, and dwelling. However, *natuurontwikkeling* is a central piece of Dutch nature policy that began in the 1980s to develop so-called new nature [*nieuwe natuur*] areas out of previously built-up sites of agriculture, industry, and inhabitation.²³² Hein-Anton van der Heijden explains the idea as giving back to nature large swaths of previously cultivated land “adding up to a quarter of a million hectares...partly compensating for the ongoing loss of nature in other parts of the country” (2005: 428). This phrase has caught on to describe this general movement of yielding land to ‘nature,’ and marks a “new form of nature politics” (Van der Heijden 2005: 427) that

232. See also Keulartz’s epilogue in *The Struggle for Nature: A Critique of Radical Ecology* (1998).

attempts to combine the previously separated domains of agriculture and nature protection in the Netherlands and that works from the premise that making or building nature can at least be facilitated, if not altogether administered by humans. After all, the Netherlands, which is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, dedicates 60 percent of its surface area to fields and meadows for agriculture (2005: 432). The “man-made character” of the country as a whole has long been recognized and prized by the Dutch²³³ (Van der Heijden 2005: 432), especially given the storied history of land reclamation and water management for which the Dutch are famous (see Zwart 2003). For this reason, naturalness, in the sense in which Elliot or Katz champion—of being untouched by human intervention or machination—is not a state to which much if any of Dutch nature can aspire. Dutch nature has been called half-nature, a phrase coined by Dutch biologist Victor Westhoff in the 1950s as a terminological compromise to describe the semi-natural landscapes that dominate the Netherlands. Westhoff’s term is not an admonishment, however, and he was not of the mind that half-nature merited half-protection. Rather, as a botanist, he saw these landscapes as boasting significant and special ecological value *because* of their coevolution with human agricultural uses that resulted in incredible plant, bird, and insect diversity. The biodiversity of these landscapes was created through—not despite—human intervention, and Westhoff advocated for its preservation (and of preservation of the landscapes themselves) through the continuation of the historic uses that had formed them: mowing, turf cutting, planting and cultivation, hunting, et cetera.

Westhoff and his advocacy of these profoundly cultural-historical landscapes typifies one of the two prevailing Dutch views of nature. According to Jozef Keulartz (1998; 2016), Dutch nature politics oscillates between primitivist and pastoralist views of nature,²³⁴ which idealizes the untouched wilderness and the Acadian garden, respectively. Westhoff is clearly on the side of pastoralism, which takes the Dutch landscape circa 1850, before the modernization mechanization of farming, as its approximate baseline. Keulartz notes that this agrarian view of nature “depends on the application of old agricultural crafts” (1998: 159) and that it manifests the “successful interplay between social patterns of utilization and natural development processes” (1998: 159), producing nature that is human-fashioned.²³⁵ Primitivist views, by contrast, reach far deeper into the ecological past and might be typified by a figure like Frans Vera, who understands nature to be prior to human cultivation and undermined by human intervention. *Natuurontwikkeling*, or nature

233. It is famously remarked that God created the earth but that the Dutch created Holland.

234. Following a dichotomy articulated by Simon Schama (Schama 1995).

235. See also Deliége 2016 for more about the rewilding conflicts and landscape values in the rural and agrarian landscapes of Europe.

development, on Keulartz's view, is an extension of the primitivist understanding of nature that attempts to remake nature by undoing the cultural landscapes and fixtures that have subdued it: fields, canals, dykes and by reintroducing the lost species native and necessary to these ecologies.²³⁶

While the Millingerwaard is one such new nature area, it is importantly different from other similar developments in ways that make it interesting for rewilding that is sensitive to place and to its regeneration. The Millingerwaard is located in the east of the Netherlands, on the bank of the Waal river and just west of the Dutch-German border. The area is a floodplain that covers about 700 hectares and is located within the Gelderse Poort, a larger nature reserve amounting to about 6700 hectares. Until the 1990s brick manufacturing and agriculture (especially for grass and maize production) dominated the landscape, but by 1989 interest in nature development was attracting support, especially after the unexpected success of the new nature in the Oostvaardersplassen. In 1989, a collection of ecologists and landscape architects, including Frans Vera, proposed the Stork Plan [*Plan Ooievaar*] for restoring the Dutch river basin, that, as Van der Heijden summarizes, envisaged that nature should “regain hegemony along the rivers: summer dikes should be moved away, agriculture should retire behind the heavier winter dikes, river forelands should be ‘given back to nature’” (2005: 433). This scheme then informed the 1990 Nature Policy Plan²³⁷ and was set about in the Gelderse Poort by the Dutch Government and the newly-formed ARK Foundation, headed by ecologist Wouter Helmer. The central idea for the Millingerwaard, driven by Helmer and his Living Rivers [*Levende Rivieren*] plan, was the to rewild the floodplains, slowly reducing agriculture and industry on the floodplain by gradually relocating them inside the dykes. After the completion of these relocations and of a large-scale construction project, natural succession was allowed to progress, resulting in a winding, riparian nature reserve. Grasses and shrub have reclaimed much of the area, and the beginnings of an alluvial forest, comprised of softwood and hardwood trees that can survive times of flooding, has emerged. Galloway cattle and Konik ponies were introduced to provide a grazing pressure; geese and badgers moved in

236. Keulartz argues that the primitivist view of nature that nature developers espouse is “a purely technological enterprise” (1998: 163) and as such is plagued by an internal contradiction: “The aim is to shield nature from human interference, so that it can once again go its own way. Yet to achieve this is in the Netherlands of today paradoxically requires large-scale human intervention. This attempt to drive the devil of technology out of nature with the help of the Beelzebub of human intervention reflects the profoundly ambivalent character of nature development” (1998: 158). This is similar to my critique of experimental rewilding (chapter 7).

237. See Van Der Heijden 2005 for more detail on these cases and on the history and politics of Dutch new nature.

on their own, beavers have been reintroduced, and wetland plants, amphibians, and birds have repossessed the former agriculture and industrial site, and the site is managed minimally to increase biodiversity. The plan was completed in 2015.

Additionally, and decisive for its creation, the Millingerwaard sits at the crux of a paradigm change in Dutch water management. In recent years, the Dutch government has acknowledged that its historically reliable strategy of reinforcing and rebuilding dykes and as ever-larger fortresses against the sea will not alone be sufficient in the climates of the near future with higher sea levels, changes to precipitation patterns, and increasingly severe storms. Anticipating these changes, Dutch water managers have embraced alternative methods of flood risk reduction that involve changes to the landscape to lower water levels: broadening and clearing out the floodplains, moving dykes further inland, and improving the spatial quality of alluvial regions (Gremmen 2014). Restoration of riverine ecology, especially of wetlands and marshes, has thus taken a central role in this policy change, and thus new nature of the Millingerwaard eventually came into being as a merging of new nature development initiatives with the larger objective to afford rivers greater space for flooding, through natural processes rather than technological means of control. Flooding events in 1993 and 1995 that forced the evacuation of the area increased support for the new nature project in the Millingerwaard, especially in conjunction with a project called Room for the River, that would excavate and thereby broaden the floodplains of the Waal to reduce flood risks in the future.²³⁸ This turn in water management exemplifies Klaver et al.'s idea of "the controlled decontrolling of ecological controls" (Klaver et al. 2002: 14): in the new regime, control is not altogether relinquished but relaxed to permit greater latitude, within certain limits. Rather than the previous straightjacketing of the river, it is afforded more room. And this loosening is done, by and large, through ecological rather than technological means. This accords with the larger "probiotic turn" within which Lorimer situates rewilding wherein the rationalization and purification of macro and micro environments is rejected in favor of processes and strategies that capitalize on, rather than exclude or restrain, natural processes and players (Lorimer 2017).

Here is one key aspect that differentiates this rewilding project from others. Although the Room for the River project is not generally heralded as rewilding but as a contributing project to the creation of new nature in the Millingerwaard, I suggest that it actually contributes an important dimension of the Plumwoodian rewilding that takes place there. The Room for the River project responds to the presence and challenge of the nonhuman forces that constitute the river landscape,

238. This was through Nadere Uitwerking Rivierengebied, which in English translates to Further Elaboration of River Areas.

and as Plumwood might argue, reminds us of our situatedness in an ecological context that we do not necessarily control, and on which we inevitably depend. Part of recognizing the agency of the nonhuman is accounting for the *variety* of relations that have been ignored in its backgrounding. The monological account of humans working on the landscape, by obscuring the “multiple, mixed agencies” (2006: 125) actively contributing to it then also obscures the way in which humans rather than directing or controlling these other actors and processes, invariably depend on them. Further, Plumwood argues that the relations of dependency are always asymmetrical in that the number of cases and the extent to which humans depend on ecology far outnumber and outweigh the examples of dependency running the other way. And as such, dependency—namely human on the nonhuman—should be reflected in the dynamic of the collaboration or dialogue.

The Room for the River initiative is arguably more reflective of human interest than of anything else, as Martin Drenthen describes:

The reasons for giving the river more room were primarily utilitarian: to ensure economic functions (transport, water supply and agriculture), safety (flood protection), recreation and leisure, but also biodiversity/habitat protection. The recreation of new wetlands reduces flood risks, but also creates large recreational sites for hiking and cycling, for which there is high demand in a heavily populated area such as the Netherlands. (2009: 288)

However, there is no reason to think that such a pragmatic or utilitarian basis *prima facie* discounts the recognition of human dependency around which Room for the River, or other similar initiatives, are organized. The project works out of an awareness, however anthropocentric, of the vulnerability of Dutch river communities to the changing river and increased flood risk from climate change, and the initiative manifests this vulnerability rather than denying it or continuing to obscure it. Recognizing this dependency and taking steps to make the river landscape more resilient—especially in a way that includes and arguably collaborates with nonhuman forces and agents rather than excluding them and continuing to try to control them—is an interesting and promising reformulation, literally and conceptually, of the cultural landscape and the human role in it.

This implicit acknowledgement of human vulnerability and dependence, while reanimating the cultural landscape, indicates that the rewilding project of the Millingerwaard situates itself in response to some larger environmental themes prevailing in the early 21st century. This is the second aspect of the Millingerwaard that differentiates it from other rewilding projects. I have argued already how rewilding should be seen as a direct heir to the legacy of wilderness in environmental philosophy and to the debates and practices of ecological restoration. Similarly,

how rewilding is shaped by concerns for the protection of biodiversity, worries about climate change, and long-standing divisions over animal ethics show rewilding to be an inflection of current debates in environmental philosophy and the wider environmental discourse. My implication throughout this dissertation—that rewilding landscapes *are themselves* cultural landscapes, that rewilding is a form of placemaking—intimates the realization that has been gaining increasing attention and recognition in the past several decades: that we find ourselves in an environmental context wherein all landscapes are made in some way by human intention or accidental impact, that there are no longer untouched places on earth. I suggest that rewilding in what I would call a place-regenerative form takes this into account. The version of rewilding I am describing in the Millingerwaard is less about reinstating past ecological formations in present cultural landscapes—as though the cultural landscape as such could be undone—but about imagining and creating new versions of cultural landscapes and environmental cultures. Rewilding in this version inherits some aspects of historic and traditional cultural landscapes but also meaningfully incorporates the more recent orientation towards wilder, more dynamic and self-willed landscapes and attention to the agency and interests of the nonhuman. This rewilding works out of an awareness of its context in the 21st century, between battling interests in maintaining legible places and traditional ways of life on the one hand and in the resurgent wild on the other. We can credit this kind of rewilding with taking up the issue of its own history as manifest in place, while realizing that history to have been in certain ways unsustainable and monological with respect to nonhuman interests and presence and trying to move forward informed by these concerns. More than any other example of rewilding, the Millingerwaard takes on rewilding in these specific, reflexive ways.

8.4.2 Reflexive placemaking

How, precisely, is rewilding, or nature development, in the Millingerwaard closer to place-regenerative rewilding than the rewilding in other landscapes I have described? On the one hand, it hard to distinguish it materially from other forms of rewilding in that it adopts many of the same strategies: like the Scottish Beaver Trial, the Millingerwaard is ecological restoration in a cultural landscape through the reintroduction of beavers and grazers and the foregrounding of their presence in, and making of, the new culture landscape. Like the Oostvaardersplassen, the Millingerwaard is the development of new nature. On the other hand, especially for its inclusion of human and technological artifacts and landscapes, it hardly seems to amount to rewilding at all. I suggest that the difference lies in its self-conception that involves a recognition of the history of the place preceding the present and an intentional and reflexive decision to make cultural landscapes anew that reflect

this history without only trying to recreate their past iterations. The primary way in which the Millingerwaard achieves (or at least works towards) this is through the way the place it makes and becomes is oriented with respect to its past and the context out of which it has arisen. This context, which is arguably also the context of any environment in the 21st century, is one that bears human influence, probably conspicuously. This realization,²³⁹ now commonplace in environmental writing,²³⁹ is here articulated by Van der Heiden: “‘original nature’ does not exist anymore in the Netherlands; nature is a part of the cultural landscape and includes (some forms of) culture” (2005: 437). Clearly, the Millingerwaard is a reminder of this, but moreover, it *embraces* this status. Rewilding in this case is a combination of the pastoralist view—which recognizes nature as invariably made in conjunction with human presence and use—and the attempt to liberate an original, wild nature—the impetus driving the primitivist view. Rewilded nature in the Millingerwaard is set amidst and intermingled with signs of past and present human inhabitation, but this is not to say that this version of nature is a degenerate one. One brochure boasts about the accessibility of the flourishing natural world in the Ooijpolder (which contains the Millingerwaard):

The ‘liberation’ of the landscape has begun in the Ooijpolder. Although the Dutch landscape continues to deteriorate daily and wild plants and animals are driven to large reserves by large-scale and intensive farming, an opposite movement has been initiated in the Ooijpolder... In this green and watery meandering of the landscape, plants and animals that are still being threatened in the rest of the Netherlands have established themselves.²⁴⁰

Interestingly, the Millingerwaard is no more invested in continuing the practices and processes that sustain the cultural landscape in its recent, agricultural iteration than it is in attempting to reclaim or recover the conditions that constitute “real” or “original” nature that the primitivist view prioritizes. By eschewing the re-creation of any baseline—the ecology of the interglacial period or the 1850 agrarian landscape—place-regenerative rewilding instead opens the landscape up to what happens now based on its current context and condition. In this case, rewilding in the Millingerwaard responds to forecasts that assume a changing climate and a

239. One of the first and certainly most famous articulations was Bill McKibben’s claim to the same effect in *The End of Nature* (1989).

240. Original Dutch: “De ‘bevrijding’ van het landschap is begonnen in de Ooijpolder. Hoewel het Nederlandse landschap dagelijks nog steeds achteruit gaat, en wilde planten en dieren door grootschalige en intensieve landbouw verdreven worden naar reservaten, is er in de Ooijpolder een tegenovergestelde beweging in gang gezet... In deze groene en waterrijke dooradering van het landschap vestigen zich nu al planten en dieren die in de rest van Nederland nog steeds bedreigd zijn” (Vereniging Nederlands Cultuurlandschap, no date).

more voluminous river, and it works from these parameters to rewild the floodplain. Rather than being past-centered, this rewilding project admits the landscape's past and anticipates its future. Importantly, this is not an unreflective continuation of existing cultures but of a reworking, or regeneration, of those cultures in more environmentally sensitive ways. Mark Haywood sees all rewilding as accomplishing this continuation:

Re-wilding land does not revert it to some imaginary Edenic state by erasing history and culture, instead it adds yet another stratum to the layers of that land's occupation. In both Scotland and South Africa successive layers of tragedies and mistakes, ideals and compromises have created these landscapes, and their traces will remain. Far from creating 'wilderness', re-wilding reminds us that landscapes are cultural products whose true value lies in their being palimpsests of history and identity. (2007: 202)

However, missing from Haywood's account is any kind of Plumwoodian environmental culture that does not "constantly refer back to the human as central" (2006: 127). I suggest that in the Millingerwaard we can see the beginnings of a new environmental culture that responds, reflexively, to the history and ways of life of a particular place *and* is informed by prevailing concerns for the nonhuman that rewilding introduces in the present. This reflexivity is the main way in which place-regenerative rewilding differs from the other modes of placemaking we have seen: they do not attempt to position themselves with respect to the history of the places they rewild. If there is a relation it is one of attempting to disown human history or step outside of it: obscuring the human labor involved in wilderness rewilding disavows the histories of inhabitation rather than contending with them, and experimental rewilding is fixated on a particular history, but it not a human history strictly speaking, and presumes it can access this history without this inquiry itself being historically situated. By contrast, place-regenerative rewilding confronts us with the recent history of the place as the context out of which rewilding happens.

A telling example of this is the way in which the recent human history of the Millingerwaard has been left intact so that the landscape contains elements of its previous iterations. Unlike traditional examples of ecological restoration, the Millingerwaard project makes no pretense about its peopled past and even highlights the enduring legacy of brick manufacturing in the landscape. Historically, brick companies of the region would buy up land and harvest the top layer of clay for brick manufacturing. This extraction process would leave pits in the landscape, which the companies would either leave on site or fill to make the area suitable for agricultural use, allowing the companies to sell the land on to farmers. When the area was converted to the Millingerwaard, some of these pits remained. They filled

with water and became small ponds and pools, obvious evidence of the clay harvest and the extractive use of the area. Wouter Helmer appreciated the ways in which they distorted the landscape and wanted them to remain as evidence of the history of manufacturing in the site. And indeed, the legacy of brick manufacturing is not only topographical but financial: as it is the change in clay mining techniques that allowed for and funded the creation of the Millingerwaard and other new nature areas. The brick company partnered in the creation of the Millingerwaard as the main source of its funding.²⁴¹ Now, the pools attract bird species that might not otherwise attend the area.

The most noticeable remnant of the brick industry is the factory's chimney that has not been removed and that will stay on the site. It remains as a souvenir²⁴² in its etymological sense of a token that assists the memory, that re-minds. The presence of the chimney in the otherwise wilded landscape offers an enduring reminder of the industrial iteration of this place and of the human labor that shaped it but perhaps also as a reminder of the past and present impact humans have on these landscapes. There is an important difference between rewilding that seeks to erase or altogether isolate itself from the signs of human industry and the unsustainable elements of past and present human development and rewilding that situates itself in relation to this past and present. Places like the Millingerwaard confront us with the inescapability of human presence, some of which we now understand as unsustainable. But, as regenerative with respect to place, they reimagine place as made out of these past developments and as part of an environmental culture that neither erases even regrettable or difficult past developments, denies ongoing human presence and intervention, nor continues operating—as these places have historically—as largely blind to the nonhuman. In this way, we can see the Millingerwaard as a new cultural landscape that, like its previous iterations, reflects the social and ethical values of the time of its making.

How is the Millingerwaard as a new cultural landscape being received by those affected by it? While many have supported the development of new nature in the Millingerwaard, and the Room for the River project is considerably popular, neither has been spared from criticism, especially from those personally attached to the landscape that is being surrendered. The main discontents, according to the 2016 paper, are those who were employed in the area (Bulkens et al.). Responding to the same kinds of issues in a discussion of questions of place and identity in these changing landscapes, Martin Drenthen notes that one frequent complaint

241. See Bekhuis et al. 2005 for a straight forward report on the economic factors in the creation of the Millingerwaard and its attempt to create sustainable economies in coordination with nature protection.

242. Thanks to Jochem Zwier for the suggestion of this term. *Souvenir* derives from Old French and ultimately from the Latin *subvenire*, to come to the aid of.

is that “Room for the River’ actually diminishes the ‘place for the people,’” not in terms of physical space but that the relations of identity and meaning are crowded out or taken less seriously than the “functional outlook” (2009: 286-287) at the core of the policy. Indeed, as Drenthen discusses, the Dutch river landscape has important meanings as both an archive and manifestation of the storied history that Dutch people have with water, and changes to that risk losing the visible histories embedded in these places and the connection people have with these places. The familiarity of the river landscape makes it legible through its signs, that, as Drenthen writes, “make the world habitable; they help us to dwell here” (2009: 291). Indeed, this speaks to the tension being worked out in rewilding projects that take place in the cultural landscape: the increased presence of and attention to the nonhuman in the new cultural landscapes of rewilding in many cases will jeopardize the existing and meaningful cultural and historical attributes. But that is precisely one of the offerings of rewilding as a new cultural landscape. Later in the same paper, Drenthen argues that in the Millingerwaard, human history is not erased but instead resituated within the much larger context of ecological or “earth history” (2009: 295). The recovery and illumination of the older, deeper layers of time through the excavation of the petrified trees, through the newly meandering river, challenge us to deepen our sense of place:

Confronted again with the way in which a river has changed its course during the past millennia, people begin to recognize what it means to live along a river. It can also help them gain a sense of place that is more in line with that of the first inhabitants of the land, who had to deal with natural forces that were much stronger. (2009: 295)

As such, the deeper sense of place and time that Drenthen suggests emerges from the rewilding project in the Millingerwaard is generated by a nonhuman perspective that can help us view the human-centeredness of our projects and appropriations in a different light. However, even without the deep time perspective, I suggest that the new cultural landscape of the Millingerwaard offers a different kind of cultural landscape, one that is already importantly open to the nonhuman perspective because it is specifically interested in the nonhuman—in geological and hydrological forces, in agential species and trophic cascades, in the dynamics of wind and weather and climate—and in how human cultures can fit amongst these elements: this interest is why I suggest we can say it is working towards a new environmental culture. It is admittedly not an easy place: incorporating the nonhuman invariably results in conflict with human interests and perspectives that will require ongoing negotiation. But the difference is that this conflict is *central* to its making: the landscape is built around the inherent challenge that nonhuman

perspectives introduce. Like the other versions of rewilding I have discussed, place-regenerative rewilding also has a paradox at its core: that in it, rewilding makes cultural landscapes that are themselves a challenge to cultural landscapes: that place is made in a way that invites a fundamental challenge to the human act of placemaking. However, this paradox, while troublesome and impossible to resolve, unlike the others is productive and opens up the possibility of a new kind of environmental culture wherein the inclusion of nonhuman otherness is a central feature and provides a critical perspective on human cultures and values. How this critical perspective can be retained in a human cultural landscape, like both rewilding and placemaking, will have to continue to be negotiated over time.

8.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter we saw a kind of rewilding that recognizes its situatedness in cultural landscapes. I argued, using Val Plumwood's critique of the cultural landscape concept, that rewilding can be a way of reappearing the disappeared agency of the nonhuman who are present and cooperative in the making of cultural landscapes historically and in the present. Two versions of this, the Scottish Beaver Trial (SBT) and the Millingerwaard, provided examples of rewilding in the cultural landscape. While the trial takes an important step in rewilding and species reintroductions, we saw that the failure to accept the fact of conflict with nonhuman others in the SBT undermined rewilding's aims and thus would pose an insuperable limit to rewild these landscapes. The example of the Millingerwaard provided a more promising case of what I called *place-regenerative rewilding*—the third mode of rewilding's placemaking—because it considers itself a new form of cultural landscape that answers to the human and nonhuman history of the place and to current nonhuman others involved in its creation and continuation. I argued that in this kind of rewilding we can see the emergence of a new kind of environmental culture that endeavors to make more room for the nonhuman but that recognizes nevertheless that this effort is a cultural and social one. Both of these cases discussed demonstrate that rewilding in the cultural landscape will always be limited to the amount of conflict and ecological upset that is socially and politically apposite: in any landscape where people are living and working, the amount of conflict or discomfort that will be acceptable will be determined by what people and governing institutions will tolerate. But this tension is not accidental to this environmental culture; instead it is a central feature of it. And as such, we see that such rewilding of this kind will be an ongoing project of continuing to balance the consideration and inclusion of the nonhuman and the threats and challenges this poses with the social and cultural dimensions of the places made through it.

Conclusion

This dissertation has claimed that to understand the phenomenon of rewilding requires renewed attention to the concepts of place, belonging, and wilderness: that rewilding reopens and renegotiates these ideas and their relations in the context of 21st century western environmental thinking.

In order to substantiate this claim, the dissertation was framed around the apparent challenge that rewilding poses to the concept of place and to specific cultural landscapes, and this involved a number of steps. After surveying leading ways in which place has been approached in other disciplines in chapter one, I turned in chapter two to philosophy as such, especially focusing on the philosophical discourse building on Heidegger's existentialism, to develop place as a fundamentally structuring dimension of human experience as being-in-the-world. However, the received notion of place has problematic associations with nostalgia, xenophobia, and conservatism that cannot be ignored. In a cosmopolitan world, especially in the face of ecological problems that are global in scope, the relevance of place is frequently questioned. In response to these kinds of challenges and to develop place as a more dynamic and open-ended phenomenon, I advanced the notion of placemaking in chapter three. I argued that placemaking consists of the ongoing ways in which we understand, consolidate, and reproduce places: placemaking amounts to a continual questioning of place and our relations in it. This recognition of places as changing—and of ourselves as implicated in their change or continuation—opened up more conceptual room to understand the conflict we saw in the introduction between the drive towards rewilding and the desire to maintain the traditional landscape.

In the second part of the dissertation, I took a closer look at the concepts of wilderness and rewilding. In chapter four, I traced the recent debate about wilderness in environmental philosophy for the purpose of situating rewilding in this context but also to explore what has made the idea of wilderness so alluring. We saw how the meanings of wilderness are largely predicated on its separation from human life and society and how efforts to problematize this tradition have sparked controversy but also spurred developments in the field. Ecological restoration largely followed out of this debate, recuperating and sometimes celebrating the role the human and of social, political, and aesthetic dynamics in rebuilding relations

with the natural world. In light of this turn, rewilding can be seen as a reaction against overly managed environments and restorations, a call for more room for the manifestation of a wilder, less inhibited nature.

Adding to these basic notions of the term, in chapter five I reviewed the meanings to which rewilding has already been put, and I distilled what I take to be its most important themes: the crux of what rewilding appears to be after and motivated by. But heeding the considerable variation in its usages, I did this by advancing a cluster conceptualization of rewilding rather than proposing a single definition. By the end of the second part of the dissertation, place, wilderness, and rewilding stood in closer relations to each other. Having challenged the conception of place as conservative, exclusionary, and fixed and having located the wilderness tradition in the broader tradition of place-meanings and understandings, I showed that wilderness and place are not necessarily oppositional, and we could think about rewilding without excluding place.

In the dissertation's third part, I developed this intersection and argued that rewilding should be understood as presenting ways of placemaking rather than read as a simple or straightforward challenge to established notions of place. However, responding to the variety of ways in which rewilding is already seen to be at work as a strategy of conservation, I elaborated three different modes in which rewilding performs placemaking, identifying cases of each type and drawing out their remarkable and sometimes paradoxical or problematic features. In concluding the dissertation, it is necessary to return to the problems raised by each type to look at what, taken together, they have to say about place and belonging. I will summarize these paradoxical findings again here.

In chapter 6, we saw the workings of what I have called *wilderness rewilding*. I argued that in this first mode of placemaking, rewilding performs place by creating areas where natural processes and functions are restored, and that in this way, it largely reproduces the wilderness idea of place. Such areas can be called places, I argued, not only because (following Casey) I developed a more expansive notion of place (allowing the inclusion of wilderness) but also because this mode of rewilding relies specifically on familiar cultural notions of wilderness that are operational in the making of these places through rewilding. I showed how these specific wilderness meanings undergird and prop up the overt, ecological justifications for rewilding in the case of wolf reintroductions in Yellowstone National Park; how the complicated genetic story of bison returning to the Țarcu mountains in Romania shows ecological functionalist accounts to be insufficient to explaining reintroduction justifications; and finally, with the example of the Apostle Islands, how rewilding not only relies on the human abdication from areas of previous use, but also on human labor in concealing or erasing traces of those histories. We

saw that rewilding aims to make these places empty, in that they become absent of conspicuous evidence of human presence or history. I claimed that wilderness rewilding manifests a desire for places where humans do not belong, as well as a willingness to make or repair these places if they are not already there, even if the work of creating these places is contrary to the spirit of their appearance as emptied of human presence and history. This gives us the first apparent paradox: a longing for places where we expressly do not belong and the self-contradicting effort to conceal the human labor involved in constructing and reproducing these places.

In chapter 7, we saw similar efforts underway in *experimental rewilding*, the second mode of placemaking that rewilding performs. The crucial difference, I argued, is that rewilding in these cases is not interested in wilderness *per se* but in interrogating questions of historical ecology. In this mode, place is made through the practice of experiment: through the opening up of spaces wherein particular questions can be put to the test. What was the role of grazing in pre-agricultural ecosystems? Was the canopy open or closed? The Oostvaardersplassen in the Netherlands is a remarkable example of land that had only very recently become land at all and that provides a proving ground, a test site, for such questions. Pleistocene Park in Siberia and its related Wild Field site make the same kinds of inquiries into their developing rewilded ecosystems. Looking at the contrast case of North American Pleistocene rewilding accentuated how the open-endedness of the scientific questions is central to the idea of experimental rewilding: it is only when these scientific questions are still undecided that we would be able to witness the “real nature” that Vera and Zimov are looking for. This is what is at stake in experimental rewilding: a scientific question is put to the test in such a place (basically an open-air laboratory), and in the answering of this question, real nature can be revealed. The claims that Vera and Zimov make about truth and real nature are only possible because the places in question open up sites where nature is invited to disclose itself. But the larger question of why these academic questions of historical ecology matter at all is never sufficiently explored. And so again we arrive in a seeming paradox: in this desire to know what these places are really like, what they are like without us or how they were before us, we again see a forgetting of the role of humans in asking these questions and setting up these experiments. The knowledge that these questions ask for can only be gained through our practices of knowledge production and our interest in answering these questions at all. But to ask why we’re even interested in the scientific inquiries rewilding accomplishes is already to reinscribe ourselves back into the experiment, to implicate ourselves as human, interested knowers. Experimental rewilding makes

places by relegating their human examiners to the perimeter. Thus, like wilderness rewilding, experimental rewilding also rests on a paradoxical denial of the human in making these places.

Finally, in chapter 8, we saw a third kind of rewilding that, unlike the previous two modes, recognizes its situatedness in cultural landscapes. I introduced Val Plumwood's argument that the cultural landscape concept has long been used to obscure the agency of the nonhuman. From this perspective, rewilding becomes a strategy for the reappearing of nonhuman agency in the landscape, and I argued that rewilding can be seen as the reintroduction of this missing agency but also the recognition of the obfuscation of nonhuman agency. We saw two examples of this: the Scottish beaver trial and the Millingerwaard, which were both limited by the extent to which wildness and conflict with nonhuman others will be tolerated in a human cultural context. I argued that rewilding in the Millingerwaard is *place-regenerative* because of the way the project engaged the history of the cultural landscape and situates itself in this history as the next chapter of the cultural landscape, so to speak. But this brings us to the central tension in this type of rewilding: not only is there a limit to how wild rewilding can be (in terms of the threats it poses to those living nearby, et cetera), but there is also a question of whether the radical wild other that rewilding appears to be interested in can really emerge in a setting that is plainly human and humanized. In other words, this third kind of rewilding readily admits its social context. But does this admission fundamentally undermine the aspiration towards rewilding altogether?

What we have seen from this third kind of rewilding is a desire for cultural landscapes and cultures that are more environmentally sound and better ecologically integrated. These are places where humans still live and work: continuations of the cultural landscapes in which we find ourselves and already make sense of our lives. In these contexts, rewilding would introduce new tensions and challenges that would have to be negotiated over time, as part of an ongoing practice of placemaking. But the first two types of rewilding revealed, antithetically, that we seem to desire places that are off-limits to us, that are alien and disorienting—we desire places where we do not belong. That we desire both kinds of places is not remarkable by itself: what *is* remarkable is that rewilding in its various guises is made to answer to such conflicting desires.

We then arrive then at a somewhat unsettling conclusion: that rewilding is the making of places where humans expressly do not belong and at the same time an opportunity to reinscribe a cultural landscape where humans do. Perhaps there is room for both tendencies in a Plumwoodian environmental culture that aims “to find cultural ways to recognise and celebrate the play of intentionality and agency in the world” (1993: 136). Belonging will have to be continuously renegotiated, as

will our human relations with nonhuman others. The critical perspective—the *wild* of *rewilding* efforts—will have to be retained despite its contextualization within the social, and it remains an open question how these tensions can be balanced and how resulting landscapes will be constituted. An important implication of the idea of placemaking is that these places are not ever finished but always coming into being: that they remain open and negotiable, and that rewilding represents only another factor that must somehow be incorporated into these ongoing processes. Rewilding shows how forms of belonging are being renegotiated in the anthropocene: the conflicting versions and motivations of rewilding convey the apprehension of finding ourselves and our human makings as constituting an ever-increasing portion of the world. We will have to acknowledge that even places where we do not belong are of our making, and the places of the world we long to be part of are not guaranteed to be hospitable to us. Rewilding's various forms reveal these tensions and our ambivalence of making our place in a world that is inescapably impacted by us, and a fascination for that which still exceeds us.

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Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift begint met een INTRODUCTION die het centrale conflict tussen rewilding en het cultuurlandschap introduceert en een overzicht geeft van het proefschrift. Rewilding, een nieuwe strategie op het gebied van natuurbehoud, legt de nadruk op zogenaamd "self-willed land," ofwel gebieden die minder door mensen gecontroleerd en minder beheerd worden. Dit neemt vele vormen aan, waaronder het minimaliseren of opgeven van landbouwgronden, de terugkeer van wilde dieren naar steden en stedelijke gebieden en projecten die meer ruimte voor de natuur beloven. Velen zijn enthousiast voor deze initiatieven, maar men is zich er steeds meer van bewust dat rewilding vereist dat bepaalde gebieden voor dit doel worden of zijn opgegeven, en in sommige gevallen gaat het om traditionele en historische cultuurlandschappen die gekoesterd worden en zelf belangrijke dragers zijn van betekenis en een bron van sociale en individuele identiteit. Rewilding, in zijn kern, lijkt in strijd met de diepgewortelde menselijke bekommernis over plaats: de wijzen waarop we ons vestigen, wonen en werken; de historische lagen van cultuurlandschappen en hoe die ons leven richting geven. Rewilding stelt het begrip plaats zelf ter discussie. Deze inleiding verklaart ook de hermeneutische benadering van het proefschrift: in plaats van te proberen dit conflict over rewilding op te lossen, is de hoofdvraag die ik zal onderzoeken hoe de relaties van het behoren en niet behoren tot bestaande en in de wildernis door rewilding worden uitgedaagd of hersteld. Ik zal dit doen via een omweg door allereerst de begrippen plaats en wildernis verder te onderzoeken.

Het eerste deel van het proefschrift, over **Place**, begint met CHAPTER 1: SURVEYING PLACE. Wat is plaats? Hoe verschilt het van ruimte? Dit hoofdstuk geeft een overzicht van de literatuur over het begrip plaats, te beginnen met humane geografie. In deze traditie werd plaats opgevoerd als een conceptueel alternatief voor het concept ruimte en als een poging om de geleefde menselijke ervaring van de omgeving te vangen en het concept plaats te ontwikkelen zoals geleefd, gevoeld en belichaamd in plaats van abstract en theoretisch. Deze focus op plaats heeft een blijvende invloed gehad op de literatuur over plaats in diverse andere vakgebieden. In de sociale wetenschappen en de milieufilosofie worden vragen gesteld over hoe we aan bepaalde plekken gehecht kunnen raken en dit thema is al lang terug te vinden in de literatuur maar ook in recenter werk. In al deze tradities blijven vraagstukken rond hechting, thuis en het lokale aspect van plaatsen dominant. De universaliteit

van de ervaring van plaats is echter in twijfel getrokken door ondermeer de culturele geografie, die zich heeft geconcentreerd op machtsdimensies die maken dat plaats wordt gedifferentieerd voor bepaalde groepen en individuen.

Het tweede deel van dit hoofdstuk gaat in op het cultuurlandschap en ook hier wordt een conceptueel overzicht gegeven. Ook deze term heeft zijn oorsprong in de geografie, en ook hier heeft deze zich daarna uitgebreid tot vele gebieden waaronder planning en design, erfgoed en geschiedenis en tot op zekere hoogte milieufilosofie. De milieufilosofie is pas onlangs begonnen het concept van het cultuurlandschap serieus te nemen, maar het recente werk daarover roept een reeks rijke en belangrijke vragen op.

In CHAPTER 2: PLACE AS EXISTENTIAL, ligt opnieuw de focus op plaats. Waarom is er toch een zo'n interesse geweest vanuit zulke uiteenlopende disciplines? Dit hoofdstuk gaat in op de filosofie van Martin Heidegger om na te gaan waarom plaats als zo waardevol wordt beschouwd. Heideggers filosofische antropologie vormt de basis voor een begrip van plaats als datgene wat de menselijke betrokkenheid in de wereld fundamenteel structureert. Place heeft existentiële relevantie voor het menselijk leven, wat tot uiting komt in Heidegger's werk over wonen en wereldvorming.

In dit hoofdstuk wordt vervolgens ingegaan op diverse pogingen om plaats een plek te geven in de milieufilosofie. De eerste drie gaan niet expliciet in op Heideggers existentiële filosofie, maar proberen niettemin de ethiek te opnieuw vorm te geven rondom het begrip plaats : Christopher Preston's *Grounding Knowledge* (2003); bioregionalisme, de beweging die probeert ethische en sociale gemeenschappen nauwer te verbinden met de bioregio waarin ze zich bevinden; en Mick Smith's *An Ethics of Place* (2001). De algemene invloed van Heidegger's denken is dan weer meer zichtbaar in het werk van Forrest Clingerman en Martin Drenthen, twee milieufilosofen die werkzaam zijn in de hermeneutische traditie. Clingerman's werk gaat over de plaats als menselijke ingang tot de natuur. Het werk van Drenthen is ook interpreterend, maar richt zich meer op het cultuurlandschap en op conflicten die ontstaan bij de interpretatie van betekenissen die daarin besloten liggen.

CHAPTER 3: BROADENING PLACE, is het laatste hoofdstuk dat zich richt op het begrip plaats en richt zich met name op de vele uitdagingen waarmee het begrip plaats wordt geconfronteerd. Dit maakt het mogelijk om nader te kijken naar enkele van de machtsdynamieken die een plaats vormen langs lijnen van gender en privileges; naar de spanning tussen wildernis en plaats zoals die door Edward Casey wordt besproken; en naar de relevantie van plaats in een geglobaliseerde en gehomogeniseerde wereld met mondiale milieuproblemen waarin kwesties van

nativiteit en verbondenheid politiek lastig zijn. In antwoord op deze zorgen biedt het begrip plaatsmaken (placemaking) een open, creatief en dynamisch alternatief voor een nostalgische, vaste en uitsluitende notie van plaats.

Het tweede deel van het proefschrift, over **Wilderness & Rewilding**, gaat in op oudere en meer recente wildernisfilosofie. Om de aspecten van wildernis die het zo fascinerend hebben gemaakt naar voren te brengen geeft CHAPTER 4: WILDERNESS CONTEXT AND MEANINGS een overzicht van het idee van wildernis in (voornamelijk Amerikaanse) milieufilosofie. Ten eerste bespreek ik het idee van wildernis als een domein dat losstaat van de samenleving, en ten tweede het idee van wildernis als transcendente Ander. Dit hoofdstuk is sterk gebaseerd op het essay *The Trouble with Wilderness* van William Cronon, waarin het overgeleverde idee van wildernis wordt onderzocht, en gaat vervolgens verder met het onderzoeken van de reacties op het wildernisdebat in de milieufilosofie. Dit is de context van waaruit rewilding ontstaat, en in CHAPTER 5: REWILDING'S MEANINGS, brengt de brede waaier aan betekenissen en gebruiken van rewilding in kaart. Dit hoofdstuk gaat in tegen een smalle opvatting van rewilding en stelt in plaats daarvan voor dat het goed zou zijn de opkomende rewilding als een cluster concept te begrijpen. Verschillende opvallende betekenissen worden geïdentificeerd, maar deze worden niet als uitputtend gepresenteerd, en ze hebben niet uitsluitend betrekking op de ecologische betekenissen van rewilding.

Deel 3: **Rewilding as Placemaking**, is het constructieve deel van dit proefschrift waar het conceptuele werk uit de eerste twee delen over plaats en wildernis bij elkaar wordt gebracht. In dit deel wordt het argument naar voren gebracht dat rewilding een vorm van plaats maken vertegenwoordigt. Elk van de drie hoofdstukken in dit deel presenteert een andere manier waarop rewilding plaats tot stand brengt.

CHAPTER 6: WILDERNESS REWILDING onderzoekt enkele van de meer conventionele gevallen van rewilding: de herintroductie van wolven in het Yellowstone National Park en de herintroductie van de Bison in het Karpatengebergte, evenals het minder voor de hand liggende geval van de rewilding van de Aposteleilanden in Wisconsin (VS), allemaal voorbeelden van rewilding die wildernis-plaatsen maakt. Dit hoofdstuk laat zien hoe de wetenschappelijke onderbouwing van dergelijke projecten ontoereikend is om de hele motivatie voor rewilding uit te leggen; en suggereert dat andere redenen van belang lijken voor het motiveren van rewilding. De zaak van de Apostel-eilanden, die door historicus James Feldman is beschreven, laat zien dat rewilding in deze vorm van plaats maken werkt door het verwijderen van sporen van menselijk leven en menselijke bewoning, dat deze vorm van rewilding is er veel aan gelegen om de menselijke

arbeid die nodig is voor de productie van dergelijke wildernis te verdonkeremanen, en dat rewilding hier lijkt te worden gemotiveerd door een verlangen naar plaatsen waar mensen niet thuishoren.

CHAPTER 7: EXPERIMENTAL REWILDING houdt zich bezig met een andere vorm van rewilding als plaats maken. Kijkend naar de bekende gevallen van de Oostvaardersplassen in Nederland en het Pleistoceenpark in Siberië, wordt in dit hoofdstuk beargumenteerd dat herwilding van dit type geïnteresseerd is in specifieke vragen over de historische ecologie, waarbij deze vragen gesteld worden door middel van het maken van een experimenteel reservaat waar deze vragen beantwoord kunnen worden. Deze experimenten zijn erop gericht om te achterhalen hoe "echte natuur" eruitziet, namelijk de natuur zoals die bestond voor de opkomst van landbouw of menselijke nederzetting. Om duidelijk te maken hoe het open-einde karakter van de experimenten die ze wilden uitvoeren van wezenlijk belang is voor deze experimentele vormen van rewilding, zal ik deze vergelijken met een derde, hypothetisch, geval van pleistoceen rewilding in Noord-Amerika.

Terwijl overwegingen voor het cultuurlandschap opvallend afwezig zijn in deze eerste twee vormen van rewilding, komen ze terug in het laatste hoofdstuk: CHAPTER 8: PLACE REGENERATIVE REWILDING, waarin twee voorbeelden van rewilding worden bekeken die hun ligging in bestaande cultuurlandschappen serieus nemen. Dit hoofdstuk begint met Val Plumwood's kritiek op het cultuurlandschap vanwege de neiging om de agency van niet-menselijke actoren te laten verdwijnen. Rewilding lijkt al een concretisering te zijn van enkele kritiekpunten van Plumwood, hoewel deze parallel nog niet opgemerkt of ontwikkeld is. De veelgeprezen herintroductie van bevers in Schotland is zo 'n geval waarin het ontbrekende agentschap van een zeer bedrijvig en ecologisch invloedrijk dier weer tevoorschijn komt. Het voorbeeld van rewilding in de Millingerwaard biedt een visie op rewilding als een nieuwe gedaante van het cultuurlandschap, als alternatief voor de meer gangbare visie van rewilding als een poging om een vroeger ecologisch landschap terug te brengen. Daarmee biedt de Millingerwaard een mooi voorbeeld van plaatsregeneratieve vorm van rewilding. Beide gevallen die in dit hoofdstuk worden behandeld, lijken verwijzen naar pogingen om een nieuwe cultuur van omgang met het landschap te ontwikkelen en zo plaatsen te revitaliseren, maar laten ook de inherente spanningen van een degelijke poging zien. Het plaats maken voor het wilde in rewilding-projecten in bewoonde gebieden en cultuurlandschappen zal een voortdurende spanning zijn die inherent is aan rewilding.

Summary

This dissertation begins with an INTRODUCTION, that introduces the central conflict between rewilding and the cultural landscape and provides an overview of the dissertation. Rewilding, a new strategy in conservation, emphasizes “self-willed land,” or areas that are less controlled and less human managed. This takes many forms, including the minimization or abandonment of lands dedicated to agriculture, the return of wilder animals to cities and urban regions, and projects that promise to make more room for nature. Many are enthusiastic for these endeavors but there is an increasing awareness that rewilding requires that specific areas will be, or already have been, relinquished for this purpose, and in some cases these areas are traditional and historical cultural landscapes that are cherished places and are themselves important bearers of meaning and sources of social and individual identity. Rewilding, at its core, seems to conflict with the deeply human concerns about place: the ways we settle, inhabit, and work; the historic layers of cultural landscapes and how these orient us. Rewilding calls the concept of place into question, and the introduction also explains the hermeneutic approach of the dissertation: rather than attempting to resolve this conflict, the main question that I will explore, through detouring through the concepts of place and wilderness, is how the relations of belonging and not belonging in place and in wilderness are challenged or reinstated by rewilding.

The dissertation’s first part, **Place**, begins with CHAPTER 1: SURVEYING PLACE. What is place? How does it differ from space? This chapter serves the purpose of providing an overview of the literature on the concept of place, beginning with humanistic geography. In this tradition, place was advanced as a conceptual rival to space and as an attempt to capture the lived nature of human experience and to develop place as lived, felt, and embodied rather than as abstracted and theoretical. This focus has had an enduring influence on the literature on place in a variety of other fields. Questions of how we can become attached to particular places have been taken up in social science and environmental philosophy, and this theme has been long present in literature and more recently in environmental writing. In all of these traditions, questions of home and of being local to a place continue to be dominant. However, the universality of the experience of place has been challenged by cultural geography, which has illuminated power dimensions that differentiate place for certain groups and individuals.

The second part of this chapter attends to the cultural landscape, and again a conceptual overview is provided. Again, this term has its origins in geography, and again, has expanded into many fields including planning and design, heritage and history, and to an extent, environmental philosophy. Environmental philosophy has only recently begun to take seriously the concept of the cultural landscape, but the work that has begun raises a series of rich and important questions.

In CHAPTER 2: PLACE AS EXISTENTIAL, place again is the focus. Why has place been of such interest across such variety of disciplines? This chapter delves into the philosophy of Martin Heidegger to interrogate why place can be so deeply valuable. Heidegger's philosophical anthropology provides the basis for understanding place as that which fundamentally structures human involvement in the world. Place has existential relevance for human life, which is brought out through Heidegger's work on dwelling and world-formation.

This chapter then looks at several efforts at engaging place in environmental philosophy. The first three do not explicitly engage Heidegger's existential philosophy but that nonetheless attempt to reorganize ethics around place: Christopher Preston's *Grounding Knowledge* (2003); bioregionalism, the movement to tie ethical and social communities more closely to the bioregion in which they are situated; and Mick Smith's *An Ethics of Place* (2001). Then, the general influence of Heidegger's thinking is more visible again in the work of Forrest Clingerman and Martin Drenthen, two environmental philosophers working in the hermeneutic tradition. Clingerman's work concerns place as the human point of access to nature. Drenthen's work is also interpretive but focuses more on the cultural landscape and conflicts arising in the interpretation of meanings therein.

CHAPTER 3: BROADENING PLACE is the final place-centric chapter and addresses the series of challenges that have been lodged against the concept of place. This allows for a closer look at some of the power dynamics that construct place along lines of gender and privilege; at the tension between wilderness and place that Edward Casey discusses; and questions of the relevance of place in a globalized and homogenized world with global environmental problems and when questions of nativeness and belonging are tainted with xenophobia and worse. In response to these concerns, the notion of placemaking offers an open-ended, creative, and dynamic alternative to nostalgic, fixed, and exclusionary notions of place.

The dissertation's second part, **Wilderness & Rewilding**, turns to older and more recent wilderness philosophy. CHAPTER 4: WILDERNESS CONTEXT AND MEANINGS provides an overview of the idea of wilderness in (predominantly US American) environmental philosophy in an effort to bring out the aspects of wilderness that have made it so fascinating: the idea of wilderness as separated from society; and the idea of wilderness as transcendent Other. This chapter draws

heavily from William Cronon's essay "The Trouble with Wilderness" that examined the received idea of wilderness, and then goes on to examine the responses to the wilderness debate in environmental philosophy. This is the context out of which rewilding emerges, and in CHAPTER 5: REWILDING'S MEANINGS, the broad array of meanings and usages of rewilding are considered. This chapter argues against a narrow construction of rewilding and instead that a cluster conceptualization would serve the emerging term well. Several salient meanings are identified but these are not presented as exhaustive, and they do not strictly pertain to rewilding's ecological meanings.

Part 3: **Rewilding as Placemaking** is the constructive part of the dissertation and where the conceptual work from the first two parts on place and wilderness come together. This part advances the argument that rewilding represents a form of placemaking, and each of the three chapters presents a different way in which it is argued that rewilding performs place. CHAPTER 6: WILDERNESS REWILDING examines some of the more conventional cases of rewilding: the reintroduction of wolves in Yellowstone National Park and the reintroduction of Bison to the Carpathian Mountain Range, as well as the less obvious case of the rewilding of the Apostle Islands in Wisconsin (USA). These are all examples of rewilding that makes wilderness places, and this chapter shows how the scientific justifications for such projects are inadequate to explain exhaustively the motivations for rewilding: other reasons seem to also be doing some justificatory work. The Apostle Islands case, which has been written about by historian James Feldman, shows that rewilding in this kind of placemaking operates by the emptying out of traces of human life and dwelling. Rewilding goes to considerable length to obscure the human labor required for its production. Rewilding, it seems, is motivated by a desire for places where humans do not belong, and paradoxically, involves the human creation of such places.

CHAPTER 7: EXPERIMENTAL REWILDING considers another type of placemaking that rewilding performs. Looking at the famous cases of the Oostvaardersplassen in the Netherlands and Pleistocene Park in Siberia, this chapter makes the argument that rewilding of this type is interested in specific questions of historical ecology, and that it asks these questions by the making of an experimental reserve where these questions can be answered. These experiments are interested in ascertaining what "real nature" looks like, which is nature before agriculture or human settlement. These cases are contrasted with a third, hypothetical case of Pleistocene rewilding in North America to bring out how the experimental cases hinge on the open-endedness of the experiments they set out to perform. Again this type of rewilding reveals paradoxical motivations to create places of experiment that are isolated from human impact.

Whereas considerations for the cultural landscape are conspicuously absent from these two types of rewilding, they come back in the final chapter: CHAPTER 8: PLACE REGENERATIVE REWILDING, which looks at two examples of rewilding that take seriously their positioning in cultural landscapes. This chapter begins with Val Plumwood's critique of the cultural landscape for its tendency to disappear the agency of nonhuman actors. Rewilding already seems to be an actualization of some of Plumwood's critique, though this parallel has not yet been observed or developed. The acclaimed reintroduction of beavers to Scotland is such a case that reappears missing agency of a highly industrious and ecologically impactful animal. Rewilding in the Millingerwaard (Netherlands) offers a vision of a new iteration of the cultural landscape *through* rewilding rather than by using rewilding to attempt to recreate a previously existing ecological landscape. For this reason, the Millingerwaard offers an example of place-regenerative rewilding: rewilding as an effort to revitalize landscapes and places that is cognizant of the human role in this placemaking and considers rewilding as a new form of the cultural landscape. Both cases in this chapter, while gesturing towards new forms of environmental cultures, also reveal the tensions that are inherent to such projects. Admitting the *wild* of rewilding efforts into inhabited areas and cultural landscapes will be an ongoing tension inherent to rewilding.

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