The Memory of Nature in Aboriginal, Canadian and American Contexts

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Edited by

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and Héliane Ventura

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Originating from two conferences devoted to the literature and visual arts in Canada, the volume has broadened its scope to accommodate First Narratives from the United States and Australia. By referring to literary and artistic works from all over the world, the authors of the present volume suggest that literature should be envisaged as one great text with multiple ramifications branching out from humanities to sciences and reciprocally enlightening each other. The memory of Nature encompasses a variety of perceptions all speaking about our relationship with the world: from Homer's *Odyssey* to Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria*, from Rudy Wiebe's *Temptation of Big Bear* to Tomson Highway's *Kiss of the Fur Queen*, from painting to cinema, from photography to sculpture, from interior journeys by First Nations artists to Emily Carr's representing First Nations totems, all forms of art tell the story of man in Nature. A goddess from Cree mythology shares similar features with a Greek or Western African goddess; the mythology created by men is derived from the observation of, and respect for, animal life; the epic journey described by an Australian Aboriginal female writer ties in with the Homeric song. Inner journeys speak about the outside world and the protection of Nature cannot be separated from artists' interior progress. From suffering Mother Earth represented by Glenna Matoush to ecological writing, artists show us our common presence in the world, a world shared by all living creatures: an awareness appearing in the representation of beauty and suffering. Do not those very different works of art rooted in different cultures speak about an invisible text where reconciliation is no longer a political notion erasing a part of memory, but simply an assertion of difference and of a common memory? Either stories on pages or stories on canvas, do not those stories conjure up multiple threads as those shown by the creative spider? Aboriginal art shows us our common memory and the fundamental reconciliation with the earth necessary to the reconciliation between peoples as water and earth, however different, reconcile in mud to create the world in many cultures, to create new shapes, to create renewal from memory.

Thank you to all the artists and authors. Thank you to the earth that inspired them all.

PART 1:

NATURE AND THE MEMORY OF THE WORLD

INTRODUCTION

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Can we speak about the memory of nature? If we remember the definitions of memory as given by various dictionaries, we can see that it is linked with the mind: it is "the faculty by which the mind stores and remembers information" (Oxford); "the power or process of reproducing or recalling what has been learned and retained especially through associative mechanisms" (Merriam-Webster); "the faculty of preserving or recalling some past states of conscience and what is associated to them"; "the mind as keeping the memory of the past" or "all the psychic functions thanks to which we can represent the past as past" (Robert). Memory seems to exclude the non-human or at least the non-animal world. And yet some scientists have demonstrated that plants have a memory.[1] Similarly ice keeps the memory of what once lived under its crust. Memory is what is kept within the human conscience but it may also be what is stored in the world, in the cosmos, on earth, in the natural world or in cities. Each particle of space, each atom has a memory and tells a story. As Swiss psychologist and philosopher Jean Piaget put it, "Everything partakes of memory […] out of which no understanding of the present nor even invention could be possible."[2]

The photograph opening this volume may symbolize the memory of the world as it is preserved in nature: the totem pole in Stanley Park, Vancouver, tells the mythical stories of the Aboriginal people who carved

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[1] Biologist Michel Thellier, a member of the Academy of Sciences, demonstrated that plants had a memory. "Vegetables are sensible to certain environmental signals to which they answer by modifications of their metabolism or of their organogenesis." Plants store information allowing them to adapt to their environment.
http://www.canalacademie.com/ida1627-Les-plantes-ont-une-memoire.html (accessed 7 March 2014).

[2] "*Tout participe de la mémoire [...] en dehors de laquelle il ne saurait y avoir ni compréhension du présent ni même invention."* (Piaget et Inhalder. *Mémoire et intelligence*. Paris: PUF, 1968), 476.

it with and in nature. The mountains and forests in the background recount the memory of the earth. A hardly visible bird (which might be a raven) is perched on the totem pole. This small living presence tells the double story of natural life and animal evolution—birds are the last dinosaurs and their mere presence appears as a memory of prehistory—and of the creation myth of Aboriginals since the raven is the creator-bird on the North-West Coast of Canada. Art and nature are united to tell the double story of the earth and of man on earth, the story of nature and of man's relationship with nature.

Nature contains the geological memory of the earth: it is the place of tracks and fossils that recount the life of past centuries; it is the place of human vestiges, the memory of footprints inscribed on the earth, which travel books, exploration or climbing books recount; it also contains agricultural memory, the earth becoming a palimpsest where, as Thoreau put it, peasants use the soil instead of a parchment to write their (hi)story. Nature includes the collective memory of peoples who, through their myths, return to the origins of the world.

From travel and exploration literature to poetry, from mythical tales and legends to nature writing and autobiography, all literary genres may speak to us about the memory of nature and the memory of the world. The memory of nature is what the organic world stores in its space and elements, the soil full of the roots of trees and plants and the fossils of past life. The soil also invisibly preserves a trace of the steps of all those who walked and worked and lived on it. Nature contains the memory of the world, its nature and history interwoven to let the shapes of the world and its landscapes speak and tell a continuous story. Eco-criticism is central to the notion of memory. As Lawrence Buell suggests,[3] texts evoking the natural world may lead man to the awareness of nature. The "ecological imagination" (Buell) allows the reader to understand nature seen here and now through the presence of all life, from Prehistory to modern times. The condition of the First Nations may be seen as crucial to the relationship between memory and nature which is at the heart of our awareness of the world surrounding us and of our consciousness of the Other.

The earth contains the memory of its evolution and its history, like the ice of the Rockies or of the Arctic which, according to Robert MacFarlane in *Mountains of the Mind*, contains the archives of the earth, a concept also expressed in Thomas Wharton's novel *Icefields* or Farley Mowat's trilogy,

[3] Laurence Buell speaks about an "ethical orientation that makes human beings responsible for the environment and accountable for its health and continuation." (Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 8.

The Top of the World. The world of fossils is the invisible trace of the memory of the earth. Robert Kroetsch's novel, *Badlands*, Kathy Page's *The Find*, and Joan Thomas's *Curiosity* all deal with the world of palaeontology and archaeology, depicting the search for a form of writing which has crossed the centuries to relate the history of the world.

The myths of the Canadian First Nations, particularly the Creation myths, in which the animal world and, to a lesser extent, the vegetable world and the natural world in general are of the utmost importance, suggest that the human world would not exist without nature, since the creatures at the origin of the world in most of those myths are animals. Recounting such myths, painting or carving them, seem to be the expression of the relationship between the world and Man—Man who finds the memory of the natural world while speaking about his own origins. Does not the link between the memory of origins and the awareness of nature point to the relationship between myth and ecology? Does not collective memory contain the notion of some ecological awareness, before the term ecology existed?

Native life appears to be a way of reading the memory of the world; rituals persisting from time immemorial are the continuous image of the union of man with his land, of the inclusion of peoples in geological Time. Pottery may metaphorically and literally illustrate this idea as it shapes the clay, mingles men's memory and the memory of the matter being transformed as the sculptor shapes stone, wood or metal, from Inuit art to Bill Reid's sculptures, among many others. Arts and crafts preserve the memory of nature by using its forms and materials to reproduce the artist's conception of natural life.

Simple stone walls or Inukchuks, human stone constructions, tell of men's memory. The vegetable world and animal tracks become a sort of ever-changing, eternally ephemeral nature writing, telling the history of the non-human world at the heart of the natural space of forests, mountains, lakes and coasts. This natural space can be read as a palimpsest, as a page of the history of the world telling its story every day.

We may thus wonder how Man's memory conveys the memory of nature and to what extent literature and art can preserve this memory; to what extent artistic and literary creation can become the locus of the preservation of the natural world. The word "memory" evokes the past and some form of nostalgia while suggesting the preservation of a life that was the present at one moment. The notion of memory questions the relationship between space and time, between past, present and future.

The authors of the essays presented in the first part of this volume explore the various forms that the memory of nature can take. Canada is

widely explored here. One of the meanings suggested for the name is: "village, the place where we live"[4]; the land, its peoples and the place-name may illustrate the link between nature and man through the memory of the world. From the Prairie writers' perceptions to studies of literary works from Acadia and Québec, this section explores how literature may reveal the memory of the world when it speaks about nature. First of all we travel to other parts of the world through an initial evocation of the "varieties of environmental nostalgia" by Scott Slovic. Memory gives the concept of nostalgia a philosophical dimension. Is nostalgia a subjective mistake in our relationship with the world, or is it an active instrument of awareness leading us to see the network linking all times through texts written by nature? Three types of environmental nostalgia are explored in Scott Slovic's essay: *nostalgia loci*, conditional nostalgia, and strategic nostalgia. These different types of nostalgia are analysed through the works of Turkish author Orhan Pamuk, French author J.M.G. Le Clézio, and American writers Rick Bass and John Nichols. The author shows that nostalgia attached to the memory of the place "is part of the emotional fabric of place itself." The second type is closer to "restless yearning" whereas the third type, strategic nostalgia, is used by environmental writers to lead readers to some sort of awareness or to alert them to changes and threats concerning the environment. The author shows that nostalgia as a sense of loss may change into fight to save our planet in the future. Nostalgia in this case is no longer a passive feeling only linked with the past but an active tool meant to change the world.

Tim Youngs's essay explores "urban recesses" to evoke memory, nature and the city. Focussing first on Jeff Chapman's *Access All Areas: a User's Guide to the Art of Urban Exploration by Ninjalicious*, Youngs shows how the book demonstrates that travel writing studies should take note of urban exploration. Commenting on Chapman's referring "to 'the hobby of urban exploration' as 'a sort of interior tourism'," he infers that "[t]he phrase 'interior tourism' [...] suggests a parallel between the psyche of the individual and that of the city." This article raises the fundamental question whether "the modern figure [of] the urban explorer" constitute[s]

[4] This is the Iroquois origin suggested by Bernard Assiniwi in *Lexique des noms indiens en Amérique*, Toronto: Léméac, 1973, 26. Bernard Assiniwi (1935-2000) was born of a French Canadian mother and a Cree father. He was curator at the Canadian Museum of Civilisations and had a *Honoris Causa* Doctorate at the University of Quebec Trois Rivières in 1999. He was Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Ottawa in 1994. He wrote a lot of books on the history of Native Americans in Canada, books of tales and legends and was awarded several prizes.

a break from [...] older kinds of traveller or whether they continue in the same vein, attached to the same conventions." Also studying Julie Cruikshank's *Do Glaciers Listen?*, which "focuses on natural phenomena but in their relationship with society and culture," Youngs suggests that "both authors are concerned with the preservation of memory and with the survival of the past in the present." Evoking Julie Cruikshank's opinion that "oral narratives are not only rooted in the past but that they remain untouched by modernity," Youngs demonstrates that "Cruikshank's own journey is embedded in her text" and it also provides "a startling example of how oral narratives of travel evolve and adapt to new contexts while retaining historical memory." It is two different but complementary views that are offered by those two texts bringing about an interesting reflexion about different aspects of travel writing.

Literature is an art that questions our relationship with the world. Three Canadian writers give their own personal views of the memory of nature: Thomas Wharton prolongs Tim Youngs's study and illustrates the dual space of town and wilderness from a personal point of view. Between the town of Jasper and the wild mountains surrounding it, he leads the reader to the porous border between human constructions and wild nature. By questioning the "edges of things," he shows how "The wild was used, ironically, to erase part of the story of Jasper in order to make another story more visible." His individual experience of the wild leads him to think that man bears in him the memory of the wild: "We came from the wild and it is still in us." It is a philosophy of the land that Rudy Wiebe invites people to share. Place-naming is a significant act: by replacing Native place-names by English ones, settlers create a new place from which memory is obliterated. Through examples taken from two of his novels, *The Temptations of Big Bear* (1973) and *Peace Shall Destroy Many* (1962), Wiebe suggests that it is only when people "have named [the land] and inhabited it with a shared memory" that the land will be for them "the ancient land that it already is for the Aboriginal peoples." The place-name contains the memory of the land and those who rename it must never forget that memory contained in language.

Aritha van Herk, using the Burkean opposition between beauty and the sublime, compares nature to a china shop in which a broken object is considered as sold. She shows that "looking is not a neutral act but a possessive gesture. " According to her, "seeing nature as a protectorate is no more disinterested than earlier explorations in 'philanthropy, religion, and art'" to use Said's phrase (Said 12). Quoting theoreticians like Homi Bhabha, Jonathan Bordo or Laurence Buell, she evokes economic exploitation and its consequences and sees the increasing demand for

environmental preservation as "a repetition of the desire to control, manipulate and map the colonized dimension of our natural world." This part of her essay demonstrates the necessity to "struggle against the imposition of the sublime as a restrictive category." Through the investigation of the role of the sublime, the article raises the issue of the link between economy and wilderness. Paradoxically, tourists are necessary to allow a country or a region to live economically, but they also constitute a threat to nature while wanting it to be conserved and contemplated as wild. "Tourism's relationship to a memory of nature is complex and paradoxical," Aritha van Herk writes. They want to see wild nature without being aware that their mere presence in those supposedly wild places erases the wilderness. And yet they are also the exterior eye watching over nature and obliging political powers to conserve it so that tourism might be prosperous. One may recall that in the eighteenth century, the sublime as described by Burke, was characterized by vastness, darkness, solitude and terror. It was the mountain summit that could not be reached and where monsters or dragons were supposed to live. Gradually the sublime has no longer corresponded to a place to be looked at from afar. People penetrated sublime places. Aritha van Herk suggests that "ideas of sublimity have contributed to a current appropriation of a desperate clinging to nature as a category which cannot be amended." She asks the questions whether Canadian divorcing from their context has meant that they "opened themselves to neo-colonial imposition." Starting from an aesthetic category, the sublime, Aritha van Herk raises important questions concerning the relationship between wild nature and tourism and more widely about the link between some ways of seeing landscapes and colonization. She suggests that the memory of nature may be erased by some ways of looking at it. She ends with the role of animals as "part of our 'memory of nature'" through a study of Marian Engel's novel, *Bear*, seen as an example of the "collision between the Canadian *in* nature and the Canadian natural world as read from without."

After writers' perceptions of the memory of nature, four critical approaches to Canadian literature explore the writings of other Canadian authors depicting man's relationship with the land and with time. Christine Lorre-Johnston analyses the memory of nature through three short stories by Alice Munro, showing how "deep time" and human time mingle in these stories. The Nobel Prize winner associates the story of her origins to the origins of the world through a geological metaphor. As Héliane Ventura writes, "Like the ice staging its conquests and retreats several times, Munro has been staging her story repeatedly, writing thirteen volumes of short stories which are mostly autobiographic and mostly

cover the same ground from 1968 to 2009. From one bedrock to another, she has reconfigured her individual experience by resorting to a geographical paradigm, which simultaneously embodies and depersonalizes her trajectory."[5] The geological memory of the world enables Alice Munro to speak about her individual memory through the trajectories of various characters. Choosing three short stories, Christine Lorre-Johnston shows "that the protagonists' sense of time and place is closely linked to their perception of both nature and their own personal history." The link between space and time—from phenomenological time to geological time—is thus studied through "a female worldview encompassing several dimensions of time."

The following three essays explore the works of several French-speaking writers from Québec and Acadia. Sylvie Vignes focuses on *Betsi Larousse* by Louis Hamelin and *Champagne* by Monique Proulx. Nature as seen in literary creation tells of the memory of the world as a vast network: it is interesting to note that the Canadian moose present in these novels, "both the memory of a local land and the memory of life on earth," seem to find an echo in the caribou opening Rudy Wiebe's novel *A Discovery of Strangers* where the animal point of view conjures up the memory of the Arctic land. Echoing Aritha van Herk's words, Sylvie Vignes suggests that the animal can be seen as the "memory of a primitive state of the world and of the primitive state of our being-in-the-world." The memory of origins inscribed in some landscapes depicted by Québécois novelists or in the eyes of a young Native American has a healing value. And even if the physical healing is not always completed through the awareness of the surrounding beauty, this awareness may lead men and women, like the character of *Champagne*, to become "the memory of the memory of the world." The article argues that these two novels suggest how natural and human fates are closely interwoven and emphasize "the vital necessity to maintain a link with what is still wild in the world." Another novel by a French-speaking Canadian author is studied by André Maindron who analyses Acadian writer René Le Blanc's *Derrière les embruns*. From "man under the subjection of nature" to "man given over to nature," André Maindron writes about the memory of Acadians and Acadia stored up in René Le Blanc's novel. Through the specificity of Acadian culture he shows the relationship between Man and nature. Man lives in nature and in certain areas, he must often fight against it. Through this precisely located novel, the author raises questions about

[5] Héliane Ventura, "Genealogy and Geology: Of Metanarratives of Origins," in Claire Omhovère, Christine Lorre (ed.). *Tectonic Shifts. The Global and the Local*. *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* 34, n° 1 (Autumn 2011): 98.

emerging countries and forced emigration accomplished in order to survive starvation in hostile regions. It raises the problems of overpopulation and the exploitation of natural resources. Le Blanc's novel tells of the memory of Acadians and the Acadian land and in this memory one can read the crucial questions of man's economic relationship to nature and to the world. In the last chapter in this section, Julie LeBlanc, demonstrates to what extent the colonization of Aboriginal peoples all over the world may be reflected in one particular novel: In Jacques Poulin's Québécois historiographic novel, *Volkswagen Blues*, the narrative of the Aboriginal genocide encapsulates the collective world memory of such genocides. Historical events are recounted by a young Métis who links all tragic historical events with nature—the sites of the most terrible massacres are natural sites: Wounded Knee, Washita River, Sand Creek. Those place names no longer speak about nature but about the tragic reality of colonization ending with massacres. Nature no longer appears there as nature but turns into a historical book preserving the memory of all those who lost their lives in colonial genocides. Through the analysis of a white pro-Aboriginal narrative in which the main character is a Métis girl, the chapter explores the status of oral stories in their relationship to historical facts. It also raises the problem of legal claims and reconciliation. The article points to the active role played by literature, both in appearing as the repository of the memory of the world through the oral accounts of a fictitious Métis woman, and in foreshadowing political events since in January 2013, as Julie LeBlanc notes, "Canadian Métis were given the same rights and privileges as Aboriginals, ending discriminatory practices which have plagued the Métis for centuries". This essay about the link between oral narratives and history in a work of fiction written by a white author who has chosen to give a voice to a Métis character denouncing the massacres of Aboriginal peoples in the 19th century leads us to ponder on the nature of Aboriginal narration, which is the subject of the second part of the volume.

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CHAPTER ONE

VARIETIES OF ENVIRONMENTAL NOSTALGIA

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Abstract

This article explores three important modes of environmental nostalgia that appear in American and international literature: *nostalgia loci*, conditional nostalgia, and strategic nostalgia. The first type of nostalgia is a complex emotional response to the sense of deep history as it attaches itself to specific places in the world—it is a nostalgia that is part of the emotional fabric of place itself. The second type, conditional nostalgia, is associated with the restless yearning that is an essential aspect of human nature. Type three identifies the language of nostalgia as a rhetorical tool employed by environmental writers in order to prompt audiences' action by alerting them to the anticipated change, or loss, of threatened phenomena, ranging from particular places to entire species. Examples of these three modes of environmental nostalgia come from the works of Orhan Pamuk (a Turkish author now living in New York City), J.M.G. Le Clézio (a French author who divides his time between France, Mauritius, and the United States), and American writers Rick Bass and John Nichols.

What is it about the word "nostalgia" that seems to evoke such negative, or at least ambivalent, responses? In popular usage, "nostalgia" tends to imply an excessive tendency to look toward the past, to wish painfully for something or some place or some relationship that no longer exists. Literally, the word means "return-pain" or "pain of return." There is an implied futility in the human desire to go back into the past. By contrast, the similar word "memory," which becomes the verb "to remember," to re-join, has positive connotations of connection—of bringing the past into the present and future. No doubt our individual psychological stability, like the stability of our entire civilization, calls for some retained connection to that which came before. The past represents the foundation

of all that follows. Our civilization and we, as individuals, careen erratically in the winds of time, like kites without tails, if we carry no memories. For me, as I contemplate how various environmental writers from the United States and abroad make use of the past, it seems important to rehabilitate the concept of nostalgia, in particular—to recognize the special emotional power of nostalgic moments in literature and the power of nostalgia as a catalyzing psychological experience. Nostalgia is one of the most potent emotions linked to our environmental experience. Environmental nostalgia is a concept that can be harnessed both to explore the meaning of human relationships to specific places and the entire planet and to inspire environmental activism.

The effort to revitalize nostalgia as a concept in environmental discourse received a boost in Jennifer Ladino's 2012 book *Reclaiming Nostalgia: Longing for Nature in American Literature*. Ladino notes that "nostalgia" has often been "used interchangeably with words like conservative, regressive, ahistorical, or uncritical" (Ladino 6). In particular, she points to the danger of a "free-floating nostalgia" that describes "an abstract, romanticized relationship to the past that is unlikely to yield critical thinking about the present or progressive thinking about the future." Ladino calls for reclamation of nostalgia "by foregrounding its nature—that is, by re-centring the environmental dimensions that were key to its first diagnosis—and by carving out a new discursive 'place' for nostalgia within scholarly discourse" (7). Working with such disparate American texts as Zitkala Sa's *American Indian Stories*, Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem*, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn*, Don DeLillo's *White Noise*, and Ruth Ozeki's *All Over Creation*, Ladino understands nostalgia as "a longing to return home that can be felt, wielded, manipulated, and retold in a variety of ways" (7-8). Surely it is true that there are numerous variations of nostalgia experienced by people and articulated in art and literature. For my own paper, though, I would like to consolidate the potentially bewildering variety of "nostalgias" into what I take to be three principle modes of "environmental nostalgia": 1) *nostalgia loci*; 2) conditional nostalgia; and 3) strategic nostalgia. I will explain these three modes below and will offer specific literary examples to illustrate these psychological processes and discourses.

One of the most common forms of nostalgia to appear in environmental literature as an aesthetic trope is what I call "*nostalgia loci*," or nostalgia that attaches itself to specific landscapes, compelling us to think of the human and natural history of those places as a way of understanding them.

I associate *nostalgia loci* with the spirit of place, which writers have traditionally called "genius loci." To be sure, any place where a person has spent a portion of his or her life may prompt a kind of place-based nostalgia, even if the person's memories of that particular place are unpleasant—a period of time spent in prison or a hospital, for instance. Because of the profound human tendency to habituate ourselves to almost any kind of experience, we become familiar with, even "fond" of, places and people and activities that (or who) may be essentially unpleasant—we become psychologically "attached." When such attachments are severed—when we move on in our lives, when we relocate ourselves geographically—we may well find ourselves yearning to reconnect with these remembered phenomena. This yearning, when directed toward place, is a form of *nostalgia loci*. Another particularly unique type of *nostalgia loci* is the strong "sense of the past" that inheres in special places—in other words, the intrinsic "past-ness" of particular environments because of the way in which layers of human and natural history impress themselves upon visitors or residents even in the present. This is akin to what Simon Schama discusses in his 1995 book *Landscape and Memory* when he writes:

> Even the landscapes that we suppose to be most free of our culture may turn out, on closer inspection, to be its product. […] And it is the argument of *Landscape and Memory* that this is a cause not for guilt and sorrow but celebration. […] So while we acknowledge (as we must) that the impact of humanity on the earth's ecology has not been an unmixed blessing, neither has the relationship between nature and culture been an unrelieved and predetermined calamity. (Schama 9-10)

Schama here notes that memory (a sense of what has happened before) inheres not only in the human mind, but in places themselves. The land possesses its own form of memory. Often this occurs through humanity's "impact […] on the earth's ecology." For Schama, and for other writers, this can be cause for "celebration." One might even claim that such a lingering (or remembered) impact represents a way of overcoming the pangs of ephemerality. It is this latter mode of *nostalgia loci*—the nostalgia that clings fundamentally to specific places—that I will discuss below.

The second prominent variety of environmental nostalgia I would like to offer is what I term "conditional nostalgia," as in the idea of *la condition humaine*, or the fundamental human condition. I understand this type of nostalgia to be linked to human psychological impulses of desire and regret and the common traumas of human life that include geographical

movement, the fracturing of our relationships with other people and even with other species (through conflict or mortality), the devastations of war, and diminishments of the physical environment that seem to occur inevitably through industrial and urban development. Environmental writers have routinely described human experience as being essentially a process of saying goodbye and often regretting the necessity of loss, departure, and even growing up. The purpose of describing a nostalgia-laden human condition seems not to be the correction of that condition, as if by naming it the artist and his or her readers might change our fundamental nature. Instead, as is so often the case, with literature and other artistic media, the purpose here is tense acceptance. As we observe in the Japanese aesthetic concept known as *mono no awaré* (the foundation of haiku poetry), there is a sweet sadness that comes from our experience of transience, either in actual life or in our encounters with aesthetic objects. This is why haiku tends to focus on spring and fall, the times of year when change is most prominent in nature—the arrival of fresh leaves and delicate flowers, whose appearance also implies eventual disappearance, in springtime; and the fading of summer vitality through the process of autumnal decay. There is nothing to be done about mortality—it is the condition of all living things, by definition. Yet it is worth noting that certain works of literature are particularly successful in describing how our human feelings of loss are often deeply interwoven with images and stories of geographical movement or environmental degradation/change.

Finally, I will offer some examples of how environmental nostalgia has served as a useful rhetorical strategy—as way of sparking poignant concern among audiences that will lead to engagement with specific or general causes: saving a treasured building or landscape; working to block the imminent extinction of an endangered species; or simply inspiring us to savour our present relationships while they last. I refer to this third variety of environmental nostalgia as "strategic nostalgia," although I have also written about it on other occasions as "anticipatory nostalgia." I use the latter phrase on occasion because, ironically, the rhetorical effect of nostalgia can be harnessed by looking forward to a *potential* loss or change that has not actually occurred and might be averted if readers react to the perceived threat by calling for change.

I turn my attention, first, to what I find to be a particularly potent example of *nostalgia loci*: Turkish novelist and memoirist Orhan Pamuk's 2003 work of nonfiction titled *Istanbul: Memories and the City*. Pamuk, who is a professor of English at Columbia University in New York, received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2006. He wrote *Istanbul* with a

sense of longing that seems natural for a person living in exile. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, the saying goes. And there is a complex mixture of fondness and anxiety embedded in Pamuk's nostalgia for Istanbul, his hometown and Turkey's largest city. In a sense, this autobiographical work is an effort to describe both the author's nostalgic feelings toward Istanbul and Istanbul's inherent embodiment of history, the place's own existence as a "nostalgic landscape." Early in his book, Pamuk writes:

> Gustave Flaubert, who visited Istanbul 102 years before my birth, was struck by the variety of life in its teeming streets; in one of his letters he predicted that in a century's time it would be the capital of the world. The reverse came true: After the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the world almost forgot that Istanbul existed. The city into which I was born was poorer, shabbier, and more isolated than I had ever been before in its two-thousand-year history. For me it has always been a city of ruins and of end-of-empire melancholy. I've spent my life either battling with this melancholy or (like all *Istanbullus*) making it my own.
>
> […] I sometimes think myself unlucky to have been born in an aging and impoverished city buried under the ashes of a ruined empire. (Pamuk 6)

The shabbiness and isolation Pamuk mentions here seem to characterize the city of Istanbul as a place continually existing at the conclusion of a glorious history, producing a psychological condition the author refers to as "end-of-empire melancholy." The empire—or rather an entire series of caliphates and empires—may have ended, but the end-of-empire feeling of Istanbul appears to be a continuing aspect of this place, a fundamental attribute of this specific place in the world. Although the writer speaks of "battling with this melancholy" throughout his life, what emerges through in his eloquent memoir is the idea of coming to terms with, or accepting, the beautiful, nostalgic qualities of this place.

Readers of Pamuk's *Istanbul* will be treated to extraordinary images of the city, including the author's own black-and-white photographs and his rich portrayals in prose (even in English translation). These "loving" images of landscape melancholia begin to convey, as the memoir progresses, a sense that the basic personality of the city is one of backward-looking sadness. This is not a blanket representation of human nature, as in the mode of nostalgia I will discuss below as conditional nostalgia, but rather a special form of nostalgia connected to one place on earth (for this particular author). In the chapter titled "Black and White," Pamuk writes:

> The street below, the avenues beyond, the city's poor neighborhoods seemed as dangerous as those in a black-and-white gangster film. And with this attraction to the shadow world, I have always preferred the winter to the summer in Istanbul. I love the early evenings when autumn is slipping into winter, when the leafless trees are trembling in the north wind and people in black coats and jackets are rushing home through the darkening streets. I love the overwhelming melancholy when I look at the walls of old apartment buildings and the dark surfaces of neglected, unpainted, fallen-down wooden mansions; only in Istanbul have I seen this texture, this shading. […As] I watch dusk descend like a poem in the pale light of the streetlamps to engulf these old neighborhoods, it comforts me to know that for the night at least we are safe; the shameful poverty of our city is cloaked from Western eyes. (34-35)

The focus here on the colours black and white evokes a sense of the past—of black-and-white films and still photography. The chapter itself (in fact, the entire book) is accented with haunting photographs of fleeting, shadowy human figures and dilapidated buildings. The photographs are beautiful, but also painful—there is something "shameful," as Pamuk writes, something almost hidden from outsiders' eyes, in these images. But the author introspectively reveals his own emotional response to the "shadow world" of Istanbul, and in doing so he also makes the emotional "texture" of the place accessible to readers. The effect of such writing is to help readers appreciate what may very well be uniquely special about Istanbul. At the same time, readers may become more sensitive to *nostalgia loci* that is relevant to other places in the world. As Schama suggests in the passage I quoted above, wherever there is a discernable and lingering human impact on the planet, there is the potential for "memory." Physical impact is an instance of physical memory. If we refer to such an impact as "nostalgia," we cast it in an emotional dimension that suggests a combination of pain and pleasure, dismay and appeal. When Pamuk asserts that he "love[s] the early evenings when autumn is slipping into winter" in the passage above, he reveals that the melancholia associated with *nostalgia loci* can be something to be cherished.

So deeply does Pamuk associate the nostalgic sadness with Istanbul that he actually presents a specific term in Turkish for this emotional condition: "*hüzün*." He writes as follows about this indigenous, local form of melancholy:

> We might call this confused, hazy state melancholy, or perhaps we should call it by its Turkish name, *hüzün*, which denotes a melancholy that is communal rather than private. Offering no clarity, veiling reality instead, *hüzün* brings us comfort, softening the view like a condensation on a

> window when a teakettle has been spouting steam on a winter's day. Steamed-up windows make me feel *hüzün*, and I still love getting up and walking over to those windows to trace words on them with my finger. As I shape the words and figures on a steamy window, the *hüzün* inside me dissipates and I can relax; after I have done all my writing and drawing, I can erase it all with the back of my hand and look outside.
>
> But the view itself can bring its own *hüzün*. It is time to come to a better understanding of this feeling that the city of Istanbul carries as its fate. (89)

The fact that this is a "communal" emotional state rather than a private one contributes to the idea that the feeling belongs to the city itself, not only to the human residents. As Pamuk continues to unpack the emotional complexity of his personal relationship with Istanbul, we realize that *nostalgia loci* inevitably combines an assessment of our own human identities as well as the identity of the physical locations (the environment, if you will) where we have forged our ideas of self. The author concludes his book by realizing that "anything we say about the city's essence says more about our own lives and our own states of mind. The city has no center other than ourselves" (349). Of course this makes sense if we define "nostalgia" as an emotional experience associated with human consciousness. Individually or collectively, we can feel the hybrid state of pleasure and sadness prompted by any sort of encounter or loss. But certain phenomena, certain types of experience or location, may be particularly powerful in evoking the complex combination of feelings that we label "nostalgia." Pamuk's memoir of Istanbul articulates this beautifully.

I will next turn to the idea of conditional nostalgia, focusing specifically on the notion that, for some authors, human nature is fundamentally embedded in the process of working through nostalgic feelings—the desire to return to previous places or situations. Another Nobel Laureate, French ex-patriot writer J.M.G. Le Clézio, has been especially effective in articulating this aspect of human experience. Born in Nice, France, Le Clézio grew up on the African island of Mauritius and currently divides his time between southern France, Mauritius, and New Mexico (in the United States). He received the Nobel Prize in 2008. As a multinational—one might even say "migratory"—writer, Le Clézio is especially qualified to describe and explore the condition of profound restlessness, or yearning, that is another aspect of environmental nostalgia. Conditional nostalgia, as I understand it, is both prospective and retrospective—an impulse to experience that which is new as well as to re-experience the past.

Perhaps Le Clézio's quintessential depiction of nostalgia appears in his 1985 novel titled *Le Chercheur d'or* (in English *The Prospector*). The English title of this novel, which broadens and universalizes the gold-seeking connotation of the original French, suggests the restless quest for something, although the object of desire is not specified. The novel itself, written evocatively in the first person, depicts a sensitive soul who succumbs to intrinsic human curiosity, leaves home, and forever finds himself pulled both forward and back. Late in the novel, have left his native lover Ouma and later inadvertently returned to her village, the first-person narrator reaches a nadir of cosmic homelessness:

> I am lost in the middle of the mountains, surrounded by stones and bushes that all look alike […].
> Where am I? […]
>
> I am moved when I realize I've spent the night in the ruins of an old Manaf camp. […] Is this all that remains of the village Ouma lived in? What happened to all of them? […] I stand in the middle of the ruins, feeling completely disheartened. (Le Clézio 1985: 294-95)

The ruins amidst which the speaker stands are the ruins of a life spent restlessly "prospecting." Every step in such a life means leaving something behind—places, people, one's own younger selves. Obviously, this is the basic texture of a sentient life, and even a life spent in a single locale with the same cast of characters entails the temporal movement away from what came before. But what makes Le Clézio's representation of this condition relevant to environmental nostalgia is how he characterizes the human condition in terms of geographical disorientation. The existential question "who am I?" is cast as "where am I?" The speaker finds himself alone in a landscape with undifferentiated features, unable to read the surroundings—to pay attention to salient detail. He is disheartened to find that all of his searching has come to naught.

Early in the novel, the narrator naively experiences a very different mode of living—a direct, accepting engagement with sensory reality. This is the novelist's way of characterizing the child's perspective on life:

> When I was totally immersed in the river I grabbed hold of a large stone and let the fresh water run over me to wash away the burn from the sun and the salty sea.
>
> That was all there was. Only what I felt and saw: the very blue sky, the noise of the sea breaking on the reefs, the cold water running over my skin. (8)

The speaker's "total immersion" in the present physical moment has not yet been tested by the desires that inevitably develop over the course of a human life. The entirety of the character's existence converges into what he "felt and saw" at one particular instant of time. To the extent that the narrative functions as a kind of *Bildungsroman*, Le Clézio allows his protagonist to succumb to the psychology of human desire (described within the text as prospecting or searching), only to experience inevitable regret (a form of nostalgia). Unable to freeze time, the character must allow himself to be buffeted by the currents of emotion representing the push-pull between stasis and change that are familiar throughout human cultures.

The protagonist's restless desire was implanted when he was just a child and is, on the surface, represented as a kind of mercenary desire—a desire for wealth or "treasure." In one key early scene, the narrator's father reveals to him a special map, a kind of blueprint for human life:

> My father remained standing as he talked, and I didn't understand much of what he said. He was not really speaking to me, I a child with overlong hair, sunburned face, and clothes torn from running through the brush and the cane fields. He was talking to himself; his eyes shone and his voice was slightly muffled by the depth of his emotion. He spoke of this immense treasure that he was going to discover, for at least he knew where it was hidden; he had discovered the island where the Unknown Corsair hid his treasure. He never said the Corsair's name, but always called him, as I read later in his papers, the Unknown Corsair, and today this name still seems more real and more filled with mystery than any other name.
>
> He told me for the first time about Rodrigues Island, a dependency of Mauritius several days' boat ride away. On his study wall he had pinned a map of the island […].
>
> I listened to my father without hearing him, as if his voice were coming to me from a deep dream. (51-52)

The fact that the father here speaks essentially to himself, not to his specific son, implies the adult's process of working out for himself an unresolved—and indeed unresolvable—aspect of the human condition. From where does this restlessness come and toward what is it directed? How do we humans learn to live with this itch, this pang of discontent? The "corsair" (or pirate) is "unknown," his treasure "mysterious" and elusive. Indeed, even the thought that this treasure might be something merely material is itself a mis-direction. No physical map could possibly display the location of the secret the protagonist must fathom in order to understand his own nature—human nature.

There are later moments in the narrative when the protagonist nearly claims the "treasure" of insight into what really matters in life. This occurs, for instance, when he comes together with his lover Ouma to experience a joyful, seemingly timeless relationship. This is the grown-up version of the scene quoted above, where the narrator is a child, immersed in the intensely cold river. Le Clézio writes:

> Sea birds fly above us and some walk on the beach a few steps away from us. They aren't afraid of us any more, they have made friends with us.
> I think that this day, like the sea, will never end. […]
>
> Yet evening comes and I am walking on the beach surrounded by anxiously screeching birds. […] When I sit down beside Ouma she puts her arms around me and rests her head on my shoulder. Her scent and her warmth are all around me. […]
>
> Pressed close to Ouma I breathe in the smell of her body and her hair and taste the salt on her skin and lips. […]
>
> Did we really sleep? I don't know. I lay still for such a long time, feeling the wind above me and hearing the terrific clamor of the waves breaking on the coral reef. It seemed as if I watched the stars slowly gyrating until dawn. (216-18)

For a brief moment, pressed against the body of Ouma, the narrator is literally centred and at rest—the very stars of the universe spin in the heavens around his centrepoint. He has achieved, for a moment, a kind of sensory stasis, if not yet the emotional peace that will quell his basic nostalgic restlessness. There is an implicitly gendered aspect to the narrator's restlessness. His initial desires seem to be triggered by his father's soliloquy in the study, gazing at the map of the Unknown Corsair. But the narrator's sister Laure is not susceptible to same prospecting impulse. When he returns home after years of wandering, his sister is still there, attempting to make a life for herself as a European living in Africa (although this socio-cultural subtext is unspoken):

> […] my boredom and desire to flee are so great that Laure can't help noticing. […] Suddenly Laure says, "You're going away again, aren't you?"
>
> […] "Why don't you say anything? Why must I always hear about you from other people?" She hesitates, then says, "That woman there, the one you lived with like a savage! And that stupid treasure you still think exists!"
>
> How does she know? Who can have told her about Ouma?
>
> "We'll never be the way we were before. There will never be a place for us here."