

# SEEING THE FOREST AND THE TREES:

## *Environmental History and the Forests of the North American West*

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BY BRUCE SHELVEY

*Turning Trees into Dollars:  
The British Columbia Coastal Lumber Industry, 1858-1913*  
Gordon Hak

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. 239 pp. Maps. \$22.95 paper.

*Northwest Lands, Northwest Peoples:  
Readings in Environmental History*  
Dale D. Goble and Paul H. Hirt, editors  
Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999.  
522 pp. Illus., maps. US\$29.95 paper.

*Last Stands: A Journey through  
North America's Vanishing Ancient Rainforests*  
Larry Pynn  
Vancouver: New Starr, 1999. 212 pp. Map. \$19.00 paper.

*Vanishing Halo: Saving the Boreal Forest*  
Daniel Gawthrop  
Vancouver: Greystone Books with David Suzuki Foundation, 1999.  
225 pp. \$19.95 paper.

*The Pacific Raincoast: Environment and  
Culture in an American Eden, 1778-1900*  
Robert Bunting  
Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997. 236 pp. Map. US\$29.95 cloth.

*Tongass: Pulp Politics and the Fight for the Alaska Rain Forest*  
Kathie Durbin  
Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1999.  
328 pp. Illus., map. US\$19.95 paper.

Nature rejoices in nature, nature subdues nature, nature rules over nature.  
Democritus the Alchemist

EVERY CULTURAL ACHIEVEMENT demands the sacrifice of nature. Such is the central idea of what is considered by many to be the oldest grand narrative in the world, the *Gilgamesh Epic*. A masterpiece of world literature, the epic illustrates what happens when cultural forces seek to subdue nature. The two central protagonists, Gilgamesh and Enkidu, go beyond the bounds of nature in an effort to secure a permanent existence. Gilgamesh, the man of civilization, struggles to reconcile the forces of culture with the forces of the wild. In the end, the natural forces both within and outside of himself rise up against his eternal quest. Gilgamesh's journey from the city to the wild stands in stark contrast to Enkidu's journey. Enkidu begins in the wild, becomes seduced by civilization, and tragically ends his life lamenting his fallen state. The epic recounts how Enkidu's death, the death of the wild man, causes Gilgamesh to realize what he has lost. Ironically, he seeks rebirth and the permanence of life in the very thing that he had sought to destroy – the wild. His quest for life ends in the death of all his former idealisms, which were informed by his animal nature (i.e., the desire for self-preservation). For both characters the instinctive need to conquer the works

of nature could not transcend the work of the spirit.<sup>1</sup>

The epic underscores most of the main themes in recent writing on environmental history and the forests of the North American West. The exploration of human nature and humanity's place within the broader environment, the definition and identity of nature itself, and the transformation of physical nature link the epic with the primary avenues of thought for environmental historians. The books reviewed, while varied in their geographical details, chronological focus, and thematic undertones, represent modern-day attempts to use the history of the forests to construct an epic that embodies our understanding of an appropriate accommodation with the environment within which we live and which we create.<sup>2</sup>

In recent scholarship, environmental history has become a conduit for exploring essential themes about culture and nature. Scholars such as William Cronon, Steve Pyne, and Carolyn Merchant, amongst others, have led the way in defining the field as a search for meaning for humans and a place in history for nature. This new wave of interest in the natural had its roots in modern pre-1970 scholarship. For example, according to the famous collection of essays edited by William

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Van Nortwick, *Somewhere I Have Never Travelled: The Second Self and the Hero's Journey in Ancient Epic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); David Ferry, *Gilgamesh: A New Rendering in English Verse* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1992); Robert Temple, *He Who Saw Everything: A Verse Translation of the Epic of Gilgamesh* (London, UK: Rider, 1991); Rivkah Schörf Kluger, *The Archetypal Significance of Gilgamesh: A Modern Ancient Hero*. Ed. H. Yehezkel Kluger (Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Daimon Verlag, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *Journal of American History* (March 1992): 1237-376; Stephen Pyne, *How the Canyon became Grand: A Short History* (New York: Viking, 1998).

Thomas, historical geographers like George Perkins Marsh and Clarence Glacken analyzed "man's role in changing the face of the earth."<sup>3</sup> Landscape historians and cultural geographers, one of the most recent of whom is Simon Schama (who wrote the wonderful *Landscape and Memory*), focused less on topography and more on "sites" as the starting point for their analysis of change.<sup>4</sup> Environmental history, the youngest sister of the three methods of inquiry, developed out of the natural sciences, thus its emphasis on ecological approaches gives more agency to nature. In the early development of the genre, polemical works espousing nature tended to predominate. In recent years, environmental historians have shown that human-nature interaction is a symbiotic process; each acts upon the other. The authors represented in the seminal work *Uncommon Ground: Towards Reinventing Nature*, edited by William Cronon, make it clear that

humans must have a meaningful place within the nature that they have a role in creating.<sup>5</sup>

Defining the relationship of forestry to human societies in the North American West is difficult because of the relative lack of in-depth historical scholarship on human interaction with woodlands. A case in point is an overview of British Columbia's forestry use in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Prior to Gordon Hak's *Turning Trees into Dollars*, the topic was limited to a master's thesis entitled "Markets and Capital: A History of the Lumber Industry of British Columbia (1778-1952)," written by Joseph Lawrence at the University of British Columbia in 1957.<sup>6</sup> Scholarship that focuses on the use of forests in the US West, including Alaska, has been more prolific and analytical; however, no one, as yet, has attempted to effectively summarize the forest's use across state and national boundaries.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps more

<sup>3</sup> William Thomas, ed., *Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956); Clarence Glacken, *Traces on a Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); George Perkins Marsh, *Man and Nature* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965).

<sup>4</sup> Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (Toronto: Random/Vintage, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Towards Reinventing Nature* (New York: Norton, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Considering the importance of the forestry sector to British Columbia's economy, the lack of scholarship in the area is surprising. Some of the best full-length studies are: Robert E. Cail, *Land, Man, and the Law: The Disposal of Crown Lands in British Columbia, 1871-1913* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1974); Peter R. Gillis and Thomas R. Roach, *Lost Initiatives: Canada's Forest Industries, Forest Policy and Forest Conservation* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986); Donald MacKay, *Empire of Wood: The MacMillan Bloedel Story* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1982); Richard A. Rajala, *Clearcutting the Pacific Rim Rainforest: Production, Science, and Regulation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998); Mary Shakespeare and Rodney H. Pain, *West Coast Logging, 1840-1910* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1977); G.W. Taylor, *Timber: The History of the Forestry Industry in B.C.* (Vancouver: J.J. Douglas, 1975); Jeremy Wilson, *Talk and Log: Wilderness Politics in British Columbia, 1965-1996* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998).

<sup>7</sup> For a sampling of the forestry history in the US West, see: Thomas R. Cox, *Mills and Markets: A History of the Pacific Coast Lumber Industry to 1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974); Robert E. Ficken, *The Forested Land: A History of Lumbering in Western Washington* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987); Ralph W. Hidy, Frank E. Hill, and Allan Nevins, *Timber and Men: The Weyerhaeuser Story* (New York: Macmillan,

problematic, as Nancy Langston points out in her fine essay "Human and Ecological Change in the Inland Northwest Forests" (in *Northwest Lands, Northwest Peoples*), is that "most forest histories have focused on political, administrative, and institutional relationships, treating ecological factors as givens rather than dynamic players in the story" (418).

The literature on the forests of the North American West illustrates that not all writing about past "nature" constitutes environmental history. In the absence of analytical history on the meaning of forest use, the forests of the Pacific Northwest – whether forest regions like the Tongass, forest types like the Boreal, or forest successions like old-growth – have been defined and characterized by polemic and politically motivated journalism. As propaganda for the environmental movement, this genre of writing usually lacks analytical balance and intellectual rigour even though, with its use of the natural sciences and ecology to challenge the claims of the applied sciences and industry, it mimics environmental history. Representative of this type of writing is Larry Pynn's *Last Stands: A Journey through North America's Vanishing Ancient Rainforests*. Pynn rightly points

to the delicate interconnectedness between all ecosystems in the old-growth forest, but the anecdotal evidence he presents appears to legitimize nature only when humans are not present. Thus, Pynn's analysis writhe under the stress of the narrative as he attempts to present old-growth as a benign entity, somehow existing outside of human experience.

More sophisticated expressions of popular environmental writing do exist. Daniel Gawthrop's *Vanishing Halo: Saving the Boreal Forest* reminds us that the more common and so-called "species-poor" areas of the Boreal forest are just as important for ecosystems health as are the magnificent stands of old-growth described by Pynn. Gawthrop underscores the fact that the Taiga, or northern forest regions, are all too often ignored, even though they are the "giant green halo" of the globe. Although the book tends to read like a series of thirty-second sound bites, Gawthrop points to a central fact long acknowledged by environmental historians – that we will protect that which we value.<sup>8</sup> In modern culture aesthetic beauty is often defined by scarcity and, thus, is associated with big trees, spotted owls, limestone caves, and Alaskan brown bears; little room is left for "normal,"

1963); David Clary, *Timber and the Forest Service* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986); Thomas R. Cox, ed., *This Well-Wooded Land: Americans and Their Forests from Colonial Times to the Present* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985); Paul Hirt, *A Conspiracy of Optimism: Management of the National Forests since World War II* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994); Lawrence Rakestraw, *A History of Forest Conservation in the Pacific Northwest, 1891-1913* (New York: Arno, 1979); William Robbins, *American Forestry: A History of National, State, and Private Cooperation* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985); Michael Williams, *Americans and Their Forests: A Historical Geography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Nancy Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: The Paradox of Old Growth in the Inland West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995); Char Millar and Rebecca Staebler, eds., *The Greatest Good: 100 Years of Forestry in America* (Bethesda: Society of American Foresters, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

or "common," landscapes, whose value is expendable or, at best, unnoticed. Not all environments can be extraordinary wilderness areas, however, and this causes obvious problems for environmental literature (and politics). Gawthrop, for example, in an effort to legitimize the uniqueness of the Boreal forest, exaggerates ecological relationships between people and place. He claims that a First Nations infant was kept alive because it was given moose urine to drink; he settles for the simplistic and incomplete stereotyping of the "Abrahamic," or Semitic, traditions of newcomers (160); and he uses confused metaphors, such as that in the title of his book (which implies that nature is sacred even though his solution to preserving the Boreal forest relies upon human self-interest).

The fine collection of essays assembled by Dale D. Goble and Paul W. Hirt, entitled *Northwest Lands, Northwest Peoples: Readings in Environmental History*, well illustrate that newcomer settlement is not the benchmark for environmental history. By highlighting how First Nations transformed the landscape, including the forest, in order to make their traditional territories homelands, authors such as William Robbins, Paul S. Martin and Christine R. Szuter, Nancy Langston, and Thomas R. Cox overcome the temptation to selectively choose which landscapes will be "natural" and which will be "artificial." Douglas Deur, in his essay, "Salmon Sedentism, and Cultivation," points out that the First Peoples of the Northwest Coast of North America developed their strategies of co-existence over tens of thousands of years (129). To assume that newcomers to North America can adjust to such unique environments in 100 or 200

years is both capricious and arrogant. The adaptive ability of First Nations should give us a greater appreciation of their strategies and produce a humility that enables us to see that, for all of our technological and scientific knowledge, we have an uneasy existence within our environment.

Others essays in the Noble and Hirt volume, such as Paul Hirt's "Getting Out the Cut: A History of National Forest Management in the Northern Rockies," struggle to reconcile the massive change in the Pacific Northwest in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Hirt's characterizations of "widespread and severe environmental deterioration" at the hands of the US Forest Service (437-61) create a dualism that identifies certain non-native species and practices (both human and non-human) as "invasive." Similarly, the articles that try to reconcile the changes between the Aboriginal homeland and the agriculture of newcomers are particularly prone to the separation of human and non-human environments. Mark Fiege's "hybrid landscape" concept, which differentiates part-natural and part-artificial ecosystems (362-88), attempts to balance the impact of human action with the dynamism of nature; however, it overlooks the fact that landscapes created by humans and their technology are also part of nature.

It is difficult to critique the large nasty forces of nature (both human and non-human) that are seemingly degrading and destroying the environments that we hold to be dear, even sacred. To place humans fully within nature is to see our foibles and our successes for what they really are – an attempt to establish order and stability in a world that is prone to change and chaos. Balancing the right of a logger

to support his family with the moral indignation of an environmentalist who chooses to venerate forest groves is complex and messy. Discussing the worldviews behind our choices, however, can result in a meaningful dialogue about human nature and humanity's place within the environment without entailing the shallow polarization that now dominates so much environmental writing. We would certainly recognize that our preferences for spacious homes and daily newspapers largely determine the ecology of local (and increasing global) regions, including the depletion of precious old-growth forests.

Recent books on the forests of the North American West reveal that the definition of nature itself determines whether human action is a part of nature or its nemesis. Within environmental history, much of the discussion of nature's identity centres on the notion of place. Robert Bunting's *The Pacific Raincoast: Environment and Culture in an American Eden, 1778-1900* highlights this trend by placing human history within the Douglas-fir forest of the States of Oregon and Washington in the hope of seeing how an ecological niche may be understood both physically and culturally. In grounding environmental history in a bioregion, Bunting argues that the dynamic interaction between culture and nature transformed the Douglas-fir region, with both society and the environment being altered in any number of ways to form a single dynamic community. This well written and meticulously researched book reveals that common perceptions of newcomers viciously exploiting a pristine Eden are somewhat misguided. In Bunting's "place," disturbance is the rule, not the exception, when it

comes to identifying nature; thus *The Pacific Raincoast* understands wilderness and the working forest as complements rather than as polar opposites.

Dan Flores, in his essay "Place: An Argument for Bioregional History" (in *Northwest Lands, Northwest Peoples*), reiterates Bunting's call for a more expansive view of nature. Flores advocates a model of adaptation that analyzes society as an organism in its own right. Cultural choices are considered successful when they commingle with the dynamism of bioregions in such a way that they enable both the choices and the bioregions to "survive." While it remains to be seen whether bioregional history can expand our notion of the environment, Flores's innovative approach to the paradox of place – the need for more humans in nature and more nature in humans – should be welcomed by environmental historians. His practical conclusion, which is that we need to write "sophisticated, deep-time, cross-cultural environmental histories of place," will not lead to tidy history with winners and losers; but it will show the complexity and variation involved in the formation of landscape (44).

Flores paraphrases what the pre-moderns understood very well, that the meaning of our interaction with nature can only be discovered in the contemplation of the world around us. Yet there is a danger in environmental histories that pretend to understand values and the morality of place without first understanding the context of the ideologies that inform action. Kathie Durbin's advocacy for the preservation of the Tongass National Forest in *Tongass: Pulp Politics and the Fight for the Alaskan Rainforest* illustrates the difficulty that

ecologically minded citizens, like grassroots environmentalists, Tlingit elders, and independent loggers – all of whom fought the exploitation of the Alaska rain forest – had in making their values understandable and palatable to pulp companies, labour unions, Native corporations, and Forest Service employees. Durbin's tightly knit, well researched book, which is more than simply a tale of a war between loggers and environmentalists, lacks the appropriate historical context. Consequently it never explores the deeper issues that arise out of her study of the Tongass National Forest of Alaska; that is, the values that informed the desire to protect the forest and philosophy of those who felt the need to exploit the trees.

In contrast, William Robbins's edited volume, *The Great Northwest: The Search for Regional Identity*, argues that we define regions like the Tongass so as to enhance our ability to identify place in a self-referential way. The essays all explore what is "local and unique" about the Pacific Northwest, while avoiding an unsophisticated connection to the "quaint and anachronistic." Gail Wells's interesting little essay, "How to Create a Forest," makes explicit the ways in which the people of Oregon established a woodland in Tillamook that reflected their cultural values and priorities. Oregonians blamed nature itself for taking their forest away with the fires of 1933, 1939, 1945, and 1951, and they reforested the Tillamook with a can-do attitude and a progressive mindset informed by years of frontier ideology. The trees planted in the 1950s, thought to be a gift forever to future generations to sustain their local timber economy, became the subject of controversy when the

environmental community suggested they be preserved. After years of conflict over which "story" – the frontier myth or the Arcadian ideal – would determine the fate of the Tillamook, the Oregon Department of Forestry developed the structure-based management (SBM) approach, a new forestry that encouraged the use of the trees while reinforcing the ecological integrity of the forest. Wells's larger point, borrowed from environmental historians like William Cronon, is that we create place by telling familiar stories. In this way SBM is operating to create a new narrative for the Tillamook – one that "better expresses the duality and paradox of our own being" (29) and that builds towards a compromise between those who want to preserve the Tillamook and those who believe in using it. "How to Create a Forest" makes clear that all histories of place are human constructs.

Robbins, for example, legitimizes his history in "the intimate association between humans and geography, the ties that bind people to particular places" (178). In *Northwest Lands* Mark Fiege creates new classifications of place with his concept of a "hybrid landscape that reflect[s] an ambiguous mixture of artifice and nature" (363). William Lang revises the notion of place by defining it as "a constructed complex of ideas, memory, and imagination" (91). Flores tries to develop a new paradigm of place in his bio-regional approach. To encourage the contemplation of nature with ideas of place, however, is to draw stark contrasts with the strictures of the modern age. Place, however variously defined, causes us to reflect upon our responsibility to our ecological community and to acknowledge our symbiotic relationship with nature.

We should take care, however, not to allow a localized environmental history to take the form of ecological determinism, thereby undercutting a society's history of altering nature. The books reviewed are a general reflection of the political, economic, and social boundaries that influence our understanding of place. Most of the books reviewed claim to deal with broad trans-political boundaries – “Northwest Lands,” “Pacific Raincoast,” “the Great Northwest” – yet little of their content relates to areas north of the forty-ninth parallel. The focus on the Northwest United States, even though many of the ecological relationships explored span the entire North American West, highlights the challenges of transboundary research and analysis and shows that humans (even environmental historians) do have an extraordinary ability to determine how we understand the environment.

A comparison of Bunting's *The Pacific Raincoast* and Gordon Hak's *Turning Trees into Dollars: The British Columbia Coastal Lumber Industry, 1858-1913*, provides new insight into the uniqueness of British Columbia's land use. Hak argues that, while British Columbia utilized its natural resources to develop its economy, the region's impenetrable geography, the need for unique harvesting technologies, and inaccessible markets (especially the US market, which was closed until 1913) limited growth in the timber industry until the early part of the twentieth century. Thus the province developed very differently than did similar areas in the States of Washington and Oregon, where demographic pressures and settlement, especially agricultural land use, created particular patterns of place.

Interestingly, it appears as if private ownership of forest land in the US West did little to restrict environmental change (Bunting, 144), whereas British Columbia's timber-allocation procedures, through timber leases and licences that did not alienate forests from public lands, had (at least in theory) the tradition of the common good at its ideological core (Hak, 79). It might be interesting for environmental historians to consider how British Columbia used the colonial, later provincial, land-use system to limit the amount of exploitation of the region's forest resources.

The uniqueness of American and Canadian landscapes that share the same bioregion is also evident throughout Debra Salazar's and Donald Alper's edited volume, *Sustaining the Forests of the Pacific Coast: Forging Truces in the War in the Woods*. Many of the essays provide extremely valuable comparisons between each nation's political system and environmental regulatory bodies, both of which explain, to a significant degree, the different forestry-use regimes separated by the forty-ninth parallel. Regulatory policies and monitoring mechanisms appear to be more responsive to public desires to preserve wilderness areas in the United States, and property arrangements appear to be more complex in British Columbia, with public ownership of forest lands and outstanding First Nations land claims. For both countries, however, the globalization of national economies threatens to undermine local democratic land-use decisions and unique bi-national agreements. Furthermore, the internationalization of organizations like the Sierra Legal Defense Fund and Greenpeace promises to undercut the traditions that have



guided local land-use decisions. The "War in the Woods," then, is hardly pragmatic or even limited to policy. As Salazar and Alper rightly point out, we have experienced a series of ideological battles over how the forests will be understood, and the future of trees will be determined by a region's dominant worldview.

If people and place are the stuff of environmental history, then so too is the analysis of the processes by which human and non-human nature interact. Current approaches to the environment are outlined in Jane Claire Dirks-Edmunds's terrific book, *Not Just Trees: The Legacy of a Douglas-fir Forest*, in which she recounts her role in the development of ecology. A pioneer of the "ecosystem concept" (she coined the term "ecological equivalents" in 1940, and it was later expanded to "ecological niche"), she traces the transition of an old-growth forest in the Saddleback Mountains of Oregon in the 1930s, to a logging landscape in the 1940s, to a second-growth forest in the 1950s and 1960s, to a clear-cut in the 1980s. In one of her more eloquent passages (pertaining to second-growth forest) Dirks-Edmunds explores the role of regeneration as a major theme of ecological science: "From vole, or slug, or beetle to bacterium or mycorrhiza, the vital connection flows, transforming death – former life – into new life, creating a living bridge resembling the placenta which links a human mother to her unborn child ... *That is the essence of the forest*" (294).

Dirks-Edmunds helped to establish a new process of nature as understood through ecology. Part of the charm of *Not Just Trees* involves Dirks-Edmunds's response when the world she studied became incongruent with her emotive

ties to the land. Before environmental science became embroiled in polemics and winner-take-all ideological battles, Dirks-Edmunds considered "trappers," "loggers," and "gatherers" to be "ecologists." By the 1980s, when foresters and private companies revisited the Saddlebacks to reharvest the timber, however, her attitudes towards human interaction in the forest had changed. In her new ecology, "tree farmers" were nothing short of the arch enemies of the ancient forest.

The development of ecology as a legitimate alternative to applied science has led to the development of alternative approaches to forest utilization. Salazar and Alper attempt to forge a truce in the War in the Woods through the concept of democratic "sustainability." The contributors to *Sustaining the Forests of the Pacific Coast* recognize that sustainability is a political concept and, thus, that any solution built around it will have to be the result of a commingling of differing, even conflicting, social values. As illustrated by the polemical reaction of industry and environmental groups to President Bill Clinton's 1994 forest policy, the fight for the public's affection is not conducive to staking out a reasonable middle ground. It appears as if the health and state of the forests is of little real concern; rather, verbal sorties that include ambiguous and ill-defined words like "development," "wilderness," "clear-cutting," and "pristine" become the playthings of generals from both sides.

Unfortunately, over the past century human self-preservation, the threat of extinctions, global warming, and limited resources have proven themselves to be poor motivators for even the smallest of lifestyle changes, let

alone the basis for a broad-based social transformation. As Hoberg points out in his essay "How the Way We Make Policy Governs the Policy We Make" (in *Sustaining the Forests*), the National Environmental Policy Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Wilderness Act, and the National Forest Management Act have given environmentalists tools to influence public opinion, thereby encouraging the US Forest Service to change its forestry practices. However, given the dismal record of US environmental policy enforcement and the western states' history of continued land-use exploitation on private lands, perhaps it is time that academics begin to question the United States' recent self-proclaimed status as the standard bearer for ecologically friendly mechanisms that can stem the tide of unfettered capitalism. The winner-take-all strategy played out within a highly adversarial system may ensure environmentalists short-term gains, but divided public opinion may be a limited guarantee of the long-term viability of an equally fractured landscape.

Complicating the process of establishing limits to forest exploitation in both the United States and Canada is the pressure put upon local suppliers to expand into a worldwide market. Although globalization has always been a part of the forest industry in the North American West, as pointed out by Hak and Bunting, recent market trends have created innumerable problems for more local bilateral relationships, such as that between the United States and Canada. Open markets are forcing forest administrators to standardize their policies in order to overcome the protectionist measures invoked to create a level

economic playing field. As Thomas R. Waggener points out in "International Dynamics of North American Forest Policy" (in *Sustaining the Forests*), the so-called "softwood lumber wars" between the United States and Canada, in which US forestry interests claim that British Columbia's transfer of forest assets for utilization amounts to a subsidy for Canadian producers, is a good example of the ongoing conflict arising out of policy differences (61). Forest policy makers in all areas of the world should be on notice that their unique production formulas will increasingly come under scrutiny and will be subject to the restrictions placed upon them by multilateral trade deals such as the North American Free Trade Agreement. As globalization continues to redefine the political concepts of sovereignty, creative and innovative responses will be necessary if societies wish to protect and enhance the land-use policies that are derived from their heritage and cultural norms.

The environmental movement has also transformed recent ecological processes. Ben Cashmore, Ilan Vertinsky, and Rachana Raizada, in "Firms' Responses to External Pressures for Sustainable Forest Management in British Columbia and the US Pacific Northwest" (in *Sustaining the Forests*), compare the responses of Weyerhaeuser, Canfor, and MacMillan-Bloedel to the forces of market globalization and environmental internationalization. All three companies responded to environmental pressure by developing an alternative notion of sustainability, what Cashmore et al. call "free-market environmentalism," in order to maintain their profit share and to satisfy the minimum requirements of their "social licence," which appears to be determined primarily by environmental

non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like Greenpeace. The end result, as is well illustrated by MacMillan-Bloedel's experience in Clayoquot Sound, is the limitation of the most destructive forms of logging, such as clear-cutting, but no apparent change or challenge to the existing international values that created the need for such exploitive harvesting practices in the first place. The cost for a reduction in intensive forestry practices is borne either by the local communities (jobs and infrastructure) or by the environment itself (logging shifts to other areas, like private lands or other international regions). NGOs have made few attempts to reduce the demand for forest products, and governments are slow to introduce ecologically sound policies (e.g., new housing codes to reduce lumber consumption, reduction in paper usage, packaging requirements) because they would inhibit a company's bottom line.

In *Sustaining the Forests*, David Boyd and Terri-Lynn Williams-Davidson provide a sophisticated analysis of land tenure in British Columbia. While the role that First Nations title and rights will play in the forestry sector remains to be seen, the essay "First Nations Lead the Way toward a Sustainable Future" argues that traditional wisdom is likely to move the forest tenure system away from industrial logging and towards ecosystem-based community forestry. The tension between maintaining traditional forestry practices and stimulating impoverished local communities may, however, surprise both environmentalists (who tend to make First Nations out to be the original ecologists) and industry (which fears the ability of First Nations to effectively

co-manage the resource for profit). As Beverly Brown points out, however, First Nations are not the only group vying for a place in the forest. It will surprise many readers to note that the forests are also being exploited by a multi-billion-dollar non-timber industry that includes Latino crews planting trees, working-class Whites gathering fern fronds, and Southeast Asians harvesting wild mushrooms.

The forests of the North American West have been a laboratory for the working out of the human relationship with nature and nature's response to different human needs. The landscape and cultural records provide us with an archive of material that will enable us to study, debate, and critique human-nature interactions. Most environmental historians, including the ones whose work is discussed here, would agree that, in order to discover the values that guide our opinions of the environment, it is essential to attempt to understand human nature and the relationship of humans to nature, to explore the identity and definition of place, and to question our methods of transforming nature. Indeed, the study of the formation and implementation of values makes environmental history, with all of its disciplinary and geographical variations (whether dealing with water or air, land or sea, forest or meadow), one of the most interesting and practical academic endeavours.

And yet, there has been something missing. It appears that the public's preoccupation with the War in the Woods has not led it to recognize that the conflict is most apparent within our immediate circumstances. We choose to make our lives more comfortable (whether by increasing the demand for newsprint, by inhabiting

spaces that provide us with what is excessive rather than with what is necessary, or by demanding profit from our stocks and RRSPs) and thus have an immediate and lasting impact upon the environment upon which we depend for our survival.

"Sustainability," the new environmental paradigm, is certainly a useful concept, but it often focuses on harvesting quotas and production techniques rather than on how a society's use of forest products creates the degraded landscapes that we so often decry. Perhaps it is time to question whether the worldviews that inform the current environmental debate have the potential to maintain our forests. Will human self-preservation through ecology be any more successful than were ideologies of the conservation era with regard to solving the crisis in American and Canadian woodlands (Goble and Hirt, 456)?

Modern humanity, just as did Gilgamesh and Enkido, has experimented with altered states of nature. Every forested landscape – whether old-growth, a regenerative stand, or a clear-cut – is a rebirth of a previous formation. As Henry David Thoreau stated in his *Journal* on 30 August 1856:

"It is in vain to dream of a wilderness distant from ourselves. There is none such. It is the bog in our brains and bowels, the primitive vigor or Nature in us, that inspires that dream. I shall never find in the wilds of Labrador any greater wilderness than in some recess of Concord, i.e. than I import into it." Current environmental thought, just as did the ideas that informed exploitive commercialism and protectionist conservatism, is reshaping the landscape. Although benign on the surface, the new landscape formations also require sacrifices of nature.

But if our more recent history leaves us hoping for a better end, then perhaps we can take inspiration from an environmental story that is already complete. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Gilgamesh learns to respect the limits of human control over nature and is united with all fellow creatures by the universality of death. Rather than challenging his limitations, he learns to accept them and to live within their bounds, thereby achieving a maturity that illustrates humility and acceptance, not defiance and denial. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, accepting our limits may well mean seeing both the forest and the trees.