ECO-PEDAGOGICAL WANDERING AND PONDERING IN PACIFIC SPIRIT PARK

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Abstract
This poetry emerges from my ongoing Ph.D. research and coursework at the University of British Columbia, where I am engaging in an a/r/tographic-walking inquiry on environmental sustainability and climate change. After moving to the unceded and ancestral lands of the Coast Salish peoples, now known as Vancouver, I began walking the forest trails of Pacific Spirit Park. Inspired by Robin Wall Kimmerer’s (2013) pedagogical discussions about the grammar of animacy, two-eyed ways of seeing, and childlike ways of seeing, my poems pay tribute to the plant elders and more-than-human beings guiding my learning journey. My ecopedagogical wandering and pondering align with environmental scientists’ calls for developing more holistic understandings and feelings about our relationship with nature (i.e. the aesthetic, spiritual and non-utilitarian standpoints that increase the sense of awe with which we regard the natural world) (Prugh & Assadourian, 2003).

Bio
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off balance

we cannot own
land

we cannot own
waters

we cannot own
sky

we cannot own
each other

we cannot own
our partners

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our friends

our children

especially not our children

only in loving freedom can we come into wisdom
to learn from and be with

all our relations

in the context of family and community

relationship and ownership
cannot
c
co-exist

ownership obfuscates our coming into understanding

of ourselves and/with/in the land

we need to restore

balance
a two-eyed ode to pacific spirit park

Polystichum munitum
dear sword ferns,
you grow so beautifully amongst and between the tall trees
your bright green fronds attach to rhizome
i marvel at your sacred geometry and thank you for your healing properties you share when my body aches

Kingdom: Plantae
Clade: Tracheophytes
Class: Polypodiopsida
Order: Polypodiales
Family: Diropteridaceae

Pseudotsuga menziessi var. menziesii
marvelous and grand douglas firs,
awe every time I visit
look up to the sky, you grow so tall and magnificent
i wonder of all the beings who have walked by you through the centuries oh the stories and wisdom you hold
i place my hands upon you listening
i feel the moss
i hear the songbirds
i see your cones on the forest floor signs of life, sustenance, abundance

Kingdom: Plantae
Clade: Tracheophytes
Division: Pinophyta
Class: Pinopsida
Order: Pinales
Family: Pinaceae

Rubus Sectabilis
dear salmon berries,
i remember the first time i came across you in mid-summer
your colourful fruit caught my eye
i thought you were a raspberry but you have your own distinct flavour and way of being
my daughter and i return to your bushes each summer to pick from your bounty
we make sure not to take too much you are a sharing being and remind us of the gift of generosity

Kingdom: Plantae
Clade: Tracheophytes.
Clade: Angioperms
Clade: Eudicots
Clade: Rosids
Order: Rosales
Family: Rosaceae
**Acer Macrophyllum**  
Kingdom: Plantae  
Clade: Angiosperms  
Clade: Eudicots  
Clade: Rosids  
Order: Sapindales  
Family: Sapindaceae

majestic big leaf maples,  
you grow amongst cedars  
and firs  
your large foliage brings us a  
special kind of beauty offering  
the gift of life itself  
i take a deep breath in, slowly  
exhale.  
in return,  
you breathe me in  
and release oxygen  
a profound reciprocal exchange  
unable to be properly described  
with language

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**Strix Occidentalis**  
Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Class: Aves  
Order: Strigiformes  
Family: Strigidae

magical spotted owl,  
i hear you more than I see you  
sometimes if I look closely  
at the forest floor  
i find your lovely feathers  
you remind me of my daughter  
named after a goddess  
accompanied by an owl friend  
before she was born, she visited me  
in a dream (the most vivid)  
as an owl  
when I hear you I think of  
the dreaming world, spirit worlds  
you remind me there is so much  
beyond what human eyes can see

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**Haliaeetus Leucocephalus**  
Kingdom: Animalia  
Phylum: Chordata  
Class: Aves  
Order: Accipitriformes  
Family: Accipitridae

sacred bald eagles,  
i see you soaring above the forest  
your flying wondrous dance  
of graceful spirals  
as though you live in  
a liminal, magical space  
between the earth and the sun  
you nest within the tallest of trees  
a fierce protector of your young  
i am humbled in your presence
Poecile Atricapillus
Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Passeriformes
Family: Paridae

black-capped chickadee, lovely and tiny
you sing the most beautiful songs composed of complex arrangements
you make me feel serene
sometimes I think you are singing a sweet lullaby to all forest beings
you remind me that strong and resilient beings can manifest in the tiniest of forms

Cantharellus
Kingdom: Fungi
Division: Basidiomycota
Class: Agaricomycetes
Order: Cantharellales
Family: Cantharellaceae

wonderous chantrelle mushrooms, you remind me of the importance of inter-species relationships
i wonder about the conversations you and red cedars must have your kinship inseparable
i would rather sit and look at you than eat you so otherworldly a pop of bright yellow amongst the bark and the moss

dear pacific spirit
i can feel you manifested
in all the sacred forms of being found beneath and above the forest canopy
our animal cousins plant elders the waters, earth and wind
haunting

in pacific spirit park because it is just that spirit.
ghostly, maintained, contained remains of a stolen place
winds ruffle leaves, carrying whispers
human nature, humans in nature, wildlife
  now controlled.
preserved and perverted from the truest of beauty
which can only be found in utter freedom
what is the difference between a park and a camp?
  markers on a map
both are imagined lines, mythical boundaries
that come to life and control
how matter moves and how it grows
binding and containing.
let the haunting speak to you
new imaginings can begin
let the movement of your mind and body
be
  be free.
ENDNOTES


REFERENCES


