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Adventure and the sublime: a quest for transformation or transcendence?

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Introduction

Outdoor adventures have emerged as recreational and educational experiences alongside the development of modern western cultures. Adventures both reflect and challenge societal norms. Can they lead to opportunities for new attachments to nature that leads to greater appreciation, concern and care in these times of environmental crisis? In this chapter we suggest that the narratives of adventure experiences fall into two main sets, those that are understood to be transformational and those that are understood as transcendental. Both versions are, we claim, rooted in the western Romantic idea of the sublime that arose as a counter narrative to the industrial revolution and the consequent objectification of nature. However, we think transformational adventures instrumentalise nature and largely focus on the benefits to humans in ways that are exclusive to many people. We discuss in what way transcendental adventures are different and whether this offers any possibilities for better human nature relations.

Human-nature relations have also evolved during modernity. The industrial revolution in both North America and Europe changed where people lived, what work they did, their standard of living and their relationships with nature. We propose that human nature relations in the modern western world can be understood as three broad phases linked to these societal changes. The first phase was adversarial, whether it was the conquest of the west in North America or of the lands of the new colonies by Europeans. The second phase was one of exploitation, both of nature and of the people of these newly acquired lands for the resources and the labour needed to fuel the industrial revolution. Finally, the Romantic counter movement challenged the objectification of nature, and primed a trend towards conservation that led to the setting up of National Parks in North America and Europe.

Adventure had a foot in all three of these phases and, to this day, is influenced by approaches that draw on the very different attitudes they elicit. These approaches also align with the cultural trends of the day. We propose that two adventurous trails emerged, both drawing on the sublime idea of dramatic land and seascapes, adventure as transformation, exemplified by its appearance in the educational systems of the west; and adventure as transcendence, found for example in extreme outdoor sports and adventure activities, allowing people to develop a relationship with nature, albeit, we will argue, taking a new form congruent with the modern way of life.

We define self-transformation as a radical restructuring of old and new internal world views in order to build a new view of the self (Wade, 2002), a redefining of self over time. This process is common if not universal in the process of development from youth to adult and increasingly occurring at other life stages. New people, places and adventurous experiences are widely understood to accelerate and precipitate self-transformation and have been widely co-opted into educational and personal development interventions for this reason (Beames & Brown, 2016; Priest & Gass, 2017). Self-transcendence, on the other hand, we understand as *'a process of expansion, or movement beyond one's immediate self-boundaries …. culminating in a …. broadened world view'* (Garcia-Romeu, 2010, p.26). In other words, a radical change in a person's sense of their relationship with the world they are in, a redefining of self in relation to nature. The settings and experiences of adventurous activities are

commonly cited as triggering moments of transcendence, a loss of self in the wider universe (Mortlock, 1987; Bethelmy & Corraliza, 2019).

Our intention is to question whether transcendental approaches can lead to nature-based adventure experiences that address both the issues of the exclusiveness enjoyed by those who can access the outdoors, as well as the issue of nature as 'other' that leads to the separation of humans and nature, a split that many claim lies at the heart of the current environmental crises.

In the next section we set the scene taking a broad view of the changes in human nature relations in the west during modernity.

New relations

In Europe, in the nineteenth century, the industrial revolution rapidly displaced the majority of people from rural settings and a working relationship with the land. As farms revolutionised food production in the countryside, so the growing number of jobs in manufacturing attracted working people to urban centres. This disruption eventually made substantially qualitative differences to people's lives and, for majority of people, changed their relationship with nature as well as with society. Better health, longer lifespans, disposable income, education and recreational time became the privilege of more and more of the population. For example, in the UK, newly wealthy people followed in the footsteps of Queen Victoria who adopted the habit of spending summers at Balmoral, a Scottish estate where the royal family could hunt and fish. The new rich bought land and built summer homes in the most attractive places. Increasingly, and spurred on by cheap forms of travel made possible by the railways, middle and working class people returned to the rural landscapes of their past to enjoy the fresh air, the open spaces, the views and the recreational activities. These destinations were quickly commercialised.

The history of North American settlement by European immigrants provides a different perspective on the human relationship with the natural world, how it was perceived by the western world, and how this perception changed over time. Roderick Nash (2001) who, in his seminal work *Wilderness and the American Mind*, provides a narrative history of the North American understanding of the idea of wilderness as a cultural phenomenon. Nash catalogues the various perceptual changes that have taken place, starting with early attempts to conquer and tame a threatening landscape. When the first Europeans arrived on the shores of North America, the natural environment they encountered was not exactly hospitable. In the onslaught of a harsh New England winter, they struggled desperately to survive. These early settlers sought to tame this wild new land (including the 'savages' they found already living there with rifles and towering wooden walls. Thus, the human relationship to nature was perceived as adversarial (Nash, 2001).

As the new world was expanded and explored, these early Americans began to discover valuable resources—timber, furs, coal, and minerals. Extraction and export of these resources provided stability and greater independence, and the natural world became a commodity. In fact, the abundance of resources pushed the expansion into the west, and the US economy began to grow by measure. The human relationship to place became economical, and the management of land and resources became pragmatic (Nash, 2001).

During the peak of resource extraction, a few voices began to challenge the rate at which beautiful landscapes were depleting. Transcendental thinkers like Thoreau, Emerson, and John Muir wrote eloquently about the sublime wilderness—that which evokes awe and wonder—and the need to protect its pristine state. Humankind was now the enemy, a parasite that needed containment.

In both the European and American cases, the industrial revolution transformed the relationships with the land of most people from one of a parochial working place to an expansive recreational space, and nature from a productive home for many to a recreational escape for the privileged. In the meantime, those now owning and still working the land turned it into an extractive farmed landscape leaving only the most remote and marginal land, sometimes protected, for other purposes. Inevitably, a counter movement emerged. The Romantics offered a new way of seeing and experiencing the wilder natural landscapes as places of sublime encounters to be cherished.

The sublime and protected landscapes

As in North America, a counter movement sprang up in Europe pushing back against some of the implications of modernity and the relationship with nature it promulgated. Often described as the Romantic movement, artists and thinkers across Europe and in North America countered the view of nature as an objectified natural resource with a new vision of sublime and picturesque landscapes to be found both at home and further afield. This movement emerged as traditional religions were in retreat from scientific explanations of the world.

The Darwinian turn extended the explanatory power of science to nature, its origins, diversity and evolution. At the same time early geologists became more confident in explaining the story of the earth and life upon it in the context of geological rather than biblical time. As science contributed to the objectification of nature so the romantics countered by acknowledging human emotional responses restoring subjective, inspirational, awe and wonder to the natural world. Nature, for some, became a secular religion worthy of intrinsic and aesthetic value, providing transcendental experiences and in need of protection from the rational, industrial world. To these artists and thinkers an 'awful' land of seascape, mountains, canyons and oceans, was not as a modern person might understand the term, but a landscape full of awe providing joy and terror in equal emotional measures.

This led to the development of National and State parks and wilderness areas, the first, Yellowstone National Park in the USA in 1872 whilst the UK was late to this trend, setting up the Lake District in 1951. The places perceived as the most beautiful were catalogued, set aside, and preserved so that future generations could enjoy sublime landscapes without fearing the effects of the human parasite. While these early preservationists helped in recognising the natural world for its intrinsic value, nature was still understood for the ways in which it benefited humans for recreation, leisure, and personal renewal (Nash, 2001).

In both continents the landscapes of the sublime became tourist destinations, initially for the wealthy and time rich, who travelled seeking out the mountains, glaciers, waterfalls and canyons for the promised moments of the sublime. Within North America, as in Europe, travel companies promoted and exploited these destinations for business purposes. In the USA, rail companies, capitalising on the newly found desire to protect wilderness, promoted destinations, such as Yellowstone in order to create income streams to finance their push to

the west and the Pacific coast. In the UK Wordsworth, the globally famous romantic poet, spoke out against the coming of the railway to Windermere, something he saw as an abomination bringing the working classes to the Lake District, a landscape he had made popular through his poetry. He thought they would not have the eyes to appreciate it.

These romantic thinkers challenge us to consider the nature of a sublime experience and the kind of human-nature relationship that results. Clewis (2019), while acknowledging that the meaning of sublime is elusive, defines it as “a complex feeling of intense satisfaction, uplift, or elevation, felt before an object or event that is considered awe-inspiring" (p. 1). This definition focuses solely on the positive aspects of sublime, but for Kant, who wrote prolifically about the sublime, there also exists what he called negative pleasure. The pleasure comes from the expansion of our imagination and an awareness of our moral capacities (e.g. freedom, reason). The negative comes from frustration over our ability to understand or take in what we are exposed to (e.g. formlessness, mathematical impossibilities) and the recognition of our physical helplessness (Brady, 2013, p. 84). Awe filled moments of the sublime force us to consider our own frailty, brevity, and insignificance in the vastness of wild and untamed nature.

Nash (2001), in his reflections on wilderness, understands place as a cultural rather than just a material phenomenon. He claims that humans perceive place based on their political and physical environments. Viewed this way, the three phases of human nature relations mentioned above, adversarial, exploitative and protective, appear largely anthropocentric in nature, although the last suggests a slight movement towards eco-centrism. The current cultural climate in Europe and the United States continues to engage in all three of these forms of human-nature relationships, from reality TV (Survivor, Man vs. Wild) that perpetuates nature as adversary, to extractive timber, mining, and oil industries. Even in the romantic and conservation movements that sprung from transcendental thinkers, there remains (arguably) a distinct separation between humans and nature. Nature becomes conflated with the landscapes of remote and sublime land and seascapes preserved as reserves or parks at a, sometimes, considerable distance from people. The parks, and by default nature, become far off destinations for human enjoyment. This analysis does not offer a construction of the human relationship with nature as equitable and mutualistic. It is not one that automatically understands or cares for nature. Adventure, as one modern expression of the human relationship with nature, is caught up in and is central to this narrative.

Adventure

Adventure is often equated with risk taking and management. However, it is also understood as a much broader concept involving new experiences, uncertainty of outcome and heightened degrees of personal agency – the freedom of the hills linking directly to Clewis’s (2019) positive elements of the sublime idea. In this formulation of adventure, risk is a secondary consequence to be managed rather than the outcome being sought. Travelling to new places on ventures with uncertain outcome was increasingly common for business, scientific and religious reasons. Over time, the hierarchy of adventurers, as they were considered by their cultures, was increasingly judged by the risks they took, how hard, how far, how dangerous, how wild. It is worth noting that many must have disappeared without their stories ever being heard. It is also worth noting that many women were also involved in exploration, though it was considered inappropriate for their stories to be told. It was not long before people, mainly men, set off on adventures for their own sake.

The cultural appropriation of adventure. Emerging democracies, in need of symbols of a good citizen willing to transform the expectations of a previous generation and contribute in new and innovative ways to a rapidly changing economy and society, jumped on the masculine and heroic symbols of early explorers. Their exploits, often justified on commercial and scientific grounds, became, on return, best-selling adventure stories. Fictional adventure stories, such as Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe published in 1719, followed close behind. Ancient Greek myths, such as Homer's Odyssey, returned to popularity celebrating transformative epic and heroic male adventures. The polar expeditions of both European and American explorers are good examples of this trend lasting well into the early twentieth century. The race to the north and south poles involved lots of money and human capital, with little reward other than some scientific achievements and adventure for adventure's sake.

This trend readily entwined with the quest for sublime landscapes, no longer viewed in settings where the observer is passive and nature dynamic, but engaged with as mountaineer, sailor, etc, as an actor in which both the landscape and the human are active in an embodied, emotional and relational experience. The culturally dominant narratives about these adventure experiences became that of challenges overcome, of discoveries and 'conquests' in which nature was subjugated to man's[1] will. The respect for nature implied by the awe inspiring sublime was replaced by an anthropocentric concept of the adventurer, a man worthy of character and as a symbol of the ideal citizen for the new world triumphant over nature – and other cultures.

Adventure therefore broke the emerging eco-centric shifts encouraged by the Romantics by adopting the earlier adversarial approach building on the negative pleasure of Kant's concept of the sublime. A proving ground for the men of the new society was established, a space onto which these men could conduct their own hero's journeys writing their own narratives of conquest and achieving that transformed state of awareness of their moral capacities.

Adventure as Education. Adventure maintained its transformational relationship with emerging democratic cultures throughout the 20th century. The historical roots of combining education and the out-of-doors varies by context and culture. In North America, origins are traditionally traced back to several sources, including The Great Age of Exploration (Ewert and Sibthorp, 2014), European Romanticism, and the influence of aesthetics and adventure tourism (Martin et al., 2017). Perhaps the first programmes to intentionally utilise outdoor adventure pedagogically were the Scout Movement (in 1907) and Outward Bound (in 1941) both founded in Great Britain. Pedagogically, a connection can be seen between Kant's idea of 'negative pleasure' and the character development aims of traditional Adventure Education programmes. The negative emotion exposes a power struggle, human survival versus nature, and sets the stage for exercising courage and tenacity in the face of something much more powerful and incomprehensible. Additionally, when programmed as a group experience, there often results the sense of unity, comradery, and interdependence William James calls for in his moral equivalent to war which was a primary aim of Kurt Hahn in his founding of Outward Bound. The result is that Adventure Education has traditionally located programming in sublime locations. As Roberts notes, 'the educational journey often involves

[1] 'Man' is used here in order to stay authentic to the terms used at the time. We acknowledge that this can be viewed as inappropriate language. However, the bias this implies was embedded in the performance and accounts of these explorations. It was mainly, though not exclusively, men who undertook adventures and almost exclusively men who subsequently wrote about them.

a trip to another place… and that place is often the location of a more powerful, sublime, and thus transcendent experience' (2012, p. 45). To our minds, this experience is more appropriately described as transformative, a youth to adult rite of passage (Loynes, 2008). Throughout the 20th century western societies co-opted adventure as an experience and sublime landscapes as spaces in which to build character epitomised by Mortlock (1987) in his book the Adventure Alternative in which he makes the case for the relationship between adventure and moral development.

In considering human relations with the more-than-human world, we question, as does Mortlock (2001) in his later writing, the quality of relationship that is being formed from these kinds of experiences. The seemingly singular focus on character development suggests a relationship that is adversarial—nature provides a worthy opponent for *homo sapiens*, who has risen to the top of the food chain to create a tame and ordered world. Looking beyond character, locating Adventure Education in sublime places also serves to emphasize the otherness of more-than-human nature. The sheer alterity of the wilderness, it's wildness, inscrutable depth and breadth, its space, set an ideal stage for the development of tenacity, courage, and determination. However, alongside the widely applauded transformational adventure experiences, transcendental adventures remained discreet and were increasingly understood to offer something else, which we explore next.

Transformative experiences

Many of the early adventure education programmes shared common aims for combining education and the out-of-doors (Macleod, 1983). Lord Robert Baden-Powell founded The Boy Scouts to address a perceived decline in the physical and moral character of modern civilisation (MacDonald, 1993). Similarly, Kurt Hahn helped create Outward Bound partly as an attempt to realise William James's challenge for a moral equivalent to war. Hahn's programmes were developed around his definition of the five declines of modern civilization, which were understood as moral failures of society contributing to an overall lack of character (Hahn, 1960).

Both Outward Bound and the Boy Scouts were also heavily influenced by the realities of war. Baden-Powell, a British hero of the Boer War, was inspired by the war-zone maturity of army scouts and recycled a manual he wrote for these British soldiers as an outdoor skills manual for young boys. Hahn, stymied by the high casualty rate of younger (presumably stronger and healthier) British castaways during World War II, concluded that these younger sailors relied too heavily on technology and lacked the experience and the craft of seamanship (Martin et al., 2017). Both saw the crucible of war as a key influence in the development of character.

Additionally, these programmes were founded on the heels of the industrial revolution and during a dramatic increase in urbanization and changes in wealth distribution and power. The assumption was that modernization and the progressive movement produced men who were physically, mentally, and morally weak as compared to their ancestors (Cronon, 1996; Phelps, 1980). Fuelled by a desire to reverse these damages and address the issue of moral decline, the outdoors became the new crucible—a place to test one's limits and strengthen moral values. Adventure was valued for its transformative power, both for the individual and then, through that individual, society.

Transcendental experiences

It would be wrong to give the impression that the sole purpose of Adventure Education was transformative in approach, constructing nature as an adversary to be overcome. Too many people provide accounts of transcendental experiences in classically sublime land and seascapes enabled by programmes of AE provided by organisations such as Outward Bound. In *Beyond Learning by Doing,* Roberts (2012) notes romantic transcendentalism as one of five theoretical currents that have shaped OAE pedagogy, specifically highlighting the influential voices of Emerson, Thoreau, and Muir. Experience of the sublime in nature is a common theme that runs throughout the transcendental literature of these particular authors. Wildness is often used interchangeably with sublime, juxtaposed with the ordered beauty of a well-kept English garden. The romantics argue for the intrinsic value of wild, unordered nature which evokes feelings of the sublime and is different from (and often described in opposition to) the aesthetic experience of a cultivated landscape. Adventure as transcendence remained alive and well if hidden from wider anthropocentric social constructions of human nature relations.

One way to understand the difference between adventures that are transformative and those that are transcendental lies in the writings of Martin Buber best known for what he called ‘a philosophy of dialogue’. Buber’s work points to two different kinds of relational receptivity: I/It and I/Thou. He describes I/It as a sort of monologue, ‘when we behold what confronts us in the world, we deal with it by treating it as an object which can be compared and assigned a place in an order of objects, described and analysed objectively, filed away in our memory to be recalled when needed’. By contrast, an I/Thou interaction is a dialogue, one that recognizes the reciprocity and mutuality of relationship. Buber calls this encounter and ties it to the Hebrew word for ‘to know’. We cannot relate to the other without an intimate knowledge of our reciprocal influence and a mutual understanding of what it means to be ‘other.’ This encounter, particularly with the natural world, means that we embrace the ‘other’ lovingly, not to exploit, use up, exhaust, or ravish. The link is between knowing and loving, rather than knowing and doing.

Brymer et al. (2009) captures the motivation of ‘extreme’ adventurers in ways that resonate with Buber’s ideas rather than the cultural constructions of heroes dominating and conquering, overcoming risks in order to persevere. For the adventurers he interviews, controlling risk, as discussed earlier, is an essential but secondary element of the desired experience. The primary motive is to encounter their chosen element, to find a flow state in which there is a loss of self in a deep embodied and dynamic relationship with the elements involved, a sublime and sustained moment of an active relationship with nature. Brymer found the same outcomes amongst mountain bikers, free divers, wingsuit base jumpers and white-water kayakers. The experience was frequently described as a sense of the universal, of the power of nature and of being intimately a part of nature. A respect for nature was universally implied and often expressed in spiritual terms. These new extreme adventurers have broken away from the cultural narratives of adventure as character building, as anthropocentric. Instead, they offer a highly personal account of their transcendence of themselves restoring the romantic movement’s idea of the sublime but in a way that encounters nature as equally as active as the humans involved. If there is a meaningful power relationship in an experience that is often described as a sense of oneness and a loss of self, then it is an equitable one.

Adventure and Wellbeing

Human wellbeing and experience in nature are increasingly linked (Capaldi A. et al. 2014). Less commonly, the wellbeing of nature is also considered (Plumwood, 2006). Adventure, in both its transformative and transcendental forms, tangles with these different ideas of human wellbeing. A *hedonic* model defines human well-being as that which gives us pleasure and satisfies desire. This approach recognizes an affective component (the presence of positive emotions) and a cognitive component (articulating something as satisfying). A contrasting approach to human well-being is the *eudaimonic* model, which defines well-being as that which connects to our values and helps us realize our full potential (Capaldi A. et al. 2014). The *eudaimonic* model is often described as an approach based on human flourishing. Ryff & Keyes (1995) categorized this into six areas of self-actualization: mastery, life purpose, autonomy, self-acceptance, positive relatedness, and personal growth. Capaldi A. et al. (2014) illustrate a more complex relationship between the *eudaimonic* benefits such as vitality and the hedonic counter balancing effects of a growing concern for the environment on wellbeing.

From these two perspectives, aspects of the natural world have instrumental value by contributing to human pleasure (hedonic model) or to human flourishing (*eudaimonic* model). However, James (2019) argues that this fails to acknowledge the intimacy of certain human-nature relationships such as those described by Brymer et al. (2009). James provides an example of Katherine Smith, a 1970's Navajo activist who refused to leave her land even if she were relocated to one that provided her with more amenities and an easier life. For her, there was no substitute for the land of her dwelling. This snapshot of a surviving pre-industrial human nature relationship might offer a bridge from the pre-modern to the current transcendental forms of adventure and the human nature relationship this stives to achieve. For James, one possible approach is to understand human-nature relations in terms of meanings rather than instrumentation. In short, stemming from an assumption that nature has meaning that varies based on context, we can conclude that nature contributes to our wellbeing because of the meaning that it offers. James calls this conception a *semiotic-constitutive* model (James, 2019).

James Raffan has also been interested in human attachments to place that extend beyond an instrumental model. In his research regarding 'Land as Teacher, Raffan (1993) explores the types of connections that people establish with certain places over a long period of time. Specifically, he decides to locate his research in the Thelon Game Sanctuary of the Northwest Territories of Canada. Raffan discusses land conflicts in this particular area, asserting that the conflicts are necessarily fights about land use, but are ultimately disagreements about what land means. He distinguishes between our perceptions of land as commodity, recreation, peaceful haven, energy potential, and part of a God-given (i.e. transcendent) universe. Through his ethnographic research, he identified four different types of a sense of place: toponymic, narrative, experiential, and numinous. Toponymic connections have to do with things like place names, indicating both knowledge and attachment to a certain place. Narrative connections were evident through the stories embedded in the culture regarding how the land came to be, history of the land, and even gossip about events that occurred over the years. An experiential connection is different than toponymic or narrative in that it is a first-hand encounter with a particular place. Within the experiential connection, Raffan notes a distinct difference between the experiences of those who were dependent upon the land for survival (hunters, trappers, and the like) and those who experienced the land for more leisurely reasons (a canoe trip). Those who were dependent upon the land were able to recall the land in much more detail (wind direction, flow of water, etc). The last connection identified by Raffan's research is that of the numinous. 'Numinous connections to place are

all that is awe-inspiring, all that transcends the rational, all that touches the heart more than the mind, all that goes beyond names, stories, and experience and yet still plays a significant role in the bond that links people and place' (p. 44). Raffan concludes his article by contending that these types of a 'sense of place' are intimately associated with identity. 'Because it appears that sense of place, in varying degrees, constitutes an existential definition of self. For many consultants to this study, you take away the land or break the connection to land, you prevent them from being who they are' (p. 45).

Brymer et al's (2009) adventurers could be described as having both an experiential (in Raffan's leisure sense) and a numinous relationship but with a more universal idea of the elements rather than a located idea of a place. Perhaps some adventurers and extreme sports people do become attached to a place as well as an element. However, the evidence suggests that most travel to experience their chosen element in various places, sometimes following repeated seasonal patterns, a neo-nomadic life not rooted or settled in place. Transcendental adventure offers a deeply meaningful experience understood as a mutual relationship between adventurers and their elements. However, it is not a return to a pre-modern and potentially harmonious way of relating. It offers something new.

Adventure at a time of Social and Environmental Crises

Modern adventurers seeking either transformative or transcendental experiences are both embedded in the historical and cultural contexts of our time. Inevitably, this highlights certain critical issues. Here, we focus on 'privilege' and on the 'relationship with nature'.

Privilege. That the adventure story is also a story told by certain privileged groups from western cultures is apparent throughout this chapter. In particular, robust ideas of masculinity, expressed by early adventurers and reproduced by some modern adventure experiences draws on the adversarial and exploitative phases of modern human nature relations. For nature and human relationships with it, this is clearly problematic. William Cronon (1996) problematizes American constructions of wilderness in his essay 'The Trouble with Wilderness'. Part of the problem for Cronon lies in the masculinity that undergirds American ideals of wilderness and frontierism.

> *The mythic frontier individualist was almost always masculine in gender: here, in the wilderness, a man could be a real man, the rugged individual he was meant to be before civilization sapped his energy and threatened his masculinity…. [T]he comforts and seductions of civilized life were especially insidious for men, who all too easily became emasculated by the feminizing tendencies of civilization (p. 78).*

Adding to these masculine ideals were also those of privilege:

> *The dream of an unworked natural landscape is very much the fantasy of people who have never themselves had to work the land to make a living—urban folk for whom food comes from a supermarket or a restaurant instead of a field, and for whom the wooden houses in which they live and work apparently have no meaningful connection to the forests in which trees grow and die. Only people whose relation to the land was already alienated could hold up wilderness as a model for human life in nature, for the romantic ideology of wilderness leaves precisely nowhere for human beings to actually make their living from the land (p. 80).*

Nash also acknowledges the role of privilege woven through the ideal of romantic wilderness: "Appreciation of wilderness began in the cities. The literary gentleman wielding a pen, not the pioneer with his axe, made the first gestures of resistance against the strong currents of antipathy" (1982, p. 44). This 'nature elsewhere' concern we address more fully below.

Further criticized by Nash is the effect of American colonialism as European pioneers sought to tame the "hideous and desolate wilderness" they encountered in the New World. "For the first Americans, as for medieval Europeans, the forest's darkness hid savage men, wild beasts, and still stranger creatures of the imagination. In addition, civilized man faced the danger of succumbing to the wildness of his surroundings and reverting to savagery himself" (p. 24). These early frontiersmen were tasked with the responsibility of civilizing this new world, a manifest destiny which meant subjugating both wild human and wild nature.

Beyond the obvious concerns for equity, diversity and inclusion that adventure institutions might want to address, Cronon concludes with the claim that American constructions of wilderness (rooted in masculinity, colonialism, and privilege) have created a dangerous reductionism and false dichotomy of humans outside-of nature, which does more harm than good when it comes to responsibility to the natural world.

Nature elsewhere. As we mentioned early on, protective approaches to human-nature relations can also be anthropocentric and therefore also problematic in supporting any equitable reconstruction of human nature relations. The two terms most commonly used to describe the outdoor environment, particularly in the context of adventure, are wilderness and nature. In contrast to simply saying outdoors or out-of-doors, these terms are meant to describe a type of outdoors—one that is wild and in its natural state. Many voices have endeavoured to deconstruct our modern notions of wilderness and nature (Cronon, 1996; Nash, 2001; Oelschlaeger, 1991; Shepard, 2002). Nash (2001) and Oelschlaeger (1991) both outline a history of how humans have understood nature, with Oelschlaeger going as far back as history will allow, and Nash focusing on the settling of the New World and the American frontier. Both recognize the role that social construction and human experience play on our understanding and interaction with the more-than-human world. The anthropocentric perspective portrayed in these works is telling. With some exceptions, wilderness and nature are described through a lens of causal determinism with little acknowledgement of the agency and affect of the more-than-human world. Moreover, the more-than-human world is described by the urban dweller as elsewhere, behind the boundaries of national parks and protected areas set aside as destinations for temporary encounters.

An alternative way of relating to the natural world has been suggested metaphorically as "nature as friend" (Martin, 1999, p. 465). As Martin contends, "One distinctive and worthy path is for (adventure) to concern itself primarily with establishing or perhaps re-establishing, a sense of personal relatedness to nature" (p. 465). Martin suggests that the metaphor of nature as friend can provide language for understanding the natural world in terms of subject-subject, rather than subject-object. As subject, the relationship is based on care and respect for the 'other.' Rather than relating to nature from an objective, rational paradigm, this type of relating is based in experiential, tacit, and intuitive ways of knowing. Martin is quick to acknowledge, however, that rational/cognitive knowledge is also important in balancing out the relationship, so it is neither a distanced, objective relationship nor that of blind

romanticism. This seems to us to align closely with Brymer's (2009) understanding of the experience and meaning making of transcendental adventurers.

Using the nature-as-friend metaphor can be helpful as we seek to understand what a subject-subject relationship might actually look like. It is also important to acknowledge that the word friend is also a rather amorphous word. Just as we can have a vast array of different relationships, friendship can also vary drastically from a neighbourly acquaintance to a deeply intimate friendship, from everyday encounters to occasional far off visits. One thing that the word friend does for us, however, is paint the relationship in positive terms. Here it's acknowledged that having a positive relationship with nature, rather than adversarial, is a possibility and, we suggest, exemplified by transcendental adventures.

Subsequent to Martin's discussion about nature as friend, he conducted a qualitative study to trace the changes in human/nature relationships based on a "nature as friend" approach (Martin, 2004). Martin found that adventure experiences that were focused on nature connections and less focused on skill development led students to develop an emotional and spiritual attachment to the natural world that resulted in eco-friendly behaviours. Martin contends, "'It is my argument that adventure activities are a powerful medium to elicit emotional connections to the natural world.' (p. 27). Research by Mullins (2011) on fly fishing and canoeing supports this claim. He suggests that, as an adventurer or outdoor sports person travels from novice to expert, a key defining shift in attention is from the activity to the environment, including a sense of the need to care for that environment.

There remains the problem of the twitcher compulsion, completing lists of routes completed or destinations attained. This can become obscene when it is linked to the environmental crises as the 'last chance to see/do, etc package'. However, there is a counter argument that could mitigate some of this harm. Asfeldt and Hvenegaard (2014) studied groups going to uninhabited parts of northern Canada, and Cheung et al (2019) researched ecotours to Antarctica, both populations incurring substantial carbon footprints in doing so. They found an offsetting value of a kind as a result of the visits as both polar regions gained advocates and activists for the environmental protection of these places. This is something they previously lacked as they have few residents in the north and none in the south to articulate their value.

Conclusions

Modern humans are not typically strongly attached to one place as pre-industrial people were. With modernity has come mobility. Finding new and sublime land and seascapes has stimulated the adventure experience as typically far away. Western cultures have co-opted adventure as a character building, transformative experiences and sublime land and seascapes as the spaces where these occur. Whilst of great value to human development, these forms of adventure may have limited potential for supporting new forms of human-nature relations drawing as they do on adversarial and exploitative anthropocentric constructions. On a more hopeful note, in seeking meaningful encounters with nature, extreme adventurers have sought sublime and transcendental experiences that unite them with a universal, perhaps spiritual, integration with a nature greater than the self. This approach to adventure can lead to respect for nature and a desire to care that operates at a global level non-specific to place. This can lead to important behaviour changes that help to address the current environmental crises. Neither transformative or transcendental adventures necessarily support the intimate and sustained knowledge and care for specific places, that is the idea of nature as home. Perhaps,

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rather than a transcendent self, it is the human concept of nature that must first be transcended.

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