

## **Emma Bell Miles's *Appalachia* and Emily Carr's *Cascadia*: A Comparative Study in Literary Ecology**

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Emma Bell Miles (1879-1919) and Emily Carr (1871-1945) both belong to the turn of the twentieth century generation of North American women writers and painters, but they lived at almost the very opposite sides of the continent and there is no evidence that they were ever in personal contact or ever aware of each other's work. Nevertheless, a comparison of Miles's *The Spirit of the Mountains* (1905) and Carr's *Klee Wyck*<sup>1</sup> (1941) from an ecocritical perspective<sup>2</sup> shows that the two story collections employ strikingly similar narrative strategies. Namely, they blend the genres of the travel narrative, environmental history, and cultural history to create stories of place that dramatize the ways in which the natural environment functions as an agent in economic and cultural development. At the heart of Miles's literary portrait are the woods of Walden Ridge, near Chattanooga, Tennessee, on the Cumberland Plateau in Southern Appalachia, and, for Carr, at the centre lies the forested British Columbia shoreline where the Pacific meets the Cascade and Coast Mountains in Central Cascadia. An examination of the generic hybridity of *The Spirit of the Mountains* and *Klee Wyck* and of the rootedness of these texts in specific landscapes indicates that Miles's and Carr's particular narrative strategies allow the authors not only to expose the ecological and social abuses that have shaped the regions' history but also to unveil the multicultural native elements that have been interwoven into the regions' heritage.

As Joseph W. Meeker points out, "ecology is an ancient theme in art and literature, however new it may be as a science" (7). In his book *The Comedy of Survival* Meeker introduces the term literary ecology, defining it as an interdisciplinary "study of biological themes and relationships that appear in literary works" and at the same time as "an attempt to discover what roles literature has played in the ecology of the human species" (7). Considered from this point of view, *The Spirit of the Mountains* and *Klee Wyck* bring to the foreground the interconnection between nature and culture. The two works share an ecological underpinning as they embody the authors' conviction that the way we imagine nature through literature impacts the way we treat it.<sup>3</sup> As each text grows out of a unique place, a particularly useful critical lens through which to compare them within the ecocritical framework is offered by the bioregional stream of thought and practice.

Like literary ecology, bioregionalism is "hardly a new concept; it is rather, a contemporary expression of a very old and many sided one" (Sale 148-49). As Kirkpatrick Sale puts it, the bioregion is "any part of the earth's surface whose rough boundaries are determined by natural characteristics rather than human dictates, distinguishable from other areas by particular attributes of flora, fauna,

water, climate, soils, and landforms, and by the human settlements and cultures those attributes have given rise to” (55).<sup>4</sup> Thanks to their emphasis on intertwining natural history and cultural history within their home regions, Miles’s *The Spirit of the Mountains* and Carr’s *Klee Wyck* can be seen as constituting important early contributions to an emerging tradition of literary bioregionalism.<sup>5</sup> Closely echoing Sale’s definition of the bioregion, Michael Kowalewski highlights the interdisciplinary project of bioregional writing in the following words: “bioregional writers picture specific localities as complex, multilayered palimpsests of geology, meteorology, history, myth, etymology, family genealogy, agricultural practice, storytelling, and regional folk ways” (17). A bioregional analysis of *The Spirit of the Mountains* and *Klee Wyck* suggests that Southern Appalachia and Central Cascadia, while distinct in many ways, share certain ecological characteristics that have resulted in certain similarities not only in their economic development but also in their cultural representations.

As William G. Robbins observes, regions can be viewed as “mentally bounded places” that “rest at the borders between geography and history” (“Introduction” 1). This fluid border crossing between geography and history is imprinted in the names of Miles’s and Carr’s bioregions. Both Appalachia and Cascadia derived their names from the mountain ranges that form their backbones and from the stories that these ranges inspired over time among the various waves of their human occupants. The Appalachians were named after the Appalachees, a Native American tribe that lived four hundred miles to the south, in the central Florida panhandle (Davis, Donald Edward 3). The name “Montes Apalatchi,” referring to the Blue Ridge Mountains in north-eastern Georgia, first appeared in 1565, a year after a Huguenot expedition penetrated into the area (Davis, Donald Edward 3). This designation, eventually encompassing the whole mountain range, has been used in variously spelled forms and with varying frequency since then (Davis, Donald Edward 3-8). The Cascades derive their name from the rapids they made on the Columbia River (Gulick 198, McArthur 154). These rapids were located near Table Mountain at a spot where the river met the tides from the ocean and where a major landslide probably blocked the river 350 to 500 years ago (Alt and Hyndman, *Roadside Geology* 216-17, Gulick 17, Harris 219, Williams 35). The rapids, usually called the upper, middle, and lower cascades, were six miles long and presented a major obstacle in transportation (Gulick 17). The rapids have now been submerged under the Bonneville Dam. The first written reference to the mountains as the Cascades dates from the 1820s (McArthur 152).

Geographers, sociologists, historians, and literary scholars have defined the Appalachian and Cascadian regions in different ways. Appalachia’s mountainous physiography has always been its major defining feature, and it was not until after the Civil War that Appalachia began to be considered as a distinct region in other than geographical terms (Shapiro xiii, Walls 56-76).<sup>6</sup> In my discussion of Miles’s Southern Appalachia I follow a geographically based model that situates the mountains in the heart of the region and that draws a porous line between the southern and northern part of the mountain chain in the area where glaciers had extended during the Pleistocene, as far south as the Ohio River, New York State, northern Pennsylvania, and New Jersey (Raitz and Ulack 42, Brooks 166).

In “The Pacific Northwest as a Cross-Border Region,” Laurie Ricou summarizes the long history of the idea of “a north Pacific region” in what is now British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon, going back to the commonalities in the local native languages, art, economy, and political organization, and continuing with the “prolonged search” for a political boundary that was not resolved until 1846—and in the Georgia Basin not until 1871 (262).<sup>7</sup> The name Cascadia began to be used in the late 1980s, but the criteria for describing it as a unified region have varied considerably. According to Eileen V. Quigley, Cascadia is “an imaginary country . . . that eschews national and state boundaries but respects the natural integrity and socio-cultural history that have united the region for centuries” (qtd. in Ricou 263).<sup>8</sup> My delineation of Cascadia as a region of the coastal ranges is closest to Joel Garreau’s nation of Ecotopia which also stresses the presence of the mountains and the rainforest (250).

### ***The Spirit of the Mountains and Klee Wyck as travel narratives***

As Nicholas J. Entrinkin emphasizes in *The Betweenness of Place*, “we understand the specificity of place from a point of view” (3). The narrator in both *The Spirit of the Mountains* and *Klee Wyck* is essentially a Rambler who presents herself sometimes as an insider, sometimes an outsider to the places she describes, oscillating between I-we-they perspectives. In addition, the narrator intersperses her recollections of what has happened recently with accounts from a more distant past, and she situates these experiences into surroundings that are depicted with a scientific accuracy clothed in impressionistic poetry. Occasionally, an extended personal opinion on a particular element of the local culture is inserted. The shifting in point of view and in time is accentuated by abrupt changes in the focus of the individual sketches in each collection. In Miles’s work, some of the themes, as indicated in the titles, include “Cabin Homes,” “Grandmother and Sons,” and “The Literature of a Wolf-Race.” In Carr’s collection, the titles that refer to abandoned coastal villages mingle for example with “The Blouse,” “Sleep,” or “Century Time.” Furthermore, to add to the variety, in the first editions both texts were accompanied by original paintings by the authors. Therefore, at first sight *The Spirit of the Mountains* and *Klee Wyck* may seem rather fragmentary, disparate collections. What holds each heterogeneous piece together is the deeply personally involved, partially autobiographical narrator and her respective region whose voices permeate the whole book.

According to Elizabeth S. D. Engelhardt, Miles’s narrator “takes off and puts on her identity as a mountain woman as befits the argument she is making” (136). Particularly revealing is the paragraph from “Neighbors,” which begins by the narrator’s assertion from the inside: “We who live so far apart . . . are never at ease without the feel of the forest on every side,” and continues by the narrator’s looking from the outside: “The nature of the mountaineer demands that he have solitude for the unhampered growth of his personality, wing-room for his eagle heart” (73). Moreover, the narrator does not hesitate to admit that there are elements of the mountain culture that are simply beyond her comprehension. When describing the special appeal of “the old-time religion” for her, she notes: “I confess that . . . the scene and the music draw me with a charm that I do not understand” (154). To highlight such vacillations in the narrative voice,

Engelhardt, drawing on an established critical tradition, calls Miles's narrator "bicultural" in the sense that she is aware of the cultural patterns within the mountain culture as well as the attitudes toward it in the mainstream culture, blurring the boundary between the two and dramatizing Appalachia's continuous interaction with other parts of the United States (141).

Like the ambivalent, bicultural perspective of Miles's narrator, the insights of Carr's traveller shift between that of a local and that of an outsider, especially during her visits to the old native village sites. In Hilda L. Thomas's words, there is a "double vision" embedded in *Klee Wyck* that allows Carr to underline "the themes of cultural transformation" (8-9). At times the narrative seems to suggest that these places are protected from the curious visitor by the environment itself, as when the narrator's sketching session at Yan is cut short by the weather: "At first it was hot, but by and by haze came creeping over the farther points, blotting them out one after the other as if it were suddenly aware that you had seen too much. The mist came nearer and nearer till it caught Yan too in its woolly whiteness" (96). At another site, it is the young growth springing from the old nurse logs that had been left lying behind the ancient village that makes "an impregnable barrier," "sealing the secrets" of the deeper forest (73). The heart of the place remains mysterious, continuing to tease the narrator with a promise that is always just beyond her reach.

As Kristi Siegel asserts in her introduction to *Issues in Travel Writing*, the genre of travel writing and the genre of autobiography are "closely aligned" (2). This assertion certainly applies to Miles's and Carr's work.<sup>9</sup> Miles's *The Spirit of the Mountains* grows out the experiences she gathered on her hikes in the woods around Walden Ridge, just as Carr's *Klee Wyck* is anchored in the experiences she collected during her outdoor trips around Victoria and along the British Columbia Coast. Engelhardt's helpful summary of available biographical studies devoted to Miles makes it clear that "the distinction between author and narrator is particularly fuzzy in Miles's case" (190). Similarly, there are many disagreements among critics as to how precisely autobiographical Carr's work is.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, it seems safe to say that like Miles, Carr was a painter as well as a writer who sought refuge in the woods frequently, always taking with her a sketching board as well as a notebook.<sup>11</sup>

While for both Miles and Carr their home regions were a source of artistic inspiration and personal identity, their rootedness in a place that was on the periphery of the national cultural sphere contributed to their sense of isolation, which they had to continually strive against. For both authors, correspondence became the key to maintaining a bridge with the wider world. In Miles's life, a crucial figure became Anna Ricketson, an art critic from New England (Whisnant xxiii). For Carr the most important correspondents were Lawren Harris, a painter based in Toronto (Tippett 151, 175-76), and Nan Cheney, a painter from Ottawa (Tippett 267). The other essential form of reaching out from their provincial "outposts" was reading. Significantly, both Miles and Carr were inspired by American transcendentalism. Miles "avidly loved" Thoreau (Engelhardt 137), and Carr especially admired Whitman and Emerson (Davis, Ann 52-60, Tippett 176-78). This attraction to transcendentalism is not surprising, since, as she herself said, Miles was "a lover of outdoors" (qtd. in Engelhardt 137), a

characterization that again fits Carr to the same degree. Interestingly, during the later stage of her artistic career, Carr, tired of being limited by the availability of accommodation, purchased a caravan that she drove on frequent painting and writing trips in the woods outside Victoria (Tippett 226). Therefore, the recollections captured in *The Spirit of the Mountains* and *Klee Wyck* could be characterized as personal memories of the times the authors spent on the trail.

### ***The Spirit of the Mountains* and *Klee Wyck* as environmental histories**

As Donald Edward Davis argues, “human history is natural history” and the natural environment functions as an active force in cultural development (201). Miles’s emphasis on close knowledge of natural history and its interconnection with the local culture runs throughout her Appalachian text. For instance, in “The Log Church School,” the narrator-teacher first situates the school in its place in the woods on King’s Creek, describing the view, the sounds, and the building itself before she outlines her teaching methods. She often takes her pupils outside, not worrying “if the young minds wander afield with the scampering and flitting of little brothers of tree-top and burrow” because she knows that “they learn at such times something not to be found between the covers of Webster” (5). The narrator also stresses the role of environmental education in her homework assignments, which always include something “to think over and dream about—an object lesson, a story, a poem, or a simple talk on some bit of natural science” (6). Carr’s Cascadian collection also underlines the elements of natural history that characterize the author’s region, highlighting especially the central role that education can play in either promoting or devaluing the local people’s knowledge of their environment. Like *The Spirit of the Mountains*, *Klee Wyck* begins with a description of the setting surrounding a wooden school house “that called itself ‘church house’ on Sundays,” even though Carr’s narrator does not figure here as a former student and teacher but as a temporary visitor (33). This time the locale is Ucluelet Bay on the north-western coast of Vancouver Island. The house sits on a narrow strip of the beach, wedged in between the ocean and the forest, between the big Presbyterian mission house and the reserve of the Ucluelet band of the Nootka nation. The trail to the school house leads along the very edge of the forest and it is “full of holes where the high seas had undermined the big tree roots” (33). When the tide is high, it is often necessary to enter the forest itself, where one cannot see the ground for it is densely covered with “hard-leafed sallal bushes and skunk cabbage bogs” (33). There is no doubt that the environment continues to shape the life in the new mission village just as it has always done in this place, despite the missionaries’ efforts to change things. As the visiting artist notes: “Houses and people were alike. Wind, rain, forest and sea had done the same to both—both were soaked through and through with sunshine, too” (35). Nevertheless, the interaction between places and people is mutual and people have always imprinted signs of their presence into the places they have inhabited. Before examining the inscriptions of human history into the Appalachian and Cascadian landscapes, it might therefore be helpful to outline the ecological characteristics that define the two bioregions.

While politically Appalachia and Cascadia each constitutes a border region, physiographically they are diverse but continuous wholes.<sup>12</sup> The mountains of

Appalachia are much older than the mountains of Cascadia and today they are structurally rather more stable. However, both the eastern and the western mountain ranges were formed by subduction, the Appalachian range during the Palaeozoic era (in three waves between 400 million and 225 million years ago) and the Cascade and Coast Ranges during the Cenozoic era five million years ago (Raitz and Ulack 41, Cannings and Cannings 30-32).<sup>13</sup> As in Appalachia, the topography of most of the northern reaches of the coastal belt in Cascadia was carved out during the Pleistocene. As in Appalachia, though, some areas, especially on Vancouver Island and in Haida Gwaii (the Queen Charlotte's Islands), escaped glaciation and offered important refuges for some of their endemic species (Cannings and Cannings 79-80). Therefore, the Appalachian chain and the Coast and Cascade chain each provides a habitat for species that are found only in certain small areas within these bioregions and nowhere else in the world.<sup>14</sup> Each of these bioregions also creates a suture zone, "a narrow band that marks the meeting of two biotas, or areas of different types of flora and fauna, that were once separated (during the Pleistocene) but are now in contact again" (Raitz and Ulack 67, Cannings and Cannings 77).<sup>15</sup>

From an ecological perspective, the most dynamic force shaping the varied forms and ways of life in Appalachia as well as in Cascadia is the ocean and the predominant westerly winds that bring the moist air into the mountains. In Southern Appalachia the climate is governed primarily by the storms from the Gulf of Mexico (Raitz and Ulack 51-56), while in Central Cascadia the Pacific cyclones set the pattern (Cannings and Cannings 62-65). These rains from the oceans have cloaked the westward slopes of Southern Appalachia and Central Cascadia in temperate rain forests (Raitz and Ulack 39, Cannings and Cannings 67). The forests of Miles's Appalachia, which receive much of their rain in the summer, are dominated by deciduous trees. Depending on the altitude, precipitation, soil, ground water, slope faces, microclimates, and other factors, more than 125 tree species have been identified in the region (Sutton and Sutton 81). In Carr's Cascadia, where most of the precipitation falls from November to March, the forests consist mainly of conifers that photosynthesise and grow through the winters (Cannings and Cannings 140-41). Therefore, the dominant trees in the coastal mountains are Douglas-fir, Western Hemlock, Western Red Cedar, and Sitka Spruce (Cannings and Cannings 67). Moreover, the rainforests in Appalachia as well as in Cascadia shelter a dense under story of shrubs and herbs, forming some of the most diverse and productive ecosystems in North America (Raitz and Ulack 70, Cannings and Cannings 141).

However, these uniquely biologically rich regions share an experience of over-exploitation by their human inhabitants. Appalachia and Cascadia had been intersected by extensive networks of native trading routes and European goods entered into these rugged areas well before the first European colonizers penetrated them. However, in both regions it was not until the arrival of the fur-traders, in the mid-eighteenth century in Appalachia and at the very end of the same century in Cascadia, that large-scale human modification of the environment began (Davis, Donald Edward 24, Roy and Thompson 40). In Appalachia, deer hides became the main articles of trade, while in Cascadia it was sea otter pelts. Gradually, mining, logging, dam construction, and the tourist industry grew in these regions. As Jacquelyn Dowd Hall puts it, "the key to modern Appalachian

history lies not in the region's isolation but in its role as a source of raw materials and as an outlet for investment in a capitalist world economy" (357). This observation is also applicable to Cascadia. Today, only small isolated areas of virgin forests able to support climax associations survive. Nevertheless, the eastern as well as the western mountains have preserved some of their integrity. In Miles's and Carr's descriptions from the early twentieth century their "power" is palpable.

The moist environment of the temperate rainforest accompanies the rambling narrators in *The Spirit of the Mountains* and *Klee Wyck* wherever they go. When Miles's narrator walks through the lush "May woods" after a night's rain, "the trees [stand] immersed in a lake of thin mist," and her face and hands get "slapped softly" by the "cool wet leaves" (38-39). With each step, she gets "a shower of bright drops" (39). Carr's narrator is also quite used to getting wet on the coast. As she remembers, on her regular summer trips there was usually some form of water in the air, be it just a pleasant "half mist, half rain" (66), a persistent gentle drip (52), or a downpour that "smothered everything in a blur of rain" (54). Such observations show the narrators' openness to recording the sensual aspects of their outdoor wanderings. In "Cabin Homes," Miles's roaming narrator comes to visit on a farm in Hallet's Fork. After she details what everything looks like and what smells, sounds, and activities permeate the place during the course of the day, she celebrates the beauty of "common things" that implant themselves in the human spirit the strongest (35). Among others, she lists "the mere smells of hot meadows, of rain-wet plowed land, . . . the musk of mother's hair, . . . the ceaseless blinking of poplar leaves" (35). In Carr's country, when the narrator is spending a night in an empty long-house at Skedans, a similarly intense feeling is stimulated by the sharp ocean air that "seeped in at the cracks" from one side and the wood smoke that stretched toward her bed from the other side (51). Such awakening of the narrators' senses often signifies a prelude to the expression of their spiritual thoughts.

In both texts, brief passages of sensually charged description support the authors' emphasis on the spiritual aspects of the landscape. As Miles's pensive narrator muses, "To one who understands these high solitudes it is no marvel that the inhabitants should be mystics" (18). In fact, it is this enchanting power of the land, "the dream vistas, blue and violet, that lead their eyes afar among the hills" that makes the local people stay in their region (19). Carr's depictions of the Cascadian landscape likewise communicate "the quality of indwelling spirit" in the land (Lawren Harris, qtd. in Dilworth 22). When her narrator watches the July sun "spread munificently" over the dense forest encircling the Cumshewa Inlet, she discovers that "for all their crowding, there was room between every tree, every leaf, for limitless mystery" (128). Carr's philosophy has been called "naturist" and "transcendentalist" (Rimstead 29, Davis, Ann 53). Indeed, both Miles and Carr fuse "pantheistic principles" with "Christian faith" in their depiction of the land, and they both do so without blurring the specific characteristics of their respective bioregions (Rimstead 35). It is this commitment to the rootedness in specific landscapes that has led them toward their deep indebtedness to Native American/First Nations beliefs.

### ***The Spirit of the Mountains and Klee Wyck as cultural histories***

The geographical characteristics of Southern Appalachia and Central Cascadia and the biodiversity of the temperate rain forest environment have contributed to the sense of solemnity that often hangs over the regions in the form of fog. At the same time, both regions have experienced many waves of cultural displacement that have added to the sombre layering of stories associated with the blue mountains. Miles's wandering narrator notices a special "charm and mystery of bygone days" that "broods over the mountain country" (18). This brooding atmosphere speaks with the voices "ancient peoples," with the echoes of "the rites and legends of the aborigines" as well as with the later reverberations of "pioneer hardihood" (18). All these stories mingle together and make it seem as if the place were filled with "audible and visible ghosts" (67). As the narrator notes, at times one may perceive "an aroma of Cherokee magic haunting" the hills and the people's minds (97). In *Klee Wyck* the native presence is also perceptibly inscribed into the landscape. For example, when camping in Skedans, an ancient village site of the Haida, the narrator records that "memories [come] out of this place to meet the Indians" (50). Observing the guides who had taken her there, she sees "remembering in their brightening eyes" and she hears it "in the quick hushed words" the couple share in the Haida language. The speaking memories in the land fill the atmosphere with a sacredness that reminds the narrator of the atmosphere believers experience in Christian churches (50). *The Spirit of the Mountains* and *Klee Wyck* thus resound with the echoes of the many cultures that have inhabited the Appalachian and Cascadian bioregions, reminding the reader that the newcomers' attitudes of towards the environment have often reflected their attitudes towards the local populations.

The need to respect, learn about, and practice indigenous, local ways of living-in-place is one of the central tenets of bioregionalism. Commenting on the work of Peter Berg and Gary Snyder, who are among the most influential proponents of bioregionalism today, Doug Aberley stresses that "each of these men instinctively understands that the successful growth of socially-just cultures rooted in the protection and restoration of ecosystem health requires a deep understanding of cultural tradition" (15). Miles's and Carr's narrators pinpoint numerous instances of cultural intermarriage between the native inhabitants and the European settlers in Southern Appalachia and Central Cascadia. In particular, they record information on native philosophy, medicine, stories, basket weaving, as well as other elements, including "the bow-arrow tang" in the mountaineers' speech (Miles 175). At the same time, Miles's and Carr's estimation of their bioregions' native heritage sometimes clashes with their prejudices and misconceptions. As Engelhardt observes, Miles's "portrait of the Cherokees is complicated, occasionally contradictory, but often surprisingly appreciative" (150). Such a mixture of lack of understanding and perceptive insight into the mutual influence among various cultures in Appalachia surfaces perhaps most clearly in Miles's discussion of mountain music. On the one hand, she introduces this chapter by distinguishing sharply between native and Appalachian music, identifying the former as un-American and the latter as American. Specifically, she declares that "negro" and "the aboriginal Indian music" are "no expression of American life and character" and that they "fall as strangely on our ears as any foreign product" (146). On the other hand, in the concluding lines of this section she notes that

mountain songs ring “crude with a tang of the Indian wilderness, strong with the strength of the mountains” (170), undercutting her previous assertion.

Carr’s portrait of the coastal tribes is also somewhat problematic. For instance, while she is piercingly critical of the missionaries’ practice of taking children away from native families (113-14, 115-17), Carr is also at times capable of very unsympathetic remarks. When, after staying for seven days, she is leaving Greenville up on a tributary of the Naas River, she is escorted out only by the local dogs and neither the man nor the woman, who with their grandchild are the only summer inhabitants of the village, comes to see her off. Carr concludes her visit by observing that “perhaps in a way dogs are more domestic and more responsive than Indians” (87), even though the couple had communicated with her and the man had even taken her to see the totem poles further up the Naas. Further, notwithstanding her sincere interest and admiration, Carr occasionally misinterprets the cultural significance of the totem poles. Paradoxically, she seems to have made a mistake in identifying one of the totems that she presents as D’Sonoqua (Rimstead 50, Sanger 237). She may have done so for her own artistic purposes so that this particular totem would fit into the pattern of the three meetings with D’Sonoqua, the Wild Woman of the Woods, which, even though spread out in time, are depicted together in one sketch and which signified a crucial change in Carr’s identity as a woman artist. However, it is probable that Carr simply did not know that the totem she thought was D’Sonoqua was more likely a figure of a “male chief or ancestor” (Rimstead 50) or, more specifically, Sisheutl, the male “horned, scaled monster who may also appear as a salmon or a snake” (Sanger 237). Nevertheless, despite these inconsistencies and errors in representation, both *The Spirit of the Mountains* and *Klee Wyck* stand firmly on the side of preservation of local cultures and their environments.

Miles and Carr speak out strongly against the unrestrained development of extractive and tourist industries that in the authors’ life times had started penetrating into their respective bioregions. Miles concludes *The Spirit of the Mountains* with an extended segment, titled “What is to be will be, and that that ain’t to be might happen.” In this piece she expresses her vision of the future of mountain culture. She first details the ramifications of building a hotel, a factory, or a mill in a remote area in the mountains. As roads and wage-jobs take local people away from home, “the loom and the wheel are consigned to the barn loft” and “the hand of the worker in wood and metal loses its cunning” (Miles 192). Community and family deteriorate, too, as “all are too busy working for the city people” (Miles 195). It is often “too late” when the mountaineer finally comes to see that “he has sold his birthright for a mess of potage” (195). Miles then goes on to call for keeping up and developing the mountain people’s traditional strategies of making a living and a culture, for “work that will make [them] better mountaineers, instead of turning [them] into poor imitation city people” (198).

Carr’s appeal in *Klee Wyck* is also for the maintenance and growth of local knowledge, economies, and arts. She emphatically links the encroachment of commercial fishing and logging to the “desolation” (73) and “desperate loneliness” (82) of the abandoned village sites along the coast. She is just as insistent in exposing the missionaries’ implication in the destruction of native art, especially of totem carving skills, by branding everything connected to native art

and religion as “foolish and heathenish” (86). At the same time, Carr celebrates, with deep delight, Mrs. Green’s “remarkable” ingenuity in integrating non-native elements into her life style while clinging “vigorously to the old Indian ways” (110). Since Mrs. Green knows exactly where the fish lay their eggs in the kelp leaves, she can gather them in her canoe and sell them at good profit due to the Japanese demand for fish roe (111). Determined to maintain her self-sufficiency as much as possible, Mrs. Green also starts to cultivate potatoes “wherever she could find a pocket of land on the little islands round about” (Carr 113). Therefore, both Miles and Carr anticipate much of recent bioregional work concerned with inhabitation, reinhabitation and the art of dwelling in place (Berg and Dasmann 217-20, Berry 153-69, Snyder 184-218).

When read in the context of literary bioregionalism, the most important contribution of *The Spirit of the Mountains* and *Klee Wyck* lies in each text’s particular environmental aesthetic. Miles and Carr succeed in illustrating the ways in which a sense of place shapes the local people’s sense of beauty. Speaking from personal experience, Miles notes, “the beginnings of aesthetic feeling found expression in necklaces of scarlet haws and headdresses pinned and braided together of oak leaves, cardinal flowers and fern” (17). Tracing the transformation of the West Coast totem poles from “forest trees” to “bare poles” to carved totems, Carr also sees an organic unity between the natural material, the environment, and the artist’s imagination (85). As she envisions it, the carver “cut forms to fit the thoughts that the birds and animals and fish suggested to him, and to these he added something of himself” (85). Through such an interaction of elements “a new language” is created, and consequently “the cedar and the creatures and the man all talked together through the totem poles to the people” (85). The sense of place in both *The Spirit of the Mountains* and *Klee Wyck* is thus associated with a commitment to preserving the bioregions’ natural as well as cultural heritage, both texts participating in the “ecological/poetical exercise” (Snyder 217) that is at the heart of the ongoing project of bioregional writing.

The generic heterogeneity of *The Spirit of the Mountains* and *Klee Wyck*, interweaving aspects of the travel narrative, environmental history, and cultural history, results at least partly from bioregional mode of representation. As bioregional palimpsests, Miles’s Southern Appalachia and Carr’s Central Cascadia combine autobiographical intimacy and manipulation, the swift movement of the travelogue, the minute, visually vibrant description of natural history, anthropological in-the-field observation, and poetic exultation. Using one of “the three primary ways of organizing environmental material” (421),<sup>16</sup> the texts are structured as collections of brief, episodic excursions which meander like the foot-trails through the tangle of the Appalachian forest or like the boat passages through the intricate channels along the Cascadian shoreline. These excursions are united by the partially autobiographical narrative voice and the ubiquitous presence of the bioregion approached from a variety of angles. Looking at *The Spirit of the Mountains* and *Klee Wyck* within the context of literary ecology, particularly bioregionalism, shows that just as Miles’s and Carr’s home bioregions are ecologically varied, they are also culturally heterogeneous and unique.

<sup>1</sup> As Maria Tippet mentions in her definitive biography of Emily Carr, the initially chosen title for Carr's first book was "Stories in Cedar" (256). Klee Wyck reflects Carr's spelling of the Nootka words T'le Wek, which was the nickname Carr received from the native people when she first visited their village at Ucluelet in 1898 (Tippet 30, 32, 285). This nickname, most often translated as "one who tends to laugh" (Tippet 32) or "the laughing one" (Crean 75), accompanied Carr for the rest of her life.

<sup>2</sup> The philosophical roots of ecocriticism lie deep in the past, but since the 1990s the body of ecocritical studies has grown dramatically. As in any other area of literary theory, there is a wide range of philosophies within this field. Among the works that have especially influenced my understanding of ecocriticism so far, chronologically according to the year of publication since the beginning of that decade, are Wendell Berry's *What Are People For* (1990), Irene Diamond's and Gloria Feman Orenstein's *Reweaving the World: The Emergence of Ecofeminism* (1990), I. G. Simmons' *Interpreting Nature: Cultural Constructions of the Environment* (1993), Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (1995), Patrick D. Murphy's *Literature, Nature, and Other: Ecofeminist Critiques* (1995), George Sessions' *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century* (1995), Gary Snyder's *A Place in Space* (1995), Cheryl Glotfelty's and Harold Fromm's *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996), Richard Kerridge's and Neil Sammells' *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature* (1998), Michael Vincent McGinnis's *Bioregionalism* (1999), Kirkpatrick Sale's *Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision* (1985, 2000), Karen J. Warren's *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective and What It Is and Why It Matters* (2000), Glen A. Love's *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment* (2003), Greg Gerrard's *Ecocriticism* (2004), and Lawrence Buell's *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (2005). My discussion of Miles's and Carr's work is framed along the following ecocritical principles: everything is interconnected and interdependent within the ecosphere, humans are not automatically superior to the nonhuman world, the nonhuman world has agency, diversity is crucial to the survival of individual species as well as to the health of the ecosphere, the exploitation of the natural environment is connected to the oppression of women, and a committed activism is an integral part of ecocritical practice.

<sup>3</sup> Such an ecological underpinning imbues also Miles's and Carr's visual art. Miles's *Our Southern Birds* (1919) is in fact an illustrated ornithological guide to the mountains of Southern Appalachia, and, as Robert Thacker points out, it is "Cascadian ecology" that forms "the primary focus" of Carr's mature visual art as well as her writing (183). Additionally, available biographical evidence shows that both women preferred painting landscapes in the outdoors and that they often took field notes on their chosen subject in preparation for and in between sketching sessions (Engelhardt 137, Tippet 238). Integrating a detailed analysis of Miles's Southern Appalachia and Carr's Central Cascadia as they are depicted in the authors' paintings would thus certainly be a fruitful extension of this article. However, here I focus primarily on Miles's and Carr's literary achievements. Another potentially highly illuminating element to compare in Miles's and Carr's work that, unfortunately, also lies outside the scope of this article, would be the authors' portraits of women's roles in the local cultures.

<sup>4</sup> In "Interpreting Bioregionalism: A Story from Many Voices" Doug Aberley offers a very helpful introductory review of the bioregional project.

<sup>5</sup> In *Practical Ecocriticism: Literature, Biology, and the Environment*, Glen A. Love names among the writers within the bioregional or "place-centred" tradition William Bartram, Susan Fenimore Cooper, Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Mary Austin, Aldo Leopold, and, among present-day authors, for instance Edward Abbey, Annie Dillard, Barry Lopez, and Terry Tempest Williams (32).

<sup>6</sup> As defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission established in 1964, Appalachia was divided at first into four, and, since 1971, into three parts: Northern, Central, and Southern Appalachia, with the coal-mining Central Appalachia being recognized as separate from the rest of Southern Appalachia (Raitz and Ulack 23-26). Arnold Guyot's earlier geographical division from

1861 also organized the region into three sections, the southern one comprising the area from the New River in Virginia to Alabama (Raitz and Ulack 11). From a sociohistorical perspective, the boundary between the southern and northern portions of the Appalachian region was early on placed at the Mason-Dixon Line, which was originally “a surveyor’s line to determine a boundary dispute” between William Penn and Lord Baltimore, in 1763-1767 (Campbell 12). While some historians, such as Allen W. Batteau, have focused on chronicling the development of Appalachia as “a social construction” (16), others have approached the region “not merely as a figment of a reformist, mainline imagination in the nineteenth century,” but as a “particularly enigmatic” and “unique” place (Drake ix-x).

<sup>7</sup> Ricou also addresses the “problematic” aspects of naming this region that is divided in half with a “permeable and meandering boundary” (262). He invokes Gary Snyder’s concept of the Ish nation defined as “the drainage of all Puget Sound and the Straits of Georgia” (263). The names Pacific Northwest, the Great Pacific Northwest, and the north Pacific Slope have also been promoted, often using as the main defining feature the Columbia River watershed (Gastil 265, Robbins, “Epilogue” 159). According to some authors, such as William G. Robbins and Thomas Griffiths, northern California, Idaho, and western Montana also belong to this region (Robbins, “Epilogue” 159, Griffiths 54).

<sup>8</sup> In the subtitle of his recent book-length study on the literature of this cross-border region Laurie Ricou remains faithful to his preference for the name the Pacific Northwest, and in the main title he chooses to emphasize another distinguishing natural feature of the area (called differently on each side of the national border), calling his book *The Arbutus / Madrone Files: Reading the Pacific Northwest* (2002).

<sup>9</sup> Miles was born in Evansville, Indiana, but her parents, who were both teachers, moved to Rabbit Hash, Kentucky, when she was about one year old, and then, about eight years later, they relocated again, this time to Walden Ridge, near Chattanooga, Tennessee, which eventually became Miles’s country (Whisnant xvii). As Miles recalled in a letter years later, during her teenage years on the Ridge she “drew, read, wrote a little,” and she “lived with the mountain people and in the woods a great deal” (qtd. in Whisnant xviii). After studying art for two years in St. Louis, Miles came back to the Ridge and married a man from a mountain family, determined to continue painting and writing all forms of life in the woods while raising a steadily growing family (Whisnant xix). Carr was born and grew up in Victoria, British Columbia, where her father ran a wholesale business and where he owned an eight-acre farm adjacent to Beacon Hill Park (Tippett 4-5). This neighbourhood on the hill served as Carr’s base throughout her life, apart from the time she spent studying abroad and excluding her stay in Vancouver for about six years in her early career. The park, the nearby Dallas Road Cliffs and the beach continued to sustain Carr’s need for the outdoors when she was stuck in Victoria because of lack of funds and also after her failing health prevented her from setting out on her favourite expeditions to remote places along the West Coast (Tippett 1-16, 115-38, 263-76).

<sup>10</sup> In fact, most of the criticism on Carr’s works has focused on the discrepancies between Carr’s “real” life and the events she included in her prose. In addition to numerous journal articles, at least six major biographical studies have appeared to date: Edythe Hembroff-Schleicher’s *Emily Carr: The Untold Story* (1978), Maria Tippett’s *Emily Carr: A Biography* (1979, 1994), Doris Shadbolt’s *The Art of Emily Carr* (1979), Paula Blanchard’s *The Life of Emily Carr* (1987), Anne Newlands’s *Emily Carr: An Introduction to Her Life and Art* (1996), and, most recently, Susan Crean’s *The Laughing One: A Journey to Emily Carr* (2001). This proliferation has prompted Stephanie Kirkwood Walker to write a metabiography comparing the various existing biographical versions, titled *This Woman in Particular: Contexts for the Biographical Image of Emily Carr* (1996).

<sup>11</sup> Miles’s and Carr’s attachment to their home bioregions was signalled early in their lives when each author experienced a debilitating case of homesickness during her studies. Miles had to leave St. Louis after just two winters at the St. Louis School of Design, returning home before she completed her programme and disappointing the patrons who had funded her education (Engelhardt 136). As Miles wrote to Anna Ricketson, “I wanted to go back to the mountains and reality, and back I went . . . That summer I spent in the woods, trying to ‘find myself’ and decided

that the city was not the place for me” (qtd. in Engelhardt 136-37). Carr, who had worked hard to save money from teaching painting to go to the Westminster School of Art in London, was actually hospitalized in the East Anglia Sanatorium when she had a mental collapse during her studies in England (Tippett 34-61). In her autobiography, Carr recorded that after her release she left England in a hurry, disappointed that she was not able to finish her training but happy to be sailing for Canada (qtd. in Tippett 61).

<sup>12</sup> The continental Appalachian Range begins at the Gulf of St. Lawrence as the Shickshocks on the north shore of the Gaspé Peninsula and runs south-westward into northern Georgia and Alabama (Brooks 1-3). Similarly, as Patricia E. Roy and John Herd Thompson observe about the West Coast mountains, the “landforms on either side of the border are identical” (10), stretching south-eastward from Alaska, through British Columbia, and to Mount Shasta in northern California (Cannings and Cannings 30-32). The Appalachians consist of four main geologic provinces, the Piedmont, the Blue Ridge, the Ridge and Valley Province, and the Appalachian Plateau, that form one chain of mountains (Raitz and Ulack 11-18). The geologic backbone of Cascadia is the coastal range, usually called today the Coast Mountains in the north and the Cascade Mountains in the south (Alt and Hyndman, *Northwest Exposures* 107, Cannings and Cannings 30-32).

<sup>13</sup> The original batholithic belt of the Coast Mountains was in fact formed forty-five million years ago, eroded to low hills that did not create any rain shadow, and then was reborn together with the Cascade Volcanic Arc that began to rise five million years ago (Cannings and Cannings 30-32).

<sup>14</sup> For example, in Southern Appalachia, endemic plant species include Michaux’s Saxifrage and Vasey’s Trillium, both of which can be found in North Carolina (McDaniel). Among the endemics in Cascadia are Taylor’s Saxifrage and Newcombe’s Butterweed that grow today only on the Moresby Island in Haida Gwaii and on the Brooks Peninsula on north-western Vancouver Island (Cannings and Cannings 80). Interestingly, the heath family dominates both bioregions because it thrives in acidic soils (Raitz and Ulack 71, Cannings and Cannings 163), and in the moist environment of these areas the most common vertebrates are the lungless salamanders (Davis, Donald Edward 133, Brooks 8, Cannings and Cannings 157-58).

<sup>15</sup> Some of the species that “bind the Appalachians into one mountain system” include the three-toothed cinqueoil and golden-crowned kinglets (Brooks 4). In Cascadia, examples include the subspecies of Douglas-fir and red and Douglas’ Squirrels (Cannings and Cannings 77).

<sup>16</sup> According to Lawrence Buell, the other two primary ways include “seasonal chronicle” and “items in an inventory” (421).

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