Wrestling Teddy Bears: Wilderness Masculinity as Invented Tradition in the Pacific Northwest[1]

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Abstract:
At the turn of the last century, the tale - end of the great period of invented tradition, Americanism was steeped in or preoccupied with the rediscovery of American masculinity - displaced by Civil War and the economic depression and uncertainty of the Gilded Age - the closing of the frontier, and a growing appreciation of outdoor recreation. The result was division over the expansionist tendencies of proponents for war against Spain, continued labor resentment, and a reinvigorated surge of white supremacy. This paper follows an unorthodox avenue to investigate these themes and tensions. In exploring instances of turn-of-the-last-century human encounters with bears in hand-to-hand combat in the Pacific Northwest, I mean to demonstrate that notions of the frontier and environmental determinism constructed a new, wilderness masculinity distinct from changing expressions of urban masculinity.

> "The wilderness masters the colonist"
> -Frederick Jackson Turner

1 On a dismal bear hunt in 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt was frustrated. After three days of walking, climbing, and riding in the wilds of Mississippi, his party had not come across a single bear. On the fourth day, the local guides and their dogs finally found an old bear, which they chased until the bedraggled creature could run no more. The dogs attacked and injured the bear, and the guides tied it to a tree before calling for the President. Here, at last, was a bear for him to shoot. Ever the quintessential sportsman, however, Roosevelt saw no sport in slaughtering the old and restrained beast, though he did order that it be put down and put out of its misery. The story might well have ended there, but for the media attention Roosevelt's response received, which resulted in the creation of the teddy bear as children's icon and added to the mystique of Roosevelt as the archetypal representation of American masculinity, already firmly entrenched after his heroism during the Spanish-American War. The political cartoonist Clifford Berryman heard of this story and drew the now-famous cartoon of Roosevelt refusing to kill the bear. Interestingly, Berryman's first cartoon depicted a full-grown bear with a rope around its neck looking rather sorry for itself. Subsequent images of the bear turned it into an innocent cub, which further enhanced Roosevelt's rejection of the kill as any kind of challenge.

2 In refusing to shoot the restrained bear, Roosevelt was adhering to his own principles

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the American Historical Association-Pacific Coast Branch meeting in Vancouver, on 10 August 2001. I am grateful to Heather Streets and Bill Robbins for their comments on that version of the paper. Sue Armitage, Tina Loo, and Val Plumwood also offered valuable suggestions at various stages. I also wish to acknowledge Karen Routledge, who hunted down a number of British Columbia newspaper articles that were central to the writing of this paper.

of the strenuous life that advocated that hard work of body and mind was the only way to guarantee the survival of the potent and virile attributes of the American, white race. He was also contributing to the propagation of American tradition by imposing the principles of the strenuous life into the invented conception of Americanism and its relationship to its natural environment. Historical geographers have explored the notion of invented tradition in the United States, arguing that mythmaking occurs after a region has been colonized. They suggest that the popular American notion of pristine wilderness is an example of this invented tradition insofar as it exaggerates the extent of the American conquest and downplays non-American influences on the landscape. The invented tradition presented America as "a succession of imagined environments which have been conceived as far more difficult for settlers to conquer than they ever were in reality" (Bowden 20). By insisting that North America was uninhabited prior to European contact, the new Americans became conquering heroes and pioneers of mythical or superhuman proportions, taming the wilderness and transforming it into the Jeffersonian or yeoman farmer ideal, as portrayed by the nineteenth century landscape artist, Thomas Cole. The geographer M. J. Bowden listed four types of invented traditions. The first were instant traditions invented by political and religious leaders. The second were invented by literary and artistic elites, whose messages seeped deliberately but informally into the mainstream. The third also came from above but settled as fact in the mainstream memory. The last type of invented tradition dealt with long held notions that were given form or substance by leaders or heroes who created grand metaphors for the nation. Bowden suggested that the predominant era of American mythmaking was the middle and late nineteenth century, but we might extend that era to include at least the beginning of the twentieth century and the ubiquity of Theodore Roosevelt's influence on all four of these types of invented traditions. Regardless of how we might date the creation or establishment of the major American invented traditions, however, we might properly recognize its rhetorical significance as a means of manufacturing consent or acquiring a hegemonic pull over the central tenets of the nation's popular culture. This is a theme that could benefit from further historical investigation.

3 At the turn of the last century, the tale-end of the great period of invented tradition, Americanism was steeped in or preoccupied with the rediscovery of American masculinity - displaced by Civil War and the economic depression and uncertainty of the Gilded Age - the closing of the frontier, and a growing appreciation of outdoor recreation. The result was division over the expansionist tendencies of proponents for war against Spain, continued labor resentment, and a reinvigorated surge of white supremacy. This paper follows an unorthodox

avenue to investigate these themes and tensions. In exploring instances of turn-of-the-last-century human encounters with bears in hand-to-hand combat in the Pacific Northwest, I mean to demonstrate that notions of the frontier and environmental determinism constructed a new, wilderness masculinity distinct from changing expressions of urban masculinity. The idea for a paper about wrestling with bears in the wilderness was inspired more than fifteen years ago. I spent my summers during high school working as a camp counselor at a forestry camp north of Squamish, British Columbia. After growing up on the stories of "Mighty Men" in European mythology - Odysseus, Heracles, and King Arthur - and reading superhero comic books in my urban, middle class environment, meeting a real-live Beowulf at Evans Lake taught me that these archetypes of rugged masculinity were somehow more than - and yet nothing more than - mere mythological constructions. Andy was an experienced outdoorsman, who had had several encounters with bears. According to camp legend, not only had he wrestled with several bears, he had even killed a bear with his own hands. Such stories would have remained campfire tales, had I not witnessed on a couple of occasions his chasing bears from the camp. Now, Andy was not a violent person with veins in his teeth and he did not go out of his way to harm bears or nature, but his experiences in the wild definitely shaped our perceptions of him.

4 Andy's wilderness environment was central to his image as bear-wrestler. Similarly, both social and geographical contexts of the American West shaped new, Progressive-era ideas about wilderness and masculinity. As Andy's encounters with bears made for lively stories around the campfire, late nineteenth and early twentieth century wilderness adventures were exceptionally well-received, as evidenced by the popularity of the writings of Jack London, William T. Hornaday, and countless books and articles written by adventurers and sportsmen. Further examples of this new masculine, wilderness colonialism - living in the shadow of Theodore Roosevelt's professed "strenuous life" - included a series of urban newspaper articles that reported stories of men wrestling with bears in the wilderness of the Pacific Northwest. These chance encounters and the heroic accounts that they inspired clearly adhere to the principles of what Val Plumwood has called "the masculinist monster myth," an inherent part of the master narrative (Plumwood, "Prey I" 40).[2] In wilderness, man is the

[2] An abridged version of this essay also exists. See Plumwood, "Prey II". Recognition of these cultural constructions in recent histories is emblematic of a greater social awareness among scholars, but significantly detrimental to inherited notions of the master narrative, that grand scheme or model that represents or symbolizes the relentless development of free institutions and the expansion of political liberty. Too often, the master narrative - born out of narrow-minded, homogeneous consensus many generations earlier - is based on ideal rather than historical reality; it is, moreover, often oppressive and suppressive, imposing a hegemonic mastery over the non-white, the non-male, and the non-middle or upper classes. That the master narrative should claim to consider - yet largely ignore - these minorities strikes at the very root of the historiographical problem it

underdog against wild and savage brutes; his victory heralds yet another example of the progress of civilization and, therefore, the supremacy of the white male. During the Progressive era, these examples of bear-wrestling in the bush reaffirmed a sense of masculine identity that was strongly tempered by the nature of the landscape; only in the wilderness - distanced from "civilization" - was the expression of this primitive virility generally accepted.[3] This epic struggle with the unknown or unfamiliar is intriguing, however, precisely because of its "uncivilized" setting. It is further indicative of a reversal in the manly mystique that had previously symbolized an appreciation for the strategic and mental acuity of nineteenth century manhood. Wrestling with bears represents a more primitive pre-industrial - almost Jacksonian - form of masculinity based on brute physical strength.

5 While considerable scholarship has examined the significance of race and class in the construction of masculinity, I propose that the natural environment plays a similarly significant role and that the interplay between race, class, and nature is central to any kind of gender construction. While scholars have emphasized global competition, economic fluctuations, and social crises as catalysts for the reconsideration or restructuring of notions of masculinity, very few have developed in a sustained way the influence of wild nature on these constructions.[4] My contribution in this paper, then, is to address the problem of the environment's relative absence from theories of gender. Using stories of bear-wrestling as a means of locating contact points between the two existing historiographies, I challenge gender and environmental historians to bridge the gap between their fields of research and broaden their parameters to include more comprehensive and connected understandings of nature and gender.[5]

6 The separation between gender and environmental studies is strikingly artificial. Nineteenth century European rhetoric used to express human mastery over the natural world shares notable links with the rhetorical tools deployed in the imperialist domination of colonies; both imply order and exhibit what have become accepted as inherently masculine

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represents. It is not until very recently that historians have started to question or debate the value of the (or any) master narrative. For an interesting critique of the master narrative, see Huggins.

[3] "Civilized" forms of violence were either still accepted or had become institutionalized during this period. The Progressive era was a period during which soldiers were still heroic and wars glorious. Furthermore, boxing during this period became a "manly art." The distinction between acceptable, civilized, and ordered forms of violence and primitive, wild, and disordered forms finds its roots in the environment in which it takes place. For the association between war and heroism, see Dawson. For boxing as manly art, see Gorn.

[4] See as exception Draper.

[5] One of the major criticisms of environmental history is that it has proven itself unable to incorporate women and the study of gender into its narratives. The reason for this stems from the initial purpose of history and responses to the ultimate question in history: what is the relationship between culture and society? Environmental historians respond "nature," whereas gender historians answer "gender." Such divergent responses, however, should not preclude greater confluence of the two deviating positions. For criticisms of environmental history from a women's history perspective, see Scharff.

traits. Whereas the global atmosphere of imperial competition stressed a scientific justification for white supremacy, the rhetoric of European settlement was steeped in similar "manly" struggles to conquer nature and carve out a sense of place.[6] These latter struggles also required a tangible antagonist against which to pit the hero. The construction of nature as subservient woman is an uncomfortable epilogue to an equally uncomfortable narrative of man's struggle against wilderness as nonhuman demon or beast. The further personification of wilderness in the human-like shape of a bear in the following newspaper accounts even further clarifies the context of male domination over the natural world. The establishment and propagation of this hierarchical ideology - pitting the white male as exploiter of natural resources - are also the central reasons for the environmental crisis we face today, given our inability to recognize the importance of a healthy environment to the progress of human civilization. This inequitable hierarchy is also a key problem against which the feminist movement protests. If environmental history represents the frontline of critical examination to help the environmental movement to better understand itself, as Donald Worster recently claimed, then surely the role of women's history is to serve the same function for the feminist movement. That both histories and movements can raise issue with the master narrative - and the same criticism vis-à-vis the hierarchical nature of that narrative - represents a departure point for the melding of both historiographies.

7 This story starts, however, not in the wild, nor even in the Pacific Northwest, but in Chicago at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. The White City was designed as the archetype of urban life in its noblest and most civilized state. Indeed, if adherence to invented traditions dictated that America was the new Arcadia, the White City was quite obviously the new Athens. The fair was also an exposition of America's new identity and sought to reaffirm notions of manifest destiny, ingrained in the nation's psyche and ethos. Having emerged from Civil War and Reconstruction, Americans were still searching for a unifying national identity or character, and they sought to associate themselves with the civilized image represented in the fair's design. At the fair, a young historian gave an alternative interpretation of American character based not on glorious architecture and feats of technology and civilization, but rather on its opposite. Speaking at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, Frederick Jackson Turner presented what has proven to be arguably the most influential essay in American historiography.[7] "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" proposed that an American character had been forged on the westward-bound frontier and that

[6] This is a longstanding tradition that Carolyn Merchant associates with the Scientific Revolution.

[7] It is important to note that Turner's thesis was not immediately embraced, but within ten years the "frontier thesis" had become a mainstay in historical interpretations of the American West.

American forms of freedom, democracy, nationalism, and individualism - the key components of this exceptional identity - were all products of this process. In essence, America offered the world civilization in its purest form only because it had an abundance of wild nature at its most beautiful or scenic and, more importantly, at its most dangerous and challenging to the settler. The frontier was a place where Old World civilization could be washed away and man could become attuned to his more animalistic instincts. During a period where a lack of physical vigor was becoming a great concern among men, this rediscovery of man's innate senses was highly valued. Ultimately what America offered was the insertion of man back into nature; manmade monuments were less representative of this frontier mentality than were natural obstacles and the vastness of the landscape.[8]

8 Turner's identification of American character, however, was not wholly positive; he opened and concluded his essay with the notion that the frontier - that lasting symbol of American-ness - had closed according to the 1890 census, thus ending the first period or chapter of American history. Since westward progression was so central to both national character and its policy of manifest destiny, the Pacific Ocean, if only temporarily, represented a psychological as well as geographical barrier to American interests in participating in international imperialism. Having defined the character of the first four hundred years of European presence in America, Turner left open the obvious question: "what now?" If the closing of the frontier represented the conclusion of the first stage of American exceptionalism, what was to shape American identity in the future? Subconsciously or otherwise, popular culture resisted Turner's suggestion that the frontier had closed. The closing of the frontier implied cultural limitations in the future and raised serious questions about the nation's abundant - heretofore believed infinite - pool of natural resources. Federal management - in the guise of professional administrations - became the cornerstone of the Progressive era and significantly changed the relationship between Americans and their natural environment. But while perceptions of managing natural resources had changed, human and male dominion continued to reign supreme; nature remained an object for *controlled* human exploitation.

9 The final stages of the closing frontier also coincided with an emerging - though unrelated - crisis in American masculinity. A considerable amount of scholarship has shown that turn-of-the-last-century middle-class men were enormously interested in - perhaps even obsessed with - ideas about manhood.[9] American culture had changed dramatically during the

[8] For a detailed discussion of Turner's frontier thesis, see Etulain.

[9] See, for example, Bederman; Dubbert; Higham; and Kimmel. Bederman would question, however, whether this obsession with masculinity really constituted a crisis. See Bederman 10-15.

past century, and masculine ideals had changed, too. During the early nineteenth century, at the height of westward migration, and the Jacksonian-era market revolution, increasing numbers of American men found economic success as entrepreneurs, professionals, and managers. Their self-made success invariably demonstrated a feeling of independence that associated itself with the individualism championed in the new country's triumphant march westward. Whig success after the Civil War promoted the continued affirmation of self-restraint and individual success that had dominated much of the pre-Civil War notions of American manliness. For the middle-class, America was the land of opportunity. Middle-class masculinity distinguished itself by stressing success through gentility, respectability, and control over impulse. Strength of mind and reason were central to this newfound masculinity. Here was a real sign that the Whigs of the North had won the Civil War; this attitude, combined with an astute business sense was very much their contribution to subsequent generations. By the 1890s, however, economic depression had signaled the end of such universally prosperous times for the middle-class. Between 1873 and 1896, tens of thousands of bankruptcies suggested that the age of the self-made man had drawn to a sputtering close. Indeed, between 1870 and 1910, the proportion of middle-class men who were self-employed dropped from 67 percent to 37 percent (Bederman, 12). With an increasing dependence on others for income, the traditional source of male power and status - financial independence - had become limited to a very elite few. The crisis in masculine identities worked on the premise that if men were unable to prove their manhood through capital, then some alternative avenue would have to be found.

10 Entering the Progressive era, surviving tough economic times and the psychological impact of the closed frontier required mental and physical strength. On the new "throne" of manliness in America was President Teddy Roosevelt, a self-made "man," Dakota rancher, Rough Rider, big game hunter, outdoorsman par excellence, naturalist, and intellect. Roosevelt was a living embodiment of a new American manhood, one that balanced *civilized* morality and intellectual exploits with a more *primitive* physical muscularity. Roosevelt promoted - and embodied - a modification of the traditional manly mantra, "strength, self-reliance, determination" that applied to the male body as much as the mind. In this capacity, Roosevelt also expressed a sincere belief in the necessity of the "strenuous life," associating vigor with a sense of national duty as the pillars of American manliness. To Roosevelt, imperial dominance and male power were inextricably linked, and both needed to be confronted and realized (Roosevelt, *Autobiography* 32-60).

11 At the heart of Roosevelt's public character was an effusion of virility. Arnaldo Testi

notes that "among foreign observers the perception of Roosevelt as a virile reformer was second only to the perception of him as virile imperialist" (1513). In his address to the Hamilton Club in Chicago, 10 April 1899, Roosevelt first introduced the concept of "the strenuous life." The speech had more to do with American imperial interests and foreign policy in the wake of the Spanish-American War than with the cult of masculinity with which the doctrine of the strenuous life is more regularly associated. But Roosevelt effectively tied the two together, by arguing that America and American imperialism must be recognized worldwide as unflinching, forthright, just, and, therefore, manly. "I do not like to see young Christians with shoulders that slope like a champagne bottle," he noted in his autobiography (49). In so doing, Roosevelt essentially deferred the reserved nature of nineteenth century manliness in favor of a bolder masculinity that implied a rugged physicality. He attributed this characteristic as being inherently American and as a result of the frontier experience, thereby further propagating the supremacy of this new masculinity. Describing himself as an effeminate youth, Roosevelt remade himself by pursuing boxing, wrestling, and hunting. He further perpetuated his self-made rugged image as a rancher in the Dakotas, and then as leader of a handpicked group of Rough Riders during the Spanish-American War. Roosevelt's carefully crafted image suggested that he might be regarded as the last frontier-made man. Tantamount to this doctrine was the importance of knowing "how to wrest triumph from toil and risk" (Roosevelt, *Strenuous* 3). The virile man had to show courage and not back away from difficult challenges. Ernest Hemingway would later define beauty as grace under pressure. Taken by an Italian translation of his essay, Roosevelt adapted "strenuous life" to "vigor of life" in his autobiography, written in 1913 (Roosevelt, *Autobiography* 58). Nevertheless, the idea remained the same. "Powerful, vigorous men of strong animal development must have some way in which their animal spirits can vent" (Roosevelt, *Autobiography* 48). For Roosevelt, game hunting and wilderness travel were the ideal outlets; boxing and wrestling were adequate, urban alternatives.

12 Wilderness - nature at its most primitive or natural state - was the archetypal venue for this quest. Nowhere were such struggles more intriguing than in the newly fashioned (and accepted) concept of wilderness as a primitive, "pristine" landscape devoid of any civilizing characteristics.[10] Indeed, wilderness was (and is) recognized as a place where people can visit but do not remain; it is ultimately a place where people and human civilization are not.

[10] This perception of wilderness is, of course, fallacious in that it fails to appreciate that indigenous people inhabited these "wilderness" areas prior to their wilderness designation. Indeed, the concept of wilderness being where civilization is not present is purely a twentieth century construction. See Catton; Spence; Plumwood, "Wilderness." Social criticisms of wilderness preservation follow similar arguments. See Pulido; Guha.

Because wilderness eludes human control, "wilderness" can only be conceived through metaphors relating to experiences within our own environment (Cronon; Haila). We view nature and wilderness through metaphors because nothing else is possible; it is through the realm of the familiar that the unfamiliar is envisaged in our imagination. "Wilderness" is defined by assuming it is similar to (or the opposite of) something that can be grasped (Haila 130). The received "portrait" of wilderness - either as a barren landscape or as a forest primeval - is fairly consistent throughout western literature (Nash; Oelschlaeger). In spite of this relatively consistent western concept of wilderness, the physical nature of wilderness landscapes is hardly so universally similar. As the aptly named G. S. Shrapnel told his readers in a 1908 article, "traveling in the woods and mountains of Vancouver Island was far more difficult than either the wilds of Ontario or Quebec, or indeed any other country I had formerly hunted in" (*Victoria Colonist*, 23 Feb 1908, 21). Whereas Africa and India represented hunting locations that were culturally exotic, the coastal Pacific Northwest was symbolic of something decidedly ecologically wild. Accounts from the first Europeans to enter the coastal Pacific Northwest demonstrate the ecological unfamiliarity of the region. Chinquapin, devil's club, 15- to 20-foot high rhododendron, impenetrable salal, three- to ten-foot ferns, and decaying, fallen trees, all of which created an undergrowth so thick that William Keil, an early settler, remarked that it was "impossible for man or beast to penetrate" (Bunting 42). Lieutenant Henry Abbot, a transcontinental railroad surveyor in the mid-1850s, further colored the perception of real wilderness by suggesting that "wandering amid 'forests primeval' in poetry, and among the Cascade mountains, are two essentially different things" (Bunting 42).

13 The harsh physical realities of the Pacific Northwest wilderness only emphasized the difficulty inherent in "gendering" this landscape. Wilderness was no woman. Whereas the representation of Mother Earth as fecund and inviting is a timeless pastoral image, wilderness is dangerous and completely nonhuman. Rather wilderness was the chaotic construction of devils, beasts, or demons. Because wilderness was a place devoid of human influence or civilization, the need to subdue or control it as a part of the progressive master narrative was a uniquely male endeavor. As an example of wilderness being an uninviting, nonhuman environment, the *Victoria Times* noted in one story of a wilderness wrestling match that "the odds were on the bear receiving assistance from her kind before the man's friends arrived, and his being mauled to death" (*Victoria Times*, 2 July 1908, 10). In wilderness, humans were not in their familiar or comfortable surroundings. In order to survive, one had to struggle and adhere to Rooseveltian ideas about the strenuous life.

14 The management mentality that entered into Progressive-era policy sought to change that perception of wilderness. Like other landscapes, wilderness needed to be ordered. During the early decades of the twentieth century, thousands of miles of recreational and logging trails were cut into the wilderness (Egan). In spite of the closing of the frontier, Roosevelt promoted an imperialist ethos that was as auspicious in domestic wilderness as it was in overseas colonies. Indeed, Roosevelt's close friend, advisor, and Chief Forester, Gifford Pinchot echoed his sentiments regarding the masculine nature of wilderness. Referring to early problems of forest management in the American West, Pinchot insisted that "forest management was a job for well-trained, vigorous, tough men, not [...] sad creatures so short of physical strength and moral vigor" (Pinchot 163).

15 The relationship between the wilderness and a newfound - yet strangely primitive - breed of masculinity should not seem altogether foreign to a western audience. It has been widely alleged that the perpetuation of the received view of wilderness is a perpetuation of male-centeredness, the idea that wilderness is macho. The early American framers of this received view clearly thought so. Roosevelt wrote that wilderness promoted "that vigorous manliness;" Robert Marshall, one of the founders of the Wilderness Society, saw wilderness adventure as providing Williams James' "moral equivalent to war;" and the nature writer Sigurd Olson imagined wilderness travel as "the virile, masculine type of experience men need today" (Nelson). Some have asserted that the received view of wilderness, and any importation of it, still carries with it this androcentrism. This is evident in pop-culture images like advertisements for trucks and SUV's and Robert Bly's *Iron John*, not to mention *Crocodile Dundee*, where manly Mick Dundee the crocodile-wrestler protects the attractive New York urbanite, who represents the epitome of femininity. As Dundee states, wilderness is "no place for a Sheila."

16 Wilderness was, however, a place for Louis Dubois. On 16 March 1908, the *Victoria Times* raved: "Such a display of physical strength as was witnessed a couple of days ago [...] when one Louis Dubois, a giant Frenchman, in a life and death combat, completely overcame an immense black bear, is as yet without parallel in Southern British Columbia." Dubois - whose name changes to Debois midway through the article - and a young Scot, Alex Campbell were cutting cordwood on Toulou Mountain, in the Cascade Range in northern Washington, when they encountered a bear's den. Dubois provoked the bear by swinging his axe at what he thought was a protruding snout. The "snout" turned out to be the bear's forepaw and the enraged beast "made a savage attack on the two men." "Campbell, the smaller of the two men, succeeded in getting out of the bear's reach, but the big Frenchman,

somewhat conceited over his personal strength, preferred a personal encounter to running." The bear quickly swatted Dubois' axe out of reach and started to squeeze the French-Canadian. "It was now a struggle for life between the man and the bear," the *Times* reported. "The man being an adept at wrestling succeeded in tripping his antagonist, and the bear fell heavily to the ground with Debois on top of him. In this position the powerful Frenchman actually pinned the bear to the ground by holding the animal's legs apart and clutching the brute tightly by the throat." At this point, Dubois received assistance, but rather than letting his companions hack the bear to pieces, he insisted that they open an artery in the bear's neck and let the animal bleed to death: "When [...] Debois was thoroughly washed it was ascertained that he had not even received a scratch from the bear. Louis Debois, the hero of this encounter, weighs 240 lbs., and is 6 feet 3 inches in height [...]. The bear which made this savage attack is claimed to have weighed over 500 lbs" (7).

17 That the bear was guilty of a "savage attack" on the men raises some serious questions about the relative ethics of chopping off a bear's paw in the woods, but it plays into the conceptual acceptance that this wilderness masculinity is under attack, and that white male supremacy must fight back. As such Dubois' "conquest" over nature makes for good reading. The article did not conclude with a disclaimer - "kids: don't try this at home" - and Dubois was described as a hero. More to the point, Dubois' exploits were incorporated into a canon of manliness that included the prose of Jack London and (later) Ernest Hemingway and was devoured by a male, urban middle-class whose environments and virilities - and likely common sense - prevented them from participating in similar activities. Their social angst, however, allowed them to live vicariously through this French-Canadian from the lumber camps on the Ottawa River. Dubois was no middle-class cleric, but accounts of his bravado certainly represent a celebration of this new, virile, and manly behavior very much in the mold of Roosevelt's ideas.

18 Gender and environment are the two related themes that make Dubois' machismo enthralling to an urban readership. His obvious size and strength is impressive, but it is the hostile and exotic wilderness environment in which he exhibits his strength that makes the story so compelling. More centrally, however, this incident demonstrates the necessity of masculine character in the subduing of the wilderness landscape. Through his prowess, Dubois demonstrates that the body can be transcended; in risking his life, Dubois achieves his existence or identity. Unlike the more domestic or "feminine" pastoral or settled landscape, wilderness is a chaotic landscape where man does not belong. Man's colonization of this landscape, even in symbolic gesture - vanquishing a bear - represents a manly rejection of his

carnal state and a reconnection with his heavenly origins (Beauvoir, 154).[11] This, Donna Haraway argues, is the painful lesson illustrated in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*: risking life - the ultimate symbol of self - identity or existence - is a uniquely male endeavor. Dubois' encounter with the bear fits with the ironically "upside down world of Teddy Bear Patriarchy" - that bastion of white and male supremacy - in which "it is in the craft of killing that life is constructed" (Haraway 241). Life and reproduction are traditionally associated with femininity, but the danger involved in taming wild nature - the production of human landscapes - is an experience that promotes male dominion over the natural world, and reasserts a male-dominated hierarchical order.[12]

19 Roosevelt himself had a close encounter with a big, charging grizzly bear in the Rocky Mountains, which he managed to shoot and kill while he was only just out of its reach. Roosevelt's story, which he recounted in his autobiography, might not match the adrenaline level of Dubois's experience, but the danger quotient, the element of adventure, and the value of the story are all similar. Further, the danger represented by a charging grizzly ought not to be dismissed. Nor should Roosevelt's experience represent some kind of an institutional taming of wilderness. Though Roosevelt's Progressive-era administration remains among one of the foremost American administrations in conserving resources and protecting wild lands, these stories of bears mark a particularly non-institutional, non-industrial, and individual - as opposed to collective - battle with the unknown. The collective element is drawn, rather, from the popular response to these real-life accounts in addition to their fictional counterparts, produced in pulp form as stories for boys (Roosevelt, *Autobiography* 40-46).

20 Dubois' story is enticing, but it is hardly unique. Rather, what is constructed is an age-old formula of man encountering his natural self in the wilderness. There, he engages in a mock struggle to prove his legitimacy, which is a recurring theme in the Judeo-Christian Bible, in European mythology, and in modern literature and pop culture.[13] The consistent theme in this "masculinist monster myth" is the significance of the non-human "other"

[11] Plumwood notes that "transcending death this way exacts a great price; it treats the earth as a lower, fallen realm, true human identity as outside nature, and it provides narrative continuity for the individual only in isolation from the cultural and ecological continuity and in opposition to a person's perishable body" (Plumwood, "Prey II," 60).

[12] For an example of male identity being realized through the risking of life, see Dawson.

[13] As examples, consider Jacob wrestling the angel; Christ being tempted in the wilderness; Heracles' capture of Cerberus at the gates of Hades; Beowulf fighting Grendel's mother in her watery lair; and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein in which man's encounter with the monster takes place on Mont Blanc. More recent examples might even include the introductory parable in Robert Bly's Iron John and the confrontation between Luke Skywalker and an imaginary Darth Vader in the murky wilderness of Yoda's Dagoba System in The Empire Strikes Back.

possessing an almost human shape or being given human characteristics, thus making it a worthy opponent.[14]

21 Also implicit in the article is the suggestion that Dubois is more "manly" than his urban counterparts. Middle-class nimrods and sportsmen of all types simply did not match up to his "display of physical strength." Indeed, Dubois' combat using only his bare hands - after the loss of his axe - creates a distinct division between the organic nature of the wilderness man and the artificial creation of the urbanite. Dubois' encounter with a bear is in stark contrast to sportsmens' encounters with the same animal. In her work on big game hunting in Canada, Tina Loo shows just how constructed the modern wilderness experience was made for the trophy hunter. The introduction of exotic species and large hunting parties, complete with cooks and guides significantly perverted the "wilderness" experience that sportsmen romanticized. Furthermore, the relative comfort that the participants of these expeditions enjoyed as a result of the technology they brought with them raises serious questions about the quality of their "natural wilderness experience;" all of a sudden, "roughing it" takes on a whole new - and somewhat farcical - meaning. Increasingly, the gun - another symbol of technology - came to distance the wilderness experience from anything purely masculine or manly. As Carl Akeley noted in *In Brightest Africa*, the most effective manner in reducing "the potency of game for heroic hunting [was] to demonstrate that inexperienced women could safely do the same thing (Haraway 247; Akeley 226)."[15] Taken in this context, Dubois' heroics take on a whole new meaning. In essence, there are two receding frontiers here; not only is the physical wilderness retreating from man and his colonization, manliness is also retreating from woman, marking an intriguing contradiction in the process of American invented tradition.

22 The recession of these frontiers also transcends class divisions to a certain extent. Dubois' social status plays only a marginal role in the story, as is evidenced by similar stories recounting similar wrestling encounters. Less than four months after Dubois' wrestling match in Washington, Lieutenant Kingscote, R. N., was forced to engage in hand-to-hand combat on Vancouver Island with a female black bear when shots fired from his rifle failed to have the desired effect. "The bear hurled herself at him. Seizing his rifle by the barrel he struck at her, stopping her headlong assault on his life just long enough to allow him to reach his knife. By the time he had clasped the handle of the knife the bear had her teeth through his shoulder and

[14] As subtext - though decidedly not a part of the traditional myth - in shamelessly provoking the bear Dubois demonstrates qualities that might be considered savage, thereby limiting the differences between himself and the bear.

[15] It is worth relating Akeley's comments to hunting accounts from previous generations, where the virility of the hunter was keenly associated with the number of animals killed. See Mackenzie 85-119.

her claws tearing his face." In the ensuing struggle Kingscote, a recent resident of the Lake Cowichan area, "stabbed the animal to the heart and let flow the last drop of its life blood." Whether or not Kingscote's ability to retain some kind of weapon distinguishes his encounter from Dubois', Kingscote's manliness is characterized by his strength and courage, but also by his humility. The *Times* story notes that this encounter would likely not have been made known had not Kingscote "had to obtain medical assistance for his gashes and wounds" (*Victoria Times*, 2 July 1908, 10). Clearly a class distinction exists between the "conceited" Dubois - most likely a Catholic - full of bravado, and the "gentlemanly" Anglo soldier. The newspaper accounts play on this, but the heroic structure of the stories does not differ much. Indeed, both start with a certain sensationalism that belies the accuracy of the account. Kingscote's account in particular is steeped in the tradition of epic struggles, where "for upwards of an hour [...] a fierce fight was waged between man and bear with the result that after a contest fought in the lonely woods, miles away from assistance" the bear succumbed to the man's superiority (*Victoria Times*, 2 July 1908, 10). The subsequent story provides a summary of the battle that could not have taken more than ten seconds. Nevertheless, the introduction whets the reader's appetite for adventure in much the same manner that does the beginning of the Dubois article: "such a display of physical strength [...] is as yet without parallel" (*Victoria Times*, 16 March 1908, 7).

23 Two conclusions present themselves for this paper. The first is that because of the closing frontier and the influence of Progressive-era management, man sought to reestablish or reaffirm his masculine identity through his reconnection with the natural world. Louis Dubois and Lieutenant Kingscote typified this new masculine identity, as did intrepid explorers such as Robert Falcon Scott, Ernest Shackleton, and Roald Amundsen. In each case, physical contact with wild nature represented a masculine desire to find a "room of *his* own." Only through violence and/or suffering, however, was man able to do this and distinguish his own identity from a new female identity that was emerging through increased workforce participation and imminent suffrage.[16] This conclusion is overly problematic on a number of fronts, not least because it is unable to resolve less violent, yet equally masculine interactions with the natural world. This approach is also unable to reconcile Roosevelt the hunter with Roosevelt the naturalist or Roosevelt the Rough Rider with Roosevelt the intellect. More importantly, however, the sensationalization of bear-wrestling in media accounts is a part of

[16] Testi notes that female suffrage and social reform were both central to Roosevelt's unsuccessful Progressive party platform of 1912 (1513). Ironically, the perpetuation of the monster myth narrative also implies an ongoing recession of the wilderness frontier and the continued colonization of the wild nature to which men sought escape.

an ongoing subordination of marginalized groups - in this case women and nature - by the master narrative. The repackaging of these stories in assimilated form is a perpetuation of that enduring but fallacious narrative that man and nature are in opposition to each other and that the taming of wild nature is a predominantly masculine endeavor.

24 The second, more plausible conclusion points to the ahistorical condition in which storytellers - historians included - are drawn to the compelling nature of invented traditions, and situate their narratives in archaic modes that separate nature and culture and assign gender qualities to one landscape or another. The moral of this flawed conclusion is that this approach is far too simplistic and its synthesis-oriented approach neglects important historical aspects and players. *We need to tell more complicated stories*. The promotion of the "masculinist monster myth" does a disservice to ideas about nature, gender, and history, by caricaturing and serializing important relationships. The master narrative - which portrays nature and gender as "other" - fails to reconcile the disparity between western perceptions of nature and gender with their overriding significance to any plausible or inclusive historical narrative. Moreover, if we accept Val Plumwood's suggestion, that "the colonizer identity is positioned as an eater of Others," then it is evident that we cannot possibly hope to understand relationships between nature and gender and history using the existing framework (Plumwood, "Prey I" 43). Indeed, in that light, the promotion of the "masculinist monster myth" surrounding the various stories of rugged bear-wrestlers loses its historical significance as a practical struggle for masculine identity, because it has become engulfed within Teddy Roosevelt's mystique and more general concepts about American frontier identity. But these stories and mythologies require examination if only so we might appreciate the fundamental problems extant in western perceptions of nature. Any attempt to address the current state of nature consumption, gender disparity, or race inequity must recognize that western rhetoric regarding perceptions of nature situate nature as an outsider or colonized "other." By linking themes of environmental history and gender history, the subsequent complication of nature and gender narratives might offer more in-depth understandings of both feminist and environmental movements. Similarly, situating gender histories more carefully within their physical environments will advance and produce more complex and serviceable understandings of both these important historical constructions.

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