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ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP, ECOLOGICAL MELANCHOLIA: THE RUINS OF STANLEY PARK

INTRODUCTION

ON DECEMBER 15, 2006, A SEVERE windstorm pummeled Canada's West Coast, with devastating effects upon old-growth trees in Vancouver's Stanley Park. Thousands of trees in the famous urban park were felled by what many saw as an erratic weather event symptomatic of global climate change. The tree damage provoked outbursts of emotion from Vancouver residents, and indeed from people across the province and the nation, with the Vancouver Park Board likening the damage to a clearcut and grieving "the wild heart of the city left bruised and broken."¹ In its first Saturday edition of 2007, *The Globe and Mail* featured a full-page response to the storm damage. Adding its voice to the remarkable public outpouring of grief, Canada's national newspaper graphically mourned the arboreal ruins of Stanley Park and pledged ten trees towards the park's restoration.

The Globe and Mail's response consists of a stark black-and-white photograph of a lone Park Board employee standing before a decimated treescape. "If three thousand trees fall in the forest, does anybody hear?" queries the headline. "That's the estimated number of trees that were destroyed in Stanley Park," the text continues, "—which is why we're donating 10 new ones to be planted. We also encourage people and businesses across Canada to do what they can to help restore this *national treasure*" (my emphasis).

This appeal affords an opportunity to ruminate on the rhetorical and material conditions of ecological citizenship in an age of global ecological crisis: in addition to provoking an examination of its own ecological

¹ <http://vancouver.ca/parks/parks/stanley/restoration/background/htm> (accessed March 1, 2007).

contradictions, the text compels a broader exploration of the relationship between work and feeling in the act of ecological citizenship it models. I seize upon *The Globe and Mail's* response to the storm as an occasion to argue the importance of contextualizing questions of ecological citizenship in relation to what contemporary cultural theorists refer to as economies of emotion or “affective economies.”² To this end, the following essay examines *The Globe and Mail's* display of ecological emotion in its response to the storm damage in Stanley Park and then presents an alternative model of ecological citizenship premised upon two affective conditions that I call “ecological melancholia” and “feeling power.”

ECOLOGICAL CITIZENSHIP

Let me start by underscoring the material irony of a national newspaper performing an example of ecological citizenship in a pulp medium.³ The old-growth trees lost in Stanley Park get fetishized as a “national treasure” in *The Globe and Mail* discourse, while the countless trees pulped to supply its daily production disappear as an ecological condition of print capitalism and of the “imagined community” of the nation, which, as Benedict Anderson has suggested, is mediated by newspapers.⁴ Moreover, the storm allows *The Globe and Mail* to suggest that both newspapers and nations are natural—something that requires deflecting recognition of the distressed environments on which they themselves depend—and to foreclose on a practice of ecological citizenship that might include breaking the spell of their inevitability.

The Globe and Mail's emotional appeal is made at the expense of an alternative model of ecological citizenship that would challenge the underlying assumption that nature is both the wealth and ward of the nation. After all, here ecological response-ability is rhetorically cast as an exemplary and emotional idiom of *national* citizenship. I hyphenate response-ability to

² Sarah Ahmed, “Affective Economies,” *Social Text* 79, 22.2 (Summer 2004).

³ After all, as John Vaillant notes, “It takes approximately 550 cubic metres of wood to produce a week-end edition of *The Globe and Mail*, in addition to 13 million litres of water and 7.5 billion BTUs of energy.” See *The Golden Spruce* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2006), 241.

⁴ In his seminal book, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), Benedict Anderson argues that in the sacrament of the daily newspaper, each member of a nation becomes imaginatively connected through the awareness that “the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion. Furthermore, this ceremony is incessantly repeated at daily and or half-daily intervals throughout the calendar. What more vivid figure for the secular, historically-clocked imagined community can be envisioned?” (39).

show that in newspaper's text it is an ability to first *hear* and then respond to ecological trauma that appears paradigmatic of environmentally sensitive national citizenship. While the photograph depicts the park employee in an act of visual witness, the text identifies her ecological response-ability as an aural sensitivity to the trauma of Stanley Park. Note that the ear guards of the employee are lifted to dramatize this attunement to the (non)sound of forest trauma.

In analyzing the model of ecological citizenship purveyed by *The Globe and Mail*, what is perhaps most elusive and at the same time pivotal is its demonstration of ecological emotion, its participation in a specifically *liberal* structure of feeling for the environment, to borrow from Raymond Williams. In his notion of structures of feeling, Williams sought to give name to "the living experience of the time" or the intangible yet powerful quality of feeling that lends cohesiveness to a particular culture at a particular historical moment.⁵ In *Statistical Panic: Cultural Politics and Poetics of the Emotions*, Kathleen Woodward contends that "[i]dentifying a particular and pervasive feeling, or a structured complex of feeling, as the cultural materialist Raymond Williams has argued, can help us to identify the emergence of a new social formation." According to Woodward, the idea of a structure of feeling "can serve as a kind of lever to disclose or uncover new social relationships in the making."⁶

In *The Globe and Mail*'s text it is possible to glimpse the emergence of new social relations that turn upon some demonstration of ecological emotion, and to glimpse an environmental structure of feeling that is liberal in the sense that it appears progressive even as it contains the meanings and practices of ecological citizenship within normative conceptions of the nation, nature, economy, and citizenship itself. *The Globe and Mail*'s subtle containment of the *difference* that ecological citizenship could potentially pose to a familiar model of national citizenship becomes more apparent when one contrasts it with more unsettling formulations of ecological citizenship elaborated by political theorists such as Andrew Dobson.⁷ Dobson conceptualizes a form of ecological citizenship that challenges the assumption that the nation-state is the natural space of citizenship:

⁵ Raymond Williams, "Structures of Feeling," in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 1977), 128.

⁶ Kathleen Woodward, *Statistical Panic: Cultural Politics and Poetics of the Emotions* (Durham: Duke U Press, 2009), 21.

⁷ Andrew Dobson, *Citizenship and the Environment* (Oxford: Oxford U Press, 2003). Further page references will be made in parentheses within the text.

It has become *de rigueur* to point out that many environmental problems are international problems—global warming, ozone depletion, acid rain—and that they are constitutively international in the sense that they do not, cannot, and will never respect national boundaries in their effects. If ecological citizenship is to make any sense, then, it has to do so outside the realm of activity most normally associated with contemporary citizenship: the nation-state. (97)

Significantly, the storm that struck Stanley Park can be linked to global climate change, but *The Globe and Mail* naturalizes it as a national trauma. Put differently, although the storm-site demonstrated the increasing intensity with which spaces of the local and the global intersect and suggested the urgency of reconceiving citizenship across these scales, the newspaper offers an image of ecological citizenship that fits within the old rhetoric of national citizenship.

For Dobson, “the transnational nature of many environmental problems” makes it necessary to imagine a form of “post-cosmopolitan” citizenship in which powerful countries and citizens who have historically consumed too much social-ecological space (at the expense of others’ life-chances) are asymmetrically called to a material reckoning (89). It isn’t only the political space of the nation-state that Dobson argues is inadequate for the practice of ecological citizenship, but also the cosmopolitan space conjured by visions of “one world.” Dobson’s ecological citizenship is post-cosmopolitan inasmuch it resists the abstract reference, in many discourses of cosmopolitanism, to universal citizens “with reciprocal and symmetrical rights and obligations” (115). Such a logic of reciprocity erases the material asymmetries and hence asymmetrical obligations that the powerful—marked by their disproportionately large ecological footprint—historically owe to those whose life-chances have been compromised.⁸

Once again, however, *The Globe and Mail* forecloses upon a more radically responsible ecological citizenship by rhetorically fusing ecological emotion to patriotic feeling for a “*national treasure*.” The discourse diverts

⁸ As Dobson writes: “In the world of cosmopolitan citizenship, obligations ... are owed by everyone to everyone. By contrast, the obligations of ecological citizenship are owed asymmetrically. Only those who occupy ecological space in such a way as to compromise or foreclose the ability of others in present and future generations to pursue options important to them owe obligations of ecological citizenship” (120).

the possibility of imagining a form of ecological responsibility that exceeds the political space of the nation or that “‘overflows’ the categories of liberal citizenship.”⁹ Instead, in its rendition ecological citizenship gets reduced to the donation of ten trees toward the restoration of Stanley Park.

These are, then, two contradictions in the newspaper’s discourse that deserve examination: first, responding to the ruin of Stanley Park’s forest in a way that diverts a reckoning with the paper’s own material contingency upon pulp, and second, discursively containing the potential difference of ecological citizenship within the familiar liberal contours of national citizenship. It’s worth elaborating upon these contradictions through a closer look at the text, starting with the philosophical cliché it customizes for the occasion: “If 3000 trees fall in the forest, does anybody hear?” Innumerable renditions of this ontological riddle in the philosophical and cultural canons of western modernity are evoked, including, in the context of popular Canadian culture, Bruce Cockburn’s 1989 political folksong “If a Tree Falls in the forest, does anybody hear?” The question suggests that an event only achieves existence if it is witnessed. Moreover, the verb “falling” implies that the event in question is traumatic. Or rather, the question invokes the conundrum of nature’s alterity and representation in relation to a traumatic event that risks going unrecognized as trauma. The ethics and politics of recognizing nature’s “fall” become acute, however, when a national newspaper purports to speak for and witness the ecological trauma of Stanley Park’s trees in the medium of pulp.

In giving witness to the 2006 storm as a traumatic event, *The Globe and Mail* also risks effacing what Sean Kheraj calls the “storm history” of Stanley Park.¹⁰ In prematurely mourning the fall of 3000 trees (rather than the final tally of 10,000 that would emerge), the paper unwittingly recalls an earlier storm that would otherwise be forgotten in its ahistorical act of witnessing. In 1962 the tail end of Typhoon Frieda whipped through Stanley Park and, by many historical accounts, also toppled 3000 trees. Less than 30 years earlier, in 1934, another major windstorm struck the park, with similar effects. As Kheraj writes, “The Park Board’s effective restoration efforts had produced a collective amnesia around natural disturbances in the park, [but] the reality is that there is a long history of storms tearing up the park’s forest

⁹ Dobson, *Citizenship and the Environment*, 95.

¹⁰ Sean Kheraj, “Restoring Nature: Ecology, Memory, and the Storm History of Vancouver’s Stanley Park,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 88.4 (December 2007): 577–612.

and leaving fallen timber strewn about the woods.”¹¹ Retrieving this history of periodic storm-damage and arboreal reconstruction challenges the public amnesia enabled by *The Globe and Mail* around the history of the weather at this site, as well as the fetishistic image of a pristine pre-storm Stanley Park.

Other details are notable in the rhetorical question posed by *The Globe and Mail*. “If a tree falls” implies that the tree falls of itself. That is, the form of the question absents or subtracts the agent of its felling from the onto-ecological riddle. In this instance, we are doubtless invited to fill in the missing hand that fells the trees with the destructive but nonintentional force of the storm itself. (The ontological trope is awkward if not impossible to utter this way: “if a tree [is felled] in the forest, does anybody hear”?) In other words, the question is one that occludes the economic and social motives or agents behind the systematic felling of trees in Canada—the forest trauma that haunts or limns the one that is given witness—and that protects the so-called invisible hand of the market. Especially in the newspaper’s rendition, the rhetorical question manages to leave the economics of forestry out of the picture, and allows for the comforting idea that ecological citizenship can be practiced without negatively impacting forest industries or markets. This, too, is part of the liberal structure of feeling, the ecological emotion, promulgated by the newspaper.

I’ve already drawn attention to the other canonical trope mobilized by *The Globe and Mail*: that of Stanley Park as a “national treasure.” This trope has done tremendous imperial work in and for the (post)colonial nation, making natural geographies and resources seem inherently the possession of the sovereign state (or “Crown”), and displacing the historical claims of indigenous groups. The anachronistic language of “treasure” reinforces the imagined antiquity of the nation theorized by Benedict Anderson, while an efflorescence of references to Stanley Park as Vancouver’s “crown jewel” in the wake of the storm suggests that a certain possessive pride in nature may be the flipside of its appropriation as a national resource.

Moreover, the rhetoric of the national treasure encourages the sense that the value of nature for the nation transcends economic calculation. Here, too, *The Globe and Mail* is complicit in mystifying Stanley Park’s early material history as a logging camp. At the moment when work crews enter the park in 2006 to clean up the downed trees—that is, at the moment when the park strangely resembles the logging camp it had once been—the

¹¹ Kheraj, “Restoring Nature,” 584.

anachronism of the “national treasure” rhetorically asserts the difference between invaluable nature and mere commercial timber. As Kheraj notes, secretive clean-up work in the past sought to uphold a similar distinction. Likewise, the secrecy surrounding the eviction of indigenous and immigrant residents (recounted in the colonial history of Stanley Park excavated by Jean Barman¹²), has allowed the park to appear pristine in its origins, rather than as an already logged and expropriated geography.

After December 15, 2006, interest in the commercial and commemorative value of the fallen timber, and petitions by individuals and groups wanting a piece of it, flooded the Vancouver Park Board office. Six days after the storm the Park Board Commissioner tried to demarcate a proper period of mourning for the downed trees by stating that “it was still too early to put a value on the timber.”¹³ Yet the Board had already consulted with members of Interfor (International Forest Products) who, smelling a windfall in the storm damage, proposed heli-logging fallen timber out of the park.¹⁴ In the end, close to one million dollars worth of commercial timber was salvaged from the Park after the storm. The national treasure yielded timber under trauma. Wood from old-growth trees felled by the storm, talismanically supercharged with ecological emotion, made its way into more than legacy and heritage projects related to local First Nations, communities and artists;¹⁵ developers also managed to secure some of the “coveted wood.”¹⁶ One example of the power to turn the arboreal ruin of Stanley Park into a liberal fetish was the fir wood incorporated into the Gateway North Shore condos, where it translated into real estate values ranging from \$375,900 to \$489,000. Amidst emotional claims that the trees were invaluable and irreplaceable, the Park Board also calculated a precise dollar value for donors wanting to contribute to the park’s restoration by adopting a replacement

¹² Jean Barman, *Stanley Park’s Secret: The Forgotten Families of Whoi Whoi, Kanaka Ranch, and Brockton Point* (Harbour Publishing, 2005).

¹³ “Storm-ravaged Stanley Park could be heli-logged,” CBC News, December 21, 2006, http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british_columbia/story/2006/12/21/bc-park-loggers.html.

¹⁴ Julia Mckinnell, “Who gets the downed trees? Stanley Park managers have some tough decisions to make,” *Macleans*, January 15, 2007.

¹⁵ Only a symbolic portion of the downed wood was allocated to First Nations: “Forty-two of the best logs were earmarked for the three First Nations associated with Stanley Park—14 each went to Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-waututh nations” (“Storm-ravaged Stanley Park could be heli-logged”).

¹⁶ At least some of the “coveted wood” found its way into high-end condos, as Kim Pemberton writes in a recent *Vancouver Sun* article entitled “Blown-down Stanley Park trees add warmth to condos,” August 22, 2009, F2.

tree. “Your donation [of \$2000]” it announced, “will provide for the planting and preservation of a tree in an area of the park that was most affected.”¹⁷

ECOLOGICAL MELANCHOLIA

The national ideology and the material nature that are taken for granted in the normative ceremony of the daily newspaper are made unusually vulnerable by *The Globe and Mail's* decision to publicly perform ecological emotion in the cause of Stanley Park's restoration. It is a risky demonstration that requires diverting recognition of its profound ecological ironies. Consider once again the photographic realism of the civic employee witnessing Stanley Park's fall from majestic forest to bedraggled scrub, mourning the loss, and facing the daunting ecological work of restoration. Drawing on Sigmund Freud's distinction between mourning and melancholia, I want to return to the contention that behind the tragic “fall” that is witnessed and mourned by *The Globe and Mail* are acts of felling that *cannot* be mourned in the public sphere mediated by the national newspaper; behind the 3000 trees identified by the newspaper lie ruins that are not accounted for. Freud has famously described mourning as the process through which a subject slowly severs their ties with a lost object and successfully overcomes that loss. What Freud calls the “complex of melancholia,” by contrast, “behaves like an open wound,” an unconscious loss that never heals.¹⁸ Freud's distinction has inspired numerous critical vectors; most recently, Paul Gilroy has theorized the “postcolonial melancholia” of British culture, which continues to unconsciously act out the loss of its global Empire in acts of racist violence against immigrants.¹⁹ In relation to this case study of Stanley Park, I am struck by the *ecological melancholia* of a national culture unable to reckon with the ravaged environments upon which it is historically and materially contingent. Ecological melancholia haunts *The Globe and Mail* text through the muted texture of the news *paper* itself as the threshold into a violent colonial history of pulp and paper production that cannot be recognized as violent without disturbing the entangled enterprise of print capitalism and the imagined community of the nation daily mediated by newspapers.

In working to return a damaged landscape to a state of health or wholeness, ecological restoration can be correlated to the psychic work of

¹⁷ <http://vancouver.ca/parks/parks/stanley/restoration/timeline.htm>.

¹⁸ Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia,” in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 2, trans. James Strachey (London, Penguin, 1984), 262.

¹⁹ Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia U Press, 2005).

mourning inasmuch as both labours are marked, first, by a consciousness knowledge of loss (unlike the melancholic subject whose wound, Freud tells us, remains unconscious) and second, by successful efforts to get over loss. In relation to ecological restoration movements, these successful efforts have often involved the goal of returning a disturbed landscape to its “original” condition of authenticity and wild health, which many critics argue is itself a fantasy that bolsters an ahistorical idea of nature.²⁰ If the project of ecological restoration managed by the Vancouver Park Board and supported by *The Globe and Mail* can be read as a social cognate of the work of mourning, the clear-cutting that supplies the pulp or flesh of print capitalism might be read as the material cognate of a psychic open wound that, far from being healed, is only painfully enlarged the more publicity the postcolonial nation gives to ecological matters. To push these correlations a little further, one could say that the mourning performed by the work of ecological restoration fits comfortably with current liberal models of citizenship, while melancholia is perhaps one expression of an ecological obligation or reckoning that exceeds the given models.

Ecological melancholia questions the idea that liberal-minded subjects of late capitalism can somehow comfortably settle accounts with or redeem the ecological ruins that materially underpin their existence. That is, it refuses the efforts of *The Globe and Mail* to deflect rhetorically recognition of the material contradictions between its discourse of ecological citizenship and the arboreal damage that globally underpins print capitalism. Even more broadly, ecological melancholia obstructs us from buying into the tempting fantasy that, as forms of digital capitalism emerge alongside forms of print capitalism, culture becomes less dependent upon material nature. While discourses of digital capitalism are powerful drivers of a belief in culture’s freedom from material nature, digital culture remains as contingent upon the “felling” of nature as print culture. Ecological melancholia in its broadest lineaments thus insists on the impossibility of culture *ever getting over nature* or escaping from its ecological conditions of possibility.

Rather than breeding fatalism and resignation, however, ecological melancholia can arguably serve a practice of citizenship whose affective premises offer an alternative to the liberal structure of feeling I’ve been refer-

²⁰ For one critique of how restoration ecology ideologically protects a fantasy of “original” nature, see Andrew Wilson, *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1991).

ring to as ecological emotion. Ecological melancholia as a different condition of ecological citizenship *works from within an affective recognition of irreconcilable ecological contradictions to make a material difference*. The work of ecological citizenship thus springs from a very different structure of feeling than the liberal model, which excites social proofs or demonstrations of environmental sensibility and identity via displays of ecological emotion. The acknowledgement that ecological melancholia gives to the inescapable material contradictions of late liberal capitalism adds an affective dimension to Dobson's formulation of an ecological citizenship based in asymmetrical material obligation.²¹

I'm not oblivious to the fact that my own essay is riddled with many of the ecological contradictions of which I accuse *The Globe and Mail*. Clearly, drawing ironic attention to the contradictions of one's own literary or cultural discourse is not sufficient for the practice of ecological citizenship. Nor is the desire for a form of discourse that is purely virtual or immaterial—and thus ecologically innocent—an option, since such a desire buys into the fantasy of a culture that can do without or *get over* nature. For this reason, I want to turn to an exploration of how ecological melancholia might function as a form of “feeling power,” one that can be differentiated from the liberal currency of ecological emotion excited by *The Globe and Mail*.

FEELING POWER

I place *The Globe and Mail* text under scrutiny one last time. What catches my attention, finally, is the figure of work that centers the newspaper's rendering of ecological citizenship; it is, after all, a Vancouver Parks employee who is witnessing—and in some enigmatic way being affected by—a forest in ruins. The work of ecological citizenship represented in this scene of civic duty appears, first and foremost, to be the work of feeling, and of possessing a subjectivity capable of being affected by nature. The newspaper presents us with an image that involves, prior to any commencement of physical work, *affective* subjectivity and labour. The park employee appears to represent an ideal or imaginary citizen who synthesizes an emotional capacity to be

²¹ Ecological melancholia departs somewhat from Andrew Dobson's formulation of ecological citizenship, insofar as it suggests an interminable historical-material debt, whereas Dobson believes the scales can be balanced: “while the obligations of ecological citizens have a non-reciprocal and asymmetrical character, they are not unlimited. They are owed because of an unjust distribution of ecological space, and they end when that imbalance has been addressed” (121).

affected (or an affectability), the practical work of physical labour (cleaning up the downed trees), and economic participation in nature's restoration (euphemized as "doing what one can"). In combination, these modes of response encode the normative liberal discourse of ecological citizenship I've been circling.

Why might we want to be wary of this image of ecological citizenship? First, one has to be willing to accept my claim that in *The Globe and Mail* text one can read the emergence of a new liberal structure of feeling for the environment, a general cultural feeling within which an individual or group's social legitimacy increasingly depends upon some expression of ecological emotion. On the one hand, the display of ecological emotion can generate significant cultural and economic value for those social actors who publicly deliver (such as our newspapers). On the other, however, the increasing expectation that citizenship include some expression of ecological emotion has the potential of marginalizing individuals, states, or populations who fail to show concern for the environment in the proper liberal idiom. At stake in the historically shifting conditions of citizenship, as Aihwa Ong reminds us, is the very humanity of an individual or group; new incentives or pressures to supply proof of one's ecological sensibility or *affectability* in the current era can become dangerously bound up with new measures of what makes one human.²²

It's worth recalling that when the wind storm struck Stanley Park in 2006, Vancouver was actively embarked on its Project Civil City, an initiative mobilizing a not-unrelated set of liberal hopes of restoring peace and good order to the city as it geared up for the 2010 Olympics. As stated on its web page, Project Civil City is focused on "reducing homelessness, improving public order and increasing citizen engagement";²³ to this end, the city has deployed techniques of micro-policing and governmentality that include issuing tickets for public "nuisance infractions" as well as "positive ticketing" for good behaviour, such as giving kids tickets to sports events when they're "caught" acting civil.²⁴ The restoration of Stanley Park similarly works to

²² In *Neoliberalism As Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke U Press, 2006), Aihwa Ong examines how the "social criteria of citizenship" get continuously recalculated. My argument here is that the social criteria of citizenship increasingly include some demonstration or display of ecological emotion, whether this is a token display or a deeply felt one.

²³ See Vancouver's Project Civil City website: <http://vancouver.ca/projectcivilcity/faqs.htm>.

²⁴ See Vancouver's Project Civil City website: <http://vancouver.ca/projectcivilcity/citizenengagement.htm>.

return it to a state of civility after the infraction of the storm, and provides an occasion for the city to semiotically and materially “clean up” a park that is strongly associated with homelessness in the popular imagination.²⁵ It wasn’t the homeless inhabitants of the park who emerged from the ruins of the 2006 storm as the subjects most visibly affected, despite the fact that the 400-acre park was a haven for several dozen; instead, the storm sparked something of a contest among middle- and upper-class Vancouverites to economically demonstrate the magnitude of their ecological emotion—and of their humanity—through donations to the park’s restoration fund.

The shifting social criteria of what makes us human, and the social relations of homelessness, are thus not unrelated to *The Globe and Mail’s* display of ecological emotion. Alongside the powerful effect it has of dissociating the damage in Stanley Park from the clearcuts upon which it materially depends, the newspaper reifies feeling in the figure of the park employee. By contrast, recent work in the field of affect theory persuasively challenges the seemingly self-evident view, reinforced by *The Globe and Mail*, that emotions “come from within” or “positively reside” in the human subject or the landscape.²⁶ Ahmed, for instance, theorizes emotion in resolutely economic terms. “Rather than seeing emotions as psychological dispositions,” she writes, “we need to consider how they work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective.”²⁷ Drawing on Marx, she continues “Another way to theorize this process would be to describe ‘feelings’ via an analogy with ‘commodity fetishism’: feelings appear in objects, or indeed *as* objects with a life of their own, only by the concealment of how they are shaped by histories, including histories of production (labor and labor time), as well as circulation and exchange.”²⁸ Bolstered by Ahmed’s perspective, might we counter a liberal culture of ecological emotion with a practice of ecological melancholia understood not as a private capacity for emotion that resides in an individual, but as a kind of feeling power that is social in origin, and that involves mediating and making explicit relationships between “the psychic

²⁵ The storm’s effect upon homeless people in the park was remarked on by at least one news story, which noted: “A couple of dozen homeless people have camped deep in the forest of the park for many years”: “Police Find Man Trapped By Trees in Stanley Park,” CBC News, December 22, 2006, <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/british-columbia/story/2006/12/22/rescue-park.html>.

²⁶ Ahmed, “Affective Economies,” 117, 119.

²⁷ “Affective Economies,” 119.

²⁸ “Affective Economies,” 121.

and the social, and between the individual and the collective”? Rather than restoring a nostalgic ideal of untouched nature, as a model of ecological citizenship based in the work of mourning and restoration is at risk of doing, or turning arboreal damage into liberal fetish by seeking to own a piece of the “coveted wood,” ecological melancholia might begin by linking the storm damage in Stanley Park to more insoluble ecological and social conditions, “wounds” or ruins, such as deforestation and homelessness.

Against the dominant liberal model of ecological emotion, ecological melancholia resists the fetishistic belief that feeling power is a capacity that inheres in an individual (and in some individuals more than others). This resistance arguably needs to extend to an examination of the social and material conditions of ecological feeling by asking—particularly in view of *The Globe and Mail* text—who owns or controls the means of production of ecological emotion? That Canada’s national newspaper supplied me with a powerful example of ecological emotion suggests that this question is paramount. It also suggests that ecological citizenship might be melancholically redefined as a struggle over the social production of feeling.

It’s not easy to move from a theorization of ecological melancholia and feeling power to an actual example of how they can constitute a practice of citizenship. One might begin, however, by complicating the sense invited by *The Globe and Mail* that the storm in Stanley Park elicited a spontaneous, unified affect. By excavating for other responses to the storm—for minor, local, competing means of production of ecological emotion—it is possible to show feeling for nature to be as social, historical, and contested as it is reified and restorative. That feeling for Stanley Park was radically variegated and social in character is borne out by a simple internet search on the subject, which retrieves not only mainstream media stories but a multitude of discussion lists, blogs and alternative news stories. Numerous bloggers, for instance, were critical of what they perceived to be overblown sentiment in the wake of the storm, particularly in the effect this sentiment had of construing the storm damage as unnatural. Other bloggers ironized the media’s use of analogies comparing the park to a clearcut.

One alternative means of production of feeling, in particular, stands out in relation to the notions of mourning and melancholy I’ve been exploring: a news story by Bob Exell that appeared in an alternative on-line publication, *The Tyee*, a few weeks after the storm. The headline, “Here Lies Stanley Park,” pronounces the conceit that Exell plies in this opinion piece, which mimics an obituary to drive home a political point glossed over by the eco-

logical emotion dominating in the mainstream media.²⁹ “Stanley Park, 117, died suddenly of windstroke Friday, Dec. 15, 2006, after years of suffering and decline from the ravages of forest degeneration,” writes Exell. In this mock obituary, Exell in effect calls for an “inquest” into the cause of Stanley Park’s death, and indicts the Vancouver Park Board for failing to responsibly manage forest health in the park. While the conceit of mourning the death of the park would seem to align this news story with the liberal structure of environmental feeling perpetuated by *The Globe and Mail*, it in fact suggests very different rhetorical and affective conditions of citizenship. For starters, the object of Exell’s mock mourning could not be more at odds with *The Globe and Mail*’s rhetoric of mourning; it isn’t an untouched old-growth forest that he grieves, but rather a forest that suffered from *lack* of human management. “[S]ymptoms of her illness had been evident for more than 60 years,” claims Exell, who accuses the Vancouver Park Board of allowing a fetish for old-growth trees to override careful planning for forest regeneration in the park. He hints that a forest management plan that could have protected arboreal health was repeatedly postponed by the Park Board in its desire to present an image of the forest as natural rather than social, that is, to pretend that it was not a historical product of human design and management. Far from serving a project of ecological restoration, which is too often invested in returning a landscape to an imagined pristine state, there is a tone of finality to the piece—the park is declared dead by Exell, a bold statement of irrecuperable loss and indictment of restoration efforts that come too late. Rather than an affect that serves the project of restoration, here mourning is a conceit that allows Exell to deliver a message of political anger in an act of journalistic citizenship that antagonizes the liberal structure of environmental feeling.

Exell’s obituary for Stanley Park is just one of many responses to the 2006 storm that could be juxtaposed with *The Globe and Mail*’s in order to bring feeling power and its multiple means of production into view, feeling power as a rhetorical technique, a social practice and site of struggle, and ultimately a condition of citizenship.

²⁹ Bob Exell, “Here Lies Stanley Park,” *The Tyee: BC’s Home for News, Culture and Solutions*, January 15, 2007, <http://thetyee.ca/Views/2007/01/15/StanleyPark>.