

Introduction

Landscapes are culture before they are nature;
constructs of the imagination projected onto
wood and water and rock.

—SIMON SCHAMA, *Landscape and Memory*

We all . . . apprehend the land imperfectly, even when
we go to the trouble to wander in it. Our perceptions
are colored by preconception and desire.

—BARRY LOPEZ, *Arctic Dreams*

An impressive white pine, now some seventy feet high, grows in a four-story, open courtyard at the center of the Michigan Historical Museum complex in the state capital, Lansing. Not only is the white pine (*Pinus strobilis*) Michigan's state tree; its history over the last two centuries is interwoven with that of the state and offers dramatic evidence of the evolution of cultural attitudes toward Michigan's forests from the beginnings of European settlement to the present. Its continuing appeal can be seen in book and song titles (*White Pine Whispers*, *Where Once the Tall Pines Stood*, "Under the Whispering Pines") and in the streams of visitors to rare old-growth stands, especially the readily accessible Hartwick Pines State Park near Grayling in Michigan's Lower Peninsula. As the largest and longest-lived tree in the northern forest, the white pine came to symbolize the north woods of the upper Midwest. To lumbermen in the East looking for new sources of timber, the abundant stands of white pine in Michigan, and in Wisconsin and Minnesota as well, represented "green gold," prime lumber in high demand as waves of settlers surged into the Midwest and beyond into the plains states.

The Apostle Islands Indian Pageant presented at Bayfield, Wisconsin, in 1924 and 1925, which purported to represent three hundred years of the history of the Chequamegon Bay area, included a scene titled “The Dance of the Spirits of the Vanished Pines.” Program notes describe the scene as the dream of an Ojibwa medicine man representing the loss of “millions of magnificent pines” in the logging boom of the last half of the nineteenth century. They explain that the pines were cut down to provide houses for those who succeeded the Ojibwa as “proprietors” of the “beautiful northland” and that the dream presents the spirits of the pines “as they appear in a dance of vanished memories.”¹ This “dream” transforms the destruction of the forests on which the Ojibwa depended into a nostalgic and sentimentalized vision of a world whose loss is assumed to be an inevitable consequence of progress. The pageant omits any reference to the roles of the lumberjacks, mill owners, and others responsible for the extension of white civilization, largely skipping over a crucial period in the human and environmental history of the area. It appealed primarily to tourists drawn from cities to the south, presenting a broad historical drama dominated by recognizable European figures, with stereotyped Indians cast in secondary roles.²

To those who thought of themselves as the Anishnabeg (including those we know as Ojibwa, Ottawa, Potawatomi, and in Wisconsin the Menominee), the white pine (*zhingwaak*), along with other culturally important trees such as the white cedar (*giizhik*) and paper birch (*wiigwass*), had various medicinal and practical uses. It was a major constituent of the woodland environment that sustained their lives and shaped their identity. A poem written about a century before the pageant presented in Bayfield by Jane Johnston, the daughter of an Ojibwa mother and an Irish father who became the wife of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, gives pines a real rather than a ghostly presence. In the poem Johnston was trying to recapture the excitement she had experienced on seeing a stand of white pines in Ontario as she and her father made their way home to northern Michigan from a trip to Ireland and England in 1810, when she was ten years old.

The pine! The pine! I eager cried,
The pine, my father! See it stand,
As first that cherished tree I spied,
Returning to my native land.
The pine! the pine! oh lovely scene!
The pine, that is forever green.

The pine symbolizes not only the homeland that Johnston had missed in her travels but the Ojibwa culture of her mother in which the pine, along with plants and animals generally, was understood as possessing its own spirit or *manito*. Writing her poem in Ojibwe (“Shing wauk! Shing wauk!”), then translating it into English, was one means of expressing her attachment to a way of life that as an adult she had seen transformed by white settlement and commerce. The poem conveys her personal sense of a spiritual connection with the pine, which she imagines as welcoming her “with a friend’s delight.” Johnston’s translation reflects the influence of her reading of English romantic verse, with its own sense of an animate natural world, on her effort to express her strong emotional response to the familiar sight of pine trees.³ As an adult, she had become adept at moving between the two worlds to which she belonged.

Jane Johnston may have been nostalgic for an Ojibwa culture that she saw as fading, but the pines themselves were still a prominent feature of the northern Michigan landscape in which she had grown up, near Sault Ste. Marie in the eastern Upper Peninsula. Subsequent evocations of Michigan’s pines are colored by nostalgia for the trees themselves. Writers of fiction and historians who have told the story of Michigan’s “Big Cut,” the logging boom that stripped the state of virtually all of its stands of white (and red) pine and subsequently of most of its old-growth hardwoods, have been drawn to images of devastated forestlands, especially landscapes dominated by stumps. In Jim Harrison’s *True North* (2004) giant pine stumps serve as a powerful image of the destructiveness of the white pine era in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. The novel begins in the 1960s with narrator David Burkett, obsessed with the crimes of his grandfather and great-grandfather against the land and its people, haunting the Kingston Plains south of Grand Marais and finding in the thousands of acres of waist- and chest-high stumps emblems of loss and the rapacity of his family and other lumber barons: “Maybe to try to imagine the trees was like asking a contemporary Lakota to imagine a million buffalo. There was an eerie sense of the gray stumps as ghost trees.”⁴

The landscape of the Kingston Plains is indeed an eerie one, where the intense fires that followed the late-nineteenth-century logging of the area burned off the topsoil to the extent that even now little vegetation other than mosses and lichens has emerged. The “ghost trees” that the stumps conjure up for Harrison suggest both the scale of the native forest, with its stands of towering white pines, and the unlikelihood that anything similar will return. For Harrison the stumps symbolize a larger pattern of con-

quest in America. He imagines the logging of the pines as a kind of warfare, driven by greed disguised as piety, in which the exploitation of natural resources was thought to be a response to a divine mandate to extend the reach of civilization. The victims of this warfare include not only the Ojibwa but the thousands of loggers and miners, many of them recent emigrants from Europe, who were maimed or lost their lives in accidents. Harrison's interwoven stories of their descendants, hanging on in a marginal economy and nursing grudges against members of David's family and others like them, register the lasting human damage done by the men who built the companies that exploited the natural resources, copper and iron ore as well as timber, that gave the Upper Peninsula its boom times.

In *True North* David Burkett comes to see his family as representative of the "alpha predators" who took pride in their ability to cut "all the virgin timber in the state of Michigan" (280) and then mythologized its destruction. Harrison engages in the work of demythologizing, telling the story of the pine forests by tracing the decline of a family, from the great-grandfather and grandfather, who invoke God and flout the law in their accumulation of wealth and power; to the feckless and dissolute father, who sells off the lands they acquired to finance his vices, the most corrosive of which is his sexual appetite for teenage girls; to the narrator, who immerses himself for twenty years in the ultimately hopeless project of writing an economic and social history that will exorcise his family's guilt by exposing it, hoping to heal his psychic wounds and free himself from this history in the process. David negotiates his own relationship with the landscape, and tries to distance himself from his family heritage, by living in a primitive cabin and seeking a form of peace in fishing and rowing. His favorite refuge is the hollow interior of an immense pine stump on the Kingston Plains, the closest thing that he can find to a church in which he can believe.

Like William Faulkner tracing the decline of the "Big Woods" of Mississippi river bottoms in "The Bear" and its sequel "Delta Autumn," Harrison focuses on loss and guilt. He uses the device of a journal of a 1920 trip to France to introduce a comparison between "the massive carnage of the natural world" visible in the blasted forests of World War I battlefields and the "shredded" landscapes around Ontonagon (253) in the western Upper Peninsula. Belleau Wood recalls the journal writer's father's reminiscences of the horrific Peshtigo fire on the Wisconsin border, the most infamous of the "holocaust" fires that swept through heavily logged areas of the upper Midwest and burned with such intensity that they destroyed whole

towns and hundreds of people unable to escape the firestorms. The accumulated logging debris (slash), in combination with dry and windy late summer weather (in 1871, 1881, 1891, and the early twentieth century), created ideal conditions for such fires, which roared through large sections of the cutover lands.

The story of these wildfires, still the most destructive ever recorded in the United States, has been told many times.⁵ Ernest Hemingway's description of the "burned-over country" around Seney in the first part of his "Big Two-Hearted River" recalls their devastating effect ("Even the surface had been burned off the ground") and mirrors the psychic damage caused by his protagonist Nick Adams's experience in World War I. Yet Hemingway's narrative also suggests possibilities for regeneration, in the "islands of dark pine trees" rising out of the pine plain and in the river itself, where Nick begins his own tentative recovery through the fly-fishing that is the ostensible reason for his trip.⁶ Harrison shows David beginning to recover as well, released from his obsession and his resentment of his father by publishing a long, moralizing newspaper essay that sums up what he is finally able to say about his family history. He rediscovers the sensuous pleasures of the landscape and realizes that his quest for solitude was a form of romantic self-indulgence, an epiphany he arrives at as he meditates beside a stump on the Kingston Plains.

For much of *True North* David tries to imagine the Upper Peninsula as it would have appeared when seen "through the eyes of Schoolcraft or Agassiz before the landscape was fatally violated" (207). Through David, Harrison taps into a kind of nostalgia, and a history, that we need to recognize if we are to understand our own perceptions of the "pristine" forests that existed in Michigan and the upper Midwest prior to European settlement and the motivation for contemporary efforts to preserve, restore, shape, or exploit them. We need to ask how these forests have been imagined over time, how they have evolved in the cultural imagination, and what preconceptions and desires have colored our perceptions of them, as well as how their composition has evolved. And we need to consider how the interplay between our perceptions of forests and the ways in which they have changed physically has affected how and why we value them.

The race to log Michigan's white pines, the lingering human and environmental consequences of which Harrison explores in his fiction, offers the most revealing example of changing cultural attitudes, as well as of the physical transformation of Michigan's forests, but pines represent only

one element in the mosaic of these forests. In the northern Lower Peninsula and the Upper Peninsula, where stands of white pine are mainly found, they coexist with other conifers and northern hardwoods, depending on the habitat: in mesic, deciduous areas with hemlock, white spruce, red and sugar maple, beech, yellow birch, and basswood; in drier, sandier areas with jack and red pines, various oaks, paper birch, aspen, and red maple; and in wet, coniferous-boreal forests with black and white spruces, balsam fir, tamarack, northern cedar, balsam poplar, yellow birch, and red maple. The southern Lower Peninsula is dominated by hardwood forests: beech and maple mixed with other hardwoods, including basswood, tulip poplar, black cherry, and elms, in wetter, mesic habitats; and oaks and hickories mixed with hardwoods, including black walnut, white ash, and sassafras, in drier ones. At the time of the first waves of European settlement in the early nineteenth century, the extensive forests in the south were interrupted by prairies and savannas, now greatly diminished.⁷

Whatever their composition, we give our forests meaning with the metaphors we choose to represent them and the stories we learn to tell about them, in other words with the changing ways in which we see them. The first European visitors to the eastern shores of North America emphasized its astounding natural abundance, including vast and diverse forests. Early promoters, eager to encourage more migration from Europe, expanded on this optimistic view, favoring metaphors of the New World as garden or paradise. Yet this story of the promise of America coexisted with another one, which emphasized the dangers and uncertainties of an unfamiliar land. As has often been noted, the English settlers who arrived on Cape Cod in the early seventeenth century were culturally conditioned to see the North American forest as a hostile wilderness. It recalled for them the dark forest of European tradition, thought to be evil as well as dangerous, and also the inhospitable, desert wildernesses of the Old Testament. In the words of the poet Michael Wigglesworth, the immense, forested country was “A waste and howling wilderness, / Where none inhabited / But hellish fiends and brutish men / That Devils worshiped.”⁸ A “waste” place because this apparent wilderness was not domesticated, or productive in ways that Wigglesworth could understand; “howling” because, like the howling of the wolves that was frequently heard at night, it radiated danger.

In writing from the colonial period well into the nineteenth century, “wilderness” was commonly described as “howling.” Wolves, the subject of numerous legends and folktales about attacks on humans, had come to be

regarded as demonic. The human inhabitants of the howling wilderness were seen by the early settlers as dangerous, perhaps evil “savages” whom it was their duty to Christianize. The nonconformists who fled religious persecution in England saw themselves as latter-day Israelites sent by God to claim a new promised land, and they were determined to domesticate it. In fact, the landscape of southern New England had already been altered by tribes whose members regularly burned wooded areas to improve conditions for hunting and to create fields for agriculture, moving on to establish new fields when the soil in the old ones was depleted. The European newcomers did not find unbroken forest but rather a patchwork that included open areas and parklike woods shaped by Indian fires, and they sometimes established their homesteads on abandoned Indian fields.⁹

By the early nineteenth century an antithetical way of looking at the American wilderness, influenced by European romanticism, was beginning to take root. The idea that divine truth could be found in nature as well as the Bible was not new (nature was commonly regarded as the second of God’s two books), but a focus on the value of wilderness and the sense in which it could be a manifestation of the sublime was. The categories of the sublime and picturesque, along with that of the beautiful, had been popularized by late-eighteenth-century English writing on the aesthetic dimensions of natural landscapes.¹⁰ Henry David Thoreau played the most crucial role in redefining the American understanding of wilderness and wildness and in arguing that transcendental truths could be found in natural facts. He discovered in the forests and swamps of the landscape around Concord, Massachusetts, metaphors for the spiritually and intellectually energizing effects of contact with wild nature: “When I would recreate myself, I seek the darkest wood, the thickest and most interminable and, to the citizen, most dismal swamp. I enter a swamp as a sacred place, a *sanctum sanctorum*. There is the strength, the marrow, of Nature.”¹¹ For the Thoreau of “Walking,” the late essay in which he distilled his mature views of wildness, “The most alive is the wildest. Not yet subdued to man, its presence refreshes him.”¹² Yet Thoreau’s provocative view of nature as representing an “absolute freedom and wildness,” which he opposed to civic culture and conventional ways of thinking, would have its greatest influence much later, on such iconoclastic defenders of wildness as John Muir at the end of the nineteenth century and Edward Abbey and Gary Snyder in the latter half of the twentieth.¹³

Another metaphor, the popular one of the forest as temple, is more representative of a shift in thinking about the forest in nineteenth-century

America that interests me here. The belief that forests, in particular sacred groves, were the dwelling places of gods goes back to European prehistory and can be found in Greek and Roman writing. The columns of Greek temples, as well as the architecture of Gothic cathedrals, invited analogies with forests. Christianity appropriated elements of the pagan veneration of the forest in the decoration of churches and in an iconographic tradition associating crosses and churches with woodlands.¹⁴ William Cullen Bryant's "A Forest Hymn," which appeared in 1825 and became one of his best-known poems, belongs to a rich tradition of imagining the forest as sacred space. Bryant begins by asserting that "The groves were God's first temples" and describes the elements that make the forest sacred for him: tall trunks that look like "venerable columns," a high canopy forming a "verdant roof," darkness, soft winds. The silence and solitude that Bryant finds in the forest give it a "tranquility" that makes it seem fit for meditation and worship, a "shrine" where he feels the power of "sacred influences." He sees a reminder of his own mortality and of the "eternity" visible in God's works in the ongoing "miracle" of creation around him, with new life springing from decay. Everything in the forest—the grandeur of the "mighty" oak, the beauty of the "delicate" woodland wildflower—becomes a sign of God's presence. Bryant's romantic sensibility transforms the forest into a place of spiritual and moral renewal and an emblem of the "beautiful order" of God's works. His "Hymn" helped to establish in America habits of imagining impressive stands of trees, particularly old-growth forests, as sacred and of describing them as cathedral-like, habits that have become so pervasive that they continue to influence travel writing. The metaphor of the forest as cathedral can still carry an emotional charge, even when it has become a cliché. The fact that a stand of old-growth white pines in northwestern Connecticut protected by The Nature Conservancy was known as Cathedral Pines raised the stakes in the debate about how to respond to the devastation of these pines by a violent windstorm.¹⁵

These two central metaphors, the forest as howling wilderness and the forest as temple or cathedral, underwent metamorphoses as attitudes toward forests changed and other metaphors became popular (the forest as "playground"). Like the early settlers, loggers saw the forest as wilderness, though less as a place of danger than as an antagonist that challenged their abilities and determination. Lumberjacks had to perform what now seem Herculean tasks in order to fell tall pines and haul giant logs in the winter woods, then contend with the force of spring rivers and with the logjams

that inevitably formed to get them to sawmills. It was not until the early 1920s that a more positive view of wilderness began to get wider attention, as Aldo Leopold and others lobbied the U.S. Forest Service to set aside wilderness areas within national forests. Like Thoreau, they came to regard wild nature as something to value rather than something to fear or seek to dominate. They saw wilderness areas as a way to preserve opportunities for primitive recreation and to protect natural forests and other undisturbed landscapes from the incursions of automobile tourism and the roads necessary to support it. Additional reasons for valuing wilderness were advanced as the campaign for designating wilderness areas gathered strength, including scientific ones. With the growing public awareness of ecology as a science in the 1960s, forests came to be regarded as ecosystems whose natural processes should be protected. Wilderness areas preserved from human disturbance could serve as laboratories, providing a standard by which forest health could be measured, and they could offer habitats for a variety of plant and animal species, some of which would be classified as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.

Imagining forests as sacred spaces served the aims of those intent on seeing areas designated as wilderness and on protecting old-growth forest generally. The image of the forest as cathedral came to be less obviously associated with divinity than it was for Bryant, but it might suggest beauty or peacefulness or a quiet that invites solitude and reflection, all aspects of the forest's appeal for Bryant that would become more important in subsequent arguments for preservation. A public that by the 1920s was becoming more interested in the use of state and national forests as places for outdoor recreation than as sources of timber came to associate forests with aesthetic and spiritual values as well as with recreational ones. One of my concerns is to show how these values have been expressed over time in various forms of writing, including a vital tradition of nature writing influenced by Thoreau, John Muir, and John Burroughs among others, and how they have become a part of public discourse about the management of forests. The fact that Aldo Leopold associated ecological health with beauty and that other scientists have been motivated by humanistic as well as scientific values in arguing for protecting natural areas attests to the breadth of their appeal, as well as to their persistence. The agencies that develop forest plans for state and national forests, recognizing public concerns, typically address aesthetic, spiritual, and social, as well as economic and scientific, values in the planning process, though with uneven

efforts to accommodate them in the final plans and their implementation.

The values associated with forests, including aesthetic and spiritual ones, mutated as cultural contexts changed. Caroline Kirkland, writing in the 1830s, found southeastern Michigan forests and oak openings “picturesque,” invoking the accepted standard of scenic beauty. In the 1890s John Muir would find “beauty” in the forests of the Sierra Nevada under all conditions, even when they were set into violent motion by a wind-storm or showed the aftereffects of such a storm, and was more inclined to find them sublime than picturesque. Aldo Leopold, writing roughly a century after Kirkland, would devalue the merely “pretty” and point the way to finding beauty in the workings of natural processes. The sense of the forest as restorative would evolve along with aesthetic standards, with the emphasis on its curative and health-giving powers waning and recognition of its role as a source of spiritual and psychological regeneration increasing. William Murray lured visitors to the Adirondacks in 1869 with a testimonial to the power of restful sleep and the fragrance of pine and balsam and cedar to cure consumption; travel literature distributed by Michigan railroad companies in the 1920s and 1930s touted the healing effects of the woods and waters of Michigan at resorts served by the railroads. The kind of restoration that Wendell Berry finds in the remnant of the “old forest” on his Kentucky farm to which he periodically retreats, a “high, restful sanctuary” where he can experience a sense of timelessness and harmony with what he describes as the ongoing work of creation, is more typical of modern accounts of the restorative power and spiritual appeal of forests.¹⁶

Perceptions such as Berry’s depend on a temporary withdrawal from the demands of daily life in society, and they are of course not unique to our own time. One can find an attraction to similar kinds of experience in accounts of forests from at least the early nineteenth century forward. One of the most intriguing themes that can be found in such accounts is the importance of silence, typically understood as the absence of human sounds. Depending on the writer and the circumstances, the forest can suggest timelessness, peace, or the sacred character of a place, or a combination of these qualities. It can encourage a heightened sensuous alertness, and it can clear mental space for meditation. Silence becomes progressively more important as an index of the quality of human experience of forests as the “noise” of industrial society intensifies, with automobiles and then jet engines and more recently off-road vehicles (ORVs) becoming emblematic of the intrusions that threaten to transform this experi-

ence. As silence has become more elusive, appreciation for it has grown, as have efforts to preserve it, at least in some places.

The values that have come to be associated with the modern ideal of wilderness and with forests generally, including ecological ones, need to be understood in relation to others that reflect a view of the forest primarily as an antagonist (when wilderness was seen as an oppressive presence) or as an economic resource to be exploited. A fundamental opposition between these two basic orientations runs through the interrelated stories that I tell, an opposition that grew as the effects of massive logging became apparent. It is embedded in Thoreau's provocative assertion that it is the poet rather than the lumberman who makes the "truest" use of the pine ("It is the living spirit of the tree, and not its spirit of turpentine, with which I sympathize, and which heals my cuts").¹⁷ Yet a viewpoint such as Thoreau's had little practical effect when logging was in the ascendant, in New England and then in the Lake States. In the later nineteenth century, at the height of the logging boom in Michigan, it was difficult to challenge an industry that was driving the economy and providing lumber essential for the development of the plains states, even if the lumber companies that supplied it were stripping virtually all of the state's old-growth forest without regard for what was left behind.

The creation by Congress in 1891 of a system of forest reserves, precursors of the national forests, launched a national effort to prevent a "timber famine" by guaranteeing a sustainable supply of timber, with the added goal of protecting watersheds. The movement to conserve natural resources implied continuing to use them productively, as Gifford Pinchot made clear when he became the first chief of the new U.S. Forest Service in 1905 and began aggressively marketing timber and grazing rights in the national forests. Pinchot articulated and put in practice the policy of multiple use of resources ("wise use," as he put it) that guided the Forest Service from its beginnings. This would later be codified in the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960, which defined the uses to be supported as timber production, protection of watersheds, grazing, recreation, and wildlife habitat, all supported by tradition and prior law.¹⁸ Arguments about how to interpret and prioritize these uses have continued and seem unlikely to diminish.

The conflict that developed between Pinchot and his former friend John Muir over the management of forests and other natural areas is often characterized as one between conservation and preservation. With his passionate descriptions of Sierra landscapes and his appeals for the cre-

ation of national parks, Muir became the most prominent national spokesman for a new movement for preservation, an important outgrowth of which was the campaign to create wilderness areas that led eventually to the passage of the Wilderness Act of 1964. Conflicts about the management of public forests in the upper Midwest, reflecting differing views of how these forests should be valued, can be seen as part of an ongoing national debate with its roots in arguments that first claimed wide public attention in the early twentieth century but reflect attitudes that had taken shape earlier. The texts and phenomena that I consider reveal the persistent tension between utilitarian views of forests, reflecting the assumption that nature should serve human needs, and others that value forests for their own sake, whether for aesthetic, spiritual, ecological, or other noneconomic reasons.

Yet if this tension has persisted it has also diminished at times, in ways that suggest that the opposing attitudes are not so absolute as they sometimes seem. Many of the same pioneering settlers who cut down and burned great numbers of trees to establish their farms would look back nostalgically to the “grand old forest” that they had feared and struggled with but had gradually come to appreciate, regretting its loss. Lumberjacks who complained about the hard conditions of their work developed their own kind of nostalgia for the freedoms and elemental nature of the life they had led in the woods and on the rivers. Early sportsmen who took pride in their hunting prowess were often avid students of natural history, and present hunters and fishermen can be found among the most vigorous advocates of protecting natural habitats. Attitudes toward forests can be complicated, and the fundamental opposition that I have sketched assumes new forms as technologies and interests change. The managers who supervise current efforts to chart the future of public forests struggle to find a balance that will satisfy competing and sometimes starkly opposed interests. On the one hand, they work to nurture the ecological health of forests; on the other, they use the mandate of multiple use to justify such actions as authorizing a higher level of timber cutting for economic reasons and extending the network of snowmobile and ORV trails in response to social pressures.

While I focus primarily on Michigan and the upper Midwest in the chapters that follow, the texts I discuss illustrate broad shifts in cultural attitudes toward forests that reflect national trends. Chapters focus on important stages in the evolution of these attitudes. They follow a chronological progression, although individual chapters may range forward and

back to explore how particular attitudes and practices have developed. Thus the chapter on the explosion of public demand for recreational use of forests in the early twentieth century (“The Forest as Playground”) considers the development of the most prominent of these uses in the nineteenth century and carries strands of the story into the present. The arc of the book’s narrative takes the reader from Anishnabeg understandings of the forest (as a physical and spiritual home and the major source of their livelihood) and the formative struggles of early European settlers to make space for themselves in a forest “wilderness” to our present concern with shaping our forests through ostensibly rational and inclusive kinds of planning.

A preliminary chapter examines images of presettlement forests, particularly of what we have come to think of as the north woods, presented to the public by Schoolcraft, by a member of Louis Agassiz’s expedition, and by other early explorers, juxtaposing accounts of their travels with Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s idealized version of Ojibwa life in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula in his hugely popular poem *The Song of Hiawatha*. I am concerned both with the popular image of the Ojibwa and their environment established by Longfellow’s poem and the way this influenced perceptions of the Upper Peninsula and with what we know about the actual life of the Ojibwa, especially their physical and spiritual uses of the forest. Images of presettlement forests, whether they derive from early narratives of exploration and reconstructions of Anishnabeg life or from recent studies of nineteenth-century surveyors’ notes, are important to an understanding of what our forests were and what they have become. And of whether and to what degree it might be possible to restore them to their presettlement state.

A chapter on the experience of the early settlers who followed the Jesuits and fur traders into the upper Midwest considers their view of the forest as a threatening place that had to be made safe and hospitable for humans (other than the “savages” whose natural home it was) and as an adversary that stood in the way of the progress of civilization, understood as bringing with it civic and religious order as well as a flourishing agriculture. These pioneering settlers regarded themselves as engaged in a continuing struggle with nature, carving out clearings in the wilderness in order to establish the farms and towns that would enable them to thrive. To create clearings was to let in light and win a sense of freedom from the dark, enclosing woods. When they pushed westward across southern Michigan into regions marked by parklike oak openings, these settlers

found a more welcoming landscape, one that travelers celebrated as combining wildness with the illusion of art and that James Fenimore Cooper made the symbolic center of a novel (*The Oak Openings*) set in southwestern Michigan at the time of the War of 1812. Cooper's novel and settlers' memoirs suggest how both oak openings and the old forest became objects of nostalgia when they were almost gone and how expressions of nostalgia could coexist with celebrations of progress.

I devote three chapters to the most important event in the recent forest history of the Lake States, the rise of commercial logging in the mid-nineteenth century, which focused initially on the abundant white pine, the source of the finest lumber. The first of these chapters deals with the culture of the lumberjacks themselves and how it came to be understood. I am interested in how these lumberjacks shaped their own identity through songs they adapted to local circumstances as these songs passed from Maine to the Lake States and from camp to camp and through stories in which they magnified their exploits in the retelling, some about local heroes and others about the legendary Paul Bunyan. I am concerned as well with the changing and sometimes contradictory ways in which the lumberjacks were viewed by others. One of the paradoxes of writing about lumberjacks is that writers could find romance in their daily lives in the forest and at the same time recognize the destructiveness and waste of their lumbering practices. When public opinion turned against the excesses of the logging era, it was primarily the bosses who were blamed, for greed and unscrupulous practices, while the early lumberjacks themselves often emerged as folk heroes.

In another chapter I treat Stewart Edward White, little known now but widely read in the early decades of the twentieth century, as exemplifying the best of popular fiction about logging. His two novels and a related book of stories about logging in Michigan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, along with others that extend the story of logging to California and then to Alaska, represent loggers as embodying another version of the pioneer spirit. White portrays logging as an epic enterprise in which victory consists of getting out "the cut," heroically overcoming whatever obstacles nature and human enemies may present. Yet the protagonists of his Michigan novels, however quick to justify intensive logging as necessary for the progress of civilization and to authorize lawlessness if necessary to complete their river drives, reveal a strong attraction to the forest. White himself was a student of natural history and an energetic outdoorsman who became a conservation activist and an ad-

vocate for national forests and parks. He dealt with the seeming contradiction between his protagonists' natural admiration for forests and their commitment to cutting whatever prime timber they could by carefully separating manliness from sentiment in his treatment of gender roles, giving aesthetic responses that his protagonists seem incapable of articulating to the women they eventually marry. Part of the interest of his fiction lies in the sometimes unacknowledged tensions between the imperatives of logging and romantic representations of the forest.

In a chapter on the aftermath of the logging era, I use several novels from the 1920s and 1930s that dramatize the human and environmental costs of the profligate logging of the late nineteenth century to show how the images of lumber bosses and their companies were transformed in the public imagination. The most important of these for my purposes, Harold Titus's influential *Timber* (1922), challenges the heroic image of logging offered by White. Titus focuses on the problem of what to do with the vast cutover lands, marked by the expanses of pine stumps and slash left by logging. He helped to establish what became the common practice of comparing these cutover lands with the devastated battlefields of World War I. The primary reason for the influence of Titus's novel when it appeared, however, was the way it used his heroine's vision of a restored pine forest that could produce timber "forever" by means of sustainable logging practices to advance the agenda of forestry scientists. This vision offered an alternative to failed attempts to farm the cutover lands based on planting trees as a crop, simplifying the structure of the restored forest to make it more efficient. It would be challenged in time by ecologists who would argue that sustaining the health of forests depends on respect for their natural complexity.

As the forests of the upper Midwest began to recover and holdings of state and federal forestland mushroomed, a surge of public interest in recreational uses of public forests challenged the priority that foresters gave to timber production. In a chapter on forest recreation I consider the evolution of the principal recreational activities and how they altered perceptions of forests and forced debate about how they should be used, exposing tensions not only between recreational users and those who managed the forests but also among users with different recreational aims. Questions about priorities arose as different groups of users lobbied for their interests. What priority should be given to the Forest Service's traditional mission of supplying timber for the mills that sustained local economies? To the wishes of hunters and others interested in maintaining

habitat for wildlife? To those of automobile tourists concerned with road access and scenic beauty (and to those who saw the automobile as the chief threat to primitive recreation and the survival of wilderness)? To the interests of hikers and nature photographers? To those of snowmobile and ORV users pressing for greater access when motorized recreation in the forests intensified later in the century? The need to justify and support particular visions of the forest contributed to the development of game laws, urged by sportsmen, and to the articulation of aesthetic and spiritual values associated with forests by nature writers among others. Without the growth of public demand that forests be protected, and managed in ways that serve perceived recreational needs, we would not have the laws, infrastructure, or mechanisms for developing forest policy that we do.

A major advance in the scientific understanding of forests with the rise of ecological forestry in the 1970s and the passage of environmental laws that reflected this new understanding forced a more radical rethinking of forest policy. In a chapter on the forest as ecosystem, more accurately a collection of ecosystems, I explore the shift from controversies over preserving and sustaining old growth (initially in the Pacific Northwest) to a broader emphasis on protecting functioning ecosystems generally. I discuss Aldo Leopold as a bridging figure who influenced the development of ecological forestry and also played a critical role in providing a rationale for the wilderness movement. Leopold advanced the case for preserving forest and other wilderness initially made by John Muir by developing a compelling “land ethic,” distinguishing between regarding land as “a commodity belonging to us” and considering it as part of “a community to which we belong,” a “biotic community.”¹⁹ Like Muir, Leopold offered an alternative to Pinchot’s doctrine of “wise use” of natural resources and showed that he could make the case for preservation to a wide public, on emotional as well as rational grounds. I include Sigurd Olson, the primary interpreter and advocate of the north woods of Minnesota, and philosopher and nature writer Kathleen Dean Moore in the line of those who have articulated values important to a holistic view of forests, Moore chiefly for her persuasive illustration of the compatibility of ecological and humanistic values in a personal essay that draws on Leopold.

My final chapter focuses on the language of current forest plans and the complex processes by means of which they are developed, the interplay between planners and representatives of contesting interest groups, and questions about how forest plans are implemented. I am interested in how positions on key issues reflect differing visions of the forest and in how the

language used by the agencies (in the plans themselves and in responses to public comments on them) reflects the difficulties of trying to balance competing interests and at the same time satisfy mandates to sustain and enhance biological diversity. A central question that underlies forest plans and related documents, as well as the debates surrounding them, is how much management, and what kinds, forests need. To what extent can and should we design our forests through active management? I discuss two wilderness areas in Michigan's western Upper Peninsula, the Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park and the Sylvania Wilderness Area in the Ottawa National Forest, as successful efforts to realize the wilderness ideal through minimal management. They offer examples of the resilience of forests and at the same time, like other northern forests, show evidence of threats (including invasive species, excessive browsing by deer, and the potentially far-reaching effects of global warming) that are introducing new kinds of uncertainty about the future shape and condition of these and other forests, however we try to influence their development.

In a coda I introduce related novels by Philip Caputo (*Indian Country*) and Jim Harrison (*Returning to Earth*) that comment obliquely on many of the themes of the book and explore contemporary modes of living with the forest in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Considering these novels serves as a way to return the larger story that I tell to Ojibwa beliefs in a spirit world of *manitos* by showing how Caputo and Harrison give these beliefs a critical role in the redemption of their protagonists and use them to suggest possibilities for harmony with the natural world that depend upon alternative ways of imagining our relationship to it. These fictional imaginings of interactions with the forests and other landscapes of the Upper Peninsula offer a counterpoint to the elaborate dance of forest planners and administrators and their critics and, while they cannot substitute for it, suggest that there may be truths that elude the bureaucratic and political language of the official documents.