

THE EVOLUTION OF “MONSTERS” IN NORTH AMERICAN EXPLORATION AND
TRAVEL LITERATURE 1607-1930

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Abstract: In the first two centuries of European exploration of North America, accounts of monsters, including ones given by Indigenous guides, were largely accepted by Europeans as reflecting actual creatures. Gradually, under the influence of a range of factors, this dynamic shifted over time. Continued exploration, the spread of Enlightenment ideas, and changing material circumstances led to a decline in the belief in monsters—or at least put the belief in them beyond respectability, thereby enlarging the cultural gulf between various Indigenous cultures and European explorers and settlers, or at least the social elite of that latter group. In Canada, as argued here, the “sasquatch” was a hybrid creation combining Indigenous and European traditions; the windigo was an Indigenous monster tradition; the “grisly bear” was predominately a monster of the European imagination. Perceptions of each in European exploration literature followed a similar trajectory of increasing skepticism. Each evolved from creatures that were depicted as innately hostile or dangerous into somewhat more benign pop culture images as they lost their potency once the frontier receded and North America urbanized. As the gap in perspectives on monsters widened in exploration and frontier literature over the course of the nineteenth century, new narratives emerged that were much more negative in their depictions of Indigenous peoples. Frequently, this negativity, when connected with monster legends, depicted Indigenous peoples as cowardly or superstitious. With the sasquatch, European stereotypes about Indigenous people had by the 1870s partially supplanted what had once been a sense of genuine mystery regarding this frontier legend. The exploitation of windigo stories to portray Indigenous peoples as cowardly and superstitious also arose mainly after the 1870s, as earlier generations of explorers and fur traders had exhibited more receptive attitudes. Meanwhile many voyageurs and lower status trappers retained beliefs on monsters closer to their Indigenous counterparts, and as a result were often lumped into the same category as sharing premodern, superstitious beliefs by their social elites. Finally, in the third example, the “grisly bear” became a bloodthirsty monster in the European settler imagination. It was the last mainstream European monster myth, before it too largely faded away in the face of skeptical inquiry. However, such skepticism, voiced normally from afar, frequently misunderstood and misconstrued the nature of these legends, and the truths they had contained.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Abstract..... | iii |
| Acknowledgements..... | iv |
| Table of Contents..... | v |
| List of Figures and Tables..... | vi |
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Chapter 1: Tracking Mountain Monsters, the “Sasquatch:” A Widening Rift 1735-1930 | 26 |
| Chapter 2: The Other Side of the “Mountain Monster” Divide: Indigenous Sources and Lower-Status Euro-Settler Accounts | 63 |
| Chapter 3: A Growing Divide: The Windigo 1607-1930 | 93 |
| Chapter 4: The “Grisly Monster”: Grizzly Bear Accounts in Exploration and Travel Literature 1666- 1919..... | 151 |
| Chapter 5: The Skeptics Challenged: Truth Behind the Legends..... | 194 |
| Conclusion | 220 |
| Bibliography..... | 230 |
| Appendix: | |
| A) Table of Early Western Monsters/Mountain Monsters/Proto-“Sasquatch” Accounts 1735- 1929..... | 265 |
| B) Windigo Monster Accounts 1633-1934..... | 268 |
| C) Table of Grizzly Bear Accounts 1666-1919..... | 270 |
| D) Google Books Ngram “Grizzly Monster” 1800-2000..... | 272 |
| E) Table of Windigo Accounts/Sources 1634-2007..... | 273 |

List of Figures and Tables

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure 0.1 Skull of the Dwarf Elephant..... | 19 |
| Figure 2.1 The Hepburn Stone..... | 68 |
| Figure 2.2 Stone pile drivers..... | 68 |
| Figure 2.3 Hami, a “dangerous thing.” | 71 |
| Figure 2.4 Kwagu’l gloves..... | 71 |
| Figure 2.5 Kwakiutl (Kwakwaka'wakw) Bear Costume..... | 71 |
| Figure 4.1 The Grizzly Bear’s Range..... | 152 |
| Table 5.1 Early Western Monsters/Mountain Monsters/Proto-“Sasquatch” Accounts 1735-1929..... | 265 |
| Table 5.2 Windigo Monster Accounts 1633-1934..... | 268 |
| Table 5.3 Grizzly Bear Accounts 1666-1919..... | 270 |
| Table 5.4 Google Books Ngram Viewer “Grizzly Monster” 1800-2000..... | 272 |
| Table 5.5 Windigo Accounts/Sources 1633-2007..... | 273 |

Introduction

When in 1792 the English explorer George Vancouver arrived on the mountainous coastline of North America's Pacific Northwest, he wrote that his men were terrified of encountering "hideous monsters, in the wilderness."¹ The fears of Vancouver's crew were not new. Strange beasts, fantastic animals, and monsters of various sorts have featured in exploration literature since at least the Greek traveller and historian Herodotus' accounts in the fifth century BCE.² Fabulous creatures became a staple of medieval travel narratives, such as Marco Polo's, or the stories told about the Irish wanderer Saint Brendan. The earliest surviving North American exploration literature, the Vikings' "Vinland Sagas," also tell of monsters.³ Stories of fantastic creatures in the "New World" continued with Christopher Columbus' first voyage across the Atlantic in 1492, as Columbus wrote of sighting mermaids.⁴ Columbus' journeys initiated centuries of nearly continuous European and subsequent Euro-settler exploration of the Americas, which has left a large record of exploration literature containing many intriguing "monster" stories.⁵

¹ George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean, and Round the World; in which the Coast of North-West America has been carefully examined and accurately surveyed etc.* Vol. I (London: Printed for G.G. and J. Robinson, and J. Edwards, 1798), 240.

² Herodotus, *The Histories*, Introduction by Carolyn Dewald, translated by Robin Waterfield, *Oxford World's Classics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

³ *The Vinland Sagas: The Norse Discovery of America*, translated with an introduction by Magnus Magnusson and Hermann Palsson, (London: Penguin, 1965).

⁴ Columbus' account reads: "On the previous day (8 Jan 1493), when the Admiral (Columbus) went to the Rio del Oro (on Haiti), he said he quite distinctly saw three mermaids, which rose well out of the sea; but they are not so beautiful as they are said to be, for their faces had some masculine traits." It has been widely assumed that what Columbus actually saw were manatees. See, *The Journal of Christopher Columbus (During His First Voyage, 1492-93)*, and *Documents Relating to the Voyages of John Cabot and Caspar Corte Real* translated and edited by Clements R. Markham (London: Printed for the Hakluyt Society, 1893), 154.

⁵ In this study, unless otherwise stated, when I use "monster" I use it in the Oxford English Dictionary's definition sense as: "NOUN: Originally: a mythical creature which is part animal and part human, or combines elements of two or more animal forms, and is frequently of great size and ferocious appearance. Later, more generally: any imaginary creature that is large, ugly, and frightening." These definitions are generally consistent with how the various primary sources examined for this study use the word, i.e. in reference to creatures that are perceived as "large, ugly, and frightening." The word "monstrous" is derived from the same Old French root, and has been defined as, "Of, relating to, or characteristic of a monster....having the appearance or nature of a monster, esp. in being hideous or frightening," as well as, "Of a thing (material or immaterial): deviating from the natural or

However, in the eighteenth century European elite opinion coalesced around a more skeptical attitude toward explorers' tales that mirrored larger trends involving greater skepticism concerning witchcraft, the supernatural, and religion—an intellectual transition known as the European Enlightenment, or what Max Weber viewed as the start of “the disenchantment of the world.”⁶ This “Age of Reason” saw not only the end of witchcraft trials but also “monsters” relegated to folklore or else reconceptualised as ordinary parts of the animal kingdom. These changes sparked, as a by-product, a wider cultural gulf between European colonists, especially the educated elite who were exposed to these influences, and North American Indigenous peoples than had existed in the first few centuries of contact.⁷ This growing cultural divide is illustrated in part through the way that stories of monsters recorded by European explorers and other frontier travellers changed.

Jonathan Swift, for example, satirized what he regarded as the more fanciful claims found in exploration literature in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), while in 1750 the Scottish philosopher David Hume, a leading Enlightenment figure, cautioned against the “strong propensity of mankind to the extraordinary and the marvellous”. Elsewhere, Hume remarked that, “With what

conventional order; unnatural, extraordinary.” Both senses have been in usage since the 1400s. While this meaning of both “monster” and “monstrous” have remained consistent throughout the period studied here, as will be clear, *what is perceived as a “monster” or “monstrous”* has changed. See, *Oxford English Dictionaries*, s.v. “monster,” and “monstrous,” accessed October 15, 2017,

<http://www.oed.com.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/view/Entry/121738?rskey=gl6jHz&result=1#eid>.

⁶ Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” in Max Weber, *Max Weber's Complete Writings on Academic and Political Vocations*, edited by John Dreijmanis (New York: Algora, 2008), 35. Given that most of the primary sources examined here are English-language sources, it has been historians of the English, Scottish, and American Enlightenments that have largely provided the intellectual histories that informed the background for this study. This includes Roy Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), Mark G. Spencer, ed., *The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of the American Enlightenment*, 2 vols, (New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015) Spencer, *David Hume and Eighteenth-Century America* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2005), and Alexander Broadie, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁷ The last legal execution for witchcraft in England was in 1716, the last in Scotland in 1727, and the last in France in 1745. For the decline in belief in witchcraft see Edward Bever, “Witchcraft Prosecutions and the Decline of Magic,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* (Volume 40, Number 2, 2009), 263-293 and Brian P. Leavack, “The Decline and End of Witchcraft Prosecutions,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe and Colonial America*, edited by Brian P. Leavack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 429-448.

greediness are the miraculous accounts of travellers received, their descriptions of sea and land monsters, their relations of wonderful adventures, strange men, and uncouth manners? But if the spirit of religion join itself to the love of wonder, there is an end of common sense; and human testimony, in these circumstances, loses all pretensions to authority.”⁸ Whereas earlier generations of European explorers, such as Jacques Cartier, Sir Walter Raleigh, Henry Hudson, Samuel de Champlain, Pierre Esprit Radisson, Louis Nicholas, Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de La Vérendrye, and Jonathan Carver, were generally receptive to the reality of monsters described to them by their Indigenous guides and companions, over time explorers’ attitudes became more aligned with prevailing Enlightenment sentiment; skepticism if not outright scorn and mockery of Indigenous tales of monsters became increasingly the norm in exploration literature of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This eventually rendered the belief in wilderness monsters beyond respectability, something to which only “superstitious Indians” and uneducated voyageurs and fur traders were supposedly susceptible. When this happened, monsters like the “sasquatch” or “windigo,” once creatures of genuine mystery and even fear to European explorers and settlers, were now exploited as tropes that cast Indigenous people and sometimes low-status Euro-settlers as superstitious, primitive, or cowardly. However, at least some explorers in the earlier phases of this process, like David Thompson and Ross Cox, attempted to reconcile Indigenous traditions of monsters with Enlightenment science.

Hume’s skepticism, while a useful note of caution, is perhaps more instructive for the things Hume might have refused to believe existed. Educated Europeans of Hume’s day still doubted the existence of rocks that fell from the sky (i.e. meteorites), gorillas, giant squids, and

⁸ David Hume, *Philosophical Essays concerning Human Understanding*, Second Edition, (London: Printed for A. Millar, 1750), 186 and David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, New Edition (London: Printed for A. Millar, 1758), 348.

the past existence of dinosaurs, Neanderthals, and other hominids.⁹ Rare and unfamiliar wildlife like the okapi—a central African forest quadruped that is the closest living relative of the giraffe—remained unknown to Europeans until the early twentieth century, as did other large mammal species. On the other hand, as a result of explorers' journeys to regions of the Earth far distant from Europe, many of the fabulous beasts that had once appeared in ancient and medieval bestiaries were gradually eliminated from the naturalist encyclopedias that began to appear during the eighteenth century.¹⁰ Dragons, unicorns, mermaids, basilisks, sea monsters and other creatures were banished to the realm of folklore—or else reconceptualised as ordinary parts of the natural world—for instance the giant squid.

While some historians might be tempted to dismiss tales of monsters as unworthy of much consideration, this would be a mistake. For centuries monsters, (meaning large frightening beasts that are wholly or partly imaginary), and other legendary creatures were an integral component of both the diverse Indigenous cultures of North America (e.g. thunderbirds, horned snakes, water lynxes, windigoes) as well as traditional European cultures (e.g. vampires, werewolves, trolls, unicorns, dragons).¹¹ Oral traditions of giant-slayers and heroes who faced monsters in the wilderness, or else ordinary human beings who were transformed into cannibalistic monsters (i.e. windigoes, vampires, werewolves) feature prominently in both Indigenous and European folklore.¹² “Here are dragons” (*hic sunt dracones*) is the famous

⁹ See Ron Westrum, “Sasquatch and the Scientists: Reporting Scientific Anomalies” in *Manlike Monsters on Trial: Early Records and Modern Evidence*, ed. by Marjorie M. Halpin and Michael M. Ames (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), 26-37.

¹⁰ For a general history of zoology, see Paul Lawrence Farber, *Finding Order in Nature: The Naturalist Tradition from Linnaeus to E. O. Wilson* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000).

¹¹ This definition of “monster” is again derived from the Oxford English Dictionary definition already cited. Of course, the term later took on other meanings in different contexts, but in this study, the focus is solely on monsters in the first sense of the word as signifying a large, frightening beast that is wholly or partly imaginary.

¹² For an example, see C. Patrick Morris, ““Monster Slayer” among the Upland Yumans: A Folk Theory on the Evolution of Hunting Cultures,” *American Indian Quarterly*, Vol. 10 No. 3 (Summer 1986), 199-211.

inscription that appeared on a sixteenth century (apparently) Portuguese globe, while many European maps of the same era showed monsters lurking in unfamiliar lands.¹³ Less well known are the rich Indigenous oral stories of monsters that lurked beyond familiar territory. The coastal Quileute spoke of fierce “border monsters” that lived high up in the interior mountains, the Kwakwaka'wakw of *Baxwbakwalanuxsiwe*, the “Man-Eater-at-the-North-End-of-the-World”; many Algonquian cultures had traditions about terrifying, giant windigoes that were said to haunt distant northern regions; the Inuit believed that the interior of Greenland and other unvisited places were home to monsters like the dreaded *kiliffat*, an eight-legged animal that preyed on humans, as well as giants (singular, *igalilik*), which killed entire families. The Apsáalooke (Crow), held the caves of the Pryor Mountains were inhabited by *nirumbee*, fierce little people, and Mi'kmaq tales warned that deep lakes harboured *jipijka'm*, giant horned water serpents that could eat humans, to cite only a few examples.¹⁴ European folklore similarly held that mountain passes, caves, deep woods, or other unfamiliar regions were home to ogres, trolls, demons and other monsters. Such commonalities are interesting given that emphasis has generally been placed on the differences between these cultures at the time of contact. But at least in the first centuries of Indigenous-European encounters, a cultural tradition of dangerous monsters was something nearly all groups shared. Such parallels between widely scattered cultures are more

¹³ See B. F. da Costa, “The Lenox Globe,” *Magazine of American History*, vol. 3, no. 9 (Sept. 1879), pp. 529-540 and also Chet A. Van Duzer, *Sea Monsters on Medieval and Renaissance Maps* (London: British Library, 2013).

¹⁴ See, *Salish Myths and Legends: One People's Stories*, edited by M. Terry Thompson and Steven M. Egesdal (University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 213-216, Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, Exhibits, First Nations Gallery, Kwakwaka'wakw Masks, *Baxwbakwalanuxsiwe*, visited 2015, and Franz Boas, *Kwakiutl Culture as Reflected in Mythology*, Vol. 28 of the *Memoirs of the American Folk-lore Society*, (G.E. Stechert & co 1935), 114, Bjarne Grønnow, “Blessings and Horrors of the Interior: Ethno-Historical Studies of Inuit Perceptions Concerning the Inland Region of West Greenland,” *Arctic Anthropology* Vol. 46, No. 1/2, (2009), 191-201, Laura Redish and Orrin Lewis, “Native American Legends: Nirumbee (Awwakkule),” *Native Languages of the Americas Website*, accessed July 2018: <http://www.native-languages.org/morelegends/nirumbee.htm>, David Lorenzo Schmidt, *Komqwejwi'kasikl: Linguistic Analysis and Historical Ethnography of the Mi'kmaq Hieroglyphs*, (University of California, Davis, 1997), 99, 206-207, and Ruth Holmes Whitehead and Kathy Kaulbach, *Stories from the Six Worlds: Micmac Legends* (Halifax: Nimbus 1988), 98-102.

than likely rooted in the common conditions all human groups faced for millennia, especially from the threats posed by large animal predators as well as in dealing with individuals who committed unsanctioned acts of violence. There are strong grounds to think that some extinct mega fauna preyed on early humans and that the cultural memory of this was preserved in oral myths and traditions on both sides of the Atlantic and beyond. In other words, there was a time in human history, and a rather long one, when “monsters” really did eat humans. Extinct mega-fauna that are thought to have once preyed on humans or human ancestors include giant cave bears, the even larger short-faced bear, saber-tooth tigers, dire wolves (twice the size of today’s wolves), giant hyenas, and an extinct species of giant crocodile once found in eastern Africa.¹⁵ Other seemingly fantastic extinct animals also likely influenced human mythology, such as the giant ground sloths and giant beavers that roamed North America as recently as 11,000 years ago, griffin-like giant birds, the aptly named *gigantopithecus* (the largest primate ever to have lived), as well as the bones of extinct species like dinosaurs, which were occasionally unearthed by ancient humans. Even after many of these creatures went extinct, animals such as leopards, lions, jaguars, tigers, wolves, and constricting snakes are known to have preyed upon humans well into modern times (and in some cases still do).¹⁶ The pervasiveness of folk stories about heroes battling wild beasts that were passed down through countless generations likely in part reflects how common this grim reality must have been in many early societies. Some better known examples of this include the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the Ancient Greek myths of Heracles, Perseus, Theseus, and Odysseus, the Anglo-Saxon epic poem *Beowulf*, various Viking sagas,

¹⁵ The biologist Robert Dunn has considered some of the deadliest predators early humans faced. See Robert Dunn, “The Top Ten Deadliest Animals of Our Evolutionary Past,” in the *Smithsonian Magazine*, online edition (June 2011), accessed June 2016, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-top-ten-deadliest-animals-of-our-evolutionary-past-18257965/?no-ist>.

¹⁶ Some of these themes are explored in David Quammen’s *Monster of God: The Man-Eating Predator in the Jungles of History and the Mind* (New York: Norton & Company, 2004).

Arthurian legends (the earliest of which mostly feature Arthur as a warrior who fights monsters), medieval stories about Saint George and the dragon, Chinese legends of the Yellow Emperor who battled the monster Chiyu, in southern Africa the Khoi myths about the great warrior Heitsi-Eibib, Mi'kmaq and Abenaki tales of the hero Glooscap, Dene stories of the heroic Yamoria who slayed fierce giant animals that ate humans, and the legendary Maya hero twins Hunahpu and Xbalanque.

The eighteenth century British historian Edward Gibbon, in his *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, had something of this in mind, invoking both Europe's ancient history and the contemporary settlement of the Americas, when he remarked that, "...in the first ages of society, when the fiercer animals often dispute with man the possession of an unsettled country, a successful war against those savages is one of the most innocent and beneficial labours of heroism."¹⁷ As Gibbon's statement suggests, with the European "discovery" of the "New World" in 1492, there were renewed opportunities on a grand scale for European explorers to encounter unfamiliar animals and "monsters" of the sort that had been immortalized in ancient myth and legend. The Spanish *conquistadors* sought glory and fortune through feats of valour in the manner of their ancient predecessors, often reciting stories of encounters with giants, whereas at least some of the Jesuits sought glory of a different sort by facing monsters in the form of "demons" and unknown beasts.¹⁸ Some of these "monsters," like the one Jacques Marquette described encountering in the North American interior in 1673, were almost certainly just animals that were unfamiliar to Europeans.¹⁹ But as the North American continent fell under

¹⁷ Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. I, (Edinburgh: Printed for Bell and Bradfute, Peter Hill, Silvester Doig and A. Stirling, and John Ogle, 1811 [first edition, 1776]), 151.

¹⁸ For Spanish conquistadors' tales of giants, see Fernando Operé, *Indian Captivity in Spanish America: Frontier Narratives* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 5 and 237.

¹⁹ Marquette wrote: "We saw also a hideous monster; his head was like that of a tiger, his nose was sharp, and somewhat resembled a wildcat; his beard was long; his ears stood upright; the colour of his head was gray; and his neck black." See Jacques Marquette, "An Account of the Discovery of Some New Countries and Nations in North

increasing European conquest and colonization, uncritical monster accounts in exploration literature were no longer considered respectable. Increasingly, mockery of such monster beliefs became the norm as the continent gradually ceased to be a place that Europeans regarded as unsettled, uncharted, and unfamiliar. Tied to this shift were increasingly negative depictions of Indigenous peoples who often retained their traditional beliefs, and frequently lower-class white settlers as well.

Investigating how European explorers, missionaries, fur traders, and colonists responded to stories of “monsters” is a subject that intersects themes that have been prominent in recent historiography: Indigenous-European relations, imperialism, the construction of an exotic and sometimes dehumanized “Other,” and the history of science and the “subjugation” of the natural world. Focusing on this peculiar feature of exploration literature offers a novel method of investigating some of these larger themes while at the same time analyzing three of the North American frontier’s most intriguing folk creatures that long persisted in exploration and travel literature, specifically, what is popularly known as “sasquatch” or “bigfoot,” a hairy apelike

America, in 1673, by Pere Marquette and Sieur Jolliet,” in *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, vol. II, edited and trans. B.F. French (Philadelphia: Daniels and Smith, 1850). 284. Some of these “monsters” were almost certainly just animal species never before seen by Europeans. It is not difficult to imagine that wildlife species endemic to the Western Hemisphere, or otherwise largely unfamiliar to the first European explorers and colonists, were likely to be interpreted as bizarre. As early as 1851 the American naturalist John James Audubon noted “the sensations excited, in the minds of the discoverers of our country, on seeing the strange animals that they met with. Travellers in unexplored regions are likely to find many unheard-of objects in nature that awaken in their minds feelings of wonder... We can imagine to ourselves the surprise with which the Opossum was regarded by Europeans when they first saw it. Scarcely any thing was known of (in Europe)...” The opossum, as Audubon observed, would have seemed a very strange creature to Europeans; it has the “head of a pig,” a prehensile tail “like a monkey,” and is a marsupial that plays dead when startled or approached by a person. See, John James Audubon and John Bachman, *The Quadrupeds of North America*, Vol. II, (New York: V.G. Audubon, 1851), 109-110. Theodore Roosevelt made a similar observation to Audubon’s. Roosevelt noted that it was the animals endemic to North America (and therefore unfamiliar to European settlers) that played the largest role in colonial folktales: “those (animals) which have most vividly impressed themselves on the imagination of the hunters and pioneer settlers, are the very ones which have no Old World representatives...Among the small beasts the coon and the possum are those which have left the deepest traces in the humbler lore of the frontier; exactly as the cougar—usually under the name of the panther or mountain lion—is a favourite figure in the wilder hunting tales.” See, Theodore Roosevelt, *The Wilderness Hunter: Sketches of Sport on The Northern Cattle Plains*, Two Volumes in One (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1893). 13.

beast with murky origins, the terrifying monster of Algonquian lore known as the “windigo,” and lastly, the “grisly” bear, a real animal that was long treated more like a monster by European explorers, colonists, and naturalists.

In doing so, this dissertation partly challenges what some have seen as a new historiographic position that argues the “disenchantment” of the sort Weber saw as having occurred with the Enlightenment has been overstated. In a review essay of recent scholarship, historian Michael Saler has argued that:

Specters are once again haunting Europe and America—as are magicians, mermaids, mesmerists, and a mélange of marvels once thought to have been exorcised by the rational and secular processes of modernity. In recent years, historians from disparate fields have independently challenged the long-standing sociological view that modernity is characterized by “disenchantment.” This view, in its broadest terms, maintains that wonders and marvels have been demystified by science... In the past decade, however, a new historiographic position, if not consensus, has emerged that presents Western modernity as “enchanted.”²⁰

While such a characterization may be partly true of the last hundred years, it obscures real historical shifts in the history of ideas. Indeed, such a characterization is challenged, at least insofar as it relates to the monsters examined here, by carefully examining primary sources in the form of exploration and natural history works within North America’s early contact period through to the early twentieth century.²¹ They reveal a clear shift from an acceptance among European explorers of the existence of “monsters” to increasing skepticism. There is a measurable decline in the frequency of uncritical, unabashed records of monsters in these accounts, from very common in the sixteenth century to virtually nil by the mid-nineteenth century. To highlight one of the more

²⁰ Michael Saler, “Modernity and Enchantment: A Historiographic Review,” *The American Historical Review*, (Vol. 111, Issue 3, 1 June 2006), 692–716, accessed online January 7, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr.111.3.692>.

²¹ It should be clear that in upholding the accuracy of Weber’s assessment, I am referring only to exploration literature up to when he made his observation (1917), and make no particular claims to assessing the general trend of exploration literature since then, which is beyond the scope of this study. In a wider sense, there has certainly been stirrings in the direction of “enchantment” of the sort Saler alludes to, although it is also surely notable that no peer-reviewed journal, scientific body, or zoology department seemingly pays any heed to the claims of “cryptozoologists,” which are frequently lampooned.

striking examples of this shift, in just six generations New World zoology texts, which were derived from reports made by explorers, went from an acceptance of all manners of monsters and fabulous beasts, such as some of those featured in Louis Nicholas' *Codex Canadensis* (circa 1700), to the more skeptical but sometimes still fantastical treatment found in Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix's *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France* (1744), to the greater realism of Thomas Pennant's *Arctic Zoology* (1784-1785), and finally to the still generally well-regarded natural history texts of John James Audubon (1840s).²² These natural history texts were indebted to explorers' reports, such as in Pennant's case the fur trader Samuel Hearne. Hearne's observations in turn were cited by Charles Darwin in what might be called the ultimate "disenchanted" tract, *On the Origins of Species* (1859), which laid out the theory of evolution by natural selection.²³

These evolving attitudes can also be seen with the windigo, "sasquatch," and "grisly" bear—three monsters that lingered in the historical record after others had been banished. As European perspectives on monsters shifted toward greater skepticism, relations between Indigenous guides and their European explorer counterparts shifted too. Increasingly, European and settler attitudes expressed in exploration and other literature toward Indigenous people and knowledge became much more negative. This mirrors a larger trend that historians, notably

²² The *Codex Canadensis* (circa 1700) is a remarkable manuscript on the wildlife of New France, which freely mixes real animals with mythical ones, such as mermaid-like river monsters and "very poisonous" tailed frogs. It is believed to have been the work of Louis Nicolas, a Jesuit missionary in Canada in the late seventeenth century. See *The Codex Canadensis and the Writings of Louis Nicolas, The Natural History of the New World, Histoire Naturelle des Indes Occidentales*, edited by François-Marc Gagnon, with Nancy Senior and Réal Ouellet (Kington, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011).

²³ This chronology of increasing "disenchantment" is supported by the work of historians Lorraine Datson and Katharine Park, who studied "wonder" in their *Wonders and the Order of Nature 1150-1750*. Datson and Park, while finding many nuances in the earlier period of their study, do not fit with Saler's characterization of historical scholarship moving away from Weber's "disenchantment" view of modernity brought on by the Enlightenment. Datson and Park argued that belief in "wonders" had evolved from mainstream to increasingly disreputable among the European elite by the eighteenth century, a trend they saw continuing to the present. See Lorraine Datson and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books), 1998. For Darwin citing Hearne, see, Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 2004, 1859), 220.

Michael Adas, have argued saw European perspectives on Indigenous cultures worldwide become increasingly negative in the nineteenth century due to what Europeans regarded as their own technological progress over nature.²⁴

But skepticism about monsters, as this dissertation will make clear, could go too far. Hume, as suggested earlier, seemed to doubt the existence of many strange things related in exploration literature that likely had factual basis. By the late nineteenth century, a habitual skepticism among European explorers and naturalists sometimes occasioned a misplaced disbelief, such as doubts that a gigantic bird described by New Zealand Māori had ever existed (what in fact turned out to be the real, and only recently extinct, giant moa), or that an all-white “spirit” bear reported by Indigenous peoples actually lived in the temperate rainforests in western Canada (what turned out to be the “kermode” or spirit bear).²⁵ Thus, there are too many nuances and complexities, too many wrinkles in the narrative, to imagine this as a story of rational, skeptical European explorers discrediting traditional lore. Too many counterexamples exist for that to be true, when a kneejerk skepticism as much blinded as enlightened explorers to the world’s wonders, including the existence of real creatures. Indeed, each of the three frontier monsters examined here, rather strikingly, *had some basis in real material circumstances that presented genuine danger*—a fact

²⁴Adas argued that European perceptions toward colonized peoples in Africa, India, and China became increasingly negative throughout the nineteenth century, with racism becoming more entrenched. See Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989). Robin Fisher noted a similar trajectory in what he viewed as steady worsening indigenous-European relations in British Columbia in his *Contact and Conflict Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977).

²⁵ For the moa, see Errol Fuller, *Extinct Birds*, (Comstock Pub, 2001) and Quinn Berentson, *Moa: The Life and Death of New Zealand's Legendary Bird* (Craig Potton Publishing, 2012). For the kermode bear, see my Chapter 4. Even more striking perhaps is the Maori legend of the *pouakai*, fearsome birds capable of killing and eating humans. Scientists had long discounted this as a myth, but in 2009 zoologists concluded that the Haast’s eagle, which went extinct around the same time as the moa, was indeed capable of killing humans. See, Michael Casey, "Extinct New Zealand eagle may have eaten humans," Associated Press, *ABC News*, September 2000, accessed online August 2018, <https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/extinct-zealand-eagle-eaten-humans/story?id=8557686>.

obscured, if not altogether dismissed, in later skeptical accounts of these folk monsters penned by outsiders increasingly removed from the worlds that had produced them.

The methodology for this study involved an exhaustive examination of North American explorers' records in what is now Canada and the northern United States from the early contact period through to the early twentieth century to identify accounts of monsters and strange creatures.²⁶ By "monsters," I mean any large, frightening beast that is wholly or partly imaginary, a longstanding usage of the word, as well as extraordinary creatures whose existence in the material world is otherwise unrecognized by contemporary science, a definition suggested by the folklore scholar Carole Henderson Carpenter.²⁷ As for exploration literature, in order to obtain as full a picture as possible, it has also been defined broadly, to include accounts written by missionaries, fur traders, sport hunters and early naturalists. Initially, when I first began looking at these records I compiled any incident that could be broadly classified as a "monster" story or something involving a seemingly bizarre or unfamiliar creature. This includes, to cite a few examples, Henry Hudson's account of mermaids, Samuel de Champlain's story of a giant monster in Acadia, Pierre Esprit Radisson's claims of unicorns and strange reptilian creatures, David Thompson's discovery of "Mammoth" tracks, and Elkanah Walker's relation of giants. However, by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially, most accounts tended to correspond to three broad categories: "mountain monsters" from western North America that fall into an imperfect but loosely "sasquatch-like" category, windigo records from subarctic Canada,

²⁶ Primary sources held in a variety of archives have been consulted, including Archives Canada, the provincial archives of British Columbia and Ontario, the Hudson Bay Company Archives, as well as various published collections of exploration and travel literature.

²⁷ This is again based, in the first instance, on the Oxford English Dictionary's definition of "monsters," and in Carpenter's use of the term "to mean creatures currently considered beyond the ordinary and not extant according to modern science." See, Carole Henderson Carpenter, "The Cultural Role of Monsters in Canada," in *Manlike Monsters on Trial: Early Records and Modern Evidence*, edited by Marjorie M. Halpin and Michael M. Ames (Vancouver: University of Vancouver Press, 1980), 97-108.

and “grisly” bear accounts, also from western North America. What is notable about these three loosely related creatures, is not only their prevalence in exploration literature, but that mystery and uncertainty about them persisted into the early nineteenth century, several generations after respect for Indigenous monster stories had already become rare in European exploration literature. Chronologically, each of these frontier legends overlap from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, though the earliest accounts in exploration literature of the windigo and “grisly” predate the earliest recorded proto-sasquatch tales. However, my research began with the sasquatch, and it served as the template for how I later approached the windigo and “grisly” bear in suggesting the focus on an evolution toward greater scepticism and the rift this created between Indigenous guides and their explorer or travel writer counterparts. Moreover, those later two monsters, at least in scholarship, are much less obscure than the “sasquatch,” and thus uncovering the historical antecedents of the “sasquatch” proved a much more complicated research task than either the windigo or “grisly monster.” For that reason, the first two chapters focus on the sasquatch, while chapters three and four deal with the windigo and “grisly monster,” respectively. Chapter 5 examines aspects of each legend, arguing that there were surprising truths behind them that became obscured or downplayed by later skeptical explorers or travel writers.

This is a study of monsters as they were portrayed in literature written by Europeans and Euro-settlers. However, relying on those records alone would allow for only a limited understanding of the evolution of monster legends in exploration literature. To gain a fuller perspective, I have turned to Indigenous sources. This includes Indigenous oral history and traditional stories, articles from the early twentieth century written by Indigenous people that constitute the earliest non-settler articles on these folk creatures, as well as drawing on other

types of sources in the form of Indigenous artwork, including totem poles, masks, pictographs, and petroglyphs as well as other manifestations of material culture. This enables a more critical assessment of frontier legends by allowing us to cross-reference what European explorers or travel writers recorded with Indigenous sources. For example, it has been assumed by many non-Indigenous writers that what we know as “sasquatch” is an authentic part of the cultures of the Pacific Northwest, and facile attempts have sometimes been made to link the twentieth century pop culture image of “bigfoot” with various creatures in traditional Salish and Kwakwaka'wakw storytelling. As chapter four will reveal, the truth is more complicated. Making use of these diverse sources allows for a much fuller picture of “monsters” in North American history that allows us to unravel both what inspired them and what they reveal about the changing dynamic between Indigenous peoples and their European explorer and settler counterparts.

Bringing these threads together, this study examines the evolution of the North American frontier’s three most prevalent monster legends—the sasquatch, windigo, and “grisly” bear, the extent to which various chroniclers believed in them, and how they fit in the wider context of the time, which witnessed increasing European colonization and the intellectual upheaval known as the Enlightenment and then the Industrial Revolution, which greatly altered the material circumstances of both Indigenous and settler communities. The complex, multifaceted nature of monster legends cautions against strong overarching arguments or trying to impose a single explanatory framework on what are diverse and diffuse monster legends. However, important commonalities link the three monsters examined in this study. Each were monsters of the frontier—that hazy, contested space beyond the margins of a particular culture’s settlement. This was true not only of Europeans, but also with Indigenous tales of monsters that were set in borderlands, such as coastal Salish or Kwakwaka'wakw traditions about fearsome beings that

lived high up in the coastal mountains, or beyond them in the interior. More importantly, each of these three monster traditions shed light on the nature of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and European explorers, as well as colonial settlers, and how that relationship shifted over time in a way that led to greater cultural estrangement. That shift was driven in part through the rise of the discipline of zoology and the creation of a formal system for classifying the natural world that emerged in eighteenth century Europe as an outgrowth of the Enlightenment—but also by the changed circumstances of the observers, who were increasingly removed from Indigenous societies in a way earlier generations of fur traders and explorers had not been. As these factors widened the cultural divide on things like monsters, it became easier and more common for such monsters, in various ways, to inspire negative, even dehumanizing, portrayals of a primitive “Other.” Monsters, in other words, went from something that had once bonded European explorers with their Indigenous guides, to something that increasingly divided them.

As will be shown in the following chapters, what came to be called the “sasquatch” was a hybrid creation that arose through the blending of European and Indigenous traditions. Only in the latter half of the nineteenth century did the vague pre-“sasquatch” lore begin to take on distinctly ape or gorilla-like characteristics, exactly when the actual gorilla became known to Europeans. The sasquatch then sometimes became connected with Victorian era racial discourse that sought to portray Indigenous peoples as less evolved and primitive, as European explorers and naturalists no longer took stories of it seriously. The windigo, in contrast, was a deep-rooted part of northern Algonquian cultures with little influence from Europeans. It was closely tied to incidents of starvation cannibalism that occasionally occurred in Algonquian societies. As will be shown in chapter three, how European explorers, fur traders, and other frontier travellers understood this phenomenon changed radically over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries in ways that mirrored the treatment of “sasquatch” legends. Finally, chapter three argues that the “grisly” bear was a monster largely of the European imagination, the last such frontier monster to receive mainstream belief among naturalists and colonial elites. It illustrates how some large New World animals that were unfamiliar to European explorers and colonists were initially treated as monstrous, before eventually becoming accepted as ordinary parts of the natural world. In this case, unlike with the “sasquatch” or windigo, it was mostly lower status white trappers and mountain men who were increasingly ridiculed by the Euro-settler elite for monster beliefs.

Such a study it is hoped will represent not only an original addition to the annals of North American exploration history, but also to the history of science, and the history of Indigenous-European relations.

Historiography of Monsters

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have long been interested in the study of monsters.²⁸ It is possible to break down this scholarship into two broad conceptual categories, what might be styled the materialists and the idealists. The materialists work from the assumption that monsters are either real creatures or inspired by real creatures (usually misidentification or embellishment).²⁹ Conversely, the idealists, often coming from an anthropology or folklore background, take their inspiration more from Sigmund Freud, and see “monsters” as mostly imaginary beings that function as cultural metaphors for all manner of

²⁸ Of course, historians have also long been interested in the history of witchcraft and even vampires legends. For example, see Wallace Notestein, *A History of Witchcraft in England: From 1558 to 1718*, (Washington: The American Historical Association, 1911) and Robin Briggs, *Witches & Neighbors: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (London: Viking, 1996), and Raymond T. McNally, Radu Florescu, *In Search of Dracula: A True History of Dracula and Vampire Legends* (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1972).

²⁹ On the extreme end of this spectrum are a small minority of scholars, commonly styled cryptozoologists, who argue that “monsters” are real, living animals unrecognized by the scientific mainstream. Some works by cryptozoologists are discussed in Chapter 2 on the sasquatch.

suppressed fears and taboos. Freud himself did much to initiate this way of thinking by analyzing the beasts and monsters of Greek mythology, usually imputing to them some sort of underlying, repressed sexual meaning.³⁰ Both approaches are valuable in tackling a subject as elusive as monsters.

The historian Adrienne Mayor, who has authored several articles and books on monster legends, has taken a materialist approach to the subject. Mayor has argued that stories of monsters in ancient myths originated from some real physical thing (in her case, the bones of dinosaurs and other extinct creatures). Mayor thus downplays the more idealist and psychoanalytical school of thought on monsters, which tends to emphasize the social function served by them.

Mayor first began publishing articles on the subject in the 1980s, which later formed the basis for her book, *The First Fossil Hunters: Paleontology in Greek and Roman Times*.³¹ She argued that stories of giants and griffins in Greek mythology were inspired by the discovery of dinosaur bones. Mayor argued that the origins of the griffin—mythical birds of giant stature that guarded gold deposits—were the bones of the extinct dinosaur *protoceratops*. She demonstrated that fossil remains of this beaked creature, including nests and eggs, were found in ancient times (and still today) near central Asian gold deposits. Mayor showed that ancient caravan routes passed by these sites, and that ancient authors had believed the bones to be those of griffins

³⁰ See Christine Downing, “Sigmund Freud and the Greek Mythological Tradition,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Volume XLIII, Issue 1, 1975: 3–14.

³¹ Adrienne Mayor, *The First Fossil Hunters: Paleontology in Greek and Roman Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

guarding gold.³² Mayor similarly explained the origins of giants and other creatures from Greek and Roman mythology based on bones known to have been discovered in ancient times.

The notion that stories of mythical animals were first inspired by the bones of extinct creatures is an old one. Sir Henry Johnston, for instance, wrote of the Neanderthal that: “The dim racial remembrance of such gorilla-like monsters, with cunning brains, shambling gait, hairy bodies, strong teeth, and possibly cannibalistic tendencies, may be the germ of the ogre in folklore.”³³ One particularly striking example of this school of thought is the Austrian paleontologist Othenio Abel’s observation in 1914 that the cave-dwelling cyclops of Greek mythology was probably inspired by the skulls of extinct dwarf elephants found in actual caves on islands in the Aegean Sea.³⁴ The Greeks would not previously have seen an elephant skull and might easily have assumed the nasal cavity for the elephant’s trunk was a single large eye-socket.

³² Adrienne Mayor, “Griffin Bones: Ancient Folklore and Paleontology,” *Cryptozoology* vol. 10, (1991): 16-41.

³³ As quoted in Bacil F. Kirtley, “Unknown Hominids and New World Legends” *Western Folklore* Vol. 23, No. 2 (1964): 90. Johnston’s description of the ogre in European folklore is notably similar to that given in early proto-sasquatch tales.

³⁴ Mayor, *The First Fossil Hunters*, 7-9. However, not all scholars agreed with the theory that monster stories had been based on the bones of extinct animals. The prominent folklorist Donald Alexander Mackenzie explicitly rejected it and instead posited that, “Giants and fairies are creations of fancy. Just as a highly imaginative child symbolizes his fears and peoples darkness with terrifying monsters, so, it may be inferred, did primitive man who crouched in his cave, or spent sleepless nights in tempest-stricken forests, conceive with childlike mind of demons thirsting for his blood and giants of wind and fire intent on destroying the Universe.” Mackenzie’s argument represents a strong rejection of a materialist approach to monsters in favour of an idealist model. See Donald Alexander Mackenzie, *Indian Myth and Legend* (Glasgow: Gresham Publishing, 2014, first published 1913), 71.



Figure 0.1 *Skull of Dwarf Elephant (Courtesy Wikipedia).*

More recently, Mayor published *Fossil Legends of the First Americans*, which applies the same theories used to explain monsters in *The First Fossil Hunters* to Indigenous myths in North America about various legendary creatures.³⁵ This suggests the importance of extinct mega-fauna to understanding monster legends both in Europe and North America and again points to something European and Indigenous cultures once held in common (i.e. extinct mega fauna inspired monster myths). In doing so, Mayor argues that there was much overlap between Indigenous and European

cultures when it came to “fossil legends,” but that this knowledge was later downplayed or discarded by European and Euro-settlers in the twentieth century, something that this study, relying on different types of primary sources, has also found.

Further indication of this once shared belief in dangerous monsters is suggested by cultural historian Jay M. Smith’s *Monsters of the Gévaudan: The Making of a Beast*, which shows that lower-class Europeans, or at least French peasants, continued to believe in dangerous monsters well into the eighteenth century.³⁶ Smith examined a notorious “werewolf” incident in mid-eighteenth century France which involved the killing of over sixty people by a large wolf. While the killings sparked rumours of a monstrous beast on the prowl in the French countryside, Smith concludes that the killing spree was the result of a large wolf or else several wolves (thus fitting with a materialist approach to monsters). Smith takes his interpretation of the killings

³⁵ Adrienne Mayor, *Fossil Legends of the First Americans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007). Mayor is silent on sasquatch and windigoes, and makes no attempt to address those monsters in relation to fossils.

³⁶ Jay M. Smith’s *Monsters of the Gévaudan: The Making of a Beast* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

further by arguing that they contributed to the discrediting of the French monarchy, a process that eventually culminated in the French Revolution. While that aspect of Smith's thesis might be open to question, his work illustrates that fear of monsters, notably werewolves, persisted in mid-eighteenth century France, at least among French peasants. Such fears were grounded in the grim reality that animal predators like wolves did kill large numbers of people (something that is amply demonstrated across Europe over many centuries), particularly before the widespread introduction of firearms among farmers and shepherds (or for that matter North American Indigenous people).³⁷ If such incidents sparked monster lore in France, it is not difficult to imagine how similar incidents might have done so in North America among early settlers.³⁸

In contrast to these more materialist based studies, a more idealist history of monsters is David D. Gilmore's *Monsters: Evil Beings, Mythical Beasts, and All Manner of Imaginary Terrors*.³⁹ Gilmore excludes human monsters from his analysis, and considers only what he deems imaginary creatures like dragons and werewolves. Gilmore's analysis of monsters is rooted in Freud's theories; to Gilmore, monsters are projections of the human psyche that embody the raw "id" and the "superego" and the "conscience."⁴⁰ Other recent examples of a history of monsters grounded mostly in an idealist approach are Richard Kearney's *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness* and Scott Poole's *Monsters in America: Our Historical Obsession with the Hideous and the Haunting*.⁴¹ Both describe monsters as cultural

³⁷ See, Jean-Marc Moriceau, "A Debated Issue In the History of People and Wild Animals: The Wolf Threat in France from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century," HAL archives-ouvertes.fr, June 2014, accessed September 2017, <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01011915>.

³⁸ In particular, see Chapter 4 for a discussion of somewhat similar incidents involving alleged grizzly bear killings in North America, especially the legendary bear known as "Old Mose."

³⁹ David Gilmore, *Monsters: Evil Beings, Mythical Beasts, and All Manner of Imaginary Terrors* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

⁴⁰ Gilmore, 194.

⁴¹ Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness* (New York: Routledge, 2003). Scott Poole, *Monsters in America: Our Historical Obsession with the Hideous and the Haunting* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2011).

constructs reflecting societies' deep-rooted anxieties over race, gender, sexuality, and religion. They see monsters as an extreme example of the construction of an "Other"—an idea also partly relevant to the three frontier monsters examined in this study, particularly after the mid-nineteenth century when much of the mystery and uncertainty surrounding them had subsided.

Some of the most interesting scholarly literature produced on monsters was a product of a conference hosted at the University of British Columbia in 1978. The conference was a watershed moment in the history of sasquatch research and featured both dedicated sasquatch believers (i.e. cryptozoologists) and academic skeptics. The conference covered a wide range of "manlike monsters" and resulted in a published anthology that is still valuable in helping frame how a topic as elusive as "monsters" might be approached. However, most of the scholars at the conference were not historians and no one considered accounts of monsters in explorers' narratives—a deficiency this study in part hopes to rectify.⁴²

A different approach to monsters at the conference was offered by the literary theorist David Lyle Jeffrey, who examined medieval monsters (such as the monsters in *Beowulf*).⁴³ Jeffrey skirted the materialist or idealist approach to monsters by setting aside the question of the origins of these creatures. Instead he attempted to elucidate how clergy and scholars in medieval Europe made sense of their existence. Jeffrey posits that two explanations of monsters were current in medieval Europe; the one saw monsters as embodiments of evil forces (i.e. Satan's henchmen), the other as "part of the deliberate diversity of Creation."⁴⁴ Early European explorers of Canada may have seen monsters in this light as well; Samuel de Champlain and some of the Jesuit missionaries, notably Jacques Marquette and Louis Nicolas, for instance, seem to have

⁴² The work from this anthology dealing directly with sasquatch is discussed in Chapters 2 and 5.

⁴³ David Lyle Jeffrey, "Medieval Monsters," in *Manlike Monsters on Trial: Early Records and Modern Evidence*, ed. by Marjorie M. Halpin and Michael M. Ames (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), 47-63.

⁴⁴ Jeffrey, 47.

subscribed to the former view. Indeed, Champlain's writings indicate that he feared and respected Indigenous stories of supernatural monsters.

Another valuable contribution to the study of monsters that came out of this conference was historian Olive Patricia Dickason's "The Concept of L'Homme Sauvage," which showed that European explorers' encounters with New World peoples were coloured by Old World folk traditions of the "Wild Man of the Woods."⁴⁵ The Wild Man was long a staple of European folklore, and according to Dickason, reached its apogee during the Renaissance. Dickason argues that the cultural trope of the Wild Man—a hairy, inarticulate, semi-monstrous man living in the woods closely associated with bears and demons—greatly influenced the manner in which Europeans perceived and imagined Native Americans. Europeans, Dickason argues, projected onto Indigenous peoples Old World traditions of the Wild Man as being wild and hairy. While Dickason concerned herself only with the European Wild Man, it is interesting to note the possible parallel with the sasquatch tradition, as the origin of the word "sasquatch" is a Salish word meaning "wild man."⁴⁶ This possible parallel between the sasquatch and European Wild Man brings to mind Carl Jung's work on mythological archetypes and further suggests that in the initial periods of contact Indigenous peoples and European colonizers had shared monster traditions.⁴⁷ Other historians, notably Carolyn Podruchny, have also noted this shared cultural context involving monsters.

Podruchny argues in her essay, "Werewolves and Windigos: Narratives of Cannibal Monsters in French-Canadian Voyageur Oral Tradition" that French-Canadian voyageurs' tales of werewolves and windigoes represented a "cultural conjunction" of European and northern

⁴⁵ Olive Patricia Dickason "The Concept of L'Homme Sauvage," in *Manlike Monsters*, 65-82.

⁴⁶ The scholarship dealing with the etymology of this word is discussed more fully in Chapters 2 and 5.

⁴⁷ Carl Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Volume 9, Part 1, translated by Richard Francis Carrington Hull, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959).

Algonquian cultures.⁴⁸ Podruchny showed that French-Canadian voyageurs assimilated Algonquian windigo tales into their own cultural milieu, readily associating this cannibalistic monster with European traditions of a werewolf. Podruchny explains that in the process “the motifs of windigo and werewolf mingled. These points of cultural conjunction became a form of métissage....”⁴⁹ Podruchny’s observation that French-Canadian voyageurs shared their Algonquian counterparts’ dread of windigoes raises the question of how true this was of European explorers and other frontier travellers. That is one of the questions this study attempts to provide answers for by broadening Podruchny’s research to include more sources and a larger timeframe so as to better assess how the Enlightenment and other factors may have altered the reception and representation of monster tales.

A strong materialist history of monsters, and one of the most insightful recent monographs on the subject, is philosophy professor Stephen T. Asma’s far-ranging *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears*.⁵⁰ While Asma does not discuss the three frontier monsters examined here, he considers a wide variety of other monsters, ranging from ancient myths like the griffin through to modern serial killers, horror movie monsters, medical “monsters,” werewolves, vampires, “Islamist terrorists,” and even cyborgs. Asma sees monsters as inspired by something real in the material world, usually frightening in itself, but that often becomes heavily embellished. This tends to happen, Asma argues, in part because such monsters serve as embodiments of societies’ collective fears and vulnerabilities, things that must be defeated or otherwise marginalized. Monsters, Asma believes, tell us much about a particular

⁴⁸ Carolyn Podruchny “Werewolves and Windigos: Narratives of Cannibal Monsters in French-Canadian Voyageur Oral Tradition.” *Ethnohistory* vol. 51, no. 4, Fall 2004. 677-700.

⁴⁹ Podruchny, 678.

⁵⁰ Stephen T. Asma, *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

society's peculiar social pathologies, whether it is the sideshow "freaks" of nature in a Victorian England awash in Darwinian notions of evolution, early modern Europe's persecution of witches that challenged traditional Christian authority and patriarchy, or even the twenty-first century American media's treatment of much of the Muslim world as hotbeds of irrational terrorists. This conception of monsters can be partly seen with each of the beasts examined here; they were feared monsters of the North American frontier while colonial settlement was spreading westward. But by the twentieth century perspectives on each had shifted. They were then increasingly no longer taken seriously, but survived in more muted pop culture guises, which often included a humorous slant totally absent from earlier accounts.

As Smith's and others' studies have shown, while monsters may be partly imaginary, their impact on society can be very real. Thus, it is surprising that monsters in exploration and travel literature have received little direct attention from historians. Despite the rich primary sources, no monograph has been published on accounts of "monsters" in North American exploration literature. And while the sasquatch has been the subject of scholarly attention from anthropologists, folklorists, archaeologists, and scientists, its historical antecedents have never before been thoroughly investigated by a historian. The windigo has similarly been the focus of considerable research by anthropologists, as well as more recent contributions by historians. But this scholarship has mostly been concerned with a medical debate over whether such a thing as "windigo psychosis" i.e. a compulsion to eat human flesh, existed in Algonquian communities. More recent scholarship has looked at shifting perspectives on the windigo over time, and how this was tied to imperialism, an approach that is expanded upon here. The "grisly monster," or grizzly bear, has been of great interest to naturalists, but less so to historians. How European explorers and settlers perceived this animal is a subject that warrants further consideration, since

it represents, as is argued here, a “monster” of the European settler imagination, in contrast to the windigo, which was Indigenous, and the sasquatch, which arose from a fusion of Indigenous-European ingredients.

Ultimately, how each of these folk monsters was perceived and understood evolved over the course of the seventeenth through twentieth centuries, with each new version of the myth reflecting wider social realities and discourses of the time. Rather strikingly, when European explorers and settlers were probing and colonizing an unfamiliar environment, each of these creatures—real or imagined—was held in earnest dread. But by the twentieth century, with Euro-Canadian and Euro-American hegemony over the continent secured, belief in such creatures had ceased to be respectable in Euro-settler society, unless they were dealt with in explicitly fictional stories. Moreover, the surviving pop culture representations of these folk creatures were usually more benign, suggesting they had lost any deeper allegorical connection to an actual danger. The representation of the sasquatch had largely evolved from a dangerous carnivorous beast into a somewhat comical and herbivorous gentle giant, the windigo from a horrifying and grim monster that was all too real into a phenomenon that occasionally was the subject of humorous condescension, and the “grisly monster” from something that literally thirsted for human blood into a misunderstood and noble animal. Frontier monsters, in other words, had been, if not quite slain, at least metaphorically tamed.

Tracking Mountain Monsters, the “Sasquatch:” A Widening Rift 1735-1930

The “sasquatch” or “bigfoot” is likely North America’s best known folk creature. Commonly depicted as a hairy, bipedal creature said to stand some seven to eight feet tall and lurk in the mountains of western North America, the sasquatch has been featured in movies, television shows, commercials, Canadian postage stamps, music festivals, magazines, newspapers, and dozens of books. Much of this attention has been dedicated to proving or disproving its existence. The 1950s-1960s saw hundreds of reported tracks and “sightings,” mostly in California, Oregon, Washington State, British Columbia and Alberta. This included perhaps most famously a much-debated piece of film footage captured in 1967. Most authors who have written skeptically about the sasquatch have assumed that it was purely a product of twentieth century media hype and hoaxes; however, a careful examination of exploration and frontier literature reveals that its origins are in part much older. While the name “sasquatch” was only coined in 1929, records dating back as far as the late eighteenth century allude to such a loose collection of partly similar “mountain monsters” in the Pacific Northwest. Moreover, vaguely “sasquatch”-like creatures appear in even older West Coast Indigenous traditions. It is, along with the windigo and “grisly bear,” the most prominent “monster” featured in North American historical records. And like those two frontier legends, stories about it followed a similar trajectory.

When the first European explorers, fur trappers, and naturalists reached the Pacific Northwest and northern Rocky Mountains, they mostly did not reject or mock Indigenous tales of what can loosely be described as “sasquatch”-like monsters. But as Enlightenment-influenced discourse gradually trickled down to more humbly educated explorers and others active on the frontier, new attitudes toward monster traditions emerged. Tales of “sasquatch” were treated with

increasing skepticism from the 1840s onward, although belief in its existence continued to persist among voyageurs, trappers, and others not exposed to Enlightenment-inspired discourse. By the last three decades of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, the rift between European and Indigenous cosmologies in North America's northwestern regions had become so wide that ridicule and mockery became the norm of "sasquatch" tales in print culture.

"Sasquatch" –like monster stories had become little more than a trope with which to mock Indigenous worldviews and sometimes a means to portray Europeans as fearlessly probing isolated, uncharted regions that their "superstitious" guides dare not explore. This new image of the sasquatch, like with the windigo, was used in these accounts to imply that Indigenous people in western North America were cowardly and superstitious. It was from these different threads, combining Indigenous and European influences, that the twentieth century pop culture image of "bigfoot" emerged—an image that, like those of the windigo and grizzly bear, eventually took a more benign form than earlier incarnations. In this chapter, I focus on the first part of that argument, namely the shifting European and settler perspectives on "sasquatch"-like creatures in western North America.

Historiographical Background

Existing scholarship on sasquatch is eclectic but generally united in an almost exclusive focus on the twentieth century, since scholars have generally been interested in understanding sasquatch as a contemporary pop culture phenomenon.⁵¹ Two valuable exceptions are the work

⁵¹ For example, *The Scientist Looks at the Sasquatch*, edited by Grover Krantz and Roderick Sprague (University of Idaho Press, 1979), Marjorie M. Halpin, "Investigating the Goblin Universe" in *Manlike Monsters on Trial: Early Records and Modern Evidence*, ed. by Marjorie M. Halpin and Michael M. Ames (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), Linda Milligan, "The 'Truth' About the Bigfoot Legend," *Western Folklore*. Vol. 49 No. 1 Jan.1990, 83-98, Robert Michael Pyle, *Where Bigfoot Walks: Crossing the Dark Divide* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995), and Myra Shackley *Still living?: Yeti, Sasquatch, and the Neanderthal Enigma* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1986). Some of the better popular books on sasquatch include the journalist John Green's *On The Track of The Sasquatch* (Cheam Publishing, 1968), *Year Of The Sasquatch* (Cheam Publishing, 1970), and *The Sasquatch File* (Cheam Publishing, 1973). Similar to Green's works is fellow journalist Don Hunter and Rene

of the anthropologists and linguists Bruce Rigsby and Wayne Suttles who in the 1970s and early 1980s published articles on Coast Salish oral traditions about a variety of sasquatch-like beings.⁵² In contrast, in this study, I have focused on the historical antecedents to the twentieth century “sasquatch,” which is a more diverse body of loosely connected monster lore from the Pacific Northwest and northern Rocky Mountains.

Sasquatch: An Evolving Frontier Legend 1735-1930

While by the late eighteenth century monster stories had become rarer in exploration literature or else treated with greater skepticism, a creature loosely resembling the “sasquatch,” (like the windigo and “grisly” bear), partly managed to defy this trend. Compared to other monsters, uncertainty about something resembling a “sasquatch” lingered much longer in exploration literature. In part this was because western North America had remained unexplored by Europeans until comparatively late (though so did the Arctic, and it did not generate any comparative monster legends). However, it was also partly because the leading Enlightenment naturalist, Carl Linnaeus, had given scientific credence to the notion that there might be hairy, animal-like “wild men” somewhere in the world’s uncharted regions in his influential natural history texts.

Linnaeus, a polymath who embodied the Enlightenment spirit, created the scientific classification of the plant and animal kingdom still in use today. His ambition, in his own words, was, “to work out a perfectly natural system for the arrangement of all quadrupeds.”⁵³ Starting in the 1730s and continuing until his death in 1778, Linnaeus would catalogue, name, and describe

Dahinden’s *Sasquatch/Bigfoot: The Search for North America’s Incredible Creature* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), as well as Peter Byrne’s *The Search for Big Foot: Monster, Myth or Man? Monster, Myth or Man?* (Washington, DC: Acropolis Books, 1975).

⁵² The works of these scholars are discussed in Chapter 2 and 5.

⁵³ As quoted in Wilfrid Blunt and Thomas Stearn, *Linnaeus: The Compleat Naturalist*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 54.

some 4,400 different species of animals and 7,700 plant species, establishing the modern system of taxonomic classification.⁵⁴ In the process, he did much to place “monsters” on the path to extinction in Western zoology by debunking fantastical creatures or else initiating the process of de-sensationalizing them. Early editions of his *System Naturae* (the first appeared in 1735), contained skeptical discussions of monsters, but Linnaeus did not bother with these in later editions. While some creatures, such as the hydra and dragon, Linnaeus dismissed as entirely fictional, others he thought might be real but heavily sensationalized, such as the kraken (i.e. giant squid).⁵⁵

Linnaeus’ work was part of a transition that saw medieval and renaissance era bestiaries that depicted all manner of real and fabulous animals—like unicorns, dragons and mermaids—give way to modern animal encyclopaedias. It represented a major and quintessential development of the intellectual transition known as the Enlightenment—what Max Weber called the “the disenchantment of the world.”⁵⁶ And while Linnaeus helped debunk the existence of some monsters, like the hydra and dragons (which he thought were the work of taxidermists sewing together lizards, sea rays, and other creatures), he was more open to the existence of others. While nothing labelled a “sasquatch” ever graced the pages of Linnaeus’ *Systema Naturae*, the similarly described “wild man” did—first appearing in the tenth edition of *Systema Naturae* in 1758 (and subsequent editions) as a subspecies of *homo* (i.e. man).⁵⁷ Linnaeus

⁵⁴ Blunt and Stearn, *Linnaeus*, cover text.

⁵⁵ See Carolus Linnaeus, *Systema Naturae*, Facsimile of the First Edition (1735), edited and translated by M.S.J. Engel-Ledeboer and H. Engel (Nieuwkoop and B. de Graaf, 1964), 29-30.

⁵⁶ Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” in Max Weber, *Max Weber's Complete Writings on Academic and Political Vocations*, edited by John Dreijmanis (New York: Algora, 2008), 35. Linnaeus, referring to himself in the third person, claimed, “No one has more completely changed a whole science and initiated a new epoch.” See, “What people have said about Linnaeus,” *On line Linne*, Uppsala University, accessed May 23, 2018, https://web.archive.org/web/20110513033923/http://www.linnaeus.uu.se/online/life/8_3.html.

⁵⁷ The word “sasquatch” is an anglicized corruption of a Salish word meaning “wild man.” See, Wayne Suttles, “On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch,” in *The Scientist Looks at the Sasquatch*, edited by Grover Krantz and Roderick Sprague (University of Idaho Press, 1979), 40-41.

denoted the wild man as “homo ferus,” described as “mutus, tetrapus, and hirsutus” (mute, walking on four legs, and hairy).⁵⁸ Linnaeus also included in the tenth edition the genus *homo troglodytes*, supposedly a primitive subspecies of hairy human.⁵⁹ Linnaeus had reportedly asked explorers to search for these creatures on their expeditions.⁶⁰

Alas, Linnaeus’ hairy wild men did not immediately materialize in the wilds of the New World. But in the eighteenth century vast areas of the continent’s north and west remained uncharted by Europeans, and despite Swift and Hume’s skeptical mockery, some suspected that strange unknown creatures might be found there. In the 1730s, the first European explorer to push westward beyond Lake Superior toward the Rocky Mountains, Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de La Vérendrye, took seriously the reports from his Cree guides that the distant western regions were home to “giant serpents” and fierce “tribes of dwarfs,” as well as a mountain with stones that “sparkle night and day.”⁶¹ La Vérendrye’s acceptance of his guides’ stories was shared by other eighteenth century explorers pushing westward. Jonathan Carver, the first Anglo-American explorer to venture west of the Mississippi River, also reported hearing about the existence of fantastic creatures from his Indigenous companions. He reported the existence of a deadly “hissing-snake,” mandrakes, tigers, and the fearsome carcajou, among other marvels.⁶²

⁵⁸ The basis for this classification and description were nine examples identified by Linnaeus from reports across rural Europe. See, Robert M. Zingg, “Feral Man and Extreme Cases of Isolation,” *The American Journal of Psychology* Vol. 53, No. 4 (Oct., 1940), 487. Some educated Swedes also believed hairy, animal-like humans lived in the wilds of North America. See, Lisbet Koerner, “Purposes of Linnaean travel: a preliminary research report,” in *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany, and Representations of Nature*, edited by David Phillip Miller, Peter Hanns Reill (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 123.

⁵⁹ Caroli Linnaei, *Systema Naturae* (10 edition) (Holmiae, Impenses direct, Laurentii salvii, 1758), 20-24, accessed online at Biodiversity Heritage Library, March 31, 2018, <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/10277#page/26/mode/1up>.

⁶⁰ Gunnar Eriksson and Gunnar Broberg, *Linnaeus, the Man and his Work* (University of California Press, 1983), 186.

⁶¹ La Vérendrye was a French soldier and colonist. These descriptions were included in his letters to his superior, the governor of New France. See Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de La Vérendrye, *Journals and Letters of La Vérendrye and his Sons*, edited by Lawrence J. Burpee, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1927), 247-248 and 51.

⁶² Jonathan Carver, *Travels through the interior parts of North America, in the years 1766, 1767, and 1768* (London: C. Dilly, H. Payne, and J. Phillips, 1781), 167, and 118, 442, and 450.

Like La Vérendrye, Carver saw no reason to doubt such tales nor mock them in his published account.

While La Vérendrye and Carver did not mention anything specifically sasquatch-like, European newspapers, such as London's *Times*, reported that such creatures existed beyond the far western fringes of North American settlement. In 1785, the *Times* printed in the general news section a story about the capture of a "wild man" in the vicinity of Lake of the Woods near the present-day Manitoba-Ontario border:

There is lately arrived in France, from America, a wild man, who was caught in the woods, 200 miles back from the Lake of the Woods, by a party of Indians; they had seen him several times, but he was so swift of foot, that they could by no means got up with him; till one day, having the good fortune to find him asleep, they seized and bound him. He is near seven feet high, covered with hair, has but little appearance of understanding, and is remarkably sullen and untractable: when he was taken, half a bear was found lying by him, which he had but just killed.⁶³

The creature described in this account—a seven foot, hairy wild man with prodigious strength, capable of killing a bear, and with "little appearance of understanding" is a near match with later depictions of what came to be known as "sasquatch." However, this creature was said to have been captured "200 miles back from the Lake of the Woods" (in which direction is not specified), which is outside the "classic" geographic range of sasquatch sightings in the Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountains.⁶⁴ On the other hand, it is telling that this location, the Lake of the Woods area, corresponded to the rough western edge of European knowledge of the

⁶³"London," *The Times* (London, England), Tuesday, Jan 04, 1785; pg. 2; Issue 3. Accessed on *The Times Digital Archive 1785-2009*. This story also appeared two days earlier in another London paper, *The Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser*. That version of the story was identical to the *Times*' version, except that it contained a source: it claimed the article was an "Extract from a Genuine Letter from Florence: dated September 13th, 1784." Why the source for a story about a creature captured in Canada and transported to France should come from Italy is not explained. For the *Herald* article, see *The Midnight Hour: Canadian Accounts of Eerie Experiences*, edited by John Robert Colombo, Toronto: Dundurn, 2004: 20-24.

⁶⁴ I use "classic" to define the relatively well-known sasquatch or "bigfoot" sighting phenomenon that produced a steady stream of reports from the 1920s onwards, and flourished especially from the 1960s through the 1970s. Over the last thirty years, sasquatch sightings have spiralled beyond their traditional spatial limits to become a phenomenon across North America.

continent in 1785.⁶⁵ As European explorers continued to push westward, the locations where monsters and sasquatch-like wild men were said to live also shifted to keep pace with the retreating frontier of European settlement.⁶⁶ Eventually, when there was little left uncharted by Europeans, it became no longer respectable in Euro-literature to claim that such frightening creatures existed.

Seven years after the *Times* story about the supposed capture of a “wild man,” the first clear account in an explorers’ narrative of a creature roughly matching a “sasquatch” appeared. In 1792, the Spanish botanist and naturalist José Mariano Mociño, while on a voyage to the Pacific Northwest, recorded hearing about a strange creature from the local Nuu-chah-nulth (Nootka) people:

I do not know what to say about the matlox, inhabitant of the mountainous districts, of whom all have an unbelievable fear. They imagine his body as very monstrous, all covered with stiff black bristles; a head similar to a human one but with much greater, sharper and stronger fangs than those of the bear; extremely long arms; and toes and fingers armed with long curved claws. His shouts alone (they say) force those who hear them to the ground, and any unfortunate body he slaps is broken into a thousand pieces.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Nearby this area, at Red Lake in 1791 the trader and interpreter John Long, who had been adopted into an Ojibwa family, related a story he had been told by his indigenous companions about an “enormous beast” covered in moss, unlike any animal previously known, which had apparently been shot by two hunters of the Chippewa nation. Long, in relating the tale, explained that the “monster’s” blood, after it had been wounded, had spilled into Red Lake, thus giving the lake its name. Like with the *Times* article, Long did not give voice to any skepticism about the “monster” in the tale. See, John Long, *Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter and Trader etc.* (London: Printed for the Author, 1791), 80-81.

⁶⁶ More than likely, the *Times* story was a fabrication by a European writer inspired by the similar sensational incidents catalogued by Linnaeus in his wildlife encyclopedias. It is also closely matches traditional European folktales of the “wild man,” which were sometimes apparently inspired by knowledge of real incidents involving “feral” persons. The psychologist Robert Zingg, who studied cases of feral persons in the mid-twentieth century, defined “feral man” as, “the term for extreme cases of isolation. Either...of abandoned infants adopted and suckled by wild animals; or of older children who have wandered away into the wilds to survive by their own efforts, unaided by human contact.” See Robert M. Zingg, “Feral Man and Extreme Cases of Isolation,” *The American Journal of Psychology* Vol. 53, No. 4 (Oct., 1940), 487.

⁶⁷ José Mariano Moziño, *Noticias de Nutka: An Account of Nootka Sound in 1792* edited and translated by Iris Higbie (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1970), 34.

The sense of uncertainty in Mociño's account is notable. He does "not know what to say about" such a fearsome-sounding creature, but neither did he reject its existence outright.⁶⁸ Given how little was known of world zoology at the time (the gorilla remained unknown to Europeans until the mid-nineteenth century), this was a reasonable position. To Europeans, the mist-shrouded, densely forested mountains Mociño saw from the deck of his ship might have concealed unknown creatures—and indeed, they did. The spirit or kermode bear (*ursus americanus kermodei*) and bighorn sheep (*ovis canadensis*) were unknown to Europeans of the eighteenth century, and even the grizzly bear at that time was unclassified in the Linnaean system, as were many of the region's smaller mammals.

In contrast, Captain George Vancouver, who was sailing the same waters in 1792 as Mociño, exhibited stronger skepticism about monsters. Vancouver, a naval officer who had studied contemporary natural history texts and astronomy with William Wales (a major Enlightenment figure), was well aware that British scientific and fashionable opinion had become increasingly skeptical about travellers' tales of monsters.⁶⁹ In his published account of his voyages he dismissed any belief in monsters lurking in the coastal rainforests and mist-shrouded mountains as "ridiculous superstitions."⁷⁰ However, Vancouver's crew—drawn from the lower social classes of the Britain and not exposed to the intellectual currents of the

⁶⁸ Of course, Mociño makes no mention of anything called a "sasquatch;" instead he labels this mystery animal a "matlox" a term that has scant other appearances in surviving literature or Pacific Northwest indigenous language dictionaries. The monster he described, however, or something similar to it, is found in later recorded indigenous tales of the Pacific Northwest. See below for a discussion of these.

⁶⁹ It is worth noting that British naval officers like Vancouver and James Cook, in order to fulfill their duties as hydrographers, were trained in astronomy and mathematics. They also carried on board their naval expeditions botanists and naturalists. See, Andrew C.F. David, "Vancouver, George," in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, (September 2004), accessed online, March 2018, <https://doi-org.libaccess.lib.mcmaster.ca/10.1093/ref:odnb/28062>.

⁷⁰ George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean, and Round the World; in which the Coast of North-West America has been carefully examined and accurately surveyed etc.* Vol. I (London: Printed for G.G. and J. Robinson, and J. Edwards, 1798), 240.

eighteenth century that Vancouver was privy to—apparently remained more receptive to the reality of monsters. Vancouver noted that when his crews were rowing near shore they were terrified of encountering “hideous monsters, in the wilderness...”⁷¹ Perhaps Vancouver exaggerated his crews’ fears in his published account in order to belittle his lower-class sailors in the eyes of his (mainly upper-class) readers, but, given the many well-documented maritime superstitions of sailors, this is not necessarily the case.⁷² While Vancouver did not record any specific Indigenous lore suggestive of a sasquatch-like creature the way Mociño had, other explorers soon did.

One such explorer who encountered a “sasquatch-like” story while probing western North America was the fur trade surveyor David Thompson. Thompson was an explorer, cartographer, and fur trader in the service of the North West Company, whom J.B. Tyrell later deemed “the greatest practical land geographer that the world had produced.”⁷³ Like other European explorers of the era who surveyed western North America, Thompson was self-consciously a participant in the Enlightenment.⁷⁴ Besides his mathematical and astronomical skills that allowed for his unprecedented precision mapping, Thompson had served an apprenticeship under the talented naturalist Samuel Hearne, and shared his natural history interests. In his writings, for example, Thompson discussed mosquitoes from a scientific point of view, and took a similar interest in geology, weather patterns, the “Esquimaux,” and other subjects. As a surveyor trained in the latest astronomical methods, he did not fail to mention in his “Narrative” that “It was at this Fort that Mr. Wales the Astronomer (who had trained

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² See, Fletcher S. Bassett, *Legends and Superstitions of the Sea and of Sailors in All Lands and at All Times* (Belford, Clarke, 1885).

⁷³ See, David Thompson, *David Thompson's Narrative 1784-1812*, edited and introduced by Richard Glover, The Publications of the Champlain Society, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1962), xi.

⁷⁴ See, Barbara Mitchell, *Mapmaker: Philip Turnor in Rupert's Land in the Age of Enlightenment* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2017).

Vancouver) observed the Transit of Venus over the Sun in 1769” (another quintessential Enlightenment project intended in part to improve methods for calculating longitude).⁷⁵

Thompson, however, remained devoutly Christian and disapproved of Hearne’s deism. While working from a scientific framework, he believed in the supernatural and accepted that the Devil played an active role in the world. In his “Narrative,” for example, Thompson recounted a meeting he had with what he took for the Devil.⁷⁶

This same ambiguity is detectable in Thompson’s perspectives toward the stories of windigoes, mammoths, and other strange creatures told to him by his guides and companions during his years in the fur trade from 1784 to 1812. Thompson’s statements on these kind of “monsters” show that he varied in how he assessed them. In 1807, for instance, while preparing to overwinter in the Rocky Mountains as part of a fur trading expedition, Thompson recorded in his September 28 journal entry some curious information he heard from an aged Kutenai chief and other local Indigenous people:

The Old Chief & others related that in the Woods of the Mountains there is a very large Animal, of abt the height of 3 fms & great bulk that never lies down, but in sleeping always leans against a large Tree to support his weight; they believe, they say, that he has no joints in the mid of his Legs, but they are not sure as they never killed any of them, & by this acct they are rarely or never seen--this is no doubt some Animal of their Nurses Fables, as they cannot say they ever saw the least remains of a dead one.⁷⁷

This fantastic sounding creature, towering three fathoms (eighteen feet) tall and without joints, Thompson dismissed for lack of evidence. He understood it as belonging in the same category as British “nursey fables,” a genre that in the late eighteenth century included such traditional tales

⁷⁵ Thompson, *Narrative*, 7.

⁷⁶ This is in contrast to Hearne, who was a deist and admirer of Voltaire. See, Thompson, *Narrative*, 8.

⁷⁷ David Thompson, *Columbia Journals: Bicentennial Edition*, edited by Barbara Belyea (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 70.

as “The Lion and the Unicorn.”⁷⁸ However, four years later, under different circumstances, Thompson encountered another Indigenous “monster” story he found more intriguing. In his unpublished “Narrative” of his journeys, Thompson recounted that in the winter of 1811, while pushing west into the Rocky Mountains, he and his party of French-Canadian voyageurs and Indigenous hunters (Algonquian, Iroquois, and Métis individuals) encountered the tracks of a large, unknown animal. Thompson recorded that his hunters had a “strong belief” that the tracks belonged to something called a “Mammoth:”

January 5: ...we are now entering the defiles of the Rocky Mountains by the Athabasca River...strange to say, here is a strong belief that the haunt of the Mammoth is about this defile...I questioned several [natives], none could positively say they had seen him, but their belief I found firm and not to be shaken....All I could say did not shake their belief in his existence...⁷⁹

Two days later, Thompson reported that they came across unusual tracks in the snow:

January 7: Continuing on our journey in the afternoon we came on the track of a large animal...I measured it; four large toes each of four inches in length to each a short claw; the ball of the foot sunk three inches lower than the toes, the hinder part of the foot did not mark well, the length fourteen inches, by eight inches in breadth, walking from north to south, and having passed about six hours. We were in no humour to follow him; the Men and Indians would have it to be a young Mammoth and I held it to be the track of a large old grizzled Bear; yet the shortness of the nails, the ball of the foot, and its great size were not that of a Bear, otherwise that of a very large old Bear, his claws worn away; this the Indians would not allow...⁸⁰

Thompson’s cautious skepticism over the “Mammoth” feared by his hunters was similar to Mociño’s. Perhaps it was the physical evidence in the form of tracks, as well as absence of fantastic attributes (there was no mention this time of a creature three fathoms high without joints) that made him treat it differently than the Kutenai story from four years earlier. Indeed, Thompson allowed that he might be wrong about the tracks and his guides correct; as his

⁷⁸ For the “Lion and the Unicorn,” first recorded in 1709, see I. Opie and P. Opie, *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 442-3.

⁷⁹ Thompson, *Narrative*, 320.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

“Narrative” makes clear, he remained open to the possibility that large, unknown creatures might live in the mountains.

Later in his “Narrative,” Thompson returned to the subject of this mysterious, large creature. After again describing its alleged tracks, he at first sounded almost Hume-like in remarking on “that fondness for the marvellous so common to mankind” but then confessed that the discovery of the creature’s large tracks had “staggered” him. He explained of the incident:

...As the snow was about six inches in depth the track was well defined, and we could see it for a full one hundred yards from us....We did not attempt to follow it, we had no time for it, and the Hunters, eager as they are to follow and shoot every animal made no attempt to follow this beast, for what could the balls of our fowling guns do against such an animal. Report from old times had made the head branches of this River, and the Mountains in the vicinity the abode of one, or more, very large animals, to which I never appeared to give credence; for these reports appeared to arise from that fondness for the marvellous so common to mankind; but the sight of the track of that large beast staggered me, and I often thought of it, yet never could bring myself to believe such an animal existed, but thought it might be the track of some monster Bear.⁸¹

Although Thompson reiterated his suspicion that this creature “might” have been a “monster” bear of more than ordinary size, doubts about it continued to weigh upon his mind. And his admission that “for what could the balls of our fowling guns do against such an animal” highlights a common theme in early proto-“sasquatch” tales, including Mociño’s, which is the fear such a creature inspired. Unlike later explorers operating in an era less sympathetic to Indigenous traditions, Thompson did not ridicule his hunters’ and voyageurs’ beliefs nor dismiss them out of hand. Rather, he continued to record what information he could find about the supposed creatures, including their feeding habits:

On the sixth of October...the Hunters there pointed out to me a low Mountain apparently close to us, and said that on the top of that eminence, there was a Lake of several miles ...that these animals fed there, they were sure from the great quantity of moss torn up...the hunters all agreed this animal was not carnivorous, but fed on moss, and vegetables. Yet they all agree that not one of them had ever seen the animal; I told them I thought curiosity alone ought to have prompted them to get a sight of one of them; they

⁸¹ Thompson, *David Thompson’s Narrative*, 383.

replied, that they were curious enough to see them, but at a distance, the search for them, might bring them so near that they could not get away; I had known these men for years, and could always depend on their word, they had no interest to deceive themselves, or other persons. The circumstantial evidence of the existence of this animal is sufficient, but notwithstanding the many months the Hunters have traversed this extent of country in all directions, and this animal having never been seen, there is no direct evidence of it's [sic] existence. Yet when I think of all I have seen and heard, if put on my oath, I could neither assert, nor deny, it's existence; for many hundreds of miles of the Rocky Mountains are yet unknown, and through the defiles by which we pass, distant one hundred and twenty miles from each other, we hasten our march as much as possible.⁸²

Thompson, after careful consideration, ultimately could not bring himself to state that the dreaded “Mammoth” did not exist. He may have done this merely for literary effect; it makes a good story after all. But on the other hand it was not an unreasonable assumption; many large mammals were unknown to Europeans (and most of the world) at that time.⁸³

Thompson sometimes attempted to analyze the spiritual beliefs of the Indigenous people he knew from the perspective of Western science, yet as someone who remained a devout Christian.⁸⁴ For example, he drew parallels between Cree accounts of a “deluge” with the biblical story of the flood, and while he observed cautiously, like the Enlightenment philosopher Hume, that, “Mankind are fond of the marvelous,” he often would not rule out supernatural phenomena.⁸⁵ The “Mammoth” story follows this pattern. It shows that an explorer like Thompson, who held a leadership position in the fur trade, while more skeptical in his written accounts than earlier western explorers (e.g. La Vérendrye, Carver, and Long), remained open to

⁸² Thompson, *Narrative*, 383-384.

⁸³ As noted earlier, the gorilla remained unknown to Europeans until the mid-nineteenth century, and the kermode or spirit bear, a rare subspecies of black bear native to a small area of the Pacific Northwest, remained unknown to the outside world until the twentieth century. *Ursus americanus kermodei*, commonly called the kermode or spirit bear, was first identified by the zoologist William Hornaday in 1905. See Chapter 4 for a discussion of its “discovery.”

⁸⁴ Thompson's blend of science with religion may seem strange to some readers, but it was not at all unusual for the nineteenth century. See, Patrick Armstrong, *The English Parson-naturalist: A Companionship Between Science and Religion* (Leominster, UK: Gracewing Publishing, 2000).

⁸⁵ Thompson, *David Thompson's Narrative*, 383. Somewhat paradoxically, Thompson would seize upon any indigenous tradition if it seemed to uphold some aspect of Christian theology as he understood it (such as a story he related about the sudden appearance of a rainbow). Yet in the midst of these discussions, Thompson would interject technical discussions of different geographical zones, like the Great Plains. But Thompson still concluded that God created the rivers. See, Thompson, 145.

the possibility that large, unknown creatures like a dreaded “Mammoth” might exist. And despite the fact he had stated plainly that he trusted his men’s (both Indigenous and voyageur) word on the “Mammoth,” his writings also reveal what would become a widening rift between explorers and their Indigenous guides and white subordinates concerning monster lore.

In his “Narrative,” Thompson emphasized what he saw as his expedition companions’ lack of scientific zeal and understanding, lumping French-Canadians, Cree, Algonquian, and Iroquois individuals all into the same category as sharing a similar worldview. For example, in between his discussions of the “Mammoth” in his January 10 entry, Thompson recorded that “A day of Snow and southerly Gale of wind, the afternoon fine, the view now before us was an ascent of deep snow, in all appearance to the height of land between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, it was to me a most exhilarating sight, but to my uneducated men a dreadful sight, they had no scientific object in view...”⁸⁶ In his January 13 entry, Thompson noted that his men were dispirited, in part because the environment was so different from what they were used to in eastern Canada. Thompson, in contrast, claimed to relish his chance to explore a new world full of mystery: “Many reflections came on my mind; a new world was in a manner before me, and my object was to be at the Pacific Ocean before the month of August...”⁸⁷ Thompson speculated on everything from the “Mammoth” to different shades of ice, the formation of glaciers, and the evaporation of salt water and its effect on the snows of the mountains.⁸⁸ In this, he was perhaps second only to Samuel Hearne and James Cook among contemporary explorers

⁸⁶ Thompson, 321.

⁸⁷ Thompson, 323.

⁸⁸ Thompson, 323.

of Canada in embodying the European Enlightenment mindset—a mindset that led Europeans increasingly to question monster traditions and later to mock them.⁸⁹

Thompson's example represents not only a growing departure from an earlier European view that had been more receptive to the reality of monsters, (perhaps best exemplified in exploration literature by Champlain), but also indicates a growing divide between educated fur traders and the predominately illiterate voyageurs and white trappers who—excluded from the literary and scientific currents Thompson was privy to—tended to remain more open to the idea of real monsters. This is the same dynamic found with Vancouver and what he saw as his lower-class naval crew's "ridiculous superstitions." This points to an important theme that would come up repeatedly in exploration literature—that belief in monsters was not perceived as exclusively a divide between Europeans and Indigenous peoples, but rather something more akin to a social status or cultural division between higher status Europeans on the one hand, and both Indigenous peoples and lower status white trappers or voyageurs on the other. It was a division that would grow sharper over the course of the nineteenth century with not only the proto-"sasquatch" tales, but also the windigo, and to a lesser extent the "grisly" bear.

Thompson was not, it turned out, the only explorer of the time to note the apparent dread of the Athabasca Pass through the Rockies as home to some sort of monstrous creature. The fur trade explorer Ross Cox, in his 1831 account of his travels, also recorded a Cree tradition about a giant monster. Cox's creature partly matches Thompson's account and corresponds to the same area of the Rockies near the Athabasca Pass:

Some of the Upper Crees, a tribe who inhabit the country in the vicinity of the Athabasca river, have a curious tradition with respect to animals which they state formerly frequented the mountains. They allege that these animals were of frightful magnitude, being from two to three hundred feet in length, and high in proportion; that they formerly

⁸⁹ For Hearne, see Chapter 3 on the windigo. For Cook, see Lynne Withey, *Voyages of Discovery: Captain Cook and the Exploration of the Pacific* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

lived in the plains, a great distance to the eastward; from which they were gradually driven by the Indians to the Rocky Mountains; that they destroyed all smaller animals; and if their agility was equal to their size, would have also destroyed all the natives, & c. One man has asserted that his grandfather told him he saw one of those animals in a mountain pass, where he was hunting, and that on hearing its roar, which he compared to loud thunder, the sight almost left his eyes, and his heart became as small as an infant's.

Whether such an animal ever existed I shall leave to the curious in natural history to determine; but if the Indian tradition have any foundation in truth, it may have been the mammoth, some of whose remains have been found at various times in the United States.⁹⁰

Cox, like Thompson, did not mock this monster tradition. Instead, he left it to the “curious in natural history” to determine its validity while suggesting extinct mega-fauna might have inspired it. Later European or Euro-Canadian explorers in western Canada would increasingly dismiss tales or warnings from Indigenous guides about avoiding certain locales due to monsters. However, it is notable that Cox, like Thompson, although somewhat skeptical of the tale in his published account (unlike Champlain's or La Vérendrye's attitude toward native monsters), does not seem to have actually plunged off to investigate any notion of a large frightening creature living in the mountains.

Coincidentally, the anthropologist Diamond Jenness, in his 1932 *The Indians of Canada*, reported that at the time of European contact, “There was only one section of the country (apart from the mountain peaks and some islands in the Arctic archipelago) to which perhaps no tribe laid claim, namely, a tract of a few hundred square miles in the foothills of the Rocky mountains between the headwaters of the Saskatchewan and Athabasca rivers.”⁹¹ Jenness did not offer any theory for this curious circumstance, but it is striking that this area corresponds closely to the

⁹⁰Ross Cox, *The Columbia River; Or Scenes and Adventures During a Residence of Six Years on the Western Side of the Rocky Mountains, Among Various Tribes of Indians Hitherto Unknown: Together With a Journey Across the American Continent*. Vol. II. (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), 207-208.

⁹¹ See, Diamond Jenness, *The Indians of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Seventh Edition, 1977, first edition: 1932), 1-2.

“haunt of the Mammoth” noted by Thompson and Cox. Perhaps it might have reflected the dread in which the locale was long held. As discussed in the Introduction, a reoccurring feature of folktales worldwide is the association of borderlands and isolated or unknown regions with the home of strange or terrifying creatures—which is something that both European and Indigenous cultures traditionally did.⁹² This again suggests the gradual shift from a shared Indigenous-European belief in monsters, to increasing cultural estrangement on the issue. Anthropologists have long found such traditional stories of monsters or malignant deities as a means by which dangerous natural phenomena is explained.⁹³ Deadly avalanches might have been one excellent reason for avoiding the Athabasca headwaters.⁹⁴ As Cox’s account suggests, some explorers of his era tried to reconcile Indigenous monster lore with the emerging Western science, in this case paleontology. But that would become increasingly unusual later in the century, as mockery of such beliefs, rather than honest attempts at understanding, became the order of the day.

Other explorers of the North American Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountains made similar observations to Thompson’s and Cox’s about strange tracks, unknown noises in the night, and legends of monsters prowling in the mountains. Paul Kane, a travelling artist who crossed the Rockies in the 1840s, noted a curious “sasquatch”-like legend told to him by his native Salish guides in his March 26, 1847 journal entry:

⁹² This theme, namely monsters lurking in isolated or border regions, comes up repeatedly in Coast Salish oral traditions about the interior mountains, and in Algonquian windigo tales (i.e. the North Pole or inaccessible islands in Hudson Bay as the home of windigos). It is also present in many other folktales and oral traditions, for example the “cannibal-at-the-north-end-of-the-world” of Kwakwaka’wakw belief. Mociño’s story of the matlox said to “inhabit the mountainous districts” also implies the same thing among the Nuuchah-nulth coastal dwellers. Beyond these examples, it is also found in the sources that immediately follow about the volcano Mt. St Helens. For a recent study exploring this idea in other cultural contexts, see Bjarne Grønnow, “Blessings and Horrors of the Interior: Ethno-Historical Studies of Inuit Perceptions Concerning the Inland Region of West Greenland,” *Arctic Anthropology* Vol. 46, No. 1/2, (2009), 191-201.

⁹³ See, Wayne Suttles, “On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch,” in *The Scientist Looks at the Sasquatch*, edited by Grover Krantz and Roderick Sprague (University of Idaho Press, 1979), 40-41.

⁹⁴ These ideas are discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

When we arrived at the mouth of the Kattlepoutal River, twenty-six miles distant from Vancouver, I stopped to make a sketch of the volcano, Mt. St. Helens. . . . This mountain has never been visited by either whites or Indians; the latter assert that it is inhabited by a race of beings of a different species, who are cannibals, and whom they hold in great dread. . . . these superstitions are taken from the statement of a man who, they say, went into the mountain with another, and escaped the fate of his companion, who was eaten by the “skoocooms” or evil genii. I offered a considerable bribe to any Indian who would accompany me in its exploration but could not find one hardy enough to venture [there].⁹⁵

While Kane claimed he was skeptical enough that he supposedly wished to investigate these “superstitions,” his local Salish guides were opposed.⁹⁶ Kane’s account presages what became a pattern in western North American exploration literature: the explorer who is warned of a monster(s) inhabiting a certain remote place and responds dismissively by wishing to investigate. This is indicative of the growing shift in European-Indigenous relations with regard to how “monsters” were viewed—a split that would widen as the nineteenth century progressed. Whereas it might be thought that Kane invented his story to play to his audience, it matches a slightly earlier unpublished account by an American missionary (which Kane could not have known about), as well as many oral stories later recorded by anthropologists.⁹⁷ Moreover, while Kane was apparently dismissive of the tale, his Salish guides would have had perfectly sensible reasons for not wanting to visit an active volcano that was then in the midst of an active eruption period, which included emitting poisonous volcanic gas. Thus, any assumption that Kane was wise and his guides naïve is more than likely incorrect.

⁹⁵ Paul Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist Among the Indians of North America*, (Toronto: Dover Publications, 1996, original publication, 1859, Toronto), 136-137.

⁹⁶ Kane’s indifference to offending his guides’ sensibilities is made plain in his book. For example, shortly after recounting the story about Mount St. Helens, he notes ignoring his guides’ “superstitions” about camping near burial grounds. See, Kane, *Wanderings*, 137.

⁹⁷ See, Suttles, “On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch,” 40-41.

In 1840, Elkanah Walker, an American missionary to the “Spokane Indians” (an interior Salish group) in the area of present-day Washington State near Mount St. Helens, recorded a “sasquatch”-like monster tradition similar to the one Kane had reported:

Bear with me if I trouble you with a little of their superstitions. They believe in a race of giants, which inhabit a certain mountain off to the west of us. This mountain is covered with perpetual snow. They [the creatures] inhabit the snow peaks. They hunt and do all their work at night. They are men stealers. They come to the people's lodges at night when the people are asleep and take them.... Their track is a foot and a half long. They steal salmon from Indian nets and eat them raw as the bears do. If the people are awake, they always know when they are coming very near by their strong smell that is most intolerable. It is not uncommon for them to come in the night and give three whistles and then the stones will begin to hit their houses.⁹⁸

Walker, like Kane, apparently did not take the story of monsters lurking up in the mountains too seriously, dismissing it as “superstitions.” He did not wrestle with whether such a creature could possibly exist, the way Thompson had cautiously done, nor how nearly fifty years earlier Mociño “did not know what to say” about the mysterious “matlox.” Walker did not provide any further detail about the “superstitions” in his diary and letters. By 1840, the growing shift in perspectives meant that even a missionary, at least in Walker’s case, now doubted local monster stories. Nor was Walker the only missionary in the area to do so.

Another missionary in western North America, Matthew Macfie, also recorded a sasquatch-like story in the 1860s while on Vancouver Island that was told to him by James Deans.⁹⁹ Macfie, notably, expressed the view that the Enlightenment had enlarged the gulf between Indigenous beliefs and European ones, noting of the local Salish people that: “Belief in

⁹⁸ Elkanah Walker, “Nine Years with the Spokane Indians: The Diary, 1838-1848, of Elkanah Walker.” *Northwest Historical Series XIII* edited by Clifford M. Drury (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1976), 122-123. Interestingly, the editor, Drury, himself linked this letter by Walker to the contemporary stories of “sasquatch or bigfoot.”

⁹⁹ Deans was a local settler on Vancouver Island who worked for the Hudson’s Bay Company and could speak several native languages; he also acted as a guide for other expeditions. See, Douglas Cole, “DEANS, JAMES,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed August 1, 2018, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/deans_james_13E.html.

witchcraft is prevalent among these people, though in this respect they are not more superstitious than were our ancestors in the reign of James I...”¹⁰⁰ Macfie detailed examples of “superstitions” among what he saw as the unenlightened natives. He recorded a sasquatch-like story of “monsters” that he compared with the former belief in “hob-goblins and brownies of British superstition.”¹⁰¹ Of these monsters Macfie wrote:

An unearthly race called *Sim-moquis*...inhabit the margin of a lake in the interior. They are about seven feet high and are without joints in their knees or elbows. Their hair is long, unkempt, and dirty. The Indians are supposed to have sustained in former times great annoyance from the abstraction of their women by these hideous creatures. Some 'clutchmen' (native women) engaged once in gathering berries in the woods....were soon made prisoners by these monsters. After being missed for some days from their own home, these wanderers were sought by their friends, who were, like themselves, attracted by light at a distance. The avengers of the wronged squaws advanced to the abode of the *Sim-moquis*, and finding the women in their embrace dispatched the captors.¹⁰²

Even the missionaries Walker and Macfie, writing in the 1840s and 1860s, reflected the now dominant, Enlightenment-influenced discourse that Indigenous monster tales were mere superstitions.¹⁰³ They were joined in these sentiments by the naturalist-explorers who were busy cataloguing the wildlife of the Rockies and Pacific Northwest.

Theodore Roosevelt was one such naturalist who on his western hunting excursions collected specimens for the Smithsonian and other newly established natural history museums.¹⁰⁴ In *The Wilderness Hunter* (1893), Roosevelt related the story of a hunting trip he undertook in 1888 in the Rocky Mountains of northern Idaho. In a tale echoing other explorers' accounts,

¹⁰⁰ Matthew Macfie, *Vancouver Island and British Columbia: Their History, Resources and Prospects* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1865), 440.

¹⁰¹ Macfie, *Vancouver Island*, 455.

¹⁰² Macfie, *Vancouver Island*, 455-456.

¹⁰³ Another missionary-explorer who crossed the Rockies in the 1840s, Samuel Parker, expressed similar skepticism with regard to monsters. Parker noted, “It is the traveler who never saw the country he describes, or the lover of the marvelous, or he who does not expect soon to be followed in his route through dreary and uninhabited wilds, who sees and minutely relates, adventures with the reptiles and monsters of the desert.” See, Samuel Parker, *Journal of an Exploring Tour Beyond the Rocky Mountains*, 5th Edition, (Auburn: J.C. Derby & Co. 1846), 206.

¹⁰⁴ Roosevelt, an avid naturalist, authored various papers on ornithology and other wildlife. See Edmund Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt*, (New York: Random House, 1979).

Roosevelt recorded that his Kutenai guide objected to their entering a certain part of the mountains because of “hobgoblins” that lurked there. Roosevelt explained that Ammál, his guide:

...objected strongly to leaving the neighborhood of the lake....For some time we could not find out the reason; but finally he gave us to understand that he was afraid because high up in the mountains there were “little bad Indians” who would kill him if they caught him alone, especially at night. At first we thought he was speaking of stray warriors of the Blackfeet tribe; but it turned out that he was not thinking of human beings at all, but hobgoblins.¹⁰⁵

This story mirrors the ones told by Kane and Walker of strange human-like creatures prowling the highest mountains, and like them, Roosevelt was similarly skeptical (or at least portrayed it that way in his published account). Like Thompson in the Athabasca Pass in 1811, Roosevelt attempted to explain what he thought might have inspired his guide’s fears. He attributed it to the combination of fertile imaginations with the noises heard at night in the mountains. Thus, in his words, “people who live in lonely forest regions are prone to believe in elves, wood spirits, and other beings of an unseen world.”¹⁰⁶ Roosevelt further described the area around their camp as enclosed by high mountains with “great white fields” of snow that “dazzled the eyes.”¹⁰⁷ These descriptions match Walker’s and Kane’s about uninhabited snow-capped peaks as the rumoured homes of strange creatures, as well as Mociño’s, Thompson’s and Cox’s observations about Indigenous legends of monsters lurking in dangerous mountain locales.

However, Indigenous peoples were not the only ones that maintained traditions about monsters lurking in inaccessible places. In his books about his hunting adventures, Roosevelt made a point of distinguishing between what he called “uneducated hunters” and trained

¹⁰⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Wilderness Hunter: An Account of the Big Game of the United States and Its Chase with Horse, Hound, and Rifle*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1893), 144-145.

¹⁰⁶ Roosevelt, *The Wilderness Hunter*, 145.

¹⁰⁷ Roosevelt, *The Wilderness Hunter*, 145.

naturalists like himself, a distinction that calls to mind Thompson's similar bemoaning of what he saw as his uneducated men's lack of scientific objectives.¹⁰⁸ In his 1893 book, *The Wilderness Hunter*, Roosevelt recounted a chilling sasquatch-like monster story supposedly told to him not by an Indigenous guide, but by an old German-American trapper named Bauman, featuring a terrifying encounter with an unknown animal in an isolated stretch of mountains.

Although Roosevelt struck a somewhat contradictory note in prefacing his tale by claiming the "frontiersmen" he knew were not generally "superstitious" (his own books imply the opposite), he then proceeded to recount the "goblin story" told to him by, "a grizzled, weather beaten old mountain hunter, named Bauman, who was born and had passed all of his life on the Frontier."¹⁰⁹ Roosevelt attributed Bauman's belief in sasquatch-like monsters to his Germanic background (inadvertently suggesting the common ground Indigenous and European cultures had formerly shared with monster lore), and to the influence Indigenous lore still held over the minds of simple, uneducated white trappers. Roosevelt explained:

He must have believed what he said, for he could hardly repress a shudder at certain points of the tale; but he was of German ancestry, and in childhood had doubtless been saturated with all kinds of ghost and goblin lore. So that many fearsome superstitions were latent in his mind; besides, he knew well the stories told by the Indian medicine men in their winter camps, of the snow-walkers, and the specters, the formless evil beings that haunt the forest depths, and dog and waylay the lonely wanderer who after nightfall passes through the regions where they lurk.¹¹⁰

Bauman's story, as retold by Roosevelt, has many elements that make for a classic sasquatch account: the initial discovery of unusual tracks that the two trappers dismiss as made by a bear walking on its hind legs, a growing sense of unease and a feeling of being watched, unexplained disturbances around the camp, strange cries in the night and a foul "wild beast"

¹⁰⁸ Theodore Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman: Sketches of Sport on the Northern Cattle Plains, Presidential Edition*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1885), 300.

¹⁰⁹ Roosevelt, *Wilderness Hunter*, 441.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

smell, and finally the mysterious creature's attack on and slaying of one of the trappers. But Roosevelt seemed to dismiss any possibility that a sasquatch-like beast might actually exist. Instead, he attributed the attack on Bauman and his friend to a bear or other wild animal. More significantly, Roosevelt's account furnishes another example of how post-Enlightenment ideas and the new scientific zoology (of which Roosevelt was an enthusiastic and prodigious contributor), had little regard for the traditional monster beliefs which continued to persist among Indigenous peoples, low-status or poor white trappers, and voyageurs. In sum, the cultural divide between the two groups, at least on the subject of monsters in the context of guide-explorer relations, had grown.

This is also seen with one of Roosevelt's close contemporaries in exploration of western North America's mountain ranges, the British explorer Warburton Pike. Pike's 1896 published account of his travels in the mountains of northern British Columbia included a by now familiar reference to a remote place his Indigenous Kaska guides regarded with great dread, as he put it, an "unknown land of all horrors lying between the sources of the Pelly and the Hyland (rivers)."¹¹¹ By 1896, it had become almost a literary trope in western North American exploration literature that there were dangerous regions where no Indigenous person dared venture because they believed monsters dwelt there.¹¹² Pike explained, when discussing the country around the upper tributaries of the Laird River, that:

...the Indians do not like the country. Something evil lives there; and once, a long time ago, before the whites came to the Laird, a party of hunters met with a terrible fate at the head-waters of Hyland River. According to the story, they were working their canoe through a canon [sic] when a sudden darkness overtook them, and the evil thing rose out

¹¹¹ Warburton Pike, *Through the Subarctic Forest: A Record of a Canoe Journey From Fort Wrangel to the Pelly Lakes and Down the Yukon River to the Behring Sea* (London: Edward Arnold, 1896). 128.

¹¹² Examples from western North America would include, in chronological order of date recorded, accounts by Alexander Mackenzie, Mociño, François-Antoine Larocque, Thompson, Cox, Walker, Kane, George Dawson, Roosevelt, and Pike. The idea is also present in a more general sense in George Brown's journal. Brown led the colonial-government sponsored Vancouver Island Exploring Expedition in 1863. See Robert Brown, *Robert Brown and the Vancouver Island Exploring Expedition*, edited by John Hayman (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1989).

of the water, turned over the canoe, and dragged the unlucky hunters down into the depths of a whirlpool. Since then, the Indians are chary of going far up any of these streams, and turn back, by their own account, as soon as they see bones of huge animals lying on the river bars.¹¹³

Although the details of this story might have suggested a connection to extinct mega-fauna (i.e. the “bones of huge animals lying on the river bars”) Pike apparently made no such connection. Similar to Kane’s guides warning him about visiting an active volcano, or the stories of dangers in the avalanche-prone headwaters of the Athabasca Pass, this monster tradition seems likely to have enshrined a warning about a dangerous stretch of white water that had drowned previous travellers.¹¹⁴ But Pike’s response to this story was less accommodating than earlier generations of explorers in the western mountains, such as Thompson and Kane, who despite their professed skepticism, did not in those instances ignore their guides’ advice about avoiding certain places.

Pike, however, compared to Thompson, Cox, and perhaps even Kane, had a negative opinion of his guides’ abilities (both Kaska and Métis). Pike judged a guide’s worth on their willingness to adhere to his opinions. He commented upon two of his guides: “The two half-breeds were willing enough fellows, not over-burdened with sense, and absolutely useless as hunters, but always cheery and ready to do what they were told, which is really saying a good deal, as men of their class usually have their own ideas how everything should be done, and get sulky if they are allowed their own way.”¹¹⁵ This assessment seems to have been a clear reflection of Pike’s background as an upper-class English explorer. In Pike’s account, there is no sense of the give-and-take debates about strange tracks, which route to follow, or the existence of “monsters” that seemed to have been a staple of Thompson’s and other earlier explorers’ conversations with their guides. Upon hearing that two of his previous guides had died, Pike

¹¹³ Pike, 77-78.

¹¹⁴ This idea is explored more fully in Chapter 5.

¹¹⁵ Pike, 125.

commented about their deaths: “Charlie will be very little loss, as he was acknowledged by whites and Indians alike to be utterly worthless, but Johnny was, next to Secatz, about the best of the Liard Indians.”¹¹⁶ Tellingly, Pike had ranked “Secatz” the best of his guides in part because he thought he was the most inclined to agree with him that Indigenous lore about supernatural creatures was, in Pike’s word, “nonsense.”¹¹⁷

Even when not explicitly mentioning monsters, other European explorers active in British Columbia in the latter part of the nineteenth century similarly reflected this increasingly negative discourse on Indigenous peoples and local knowledge, by portraying their guides as cowardly or superstitious in their unwillingness to venture to certain places. For example, Hermann Otto Tiedemann, who in 1862 led a colonial government-backed expedition to scout a route from Fort Alexandria to Bute Inlet, complained in his official report that, “In the first instance, our Indians deserted us at the mouth of the River. Nothing could induce them to go farther with us. They were too much afraid of the high state of Water in the River....”¹¹⁸ In his journal Tiedemann added that the guides had also feared the “interior Indians” (a possible basis for many “sasquatch” stories).¹¹⁹ The upper class British travellers Viscount Milton and W.B. Cheadle, who together co-wrote a book about their journey across British Columbia, also reflected the increasingly dim view many European explorers had of their native guides by the later nineteenth century. Although Milton and Cheadle said nothing of wilderness monsters in their book, they denoted one of their own guides as a “monster,” describing his appearance as, “[the] most hideously repulsive-looking Indian...his skin was dirty, and his face perfectly diabolical....”¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Pike, 134.

¹¹⁸ H.O. Tiedemann, “To Alfred Waddington Esq.,” July 1862, Box: B01367, BC Archives.

¹¹⁹ Tiedemann, “Journal of the Exploration for a Trail from the Head of Bute Inlet to Fort Alexandria in 1862,” Box: B01367, BC Archives. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of this idea.

¹²⁰ Viscount Milton and W.B. Cheadle, *The North-West Passage by Land* (London: Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1865), 313.

These increasing commonplace attitudes toward Indigenous guides, often expressed by higher status outsiders like Tiedemann, Pike, Milton, and Cheadle, largely differed from the earlier sentiments of the fur trade explorers, most of whom had been sent to live in the “Indian country” while still adolescents.¹²¹ Thompson, for instance, although part of the growing Enlightenment-inspired shift away from belief in monsters, still praised the courage and fortitude of his voyageurs and Indigenous hunters, writing that, “My men were the most hardy that could be picked out of a hundred brave hardy Men.”¹²²

When the belief in wilderness monsters had ceased to be respectable, and with North American society becoming more urban and therefore farther removed from frontier life, mockery of Indigenous peoples for monster traditions became increasingly common in wider literature as well. For example, in 1907 British Columbia’s *Daily Province* claimed that Indigenous villagers lived in terror of a “monkey-like wild man.”¹²³ The *Province* depicted Indigenous people as superstitious and cowardly, alleging that: “A monkey-like wild man...has been the cause of depopulating a local Indian Village, according to officers of the steamer ship *Capilano*...”¹²⁴ The “Indians” were supposedly so terrified by this creature that: “As soon as the steamer appeared in sight, the inhabitants put off from shore in canoes and clambered on board the *Capilano* in a state of complete terror...over what they called a monkey covered with long hair, which stood about five feet high that came out onto the beach at night to dig clams and howl.”¹²⁵ The newspaper emphasized what it called the “superstitious fears” of the natives. But the paper struck a skeptical air by noting that: “The officers of the vessel heard some animals

¹²¹ This would include Thompson, George Nelson, and Alexander Mackenzie, among others.

¹²² Thompson, 446.

¹²³ The article is reprinted in John Green, *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us*, (Surrey, BC: Hancock House, 1981), 48.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

howling along the shore that night but are not prepared to swear that it was the voice of the midnight visitor who so frightened the Indians.”¹²⁶ Once more, in popular literature Indigenous people were portrayed as living in superstitious terror of imaginary monsters.

More stories of a similar vein followed in newspapers in British Columbia and elsewhere in western North America, while contemporary explorers’ reports, having grown more scientific, seldom condescended to discuss such matters as monsters.¹²⁷ In Canada, formal exploration was increasingly dominated by professional scientists, such as those in the Geological Survey of Canada. One revealing indication of how much explorer attitudes toward monster myths like the “sasquatch” had shifted is suggested by Joseph Burr Tyrrell. Tyrrell, often regarded as Canada’s greatest explorer of the early twentieth century (the “prince of modern surveyors”) had little time for Indigenous monster myths.¹²⁸ It was Tyrrell, ironically, who rescued David Thompson from obscurity when he found, edited, and had published in 1916 Thompson’s previously unpublished “Narrative.” Tyrrell greatly admired Thompson’s mapping feats and the accuracy of his surveying rather than his interest in proto-sasquatch legends. He downplayed that part of Thompson’s career, not mentioning it at all in his introduction to his “Narrative,” and in a volume otherwise rich with detailed explanatory footnotes, Tyrrell provided none for the various passages in which Thompson had grappled with the possible existence of a “Mammoth.” Respectable explorers of

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Despite nearly exhaustive searching, I have not found any explorer who made a record of a sasquatch-like story in western North America after Roosevelt’s 1893 one (unless one counts Pike’s vague 1896 account). By that point, the rise of specialization meant that exploration was increasingly dominated in Canada by trained geologists and surveyors; while those who had an interest in folklore became anthropologists. See, Morris Zaslow, *Reading the Rocks: The Story of the Geological Survey of Canada, 1842-1972* (Ottawa: Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, 1975) and Suzanne Zeller, *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation*, Second Edition, (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

¹²⁸ For the “prince of modern surveyors” see, Richard Glover, “Introduction,” in *David Thompson's Narrative, 1784-1782*, edited by Richard Glover, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1962), xi.

Tyrell's day seldom concerned themselves much with (in their eyes) discredited lore about imaginary monsters.

The only member of the Geological Survey who seems to have noted a vague “sasquatch” story was George Dawson, a full generation before Tyrell brought the forgotten David Thompson to light. Dawson, in his 1887 report on his lengthy surveying expedition in northern British Columbia, had briefly noted in passing a “superstition” of the local Tahltan, an Athabaskan-speaking people in northwestern British Columbia who lived near the Stikine River. He commented: “Amongst many other superstitions, they have one referring to a wild man of gigantic stature and supernatural powers, who is now and then to be found roaming about in the summer season. He is supposed to haunt specially the vicinity of the Iskoot River, and the Indians are much afraid of meeting him.”¹²⁹ Dawson's account strikes similar notes to previous ones; Indigenous beliefs about frightening monsters are reduced to mere “superstitions,” which usually are seen to correspond to a particular area they shun or avoid in fear. Dawson did not attempt to offer any explanation for this belief, or its connection to the Iskoot (Iskut) River; to him, it was merely a superstition.

The lampooning of Indigenous belief in sasquatch-like monsters reached its peak in the 1920s and 1930s, when John W. Burns, a government Indian agent and school teacher on British Columbia's Chehalis Indian Reserve, introduced the subject to a national audience for the first time in a 1929 story for *Maclean's* magazine. In it, Burns coined the name “sasquatch,” which he derived from the Halkomelem (one of the Salish languages) word *sásq'ets* i.e. “wild men.”¹³⁰ The tone of his article, “Introducing B.C.'s Hairy Giants,” poked fun at Indigenous people for

¹²⁹ George M. Dawson, *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon District, N.W.T, and adjacent northern portion of British Columbia, 1887* (Ottawa: Geological and Natural History Survey of Canada, 1888), 194.

¹³⁰ See, Wayne Suttles, “On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch,” in *The Scientist Looks at the Sasquatch*, edited by Grover Krantz and Roderick Sprague (University of Idaho Press, 1979), 40-41.

what he saw as their unenlightened naivety regarding monsters. Tellingly, *Maclean's* published it on April 1. Burns prefaced his story with some melodramatic background on the subject:

Are the vast mountain solitudes of British Columbia, of which but very few have been so far, explored, populated by a hairy race of giant ape-like men? Reports from time to time...have come from the hinterlands of the province, that hairy giants had been occasionally seen by Indian and white trappers...These reports, however, were always vague ...¹³¹

Burns' reference to "Indian and white trappers" recalls a theme we have already seen in exploration literature, namely that low-status trappers and voyageurs were frequently lumped in with Indigenous people as sharing similar, unenlightened beliefs about the existence of monsters. As for respectable opinion, the existence of monsters had long since ceased to be taken seriously. Burns continued by invoking his Indigenous sources' unwillingness to have their stories ridiculed: "Persistent rumors led the writer to make diligent inquiries among old Indians. The question relating to the subject was always, or nearly always, evaded with the trite excuse: 'The white man don't believe, he make joke of the Indian.'"¹³² Burns insisted that he, a government Indian Agent, would never mock his "charges." He explained to *Maclean's* readers that:

...after three years of plodding, I have come into possession of information more definite and authentic...Disregarding rumor and hearsay, I have prevailed upon men who claim they had actual contact with these hairy giants, to tell what they know about them. Their story is set down here in good faith.¹³³

The article that followed, however, made it clear that "in good faith" was meant in jest. Burns recounted fantastic sasquatch stories supposedly told to him by residents of the Chehalis Reserve. One of these stories, recounted by a Peter Williams, involved a six and a half foot hairy giant that pursued him to his cabin—where it then attempted to break in. Burns seems to have

¹³¹ J.W. Burns, "Introducing B.C.'s Hairy Giants," *Maclean's*, (April, 1929), 9, 61-62 (continued from page 9).

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Burns, "B.C.'s Hairy Giants," *Maclean's*, 9, (continued) 61-62.

liberally added all kinds of fantastic embellishments to the story, broadly hinting at the humour of his piece.

Burns' article treated "sasquatch" as an April Fool's joke, a humorous example of how Indigenous people still clung to naïve beliefs about monsters. But to early European explorers, like Mociño and Thompson, such legends were not to be dismissed lightly. The skeptical trajectory that had developed throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with regard to how European explorers and settlers treated Indigenous tales of "sasquatch-like" creatures was based on a range of factors, including increased exploration, and a major societal shift in outlooks on the existence of dangerous monsters in the wild. This skeptical trajectory with regard to sasquatch reached its peak with the government Indian agent Burns. Burns continued to write about the supposed fear "Indians" had of sasquatch in a series of mock articles that were widely reprinted in various newspapers across North America in the 1930s, with headlines like "Indians Fear the Sasquatch Have Returned."¹³⁴ Burns later took his theme of Indigenous people not wanting their belief in "sasquatch" mocked even further in an article he penned for *Wide World Magazine*, a popular British travel and adventure magazine.

The magazine's editor introduced Burns' article by stating that although it would "undoubtedly arouse the derision of skeptics both in Canada and elsewhere," the author, J.W. Burns, is, "a responsible Government official (who) shares the firm belief of his Indian charges

¹³⁴ *Newspaper Archive*, an online digital archive of various North American newspapers (but by no means comprehensive), yields some fifty-five news stories in the 1930s about sasquatch originating from Burns. Most of these were reprints of the same article from one paper to another, with only the titles changing. The stories had a mock seriousness or humorous undertone, to them. For a typical example, see, "Dreaded Wild Men Strike Fear into Indian Children: Chehalis Tribes Claim to Have Seen Hairy Men Who Live in Caves and Subterranean Houses," *Lethbridge Herald*, March 3, 1934, *Newspaper Archive*. Accessed online August 2018: <https://newspaperarchive.com/lethbridge-herald-mar-03-1934-p-3/>.

that deep in the unexplored mountain wilds of British Columbia...(lurk)...Sasaquatch.”¹³⁵ The editor further explained:

Before setting forth Mr. Burns’s narrative, I should like to make it clear that he not only holds a highly responsible Government position as an Indian Agent, but is keenly interested in the subject of the “hairy giants,” which he has studied for many years. He is confident that his charges are perfectly sincere in their beliefs; they are not in contact with tourists and have no reason whatever to “cook up” fables for the benefit of the unsophisticated. Moreover, the Indians are reluctant to talk about “Sasquatch” even to him a friend of long standing, and absolutely refuse to discuss the matter at all with white strangers. They are simple minded, unimaginative folk; the invention of so many different stories of encounters with the wild men would be quite beyond their powers.¹³⁶

Despite Burns’ claims that he was a sincere believer in sasquatch, as with his *Maclean’s* piece, there was more than a few hints of satire in his story, which clearly seems to have been about lampooning the “Indians” under his charge as “simple minded.” To begin with, after insulting the intelligence of Indigenous people by claiming they were too “simple minded, (and) imaginative” to devise such stories, Burns rather melodramatically claimed:

"I am convinced," said Mr. Burns, "that survivors of the Sasquatch do still inhabit the inaccessible interior of British Columbia. Only by sheer luck however, is a white man likely to sight one of them because like wild animals, they instinctively avoid all contact with civilization and in that rocky country it is impossible to track them down. I still live in hope however, of some day surprising a sasquatch and when that happens I trust to have a camera handy. And now for my story!"¹³⁷

The stories that followed, written by Burns, recounted many of the same tales he had divulged in his earlier articles, except here he rendered them in even more melodramatic, campy language that broadly hinted he did not take them seriously. Burns recounted in sensational terms the sasquatch story told to him by Peter Williams of a monstrous sasquatch that had aggressively

¹³⁵ J.W. Burns and C.V. Tench (editor), "The Hairy Giants of British Columbia," *Wide World Magazine*, (January 1940), 296-307.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

pursued him. After recounting several other fantastic sasquatch encounters, Burns paused to reemphasize how his “Indians charges” were “extremely sensitive to ridicule” about sasquatch:

...I ought to explain that for the past *fifteen* years I have occupied a Government position as Indian Agent stationed at the Chelias Indian Reserve...My charges are also my friends and because I have always reciprocated their regard, endeavouring to help them in every way possible, the Chelais Indians gradually took me into their confidence and eventually told me all they knew about the Sasquatch. A subject never previously discussed with any white man. Being naturally of a proud and somewhat aloof nature, they are extremely sensitive to ridicule and so avoid all mention of a topic which experience has shown merely exposed them to derision. If a white stranger inquires about the Sasquatch he is invariably met with the guarded reply: "*No! White man won't believe. He make joke of Indian.*"¹³⁸

Of course, Burns was doing precisely that, inviting his readers to laugh with him at local natives for supposed sasquatch beliefs. Ironically, this was something that early explorers like Mociño, Thompson, and even Walker and Cox had refrained from doing, despite Burns' claim that he was the first “white man” ever trusted enough to be told such stories by “Red men.”¹³⁹ Burns, a raconteur who liked to spin a story, frequently blurred the line between fact and fiction. His fake claims included one that the University of California had sponsored an expedition to British Columbia to search for sasquatch. The supposed “expedition” had failed because, even with Burns' help, it was impossible to find “Indian guides and packers” brave enough to venture after the dreaded sasquatch.¹⁴⁰ Burns thus invoked the trope of cowardly native guides, unwilling to push into the unknown. Burns' favourite theme though, was emphasizing for comedic effect Indigenous peoples' displeasure at having their belief in sasquatch ridiculed:

On May 23rd, 1938 a festival known as "*Indian Sasquatch Days*" was held at Harrison Hot Springs, B.C. Having obtained special permission from the Department of Indian Affairs at Ottawa, I took several hundred of my charges to the event. Unfortunately, in his opining speech over the radio, a very prominent official of the British Columbia Government made a bad slip, thus offending all the Indians present who understood English. After a few preliminary remarks, this personage went on: "Of course, the

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

sasquatch are merely legendary Indian monsters. No white man has ever seen one and they do not exist..."

Thereupon his voice was drowned by a great rustling of buckskin garments and the tinkling of ornamental bells as, in response to an indignant gesture from old Chief Flying Eagle, more than two thousand Red men rose to their feet in angry protest. Chief Flying Eagle then stalked across to the open space where the speaker stood, surrounded by important dignitaries and others. Absolutely ignoring the entire groups, Chief Flying Eagle turned to the microphone and thundered in excellent English: "*The white speaker is wrong! To all who now hear I say: Some white men have seen sasquatch. Many Indians have seen them and spoken to them. Sasquatch still all around here. I have spoken!*"¹⁴¹

Burns' sarcasm ("in excellent English") further makes plain that his piece is intended in jest, despite claiming that "like my Indians, I also believe (in sasquatch)."¹⁴² He continued his story of the supposed debacle at the festival, and assured his readers that after "Chief Flying Eagle's" angry speech he had to come to the rescue to restore order:

The chief then strode back to his place and signed to the other Indians to sit down leaving behind him the Government spokesman whose face was exceedingly red! I was one of the party gathered about the microphone and immediately said a few words over the loud speakers to appease the angry Indians...¹⁴³

Whether this incident actually happened at all or was just a fiction concocted by Burns is unclear. The incident at the festival was reported in various newspapers, though the source for these stories was also Burns.¹⁴⁴ Oral stories recorded in the twentieth century by anthropologists do suggest that belief in a "sasquatch" existed among many Salish cultures in British Columbia. The anthropologist Wayne Suttles, who recorded oral traditions about sasquatch in the 1970s, noted, "...the being whose native name was anglicized 'Sasquatch' exists less in native mythology than in native zoology..."¹⁴⁵ The earliest Salish writer on the subject, Jorg Totsgì,

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ See, "Legendary Giant Tribesmen Feted by B.C. Indians," *Kalispell Daily Interlake*, Kalispell, Montana, May 23, 1938, Newspaper Archive, accessed August 2018: <https://newspaperarchive.com/kalispell-daily-inter-lake-may-23-1938-p-5/>.

¹⁴⁵ Wayne Suttles, "Sasquatch: The Testimony of Tradition," in *Manlike Monsters on Trial*, 248.

also stated that Pacific Northwest Indigenous people were sensitive to ridicule over their believe in “Seehtik,” another name for what Burns translated as sasquatch.¹⁴⁶ Though perhaps much embellished by Burns, his stories reflect the culmination of a larger historical trajectory that saw the rift between European settlers and their Indigenous counterparts widen with regard to “sasquatch”-like tales. As that rift widened, negative portrayals of Indigenous people and their collective wisdom became common, with Burns’ articles representing the most extreme example of this.

That rift had grown so wide by Burns’ time, that he even fabricated a historic sasquatch account supposedly made in 1846 by the fur trade explorer Alexander Caulfield Anderson. Burns claimed that:

During the many years I have been delving into this fascinating subject of the hairy giants of British Columbia, I have come into possession of much well authenticated data. The oldest written record I have so far discovered is that of the late Alexander Caulfield Anderson. He was a noted explorer...In the year 1846, then an inspector for the Hudson's Bay Company, Anderson was sent out by that company to establish a post in the then virgin wilderness in the vicinity of Harrison Lake. There was no doubt that he frequently encountered sasquatches because he mentions the wild giants of the mountains several times in his official reports. For the most part, he writes they were as wary as wild animals but on one occasion he and his party had to retire before a bombardment of rocks hurled by a number of sasquatches entrenched on a hillside.¹⁴⁷

This account is a fiction made up by Burns. A careful review of Caulfield’s reports and papers reveal no allusions to any sasquatch-like creatures.¹⁴⁸ Ironically, Burns, if he had been informed of old explorers’ journals, would not have needed to invent records of explorers seriously

¹⁴⁶ Jorg Totsg, “BIG HAIRY INDIANS BACK OF APE TALE – MOUNTAIN DEVILS’ MYSTERY GROWS DEEPER,” *The Oregonian*, July 16, 1924, accessed online at The Olympic Project, November 2014, <http://www.olympicproject.com/1924-oregonian-july-16/>.

¹⁴⁷ J.W. Burns and C.V. Tench (editor), “The Hairy Giants of British Columbia,” *Wide World Magazine*, (January 1940), 296-307.

¹⁴⁸ When I first read Burns’ article, I assumed that, although he may have been exaggerating, the story about Anderson was a genuine one. After reviewing Anderson’s unpublished papers at the Provincial Archives of British Columbia in 2014, and again 2015, it became clear that Burns had simply invented the story wholesale. Anderson makes no mention of anything at all suggestive of sasquatch lore. See, “A.C. Anderson Papers,” Box: A01360(6) Box: MS0559-0001 Box: MS0559-0002 Box: MS0559-0003 Box: A/B/40/An3.1 Box: MS0559-0004, BC Archives.

contemplating “sasquatch” stories. While the likes of contemporary explorers such as Tyrell might not have condescended to consider sasquatch, Mociño, Thompson, and Kane had actually done so, and such legends had been noted by others in the nineteenth century. Indeed, it is striking that Burns, despite his interest in the subject and claims that he had “come into possession of much authenticated data,” did not realize that there were actual historic explorers who had discussed sasquatch-like stories. But that was a history that had been forgotten by Burns’ era, when it seemed, at least in the popular press, that sasquatch was something no credible person could ever have taken seriously. The folk legend had become, at least in Euro-Canadian and Euro-American writing, little more than a trope with which to mock Indigenous peoples (and sometimes lower-class white trappers) as backwards, superstitious or cowardly. This, however, as will be shown in subsequent chapters, misrepresented and obscured some startling truths behind these legends.

Conclusion

When in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the first European fur trappers, explorers, and naturalists reached the Pacific Northwest and northern Rocky Mountains, they mostly did not reject or mock Indigenous tales of what can loosely be described as “sasquatch”-like monsters. Although they may have been cautiously skeptical about them, they also accepted the possibility that large, frightening monsters might well exist. They were also operating in an era in which prevailing European opinion of Indigenous knowledge was not nearly as negative as it eventually became.¹⁴⁹ However, as the pace of European exploration of North America

¹⁴⁹ Perhaps the most striking illustration of this shift is the contrast between Washington Irving’s (1783-1859) and Mark Twain’s (1835-1910) depictions of Indigenous people in both their fiction and non-fiction. Irving was perhaps the most popular American writer of the first half of the nineteenth century, Twain the most popular of the second. See, Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr. “Washington Irving and the American Indian,” *American Indian Quarterly* Vol. 5, No. 2 (May, 1979), 135-154 and Helen L. Harris, “Mark Twain’s Response to the Native American,” *American Literature* Vol. 46, No. 4 (Jan., 1975), 495-505.

proceeded, and as new, more skeptical attitudes toward explorers' tales of monsters and strange beasts circulated in Europe, gradually the rift between explorers and their native counterparts over proto-sasquatch traditions grew wider.

By the late nineteenth and into the early twentieth century, the widening rift between European and Indigenous cosmologies in North America's northwestern regions meant that ridicule and mockery became the norm of "sasquatch" tales. The earlier sense of genuine mystery and even fear evident in early accounts like Mociño's and Thompson's had given way to stories that belittled Indigenous worldviews and portrayed European explorers as bravely probing uncharted regions their superstitious guides dare not set foot in, as was seen with the case of Kane, Roosevelt, and Pike. Possibly these legends of monsters that were dismissed by later explorers actually encapsulated long-held wisdom about avoiding certain dangerous places, such as in Kane's case an active volcano, or in Cox's the avalanche-prone headwaters of the Athabasca Pass, or in Pike's hazardous stretches of white water.¹⁵⁰ Instead, however, such warnings about monsters were dismissed as primitive superstitions of the sort, in Macfie's estimation, that Europeans had once been prone to prior to the Enlightenment. This new image of the sasquatch was frequently used in these mediums to imply that Indigenous people in western North America were naïve and cowardly.

The evolution in recorded "sasquatch" stories continued further as the frontier steadily receded and North America urbanized, such that the fear present in all early accounts (even the ones by Kane, Roosevelt, and Pike), gave way to humorous depictions of "sasquatch" such as those found in Burns' work and many later stories.¹⁵¹ This pattern fits what the philosopher

¹⁵⁰ This idea is discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

¹⁵¹ The journalist John Green recorded over a thousand "sightings" beginning in the 1960s, and noted that none involved an animal that was perceived as threatening or dangerous. This benevolent, gentle giant depiction of the sasquatch is also featured in the 1987 comedy film *Harry and the Hendersons* (Amblin Entertainment). The film

Stephen T. Asma argued characterized a particular society's treatment of monsters in a given era, namely that "monsters embody our deepest anxieties and vulnerabilities" and especially that, "how we handle monsters reflects how we handle uncertainty, ambiguity, insecurity."¹⁵² By the twentieth century, the North American frontier had closed, with colonial settlement triumphant nearly everywhere. Monsters that had once inspired consternation, uncertainty, and ambiguity in explorers, fur traders, and missionaries on the contested frontier now no longer did so (or at least were no longer something one would want to admit to fearing), and instead had become objects of ridicule and humour.

inspired a TV series of the same name that ran from 1991-1993. For Green, see John Green, *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us* (Surrey, BC: Hancock House, 1978, 2006 reprint), 34.

¹⁵² Stephen T. Asma, *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, paperback edition, 2011), back cover text.

The Other Side of the “Mountain Monster” Divide:
Indigenous Sources and Lower-Status Euro-Settler Accounts

The previous chapter showed how the gap between European and Indigenous perspectives on loosely “sasquatch”-like monsters widened from the late eighteenth to early twentieth centuries, and that, as this rift widened, negative portrayals of Indigenous cultures became more common. However, that analysis would be rendered suspect if it could be shown that monster beliefs recorded by European explorers and travel writers did not reflect authentic Indigenous traditions, but were simply the fanciful inventions of European writers, or ad hoc or makeshift inventions of local guides seeking to deter European explorers from pushing into their territory. While some historians have occasionally made this argument in other contexts, this chapter refutes that idea as it applies to the sources examined in the previous chapter. Such a view ignores the reality of Indigenous beliefs, as well as the fact that such arguments make little sense when examined in context. Cross-referencing the oral legends of monsters recorded by explorers and travel writers of western North America in the frontier period, from roughly the 1790s through the 1890s, with third-party Indigenous sources strongly suggest they were genuine traditions—not ad hoc inventions made up by native guides to discourage European explorers, nor the literary inventions of those explorers. However, these stories in themselves do not fully explain how the twentieth century folk legend of the “sasquatch” came to be. That folk creature, it is argued here, while having its roots in these genuine traditions recorded by explorers, was later adapted and reshaped by non-Indigenous settlers. These settlers introduced explicitly gorilla or ape-like attributes into what had been diverse Indigenous legends, helping unify and cement them as the sasquatch or “bigfoot,” as well as frequently injecting a humorous slant to them. This

shift from largely faithful recordings of Indigenous monster lore of the Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountains to increasing misrepresentation reflects and emphasizes the widening rift between elite Euro-settler and Indigenous cosmologies already illustrated in the previous chapter. The remodeling of these legends into something taken less seriously, further reflected the changing circumstances of a North American settler society that no longer felt it had much to fear from unknown creatures of the wilderness.

This argument runs contrary to what has often been assumed about “sasquatch,” namely that the modern image of it originates from a straightforward, genuine Indigenous tradition that later spread into popular consciousness through twentieth century newspapers and magazines. Proponents of this view have included such popular authors as J.W. Burns, and his more recent successors, such as John Green, Roderick Sprague, Myra Shackley, Don Hunter, Rene Dahinden, and Rupert Matthews.¹⁵³ In reality, the white settlers like the Indian agent J.W. Burns and frontier newspaper journalists who promoted the “sasquatch” myth had little interest or understanding of Salish or other Indigenous legends and even less of a commitment to representing them faithfully. In contrast, earlier explorers and travel writers, despite some undoubted imperfections, seem to have done fairly well in faithfully recording as best they were able the monster legends recounted to them by their Indigenous guides. Early recorded stories, like most folklore, are highly variable, and refer to different, but loosely related, “mountain monster” traditions.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ See John Green’s *On The Track of The Sasquatch* (Cheam Publishing, 1968), *Year Of The Sasquatch* (Cheam Publishing, 1970), and *The Sasquatch File* (Cheam Publishing, 1973), Myra Shackley *Still living?: Yeti, Sasquatch, and the Neanderthal Enigma* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1986), Don Hunter and Rene Dahinden, *Sasquatch/Bigfoot: The Search for North America’s Incredible Creature* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973), and Rupert Matthews, *Sasquatch: True-Life Encounters with Legendary Ape-Men* (London: Arcturus, 2008).

¹⁵⁴ Folklore is difficult to concisely define, but Donald R. Hill offered this characterization: “Folklore, in its broadest sense, may be defined as traditional beliefs and behaviors that circulate within a group of people in different versions based on a perceived model. Generally, folklore is learned and transmitted verbally or by example within a ‘face-to-face’ setting, although the key to understanding folk communication is that the source of folklore is

Indigenous Sources, Oral History and Artwork

Some scholars have occasionally made arguments to the effect that monsters or supernatural beings were merely native inventions intended to scare off European explorers from pushing into their territory. For example, David Hackett Fischer believed that Algonquian tales of evil sorcerers lurking north of Lake Nipissing were made up to discourage Samuel de Champlain from visiting these regions. Fischer explained: “One suspects that the Indians were protecting the sources of their fur trade, much as other nations had done.”¹⁵⁵ Could Salish and other Indigenous peoples’ tales of vaguely “sasquatch-like” monsters in western North America have been intended to serve the same purpose?

This seems highly unlikely on several grounds. In the first instance, the recorded tales do not seem to feature any warning about monsters in locations that would have been of material interest to European colonists and fur traders. On the contrary, the proto-sasquatch tales were generally set in remote, inaccessible places, like barren mountain summits, that had virtually zero interest to Europeans as sites for settlement, fur trade activity, or even as travel routes. Even ignoring this context, another problem with this line of argument, as with older arguments about the origins of the “Beaver Wars,” is that it attributes European economic motives (i.e. ownership of land and creation of trade monopolies) to Indigenous cultures. Recent scholarship has been

ephemeral or 'in the moment' and not fixed..." See, Donald R. Hill, *Caribbean Folklore: A Handbook* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing, 2007), 8-9. Jan Harold Brunvand, in his encyclopedia of American folklore, explained that: “The three common features of the numerous cultural elements...that are included in most folklorists' concepts of what comprises folklore are: (1) that these elements are transmitted orally or by means of informal demonstration; (2) that these elements are traditional in form and content; and (3) that these elements (as a result of their traditional circulation) always exist in different versions, or 'variants.'” Jan Harold Brunvand, *American Folklore: An Encyclopedia* (Routledge, 2006) 594. In this study, I adhere to these concepts. For a general overview of folklore, see Richard M. Dorson, *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), and for a more recent survey, see, *A Companion to Folklore*, Blackwell Companions to Anthropology, edited by Regina F. Bendix, Galit Hasan-Rokem (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2012).

¹⁵⁵ David Hackett Fischer, *Champlain's Dream* (Toronto: Random House, 2008), 310.

critical of this approach.¹⁵⁶ But by far the strongest counter to this line of thought is the abundant evidence that shows that the diverse cultures of the Pacific Northwest and northern Rocky Mountains really did have rich and prolific traditions of monsters, strange beasts, and anthropomorphic animals. To appreciate this fact, one can turn to the impressive collections and exhibits of the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology, which feature a variety of dangerous monsters preying on humans, or any number of anthologies of Salish oral tales, such as, to cite a recent example, *Salish Myths and Legends: One People's Stories*. This anthology, like many others, include a traditional tale about giant, fearsome "border monsters" that lurked in the mountain passes similar to what the explorers and travel writers of two centuries ago reported.¹⁵⁷ Cross-referencing oral traditions and artwork with the stories recorded by explorers and travel writers like Mociño, Walker, Kane and Macfie tends to support the general veracity of their accounts as reflecting real traditions, though curiously the latter image of a giant, hairy "sasquatch" is somewhat lacking.

Elaborate wood carvings, totem poles, and petroglyphs flourished on the Northwest coast of North America like nowhere else on the continent. "Monsters" of various incarnations appear in these ornately carved objects—as do bears, wolves, killer whales, eagles, frogs, and other Pacific Northwest wildlife. Anthropomorphic creatures that appear vaguely sasquatch-like can also be found in totem poles, masks, and other objects. However, the wet conditions of British Columbia's temperate rainforest make for poor preservation, and thus most wooden art objects and totem poles still in existence are generally no older than the mid-nineteenth century. Stone

¹⁵⁶ For the "Beaver Wars" and a succinct discussion of scholarship moving away from older approaches to the subject of what caused them, see Kyle F. Zelner "Colonial Warfare in North America in the Seventeenth Century," in *The Routledge Handbook of American Military and Diplomatic History*, : the colonial period to 1877, edited by Christos G. Frentzos, Antonio S. Thompson, 12-13.

¹⁵⁷ *Salish Myths and Legends: One People's Stories*, edited by M. Terry Thompson and Steven M. Egesdal (University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 213-216

carvings, however, have survived from much earlier and offer invaluable glimpses into the distant past, centuries before European contact.

Petroglyphs, that is ancient carvings etched into rock, are rare in most of Canada, except along or near the Pacific Northwest coastline where hundreds exist in sandstone, slate, and limestone. Most of these carvings predate European contact, and many are believed by archaeologists to be at least several thousand years old.¹⁵⁸ It is difficult to interpret what many are supposed to represent or to confidently match ancient art with later Indigenous oral stories, but it is clear that some petroglyphs are depictions of monsters and mythical creatures. Near the Nanaimo River, for example, is a petroglyph depicting a monster devouring a human being, as well as what are thought to be “sea wolves” and other supernatural creatures.¹⁵⁹ On Sproat Lake, in the interior of Vancouver Island, an ancient petroglyph carved into a rock face depicts a marine monster, often identified as Haietlik or Hahektoak, a sea monster featured in Pacific Northwest mythology.¹⁶⁰ On Gabriola Island in the Georgia Strait there are petroglyphs depicting whales, thunderbirds, giant serpents, and a creature that may possibly represent a sasquatch-like beast. The Thorsen Creek petroglyphs near Bella Coola depict various creatures; some of these carvings are today interpreted by some local Nuxalk people as representing sasquatch.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Beth and Ray Hill, *Indian Petroglyphs of the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974).

¹⁵⁹ Beth and Ray Hill, 107-112.

¹⁶⁰ Beth and Ray Hill, 120-121.

¹⁶¹ This is what I was told during fieldwork studying petroglyphs in Bella Coola in 2012 by Nuxalk teachers.

Another striking example of such a carving is the “Hepburn Stone,” which, appears to depict some kind of formidable monster’s head.¹⁶² The carving is stylistically similar to other Pacific Northwest Indigenous artwork, and according to the Nanaimo Museum, where it is now housed, it is believed to be at least seven hundred years old.¹⁶³ Other depictions of what seem



Figure 2.1 *The Hepburn Stone (Nanaimo Museum, author's photograph)*

like menacing faces are found in functional objects, such as stone pile drivers found along the British Columbian coast. While it is not possible to interpret any of these objects in specific terms, they do testify that “monster” motifs in Pacific Northwest art long predate encounters with Europeans.



Figure 2.2 *Stone pile drivers (Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia, author's Photograph)*

The famous carved wooden masks of the Coast Salish, Nuuchahnulth, Haida, Kwakwaka'wakw, and Nuxalk cultures provide further visual evidence of the richness of Indigenous lore, including legends of half-human, half-animal creatures. Some of these surviving masks, housed in various museum collections, date to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, they were a part of Pacific Northwest Indigenous culture from an earlier

¹⁶² This is the interpretation of the carving given by the Nanaimo Museum. See, “The Hepburn Stone,” Nanaimo Museum Permanent Exhibit, visited in 2012, 2014, and 2015.

¹⁶³ “The Hepburn Stone,” Nanaimo Museum Permanent Exhibit, visited in 2012, 2014, and 2015.

date, as they are alluded to in the earliest explorers' accounts of contact along the Pacific coastline in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹⁶⁴ The earliest photographic collection of Pacific Coast Indigenous masks was made in the first decade of the twentieth century by Edward S. Curtis.¹⁶⁵ Curtis' large collection of photographs record Kwakwaka'wakw traditional masks, costumes, rituals and daily life in northern British Columbia as it existed in the early 1900s before outside influences had begun to undermine it.¹⁶⁶ Curtis' photographs show several masks of legendary creatures, such as *Tsunukwalahl*, a mythical being, *paqus* (also spelled *bukwas*), a wild man of the woods, the forest spirit *Nuhlimkilaka*, sea serpents, cannibals, something called *Hami* (a "dangerous thing"), as well as grizzly bear masks. Other legendary creatures known from Kwakwaka'wakw art and storytelling include a giant man-eating octopus, *Baxwbakwalanuksiwe* (the "Man-Eater-from-the-North-End-of-the-World"), and supernatural man-eating birds, called *Hi'hamsiwe* who served *Baxwbakwalanuksiwe*.¹⁶⁷

Writing in the 1970s, journalists such as John Green superficially claimed the *bukwas* (wild man) and the *Dzoo-noo-qua* (giant cannibal woman) found in Kwakwaka'wakw oral stories as alternative terms for sasquatch. In reality, while these were frightening supernatural creatures in Kwakwaka'wakw belief, such a connection is mostly spurious with the *Dzoo-noo-qua*, and has

¹⁶⁴ For example, the American sailor John R. Jewitt, who was taken prisoner by the Nuuchah-nulth chief Maquina in 1803, mentioned wooden masks in his account of his over two year captivity: "He [Maquina] had a whistle in his hand, and over his face a very ugly mask of wood, representing the head of some wild beast...." John R. Jewitt, *The Adventures and Sufferings of John R. Jewitt, Only Survivor of the Ship Boston, During A Captivity of Nearly Three Years Among the Savages of Nootka Sound; With An Account of The Manners, Mode of Living, And Religious Opinions of the Natives* (Edinburgh: Reprinted for Arch. Constable & Co. 1824), 28.

¹⁶⁵ This was part of Curtis' massive undertaking to document North America's Indigenous cultures before they were further altered by European colonization.

¹⁶⁶ Curtis took thousands of photographs across North America documenting Indigenous peoples and culture, which were published in his multivolume *The North America Indian*. Copies of Curtis' photographs, including 1,608 prints not included in his publications, are archived at the United States Library of Congress. The ones reprinted here were submitted to Congress in 1914, which means they were taken somewhat earlier.

¹⁶⁷ University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology, First Nations Gallery, visited in 2014 and Franz Boas, *Contributions to the ethnology of the Kwakiutl* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925).

only limited similarities in the case of *bukwas*.¹⁶⁸ The former was a giant ogress that abducted children and kept them in baskets to be eaten later, while the *bukwas* were supernatural beings associated with the sea coast and drowning victims.¹⁶⁹ Variants on the *bukwas* are found in several coastal cultures in British Columbia; each is slightly different. Boas treated it as a supernatural being, though he translated it as, “wild man of the woods,” which seems to have been what led Green and other later sasquatch enthusiasts to identify it with “sasquatch.”¹⁷⁰ Curtis described his photograph of this creature as: “Dancer representing Paqusilahl (“man of the ground embodiment”), wearing a mask and shirt covered with hemlock boughs.”¹⁷¹

Several of Curtis’ photographs show costumes of creatures from Kwakwaka’wakw mythology that do appear more vaguely sasquatch-like. One of these costumes includes a man covered in shaggy animal hair, with giant, oversized hands and head. Curtis’ caption for the photo reads: “Koskimo person wearing full-body fur garment, oversized gloves and mask of Hami (“dangerous thing”) during the numhlim ceremony.”¹⁷² While the unspecified “dangerous thing” is not a “sasquatch,” the similarities are self-evident in featuring a hairy, human-like beast. In the University of British Columbia’s Museum of Anthropology collections, there are similar examples of gloves that seem to represent monster paws with long claws that were used in traditional dances and rituals by Pacific Northwest First Nations. These long-clawed monster gloves do not match later popular depictions of sasquatch, but they do mirror the Spanish

¹⁶⁸ See Franz Boas, *The Mythology of the Bella Coola Indians* (New York: American Museum of Natural History 1898) and Franz Boas, *Indian Myths & Legends from the North Pacific Coast of America : a translation of Franz Boas' 1895 edition of Indianische Sagen von der Nord-Pacifischen Küste Amerikas* edited and translated by Randy Bouchard, Dorothy I. D. Kennedy, and Dietrich Bertz (Vancouver : Talon Books, 2002).

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ The word “sasquatch,” is an anglicized corruption of the Halkomelem (one of the Salish languages) word *sásq’ets*, which means something like “wild man.” Salish is a different language family from the neighbouring Kwak’waka, which is part of the Wakashan language family, but there are some cross-cultural and linguistic affinities between them.

¹⁷¹ See, Curtis, *The North American Indian*, v. 10, 166.

¹⁷² Edward S. Curtis, *The North American Indian* v. 10, (Seattle: Edward S. Curtis, 1907-30), 236.

explorer Mociño's description of the "matlox" in 1792, which was said to have "fingers armed with long curved claws."¹⁷³

PHOTOS:



Figure 2.3 *Hami, a "dangerous thing."* Edward S. Curtis Collection, Library of Congress, 1914.



Figure 2.4 *Kwagu'l gloves, A9243 a-b, Museum of Anthropology, University of British Columbia (Author's Photograph).*



Figure 2.5 *Kwakiutl Bear Costume, Edward S. Curtis Collection, Library of Congress.*

Another of Curtis' Kwakiutl photographs shows a man wearing a traditional costume made out of grizzly bear skin. His caption reads: "Man dressed in a full-body bear costume. The bear had the duty of guarding the dance house."¹⁷⁴ Again, while not an actual "sasquatch" it seems to partly match the creature that Mociño described among the Nuu-chah-nulth, who are linguistically and

¹⁷³ José Mariano Moziño, *Noticias de Nutka: An Account of Nootka Sound in 1792* edited and translated by Iris Higbie (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1970).

¹⁷⁴ Edward S. Curtis, *The North American Indian*, v. 10 (Seattle: Edward S. Curtis, 1907-30), 184. The Kwakwaka'wakw were not the only culture to make masks and costumes out of bear skins and to make the bear an important part of their mythology. Norse *berserkers*—the most feared of all Viking warriors—went into battle wearing bear heads and skins, which like with the Kwakwaka'wakw, were connected to spiritual rituals invoking courage and power; another reminder of the commonalities European and Indigenous cultures once held. See Lotte

culturally related to the Kwakwaka'wakw.¹⁷⁵ That legend recorded by Mociño is also notably similar to a neighboring Salish oral tradition recorded by the linguist Charles Hill-Tout. In 1905, Hill-Tout transcribed in detail a Salish tale of a “hairy forest monster” with “long fierce claws” that preys upon human beings, which is similar to the “matlox” described by Mociño.¹⁷⁶

The creatures and legends recorded by Walker, Kane, and Macfie are similarly supported by oral traditions and oral interviews recorded by anthropologists and Indigenous writers. This includes not only many stories of mountain giants that abducted people from natives villages (an element found in all three of these mid-nineteenth century writers’ accounts), but even such seemingly esoteric details as the tradition that Macfie reported in 1865 about the seven-foot “*sim-moquis*” being “without joints in their knees or elbows.”¹⁷⁷ The anthropologist Wayne Suttles, who studied Coast Salish stories in the 1960s and 1970s, recorded stories of mountain giants that “have unbending legs and run downhill only.”¹⁷⁸ As for examples of stories of mountain-dwelling giants that abducted people from villages like the ones reported by Walker, Kane, and Macfie, these are common in anthologies of Salish tales. Marian W. Smith, for example, recorded traditions in the mid-twentieth century about:

A race of tall Indians, called "wild" or "stick" Indians, [who were]... said to wander through the forests. In general conversation they were referred to as *tsiatko* although another term, *steta'l*, from *ta'l*, spear, could also be applied to them.... They wandered freely through the wooded country, their activities being mainly confined to the hours of darkness... The giants played pranks on the village Indians, stealing the fish from their

Hedeager, *Iron Age Myth and Materiality: An Archaeology of Scandinavia AD 400-1000* (London: Routledge, 2011), 90-96.

¹⁷⁵ Both the Nu-chah-nulth (Nootka) and Kwakwaka'wakw belong to the Wakashan language family spoken along the Pacific Northwest coastline. They shared many social and cultural traditions. See, for instance, “People of the Northwest Coast,” First Nations, Royal British Columbia Museum, https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/exhibits/bc-archives-time-machine/galler07/frames/wc_peop.htm, accessed April 2018.

¹⁷⁶ Charles Hill-Tout, *Report on the Ethnology of the South-Eastern Tribes of Vancouver Island, British Columbia*, (London: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1905?), 371.

¹⁷⁷ Macfie, *Vancouver Island*, 455-456.

¹⁷⁸ Suttles, *Manlike Monsters*, 248. This is also strikingly similar to what Thompson noted in his 1807 journal entry about the strange creature described to him by an aged Kutenai chief. Thompson had dismissed it as a nursery fable, but he later took the “Mammoth” stories more seriously. He did not seem to have associated the two legends with each other (though his views are not entirely clear).

nets at night, going off with their half-cured supplies under cover of darkness...The giant were dangerous to men if the latter interfered with them or caused hurt to one of their members....Occasionally also, they stole children or adolescents and carried them off to act as wives or as slaves. Men avoided conflicts with the giants and women retained the fear of them throughout their lives. Thus, one informant, a woman approaching seventy, broke her habit of rising before dawn and going to an outhouse at some distance from her home because she heard the whistle of a giant one morning. This happened during the winter of 1934-5.¹⁷⁹

This matches remarkably closely the traditions noted by Elkanah Walker a hundred years earlier, including such details as the activities of the giants being nocturnal (“they hunt and do all their work at night”), stealing salmon from villagers’ fishing nets, occasionally abducting people, and whistling before attacking.¹⁸⁰ Walker’s private letters were moreover not published until 1976. Such continuity between these accounts separated by a century is testament not only to the remarkable consistency of Salish oral traditions, but more importantly for the purposes of this study, that European writers in the early contact period like Walker were not simply making up native tales of monsters.

These accounts also match what the earliest Indigenous writer on the subject, Jorg Totsgi, recorded. Totsgi, a member of the Clallam tribe in Washington State (part of the Coast Salish culture and language family), was one of the editors of the *Real American*, a national weekly newspaper dedicated to Indigenous news and issues published in Hoquiam, Washington. In 1924, five years before Burns’ article appeared in *Maclean’s* magazine, a Portland daily, *The Oregonian*, published two articles by Totsgi that offered an explanation for recent reports in area newspapers about ape-men sightings, including an alleged attack on a cabin that was to become one of the most famous sasquatch stories. Totsgi’s articles, because of their uniqueness as an

¹⁷⁹ Marian W. Smith, “The Puyallup-Nisqually,” *Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology*, Vol. 32 (1940), 129-130.

¹⁸⁰ Elkanah Walker, “Nine Years with the Spokane Indians: The Diary, 1838-1848, of Elkanah Walker.” *Northwest Historical Series XIII* edited by Clifford M. Drury (Glendale, California: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1976), 122-123.

early source representing a Coast Salish perspective on sasquatch, are worth quoting at some length:

...Redmen's Editor at Hoquiam Gives Theory of Reported Attack at Spirit Lake.

By Jorg Totsgi, Clallam Tribe – Editor of the Real American

HOQUIAM, Wash., July 15 – (Special.) – The big apes, reported to have bombarded a shack of prospectors at Mount St. Helens are recognized by northwestern Indians as none other than the Seehtik tribe of Indians. Seehtik is a Clallam pronunciation. All other tribes of the northwest pronounce it Seehtkch. Northwestern Indians have long kept the history of the Seehtik tribe a secret, because the tribe is the skeleton in the northwestern Indian's closet. Another reason the Indians have never divulged the existence of this tribe is that the northwestern Indians know the white man would not believe the stories regarding the Seehtik tribe.

These facts are corroborated by Henry Napoleon, Callam tribe, J.J. James, Lummi tribe, George Hyasuman, Quinault tribe...Every Indian, especially of the Puget Sound tribes, is familiar with the history of these strange giant Indians...

Oregon and Washington Indians agree that the Seehtik Indians are not less than seven feet tall...They have great supernatural powers. They also have the gift of ventriloquism, and have deceived many ordinary Indians by throwing their voices.

...The writer was told by Oregon Indians during his research work among them last year that the Seehtik tribe can imitate any bird of the northwest...

Oregon Indians at times have been greatly humiliated by the Seehtiks' vulgar sense of humor. The Seehtiks play practical jokes upon them and steal their Indian women. Sometimes an Indian woman comes back. More often she does not, and it is even said by some northwestern Indians that they have a strain of the Seehtik blood in them. Oregon and Washington Indians differ in regard to the Seehtiks' home. The Oregon Indians assert they made their home in or near Mount Rainier, while the Puget Sound Indians say they live in the heart of the wilderness at Vancouver Island B.C....¹⁸¹

Totsgi further reported that:

...The Seehtik tribe is harmless if left alone. However, if one of their members is injured or killed, they generally take 12 lives for the one....even though the Seehtik tribe steal all their dried meat or salmon, or even steal their women, the Puget Sound Indians will not try to retaliate, for once the Clallam tribe in righteous indignation captured a young man of the Seehtik tribe at Seabeck, Wash....Kwainchtun, the writer's own grandfather,

¹⁸¹ Jorg Totsgi, "BIG HAIRY INDIANS BACK OF APE TALE – MOUNTAIN DEVILS' MYSTERY GROWS DEEPER," *The Oregonian*, July 16, 1924, accessed online at The Olympic Project, November 2014, <http://www.olympicproject.com/1924-oregonian-july-16/>.

kept telling the Clallams to be careful of the Seeahtik's supernatural powers, but he was only laughed at...

...That very night the Seeahtik tribe came down and killed every Clallam there but Kwaichtun, ... Fred Pope, of the Quinault tribe, and George Hyasman were fishing for steelheads about 15 miles up the Quinault river...four years ago, when they were visited by Seeahtik Indians. Mr. Hyasman said he heard and recognized their peculiar whistling before they approached and in the morning found that they had stolen all the steelheads they had caught. Therefore, the Indians of the northwest after reading an account of the "big apes" attacking a prospector's shack immediately recognized the Indians referred to...as the Seeahtiks, or giant Indians.¹⁸²

These details, reported by Totsgi and based on his first-hand knowledge as well as interviews with other Salish people (including his grandfather), are consistent with Walker's, Kane's, and Macfie's accounts, as well as the other oral traditions cited earlier. This includes such details as giant stature, occasional abduction of women from villages, identifying the haunt of such giants as either the high peaks of the Cascade range (as Walker and Kane reported), or else the interior of Vancouver Island (as Macfie recorded), as well as stealing salmon, occasional attacks on villages, and their "peculiar whistling" (something Walker had also noted).¹⁸³ A second article published in *The Oregonian* by Totsgi sheds further light on the matter:

Local Indians assert that the Seeahtik tribesmen generally make their appearance around Mount St. Helens the later part of July and as a general rule do not remain there very long. Then they move north to the Olympic range, where they do their fall fishing in the upper parts of the Quinault and Brinnon river. Then about the first of November or with the first breath of winter they start their southward journey to Vancouver island, there they remains during the entire winter....

The Duwamish tribe at one time related that some of their women had been stolen. The Seeahtiks in a rage killed 12 of the Duwamish tribe by ripping them in two. Mr. James' mother, who is still alive, was a witness to the tragedy. She said; "They took our young men like toys, turning them upside down and ripping them in two...Never again did the Duwamish tribe seek revenge when their women and babies were stolen by these Snayihum or Indians of the night...."¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Kane did not specifically include giant stature in his account, but it seems to be implied from his general description and from the similarity to the other accounts.

¹⁸⁴ Jorg Totsgi, "Ape Hunt to Fail, Indians Predict," *The Oregonian*, July 17, 1924, accessed online November 2014, <http://hamell.net/tag/washington/>.

Again, Totsgi provides details consistent with the accounts from the 1840s-1860s (without likely knowing about those accounts). This again includes geographic locations, such as Mount St. Helens as one of the haunts of these giants, or the surrounding high peaks, as well Vancouver Island's mountainous interior (again as Macfie noted). And again details about the occasional abduction of local women from villages as well as nocturnal attacks ("these Snayihum or Indians of the night" as Totsgi's source put it), similar to what all three European writers reported. Thus, as with Mociño's account, there is ample third-party evidence drawn from Indigenous sources that seems to uphold the general accuracy of these early accounts.

As for the accounts made by David Thompson and Ross Cox, these must be treated separately. They were far inland from the Pacific Northwest cultures. Cox writing in 1831 identified the belief that frightening beasts of gigantic stature lived in the mountains as a "curious tradition" of the "Upper Crees." The "Upper Crees" were an Algonquian subgroup, part of the widely distributed Cree nation that ranged across the boreal forest.¹⁸⁵ Thompson's similar "Mammoth" story came from his "men," a mixture of Iroquois, Algonquian (possibly Cree), Metis, and French-Canadians who were themselves newcomers to the Rocky Mountains. It is likely that Thompson's men also learned of the "Mammoth" traditions from the local Cree. While there are no corresponding stone carvings, totem poles, or masks for these groups like on the Pacific Coast, Thompson's and Cox's stories can be cross-referenced with Indigenous oral traditions later recorded by anthropologists. Ella E. Clark in her 1966 *Indian Legends of the Northern Rockies*, which was based on interviews with Indigenous elders then in their seventies and eighties (i.e. individuals born in the late nineteenth century), reported traditions about the

¹⁸⁵ For a discussion of the Algonquian cultures, see the footnote at the start of Chapter 3.

past existence of giant animals living in the mountains based on the unearthing of large bones.¹⁸⁶ Similarly, Adrienne Mayor in her study of Indigenous monster myths, found evidence both in historic records and contemporary oral interviews that fossils in western North America had inspired rich traditions about the existence of giant creatures.¹⁸⁷ It seems clear that what Thompson and Cox recorded reflected these beliefs.¹⁸⁸ (Moreover, as noted previously, the anthropologist Diamond Jenness in the 1930s found traditions that suggested the area around the mountainous headwaters of the Athabasca River was uniquely avoided by local Indigenous peoples, as suggested by Thompson's and Cox's accounts.)

Warburton Pike's and the surveyor George Dawson's monster stories, recorded in the 1890s and 1880s respectively, both came from northern British Columbia in the homelands of Athabascan-speaking peoples, particularly the Tahltan and Kaska, two closely related groups. Dawson's story of a giant wild man with supernatural attributes who roamed the interior seems to closely parallel Salish and other coastal First Nation tales, and perhaps reflects a case of acculturation between neighboring nations in northern British Columbia. The Tahltan, although an interior Athabascan tribe, shared many cultural affinities with coastal nations, including in their artwork and social structure; this was in part because living along the Stikine River, they enjoyed more trade contacts with the coast.¹⁸⁹ On the other hand, recorded Tahltan traditions by

¹⁸⁶ Ella Elizabeth Clark, *Indian Legends of the Northern Rockies* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1966), 141.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Pike's account is also similar to ones noted by Ella E. Clark about the bones of large animals found along rivers being associated with dangerous waterways. See Clark, *Indian Legends of the Northern Rockies*, 140-141.

¹⁸⁹ See Diamond Jenness, *The Indians of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977 edition), 370-376. The cultural affinities are also made clear in Dawson's Report. See, Dawson, *Report on an Exploration in the Yukon District*, 191-205. This still carries on: the artwork featured on the Tahltan's central government's website today is based on Pacific Northwest motifs. See, Tahltan Central Government, <http://tahltan.org/>, accessed online August, 2018.

anthropologists also contain stories of malevolent giants similar to what Dawson reported.¹⁹⁰

One Tahltan oral story, for example, speaks of “giants (that) killed and ate many people, especially children.”¹⁹¹

There is also in northern British Columbia among Athabascan-speakers the tradition of the *a'tix*, which was described in 1917 as “the monster that ate people.”¹⁹² The linguist and anthropologist James Teit, who worked with Franz Boas and transcribed Tahltan and Kaska oral tales in 1917 for the *Journal of American Folk-Lore*, recorded in a footnote to his transcription of a Kaska tale recited by a Kaska man named Tsonake'l (who was also assisted in the recounting by his wife, Nettie Mejade'sse) that the *a'tix* was:

A very large kind of animal which roamed the country a long time ago. It corresponded somewhat to the white men's picture of elephants. It was of huge size, in build like an elephant, had tusks, and was hairy. These animals were seen not so very long ago, it is said, generally singly; but none have been seen now for several generations. Indians come across their bones occasionally. The narrator said that he and some others, a few years ago, came across a shoulder-blade which they at first thought was a peculiarly shaped rock, sticking out of the ground. This was on the top of a mountain near the Hyland River. The shoulder-blade was as wide as a table (about three feet), and was covered with about seven inches of moss.¹⁹³

Teit, remarkably, did not seem to link this description to a woolly mammoth or mastodon (the bones of which are found in northern British Columbia and the Yukon), but it seems impossible not to think that this is what Tsonake'l was describing (and remarkably well).¹⁹⁴ Regardless, this tradition has a striking parallel with what Pike had written about in the 1890s when he was warned of an “evil thing” by what seems to have been Kaska guides (Pike did not specify the “Indians” tribal affiliation, but given his location, and other details, this seems to

¹⁹⁰ See, James A. Teit “Tahltan Tales Continued,” *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 34, No. 134 (Oct. - Dec., 1921), 335-356 and also Teit. “Tahltan Tales,” *The Journal of American Folklore* Vol. 34, No. 133 (Jul. - Sep., 1921), 223-253.

¹⁹¹ See, Teit, “Tahltan Tales Continued,” *The Journal of American Folklore*, 349-350.

¹⁹² James A. Teit, “Kaska Tales,” *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 30, No. 118 (Oct. - Dec., 1917), 450-451.

¹⁹³ Teit, “Kaska Tales,” 450.

¹⁹⁴ Teit, “Kaska Tales,” 429.

have been the case). Although Pike's "evil thing" was apparently aquatic (it hauled people down to their deaths in whirlpools), Teit's recorded story of the man-eating *a'tix* included details that it could travel underwater.¹⁹⁵ More striking perhaps is the connection with both the location, canyons along the Hyland River, and "bones of huge animals" (Pike's words), which again suggest what Pike recorded was based on a real tradition. (Notably, Pike did not link the story to the discovery of mammoth or mastodon bones.)

As for Theodore Roosevelt's monster stories, these are again a separate case. Roosevelt's recounting of his Kutenai guide's fear of the mountain peaks as home to "hob-goblins" seems consistent with later anthologies of Kutenai oral traditions. William Gingrass, a Kutenai man who worked with the anthropologist Ella E. Clark in the 1960s, independently confirmed Roosevelt's (and other explorer's) observation that certain areas were avoided by Indigenous people out of a belief that dangerous beings lurked there. Gingrass, to cite one of his stories, recounted, "the giants followed the big streams and that whenever Indians went to a big stream, giants killed them and ate them. So the Indians lived around little streams near the mountains."¹⁹⁶ Gingrass also recalled that his great-grandmother's uncle had once found the bones of a giant. Granted, the "hob-goblins" Roosevelt referenced were not giants, though there are also many Indigenous stories from the Rocky Mountains about fierce "little people" that seem to more closely match Roosevelt's guides' description.¹⁹⁷ Kutenai traditions also suggest other things inhabited the upper peaks which were best avoided. For example, another recorded Kutenai oral tradition speaks of "....a spirit (nipik'a) living in the mountains that waged war against them (the Kutenai). Any hunter who went up into the mountains was sure to be killed by a stone rolling, a

¹⁹⁵ Teit, "Kaska Tales," 451.

¹⁹⁶ Clark. *Northern Rockies*, 140-141.

¹⁹⁷ See, Laura Redish and Orrin Lewis, "Native American Legends: Nirumbee (Awwakkule)," *Native Languages of the Americas Website*, accessed July 2018: <http://www.native-languages.org/morelegends/nirumbee.htm>.

tree falling, or a ravine closing in upon him.”¹⁹⁸ Other studies of Kutenai oral stories confirm these traditions. The linguists and early anthropologists Franz Boas and Alexander Francis Chamberlain’s joint collections of Kutenai tales include similar stories of giants.¹⁹⁹ Boas also noted the similarity between Kutenai oral legends and Salish ones (some linguists believe Kutenai is related to the Salish language family).²⁰⁰

Roosevelt’s recounting of a sasquatch-like monster story told to him by an old German-American trapper named Bauman is a more difficult case to cross-reference. It is the only one of these exploration narratives to feature a “sasquatch-like” monster legend recited by a white frontiersman (the old German-American trapper Bauman) rather than an Indigenous guide. (Although Thompson made clear that his French-Canadian voyageurs were believers in the “Mammoth.”) Unlike with Indigenous stories, there is no artwork or later oral study that it can be measured against. All that can be safely deduced about it is that, based on archival records from ancestry.com, there does appear to have been someone named Bauman of German background who lived in Montana near the mountains where Roosevelt’s Bauman’s tale was set, who would have been of about the right age and in the right place in the 1880s to have met Roosevelt.²⁰¹ Anything beyond that is speculation, though Roosevelt is generally regarded as a reliable

¹⁹⁸ A. F. Chamberlain, “A Kootenay Legend,” in *The Journal of American Folklore*, Volume 7, (Boston and New York: 1894), 195.

¹⁹⁹ Franz Boas, Alexander Francis Chamberlain, *Kutenai Tales*, Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 59, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1918).

²⁰⁰ For the similarity to Salish traditions, see Boas, *Kutenai Tales*, 281. For a linguistic study of Kutenai and its possible connection to Salish languages, see Lawrence Morgan, *A Description of the Kutenai Language*, *PhD Dissertation, Department of Linguistics*, UC Berkeley (Berkeley: UC Berkeley, 1991), accessed June 21 2018 online at: <https://cloudfront.escholarship.org/dist/prd/content/qt0f76g7f2/qt0f76g7f2.pdf?t=nmlzgs>.

²⁰¹ See the records for one Carl L. Bauman (1831-1909). This Bauman’s records indicate he died in 1909 in Melrose, Montana, which is on the Big Hole River (formerly called the Wisdom) and nearby the location given in Roosevelt’s tale. See, ancestry.com, s.v. “Carl Bauman,” and “Montana, County Births, and Death, 1830-2011.” Accessed September 2018: https://www.ancestry.ca/search/categories/34/?name=carl_bauman&event=_montana-usa_29&birth=1831&event_x=_1-0&gender=m&name_x=_1.

chronicler, and it is interesting that there is nothing else like the Baumann digression in his other hunting books.

These early accounts written by explorers, travel writers, and missionaries in western North America, all of which describe “mountain monster” legends that can loosely be styled “proto-sasquatch” tales and which are supported by third-party Indigenous sources, seem to allude to at least three different types of creature. There are the legends of mountain-dwelling anthropomorphic giants noted by Walker, Kane, Macfie and Dawson, the fearsome, fur-covered, long-clawed and mysterious “matlox” recorded by Mociño, which is similar to the beast featured in Roosevelt’s Bauman story, and finally the vaguely described, massive creatures noted by Thompson and Cox that apparently left grizzly-like tracks. (Pike’s account is too vague to classify, but seems most similar to Thompson’s and Cox’s.) On their own, none of them quite match the later, familiar image of the “bigfoot” or sasquatch. Yet, when mingled together, one gets a pretty close approximation of a modern sasquatch: a seven to eight foot tall hairy bipedal creature that lives in the mountains and makes giant, grizzly-like prints. Such “mingling,” a staple of folklore, must have taken place at countless shared campfires in the Rockies and Pacific Northwest over generations of frontier encounters between Indigenous guides, European explorers, trappers, and other travellers.

And while European or Euro-American explorers and naturalists in the nineteenth century were increasingly scornful of such monster lore, there is evidence to suggest many humble or low status white trappers remained receptive to it. Roosevelt had tellingly blamed Bauman’s monster “superstitions” on his being “saturated” not only with Germanic folklore in his childhood but with “Indian” tales. Thompson had also made clear that his French-Canadian voyageurs shared the same beliefs about the “Mammoth” as their Indigenous companions. Other

observers made similar remarks lumping white trappers in with their Indigenous counterparts as being superstitious. In 1837, Washington Irving, in his non-fiction account of American exploration in the Pacific Northwest, had remarked on the, “...many notions, and almost superstitions, which prevail among the Indians, and among some of the white men [on the frontier]...”²⁰² Of course, these low status whites in the fur trade, like their Indigenous counterparts, were not privy to literary currents, and given their largely oral culture, few left any written records of their beliefs.

Beyond what is contained in sources penned by their contemporaries like Thompson and Roosevelt, a few scraps of what these trappers and frontier settlers may have believed can be found in interviews recorded as part of the Work Projects Administration’s oral history program in Washington State in the 1930s. Published in three volumes under the title, *Told by the Pioneers: Reminiscences of Pioneer Life in Washington State*, two tales in the collection are very suggestive of “sasquatch” lore. P.H. Roundtree, a pioneer settler then in his mid-eighties, who had come west with his family as a boy in 1852 and settled on the Chehalis River, recalled stories of hunting elk, cougars, and grizzlies. He also recalled that: “Before the white people came to this country, a big Skookum, or hairy man, came and drove all the Indians away that were living on the Pe Ell Prairie and the Indians never went back there to live until after the Roundtree boys [referring to two of his paternal uncles] took up claims there, and went to live there.”²⁰³ Roundtree provided no further details, but it is striking that the “big Skookum” he mentioned matches the same word recorded nearly ninety years earlier by Paul Kane in his 1847

²⁰² Washington Irving, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, U.S.A. In the Rocky Mountains and Far West. Digested from his Journal and Illustrated from Various Other Sources, Author's Revised Edition, Complete in One Volume*, (New York: G.P. Putnam & Son, 1868), 187.

²⁰³ The parentheses in the quote are mine. See, P.H. Roundtree, "Autobiography of P.H. Roundtree, Lewis County," in *Told by the Pioneers: Reminiscences of Pioneer Life in Washington State*, edited by F.I. Trotter, F.H. Loutzenhiser, and J.R. Loutzenhiser, Volume II, (United States Work Projects Administration, Washington State, s.n. 1938), 114-115.

journal about the creatures his Salish guides had feared on Mount St. Helens (not far from the Chehalis River). One source from 1913 translates “Skookum” from the Chinook pidgin language of the Pacific Northwest fur trade as meaning “strong,” while an earlier source renders it as meaning an “evil spirit.”²⁰⁴

A second oral interview involves a similar story. Agnes Louise Eliot (née Ducheney), whose family had settled in what became Wahkiakum County in Washington Territory, recalled of her father, referred to here as “Grandpa,” that: “Grandpa Ducheney firmly believed the story of the huge apes near St. Helens Mountain. He went there to hunt once and one of these ape men beckoned to him. He just turned and ran and ran until he reached home.”²⁰⁵ “Grandpa Ducheney” had been a trader with the Hudson’s Bay Company, and his story seems to have also occurred sometime in the 1850s. It again mirrors other sources (such as Kane and later Totsgie) identifying such lore of scary giants with the volcano Mount St. Helens.

These stories “from below” seem to reinforce the impression given by frontier travellers like Thompson, Roosevelt and Irving that lower-status whites shared in their Indigenous counterparts’ beliefs (or “superstitions”) about monsters. Notably, neither of these oral accounts with people in their eighties contain any dismissive reference to “superstitions.” Both accounts seem to be referring to the same lore about frightening mountain-dwelling giants that was recorded by Walker, Kane, and Macfie—suggesting such Indigenous beliefs trickled over to the white settlers in the area, who for many years had by necessity traded and socialized with local

²⁰⁴ For the translation, see El Commancho (W.S. Phillips), *The Chinook Book: A Descriptive Analysis of the Chinook Jargon in Plain Words, Giving Instructions for Pronunciation, Construction, Expression and Proper Speaking of Chinook with All the Various Shaded Meanings of the Words* (Seattle, 1913), 109 and for “evil spirits” see James Gilchrist Swan, *The Northwest Coast: Or, Three Years' Residence in Washington Territory*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1857), 183.

²⁰⁵ Agnes Louise (Ducheney) Eliot, “From An Interview With Agnes Louise (Ducheney) Eliot, Wahkiakum County,” in *Told by the Pioneers: Reminiscences of Pioneer Life in Washington State*, edited by F.I. Trotter, F.H. Loutzenhiser, and J.R. Loutzenhiser, Volume I, (United States Work Projects Administration, Washington State, s.n. 1938), 111.

Indigenous peoples (something that is also clear from their interviews). However, it also appears that these Euro-settlers introduced something new into these existing traditions: the explicit reference to apes. It seems this took two forms, the more or less innocent beliefs of the humble frontier dwellers, like “Grandpa Duchenev” who fled in fear of “apes,” (a bear on a mountain slope at a distance might be mistaken for such) but also a separate, less innocent strain promoted in newspapers by skeptics who carried on the tradition of mocking Indigenous people (and sometime white trappers) for their supposed naivety. It was this image of the “sasquatch” as “hairy ape-like giants” (J.W. Burns’ description) that became enshrined in North American pop culture in subsequent decades.²⁰⁶ While Burns claimed he was being scrupulously faithful to his Indigenous sources, he seems to have borrowed much of the overgrown gorilla imagery about “sasquatch” from imported Euro-settler traditions.

To understand better how that happened and the effect it had, some wider context is necessary. Prior to 1861, few Westerners had any knowledge of the existence of gorillas. While they had been described in vague reports, and even bones and skulls had been collected from coastal African trading posts, it was not until the late 1850s that the French explorer Paul Du Chaillu became the first European to see a live gorilla on his travels in central Africa. Then in 1861 Du Chaillu created a sensation when he brought back dead specimens to Great Britain—thus proving that the gorilla was no myth.²⁰⁷ Du Chaillu’s “discovery” sparked widespread fascination in the West, and for the remainder of the century gorillas and apes were frequently

²⁰⁶ J.W. Burns, “Introducing B.C.’s Hairy Giants,” *Macleans*, (April, 1929), 61-62.

²⁰⁷ James Newman, “Discovering Gorillas: The Journey from Mythic to Real,” *Terrae Incognitae*, Vol. 38, (Jan. 2006): 36-54.

featured in Western popular culture. Vernon Reynolds, in his history of primates, explained some of the extraordinary effect this had:

The discovery of the gorilla made an enormous impact on both the public and scientists, in Europe and the United States, much more than the discovery of other apes... There were several reasons for this. First, the discovery came late, when the era of modern science was already well underway... Second, the huge gorilla had “monster appeal” for an imaginative public. Here was a new monster, and one the scientists approved of! ²⁰⁸

Such a surprising “discovery” of a big, hairy “monster” seems to have directly influenced the subsequent flavour “sasquatch” stories took on in popular media, notably newspapers, as featuring a creature that was gorilla or ape-like. None of the pre-1860s stories recorded by explorers analyzed above, it will be noticed, contained any specific reference to the various creatures as resembling “apes” or gorillas. But shortly after Du Chaillu’s sensational discovery frontier newspapers for the first time began to use “gorilla” to describe supposed sightings in the mountains.

The earliest example in print seems to be from 1870. In that year, various local newspapers in northern California carried stories about alleged sightings of “gorillas” in the surroundings mountains. The *Antioch Ledger*, the paper of a settlement in northern California, printed a letter supposedly written by a frontier hunter, a white “mountain man” in colloquial usage. The letter complained that the paper had dismissed the idea of there being any “gorilla”-like creature in the mountains: “I saw in your paper a short time since, an item covering the ‘gorilla’ which was said to have been seen in Crow Canyon... You sneered at the idea of their (sic) being any such a ‘critter’ in these hills, and were I not better informed, I should sneer

²⁰⁸ Vernon Reynolds, *The Apes: the Gorilla, Chimpanzee, Orangutan, and Gibbon, their History and their World* (New York: Dutton, 1967), 55. See also, Newman, “Discovering Gorillas: The Journey from Mythic to Real.” *Terrae Incognitae*, 36-54.

too....²⁰⁹ The writer explained how he found unusual tracks the previous fall while hunting in the mountains and recounted seeing not one but two of these gorilla-like creatures. While the “letter” may have been a fiction concocted by the paper’s editor (it seems suspiciously well-written to have come from an actual humble mountain hunter, and certainly such a story would be good fodder for any newspaper), it seems as if it must have reflected the *lingua franca* of the frontier—the kind of stories trappers, hunters, and other settlers like “Grandpa” Ducheney exchanged. Regardless of its authorship, the story speaks to two interesting points: first, the same dynamic already seen elsewhere, that low status whites were frequently represented as sharing the same kind of “superstitious” beliefs about monsters as Indigenous people (the newspaper had been accused of “sneering” at such beliefs); and second, the explicit reference to the creatures supposedly seen as resembling a “gorilla.”

Other similar stories soon followed with more references to gorillas or apes. One of the most sensational appeared in 1884 in British Columbia’s *Daily Colonist* (Victoria). Under the headline “WHAT IS IT?” the *Colonist* claimed a “British Columbia gorrilla” (sic) had actually been captured. It described the creature as:

...half man and half beast. “Jacko”, as the creature has been called by his capturers, is something of the gorilla type standing about four feet seven inches in height and weighing 127 pounds. He has long, black, strong hair and resembles a human being with one exception, his entire body, excepting his hands (or paws) and feet is covered with glossy hair about one inch long. His forearm is much longer than a man’s forearm, and he possesses extraordinary strength, as he will take hold of a stick and break...which no man living could break in the same way.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ The article is reprinted in John Green, *Year of the Sasquatch*, (Agassiz, British Columbia, 1970), 41-42. It was also reprinted in the *New York Times* in 1870 under the headline, “The Wild Men of California--Their Appearance--The Story of an Old Hunter.” See, “The Wild Men of California--Their Appearance--The Story of an Old Hunter,” *New York Times*, November 7, 1870, accessed online, August, 2018:

<https://www.nytimes.com/1870/11/07/archives/the-wild-men-of-californiatheir-appearance-the-story-of-an-old.html>.

²¹⁰ “What is it? A Strange Creature Captured Above Yale,” *British Colonist*, July 4, 1884. Accessed online at the University of Victoria Libraries, *The British Colonist*, Online Edition: 1858-1920: <http://www.britishcolonist.ca/>.

While the story in all probability was a newspaper hoax, like the earlier *Antioch Ledger* one, it stands out as one of the first proto-“sasquatch” stories to explicitly describe the creature as some sort of ape, a depiction that would become standard in nearly all subsequent published accounts.²¹¹ By the end of the nineteenth century such stories had become common in popular newspapers (though notably no explorer or naturalist made any such claims), and by the 1920s they had received national attention in *Maclean’s* magazine. Exactly what kind of ape varied. The *Antioch Ledger* and *Daily Colonist* had referred to creatures allegedly seen in the mountains as resembling gorillas, while the *Daily Province* in 1907 had used “monkey-like” to describe a creature that supposedly terrified Indigenous people. Other newspapers and popular writing favoured “ape.”²¹² For example, in 1896 the *Crescent City News*, a newspaper based in Siskiyou County in northern California, published a long folk poem by L.W. Musick. Musick explained that his poem was intended to “aid in the perpetuation of some of the quaint legends” told among white settlers of the Siskiyou Mountains, including sightings of an “ape”-like creature.²¹³

Most, if not all, of these newspaper stories about sightings of a vaguely described “wild man” or gorilla-like creature were reported in a not entirely serious vein. A humorous slant had been injected into the news stories that had generally supplanted the earlier undercurrent of fear or violence that had been present in nearly all the proto-sasquatch tales made by explorers, even skeptical ones. There is a strong sense that the stories were not taken seriously by the papers. Certainly, as discussed in Chapter One, such claims were no longer taken seriously in North American exploration literature. Of the “Jacko” story another newspaper, the *Mainland*

²¹¹ For a discussion of the Jacko case and other similar ones in an international context, see Gregory Firth, “Images of the Wildman Inside and Outside Europe,” *Folklore* 118, no. 3 (December 2007): 261-81,

²¹² Of course, few people in western North America of the day would have been readily able to explain the differences between monkeys, apes, and gorillas, and the words were frequently used as synonyms (just as they sometimes are today).

²¹³ L.W. Musick, *The Hermit of Siskiyou*, (Crescent City, California: Crescent City News, 1896), 37.

Guardian, commented, “Absurdity is written on the face of it.”²¹⁴ Newspapers of the era, like twentieth century tabloids, often trafficked in such hoaxes.²¹⁵ Indeed, stories of ape-like “wild men” were such a staple of late nineteenth century American popular culture that Mark Twain satirized them in an 1869 mock news article.²¹⁶ While these newspaper stories were mostly fiction intended to sell papers, they also seem to have at least partially reflected the campfire legends told and retold by white trappers, hunters, and mountain men of the sort noted by Musick, with gorilla or ape-like characteristics grafted onto them following Du Chaillu’s discovery. This is similar to how French settlers and voyageurs seem to have partly understood “windigoes” with reference to Old World werewolf traditions. It seems Euro-settlers in the West eventually came to interpret Indigenous tales of mountain giants as representing “apes,” since that had become a recognizable conceptual category for making sense of frightening wild beasts.

However, as alluded to earlier, there was perhaps a darker side to these printed news stories as well, which reflected the increasingly negative view the dominant discourse of Europeans and Euro-settlers took of Indigenous culture by the late nineteenth century (a notion suggested earlier by Adas and Fischer). There was, after all, something besides Du Chaillu’s discovery that lent much greater prominence to apes and gorillas in Western thought in the second half of the nineteenth century: the publication in 1859 of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*, which laid out the theory that humans had evolved from apes. While it is unlikely that

²¹⁴ “The ‘What is it?’” *Mainland Guardian*, July 9, 1884, Google News Archive, accessed August, 2018: <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=bEWYMUwI8FkC&dat=18840709&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>.

²¹⁵ One such prank was the “Cardiff Giant,” an elaborate hoax involving the apparently petrified remains of a ten foot man discovered by workers digging a well near Cardiff, New York. This hoax was exploited by P.T. Barnum and spawned numerous others, including in the American West. See A.H. Saxon, *P.T. Barnum: The Legend and the Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

²¹⁶ Twain published his story as if it were a newspaper article, noting, “There has been so much talk about the mysterious “wild man” out there in the West for some time, that I finally felt it was my duty to go out and interview him ...” Twain’s story, as was his style, veers into the absurd—his surprisingly articulate wild man turns out to be a “son of Cain” with a fabulous history. See Mark Twain, “The Wild Man Interviewed,” in *Delphi Complete Works of Mark Twain* (Delphi, 2013).

“Grandpa” Ducheney and other mountain men were reading Darwin round the campfire, newspaper journalists of the era in western North America were certainly familiar with Darwinian notions.²¹⁷ In the wake of Darwin’s theory of evolution came crude suggestions from certain corners that Indigenous people might represent a less evolved type of humanity. Elsewhere in western North America, there were even claims that certain Indigenous tribes, notably the so-called “Root Digger Indians” of northern California and southern Oregon represented a literal “missing link” between humans and apes.²¹⁸ The *Antioch Ledger* story of 1870, the earliest such article to feature sightings of a “gorilla”-like creature, had tellingly likened the supposed creature’s appearance to a “Digger Indian.”²¹⁹ And the *Daily Colonist* in 1884 had suggested that perhaps the “monstrosity” “Jacko” was not a “British Columbia gorilla” after all, but in their words “a demented Indian.” The *Colonist* had concluded their report on “Jacko” by posing the question: “Who can unravel the mystery that now surrounds Jacko? Does he belong to a species hitherto unknown in this part of the continent, or is he really what the train men first thought he was, a crazy Indian?”²²⁰ The *Colonist* thus conjured up crude Darwinian-inspired notions of Indigenous peoples as less evolved by claiming that it was unclear whether “Jacko,” was a “British Columbia gorilla” or else a “demented” or “crazy” Indian. This was also

²¹⁷ Digital archives of western North American newspapers, such as Victoria’s *Daily Colonist*, reveal many dozens of references to Darwin’s theory of evolution in the 1860s-1900 era. This assessment is based on both the University of Victoria’s digital archive of the *Daily Colonist* (and the *British Colonist*), which spans 1858-1970, as well as the digital United States Newspaper Archive 1865-1960, which contains hundreds of American and Canadian newspapers.

²¹⁸ See, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Making Freaks: Visual Rhetorics and the Spectacle of Julia Pastrana,” in *Thinking the Limits of the Body*, edited by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Gail Weiss, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 129-144.

²¹⁹ The American missionary Oscar Penn Fitzgerald, who was active in California among the “Diggers,” described them in almost animal-like terms in his *California Sketches* (1881): “The Digger Indian holds a low place in the scale of humanity. He is not intelligent; he is not handsome; he is not very brave....It is not because he is an agriculturist that he is called a Digger, but because he grabbles for wild roots, and has a general fondness for dirt. I said he was not handsome, and when we consider his rusty, dark-brown color, his heavy features, fishy black eyes, coarse black hair, and clumsy gait, nobody will dispute the statement.” Oscar Penn Fitzgerald, *California Sketches*, Vol. II, (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Methodist Publishing House, 1881), 15.

²²⁰ “What is it? A Strange Creature Captured Above Yale,” *British Colonist*, July 4, 1884.

to some extent the subtext in J.W. Burns' articles that inferred sasquatch were distant relations of the "Indians."

This reinforces what we have already seen regarding the widening rift over monster lore in the North American hinterland. From the 1870s through the 1930s, monster legends were increasingly exploited by outside observers who did not take them seriously as a means to mock or otherwise belittle Indigenous peoples, and sometimes low-status, largely illiterate white settlers as well (something subsequent chapters reveal also happened with the windigo, and to a lesser extent even the "grisly" bear). Usually this took the form of ridiculing these lower-class groups' perceived naivety or cowardice for clinging to such "superstitious" beliefs. However, the more virulent form, as seen with the "Jacko" article, insinuated that Indigenous people themselves might be a kind of monster, or at least related to them. This has parallels with some of the post-1870s windigo accounts that depicted Algonquian peoples in racial terms as innately primitive savages, something earlier writers had been at pains to contradict. In both cases, there was also a newfound comedic element in these frontier tales that went along with the mockery. This represented a significant departure from earlier incarnations, which, even when skeptical, had an undercurrent of fear or danger embedded in them (i.e. Mociño's fearsome "matlox," Thompson "hastening" his march to get through the Athabasca defiles, Cox's creature of "frightful magnitude" that had formerly killed Plains peoples, Kane's sinister "skookums" and Walker's similar account, Macfie's "hideous" "Sim-moquis" that abducted native women, Dawson's "gigantic wild man" that the Tahltan dreaded, Roosevelt's "great goblin beast" that had killed a trapper, Pike's mysterious "evil thing" that had drowned Indigenous paddlers, and the "huge ape" that caused Grandpa Duchenev to flee in terror). Even when being dismissed as mere "superstitions," those earlier stories recorded by explorers always contained some violent

element or sense of something threatening or malevolent. But with the dawning of settlements, railroads, newspapers, and other tidings of modern industrial society, old monsters were starting to be rebranded in new guises that saw them as less threatening. Ultimately, it was this image of the “sasquatch” as a somewhat comic, bumbling, herbivorous overgrown ape that became a fixture of North American pop culture.²²¹ This version, in many respects J.W. Burns’ version, while containing elements of longstanding Indigenous lore, mingled into it the separate “gorilla” or “ape” strain introduced by Euro-settlers. Thus, the modern “sasquatch” became a Euro-Indigenous monster myth; much more so than the windigo, which retained its core Algonquian conception.

Conclusion

The various monster legends recorded by explorers and travel writers of western North America in the frontier period, from the 1790s through 1890s, seem to have been faithful to the Indigenous traditions told to them by their guides. The stories reported by Mociño through to Pike match with what can be gleaned from third-party sources, such as Indigenous art objects and oral traditions recorded by later anthropologists. Thus, the increasing skepticism found in these accounts really did reflect a widening gulf in cosmologies between the two groups, that is, European explorers, travel writers, or naturalists and their Indigenous guides or hunters. As these factors widened the cultural divide on things like monsters, it became easier and more common for such monsters, in various ways, to sometimes inspire negative, even in the more extreme cases dehumanizing, portrayals of what some Euro-settlers saw as a primitive “Other.”

²²¹ This is not to say there is not also a separate and enduring horror tradition involving sasquatch. Only that the fundamental nature of the stories evolved into something treated less serious (and frequently in a humorous or benign guise). For an example of modern sasquatch “sightings” generally more benign details, see John Green, *Sasquatch: The Apes Among Us* (Surrey, BC: Hancock House, 1978, 2006 reprint), 34.

However, many of the low-status, often illiterate voyageurs and white hunters or trappers (i.e. “mountain men”) who lived on the frontier, retained beliefs about monsters closer to their Indigenous companions than to their social and economic elites. They were also often represented in exploration literature written by this latter group as sharing similar “superstitions” as Indigenous people. In the post-1860s, as new waves of settlement moved into the North American West and formerly isolated trading posts rapidly grew into bustling towns connected with telegrams, railroads and newspapers, these old traditions became fodder for the newspapers that sprung up. Such papers, with their largely middle-class or “respectable” readership, seem to have delighted in poking fun at the old beliefs or “superstitions” of the area’s Indigenous people and low status whites. These new settlers also introduced explicitly ape or gorilla-like traits into existing legends, many of which had featured scary anthropomorphic giants but not necessarily (at least in all cases) very ape-like. J.W. Burns especially promoted this image of what he rendered as “sasquatch” in a series of widely reprinted stories that used the supposed existence of these hairy giants to ridicule “Indians” (and sometimes white trappers) as cowardly, silly, or superstitious. The “sasquatch” had by that point long since ceased to be taken seriously in exploration literature (or even to be mentioned at all), and in popular media had become something of a caricature for entertainment. This transfiguration in its representation reflected the similar transformation in the material conditions of the Pacific Northwest and Rocky Mountains. The old social function such beliefs or legends may have fulfilled in their original Indigenous conception, and the uncertainty or even fear they had inspired in early explorers or outside travellers, had largely been rendered moot by an industrialized, Euro-dominated society where skepticism or even mockery of Indigenous lore had become the mainstream.

A Growing Divide: The Windigo 1607-1930

The “windigo,” a terrifying creature found in northern Algonquian culture, is by far the most common monster in Canadian historical records and the one that has attracted the most attention from scholars.²²² Like the very name “windigo,” which has been rendered in almost countless variations, opinions about the creature itself are variable. Sometimes it is represented as an “evil spirit” that takes possession of human beings, especially solitary travellers in northern forests, transforming them into crazed cannibals with almost superhuman strength.²²³ At the same time, the windigo can be a nonhuman monster of giant size, with frequent attributes including large teeth, a lipless mouth, heart of ice, and coarse, black hair. Some recurring or common motifs about this legendary being is a tendency to prey upon solitary travellers in

²²² The Algonquian language family is the largest Indigenous language family in Canada and was (and is) geographically widely distributed over a vast area from the modern maritime provinces to the western prairie, north to Hudson Bay, and south to the Great Lakes. Nations within the Algonquian language family include the Ojibwa, Cree, Mi'kmaq, Abenaki, Odawa, Nipissing, Innu (Montagnais/Naskapi), the eponymous Algonquin, and many other groups. Many of the central Algonquian peoples have become increasingly known in scholarly and popular nomenclature as the Anishinaabe; though that designation does not include all members of the Algonquian peoples, such as the more northerly Cree and Innu. Most nations and tribes within the Algonquian language family shared certain broad cultural adaptations; they were generally nomadic hunter-gatherers (as opposed to the agriculturalists of the Iroquoian-language family), and made use of birch bark canoes. Windigo legends and stories are particularly associated with those groups that lived in the northern part of the Algonquian-language family distribution (i.e. the subarctic boreal forest), that is the Ojibwa, Cree, and Innu (Montagnais/Naskapi). See, Marianne Mithun, *The Languages of Native North America, Cambridge Language Surveys*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), and *Algonquian Spirit: Contemporary Translations of the Algonquian Literatures of North America*, edited by Brian Swann (University of Nebraska Press, 2005). For a modern exploration of pan-Algonquian culture, see Evan T. Pritchard's memoir, *No Word for Time: The Way of the Algonquin People* (Council of Oak Books, 2001). For a classic linguistic study, see Leonard Bloomfield, *Algonquin Sketch* (1946), accessed online April, 2018, <https://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~oxfordwr/bloomfield1946/> and for another classic overview, see, Diamond Jenness, *The Indians of Canada*, 7th Edition, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977, first published 1932).

²²³ There are over forty different variations in the spelling of the name in historical accounts that date from the seventeenth through twentieth centuries, including: Atoosh, Weedigo, Weeghtako, Weeghteko, Weendago, Weendegoag, Weendigo, Weetego, Wee tee go, Weetigo, Wehndigo, Wehtigo, Wendago, Wendigo, Windigo, Wenigo, Wentigo, Wentiko, Wetigo, Wihtikow, Whit te co, Whittico, Wiendigo, Wihtigo, Wiitiko, Windago, Windagoe, Windagoo, Windego, Wi'ndigo, Windikouk, Wintego, Wintigo, Wi'ntsigo, Wi'tigo, Witigo, Witik, Witiko, Wittako, and Wittikka. This list was compiled by John Robert Columbo in his excellent anthology *Windigo: An Anthology of Fact and Fantastic Fiction* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1982), 2-3, with several new additions by the present author. Columbo excluded from the list cited above non-w forms of the name, including *atchen*, *atschen*, *cheno*, *djenu*, *kokodje*, *kokotsche*, *outiko*, and *viniko*. In this essay, I favour the traditional spelling “windigo.” The word has been translated into English as signifying both “giant” and “cannibal.”

remote areas, especially during winter, strange pointed tracks left in the snow by it, and in cases where the creature has “possessed” a human being, an insatiable craving in that individual to eat human flesh. The anthropologist Alfred Irving Hallowell noted this dualism in 1951 about two distinct windigo traditions involving both human cannibals and nonhuman monsters.²²⁴ More recently the Omushkego elder Louis Bird explained it as:

Wihtigo. It was something that happened among humans. It means an other-than-human was created from an ordinary human—and sometimes maybe not. There is a question there. There were many kinds. There is a wihtigo that was created by starvation—humans starved, went crazy, and ate human flesh.... Other wihtigos are not understood—it is not known where they came from.²²⁵

However, another Cree elder, Samuel Makidemewabe, explained that, “Windigos were all once humans. But once they begin to go Windigo, it gets worse and worse.”²²⁶ In this view, there is a synthesis of the various accounts: the original Windigo, the “evil spirit,” possesses a human, transforming them into a cannibal with an insatiable craving for human flesh; gradually, the individual loses more of their humanity, gnawing away at their own lips, becoming covered in coarse hair, their hearts turning to ice, and eventually, if they are not killed, growing into hideous cannibal giants.

The windigo, in its various forms, has an ancient lineage that likely predates European contact with Indigenous populations in northern North America.²²⁷ In terms of written accounts it first appears in seventeenth-century French sources where all the variants discussed above can be seen. Unlike the “sasquatch,” which as suggested in earlier chapters was not entirely an authentic

²²⁴ See Alfred Hallowell, “Cultural Factors in the Structuralization of Perception,” in *Social Psychology at the Crossroads* (New York: Harper, 1951). Richard J. Preston also makes note of the two types in his “The Witiko: Algonkian Knowledge and Whiteman Knowledge,” in *Manlike Monsters on Trial*, 111-131.

²²⁵ Louis Bird, *The Spirit Lives in the Mind: Omushkego Stories, Lives and Dreams*, compiled and edited by Susan Elaine Gray, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007).

²²⁶ Howard Norman, *Where the Chill Came from: Cree Windigo Tales and Journeys* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1983), 5.

²²⁷ For an argument for the pre-contact origins of the windigo, see Robert A. Brightman, “The Windigo in the Material World,” *Ethnohistory* (35/4), 1988: 337-379.

part of Pacific Northwest Indigenous lore but rather a hybrid folk creature created out of a blending of Indigenous and European traditions, the windigo is an authentic and prolific character in Algonquian folktales and belief.²²⁸

After briefly reviewing the historiographical literature relevant to the windigo, this chapter argues that early European perceptions of the windigo were characterized by a striking degree of acceptance and tolerance that later shifted to scorn and mockery. By the 1870s the windigo, like the proto-“sasquatch” tales, became increasingly exploited by outside explorers and travel writers as something that could be used to portray Algonquian peoples as cowardly, superstitious, or primitive, and also frequently to present low-status French-Canadian voyageurs in the same light. This shift was driven by the changed circumstances of the observers, who were increasingly far removed from Algonquian communities, as well as larger intellectual trends that saw the belief in supernatural monsters cease to be respectable—all of which points to a widening cultural gulf between European settler cultures and Algonquian cultures that led to much harsher assessments of the latter in exploration literature. This closely parallels the treatment of sasquatch-like tales in exploration and frontier literature.

Historiographical Background:

Scholarly and popular literature, when presenting North America’s past, has frequently emphasized the cultural divisions between Indigenous peoples and Europeans, and the often resulting antagonistic relationships.²²⁹ A subject like the windigo might seem as if it would fit

²²⁸ See the appendix for a sampling of the many collections of Indigenous oral stories published about the windigo.

²²⁹ Some general examples include: Sidney L. Harring “The Enforcement of Extreme Penalty,” Canadian Law and the Ojibwa-Cree Spirit World” in *White Man’s Law: Native People in Nineteenth-century Canadian Jurisprudence* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), Ken S. Coates, *Best Left as Indians: Native-white relations in the Yukon Territory 1840-1973* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), *Anti-Colonialism and Education: The Politics of Resistance*, ed. George J. Sefa Dei and Arlo Kempf (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2002), as well as portrayals in other mediums, such as the film *Ikwe* (1986) released by Canada’s National Film Board.

with such an approach; it is easy to imagine that the construction and propagation of an inferior or dangerous “Other” was connected in some way with monster legends, especially one connected with as sensitive a subject as cannibalism. And while this is certainly to some extent the case, much of the scholarship written from this angle misses a crucial aspect of North American exploration history: the affinities between Indigenous and European cosmologies with regard to monsters, and how that could bond these two groups as much as divide them. That was a bond that eventually declined due to a range of factors. As it did, European perspectives expressed in exploration and travel literature toward Indigenous cultures, in this case Algonquian ones, did become very negative.

Most scholars who have taken an interest in the windigo, however, have not looked at it from the perspective of relations between Algonquian guides and European explorers and other frontier travellers. Instead, much of the historiographical focus has been over the how and why of the phenomenon, and since the 1980s, even over whether “windigo cannibalism” itself ever existed. Beginning in the 1920s, researchers working from a psychoanalytical framework had posited that the “windigo” was an actual form of cultural bound psychosis that had occasionally afflicted Algonquian-speaking individuals, resulting in the compulsion to eat human flesh. This became the standard view among scholars studying windigo, cemented in 1960 with the publication of *Windigo Psychosis* by Morton Teicher, which included some seventy cases of windigo cannibalism.²³⁰ This consensus, however, was challenged in the 1970s and 1980s. Charles Bishop argued that the so-called “windigo psychosis” probably owed much to European colonialism. Bishop thought that there was a huge rise in the number of windigo cases because of

²³⁰Morton Teicher, *Windigo Psychosis: A Study of a Relationship Between Belief and Behaviour Among the Indians of Northeastern Canada* (American Ethnological Society, 1960). The seventy cases were a mix of historical records from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, and twentieth century oral interviews with Algonquian persons.

starvation brought on by ecological changes (i.e. overhunting in the fur trade) initiated by Europeans.²³¹ Louis Marano took this idea further and argued that windigoes had never really existed, but were just after-the-fact concoctions to justify “executions” of the sick, infirm, elderly, or even unpopular, within subarctic Indigenous societies in the nineteenth century that had been necessitated by the strains occasioned by the fur trade (i.e. the strains discussed earlier by Bishop).²³² Marano thus concluded that the windigo was comparable to European witch hunts, socially-sanctioned murders carried out by communities not against real cannibals or criminals but rather against vulnerable individuals. Marano’s thesis, however, has been since been strongly challenged.

Partly in response to Bishop and Marano, whose interpretation of the windigo became something of a new orthodoxy, Richard J. Preston argued in his paper, “The Witiko: Algonkian Knowledge and Whiteman Knowledge,” that the windigo phenomenon was indeed based on the real condition experienced by persons suffering “severe physical deprivation” (i.e. starvation leading to cannibalism) and “psychological stress” and that the “transfiguration of these qualities as a monstrous being is the Algonkian society’s attempt to come to terms with radically antisocial behaviour.”²³³ A further, more extensive defence of the reality of the windigo and criticism of Bishop’s and Marano’s theories appeared in 1988 by Robert A. Brightman.²³⁴ Brightman rejected the revisionists’ argument that the windigo was something created by the strains of European imperialism, arguing instead that its origins were ancient and likely predated European contact. Brightman argued that the historical record amply demonstrated that this

²³¹ Charles A. Bishop, “Northern Algonkian Cannibalism and Windigo Psychosis,” in *Psychological Anthropology* edited by Thomas R. Williams (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), 237-248.

²³² Louis Marano, *Wendigo Psychosis: The Anatomy of an Emic-Etic Confusion* PhD Thesis, University of Florida, 1981, 1. (Accessed online at: <http://archive.org/stream/windigopsychosis00mara#page/n0/mode/2up>).

²³³ Richard J. Preston, “The Witiko: Algonkian Knowledge and Whiteman Knowledge,” in *Manlike Monsters*, 111.

²³⁴ Robert A. Brightman, “The Windigo in the Material World,” *Ethnohistory* (35/4), 1988: 337-379.

“psychiatric disorder” had long-term persistence in Algonquian societies over a period of centuries. Brightman argued that the ecological interpretation (i.e. starvation conditions induced by the European fur trade) failed to explain the origin, persistence and pervasiveness of the windigo phenomenon. Brightman concluded that the disorder must be understood not in relation to material factors like resource depletion, but rather in relation to Algonquian spiritual beliefs and particularly their understanding of dreams and predestination.²³⁵

More recently, Nathan D. Carlson, in his “Reviving Witiko (Windigo): An Ethnohistory of ‘Cannibal Monsters’ in the Athabasca District of Northern Alberta, 1878-1910,” also rejected Marando’s argument, criticizing his theory for ignoring abundant written and oral testimonies.²³⁶ However, Carlson also argued against earlier scholarship which treated the windigo as a culture bound psychosis, instead insisting that the windigo must not be viewed from a Western perspective at all, but rather within “northern Algonquin cosmologies” if it is to be understood.²³⁷ Carlson, unlike many writers other on the subject, is himself of Indigenous ancestry and included in his research a windigo story told to him by his grandmother.

Other scholars have started to shift the lens away from the medical debate to look at windigoes as part of a different picture. The historian Carolyn Podruchny offered a fresh perspective in her essay, “Werewolves and Windigos: Narratives of Cannibal Monsters in French-Canadian Voyageur Oral Tradition.” Podruchny argued that voyageurs’ tales of werewolves and windigoes represented “cultural conjunction” of northern Algonquian and

²³⁵ Even Bishop’s argument that famine was caused by overhunting in the fur trade has been challenged. See Leo Waisberg, “Boreal Forest Subsistence and the Windigo: Fluctuations of Animal Populations,” *Anthropologica*, n.s. 17 (1975): 169-185. The most extreme skepticism regarding windigoes has been put forth by the anthropologist James B. Waldram. Waldram took Marando’s hypothesis much farther, arguing that the windigo was almost purely imaginary. See, James B. Waldram, *Revenge of the Windigo: The Construction of the Mind and Mental Health of North America Aboriginal Peoples* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 190-195.

²³⁶ Nathan D. Carlson, “Reviving Witiko (Windigo): An Ethnohistory of ‘Cannibal Monsters’ in the Athabasca District of Northern Alberta, 1878-1910.” *Ethnohistory* vol. 56, no. 3 (2009): 355-394.

²³⁷ Carlson, 355.

European cultures.²³⁸ Podruchny showed that French-Canadian voyageurs assimilated Indigenous windigo tales into their own cultural milieu, readily associating this cannibalistic monster with European werewolf traditions. Podruchny explains that in the process, “the motifs of windigo and werewolf mingled. These points of cultural conjunction became a form of métissage...”²³⁹

Shawn Smallman has also focused on European perceptions of the windigo in the historical record. Smallman’s “Spirit Beings, Mental Illness, and Murder: Fur Traders and the Windigo in Canada’s Boreal Forest, 1774 to 1935” examines how Hudson’s Bay Company traders viewed stories of the windigo.²⁴⁰ Smallman sees a change in attitudes toward windigos on the part of some of the HBC traders, moving from sympathy, or at least indifference to the phenomenon, toward harsher attitudes that helped justify European imperialism. This argument is similar to the one advanced in this chapter. Smallman, however, thought that the HBC traders mostly viewed the windigo from an imperial and economic vantage point (believing it to be something which annoyingly disrupted fur trapping activities). He concluded that the windigo was later used to justify imperial control of Indigenous populations, a dynamic other scholars have examined in a legal context.²⁴¹

²³⁸ Carolyn Podruchny “Werewolves and Windigos: Narratives of Cannibal Monsters in French-Canadian Voyageur Oral Tradition.” *Ethnohistory* vol. 51, no. 4, Fall 2004. 677-700.

²³⁹ Podruchny, 678.

²⁴⁰ Shawn Smallman, “Spirit Beings, Mental Illness, and Murder: Fur Traders and the Windigo in Canada’s Boreal Forest, 1774 to 1935” *Ethnohistory*, vol. 57, no. 10 (2010): 571-596. Smallman later expanded this research into a 2014 book that looks at the windigo more broadly. See, Shawn Smallman, *Dangerous Spirits: The Windigo in Myth and History* (Victoria, BC: Heritage House, 2014).

²⁴¹ The legal historian Sidney L. Harring looked at windigo cases in criminal trials of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Harring argued that such trials represented a form of Canadian “legal imperialism” over Indigenous communities that retained spiritual beliefs at odds with Western jurisprudence. However, Harring at the same time discounted Marano’s argument that windigo executions were concoctions to justify community-sanctioned murders. See Sidney L. Harring “The Enforcement of Extreme Penalty, “Canadian Law and the Ojibwa-Cree Spirit World” in *White Man’s Law: Native People in Nineteenth-century Canadian Jurisprudence* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

Building from this previous scholarship, especially Podruchny's and Smallman's studies, this chapter, drawing from a wider timeframe and more sources, argues that a profound shift in perceptions and representations of the windigo by explorers, fur traders and other travel writers occurred over the course of the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like with the "sasquatch," the gulf between Indigenous and European perspectives (at least those expressed in literature) on the windigo widened in ways that eventually led to much harsher, more negative depictions of Algonquian peoples in exploration and travel literature than had been the case prior to the 1870s. This happened with both aspects of the windigo legend, that is giant cannibal monsters, as well as human cannibals (or accusations of such). However, in contrast to nearly all previous scholars, my interest has been less on accusations of human cannibals, and more on the giant monsters of Algonquian lore, which are less discussed and often overlooked in windigo studies. Some of the accounts included here do not appear to have been previously considered by scholars studying the windigo.

A Growing Divide: 1607-1930

The French encountered Indigenous stories involving both giant monsters and human cannibals among northern Algonquian nations when they arrived in North America in the seventeenth century. The earliest of these written accounts featuring a cannibalistic, giant monster was made by the explorer Samuel de Champlain. Champlain, who went to sea at a young age, fully believed in the existence of fantastic and dangerous monsters. (He had earlier reported the existence of one in Central America based on a story he had been told while in the

Caribbean.²⁴²) In this, he was not at all unusual among European explorers (many of whom had similar maritime backgrounds) of North American in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In 1607, on his first voyage to Canada, Champlain expressed his belief in a “dreadful monster” called the “Gougou” that the Mi'kmaq people (an eastern Algonquian nation) had told him inhabited a certain island in Acadia. Much like the depiction of the windigo in subsequent Algonquian stories, this creature was said to be a giant cannibal, though it is unclear whether the “Gougou” was a local variant of windigo legends or a different creature entirely. Champlain recorded what he heard in considerable detail:

There is another strange thing worthy of narration, which many savages have assured me was true; this is, that near Chaleur Bay, towards the south, lies an island where makes his abode a dreadful monster, which the savages call *Gougou*. They told me it had the form of a woman, but most hideous, and of such size that according to them the tops of the masts of our vessel would not reach his waist...they say that he has often devoured and still devours many savages...This monster, which the savages call the Gougou, makes horrible noises in that island, and when they speak of him it is with unutterably strange terror, and many have assured me that they have seen him. Even the above mentioned Sieur Prevert from St. Malo told me that, while going in search of mines...he passed so near the haunt of this frightful beast, that he and all those on board his vessel heard strange hissings from the noise it made, and that the savages he had with him told him it was the same creature, and were so afraid that they hid themselves wherever they could...*And what makes me believe what they say*, is the fact that all the savages in general fear it, and tell such strange stories of it that, if I were to record all they say, it would be considered untrue; *but I hold that this is the dwelling-place of some devil that torments them in the manner described*. This is what I have learned of this Gougou.²⁴³

Champlain interpreted this cannibal giant as some kind of “devil,” and concluded that it really did “torment them in the manner described.”²⁴⁴ He was aware, clearly, that some of his more skeptical readers in France might question his belief in an Indigenous monster tale, thus his

²⁴² Champlain reported there was a “dragon” in central America, with the head of an eagle, wings like a bat, and a body of a lizard. See Samuel de Champlain, *The Works of Samuel de Champlain*, Vol. I edited by Henry Biggar, translated by John Squair (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1922), 54.

²⁴³ All italics in the quote are mine. See Samuel de Champlain, *The Works of Samuel de Champlain*, Vol. I, edited by H.P. Biggar, (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1922-1936) 186-188.

²⁴⁴ Nor was Champlain alone in his acceptance of the existence of monsters among New France’s explorers. Jacques Cartier, Pierre-Esprit Radisson, Jacques Marquette, Louis Nicholas, and La Vérendrye also believed that dangerous monsters lurked in North America’s wilderness.

careful wording, his invocation of Sieur Prevert's account to corroborate the story, and his insistence that since all the natives feared it, it must have some basis in an actual monster. Champlain's further comment that "if I were to record all they say, it would be considered untrue" points to the stirrings, even in 1607, of greater skepticism toward travellers' tales of monsters in the elite, upper-class circles that were likely to read Champlain's account.²⁴⁵ Those skeptical attitudes, still a minority in 1607, would gradually gain adherents in Europe among the educated and the upper-class, eventually becoming the dominant narrative on monster tales. Champlain's acceptance of the tale likely in part reflected his personal background; as a lifelong seafarer, he would have absorbed much mariners' lore about monsters (something evident on his illustrated maps), and his religious beliefs held the Devil and evil spirits were very real.²⁴⁶ But perhaps equally important was the reality that, with so little of the world as yet known to Europeans, Champlain quite naturally accepted dangerous creatures likely existed. Other French explorers who followed after Champlain would share these assumptions, notably Pierre Esprit Radisson, La Vérendrye, and presumably many of the (mostly illiterate) *coureur des bois* and voyageurs who left no written records.

In contrast, the Jesuits who began to explore North America's northern interior a generation after Champlain's first foray in 1607 brought with them an educational background

²⁴⁵ Andy Orchard has argued that early skepticism toward monsters in Christian theology often took the form of discounting the existence of pagan monsters, but accepting the literal existence of ones supported by biblical traditions. In this context, one can see Champlain's extra caution in justifying his acceptance of the Gougou. (Not that Champlain would likely have had read any of these Latin works; but perhaps in a more general sense these attitudes were known to him.) One of the earliest detailed skeptical dismissals of monsters (though after Champlain's death) was Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia epidemica* (1641), which discounted the existence of griffins and other monsters, though Browne's book in turn was challenged by other authors' counterarguments. Few explorers or fur traders had any familiarity with higher literary currents, though the Jesuits did. See, Andy Orchard, *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monsters of the Beowulf-Manuscript* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press) and Richard Todd and Kathryn Murphy, editors, *A Man Very Well Studied: New Contexts for Thomas Browne*, (Leiden: Brill: 2008).

²⁴⁶ For a discussion of Champlain's religious views, see David Hackett Fischer, *Champlain's Dream*, (Toronto: Random House, 2009), 146-147.

that often included greater skepticism toward monster stories. They proved more mixed in their reception of cannibalistic monsters. While some of New France's Jesuits, such as Jacques Marquette, Louis Nicholas, and Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix accepted the existence of wilderness monsters or fantastic beasts (like the carcajou that could control other animals and killed by wrapping its tale around its victims' throats), others, notably Paul Le Jeune, were more cautiously skeptical.²⁴⁷

In November 1633, Le Jeune reported an alarming incident that involved "large unknown animals" that had apparently "devoured" entire Innu (Montagnais) families. Le Jeune recorded:

On the eighth, Manitougache, surnamed la Nasse, and all his family, consisting of two or three households, came and encamped near our house. They told us that two or three families of Savages had been devoured by large unknown animals, which they believed were Devils; and that the Montagnais, fearing them, did not wish to go hunting in the neighborhood of Cape de Tourmente and Tadoussac, these monsters having appeared in that neighborhood. It was afterward suspected that the Savages had spread this report, to draw them from the other side of the river.²⁴⁸

It seems that Le Jeune had initially believed the truth of the report; one can imagine the terror it must have inspired among the French, who were in what to them was still an unfamiliar environment. It was only "*afterward* suspected" (and again, only *suspected*, not proven) that it might not be true. While more restrained than Champlain's perspective on the existence of dangerous monsters, Le Jeune's writing indicates that (in contrast to later explorers) he was still operating within a worldview that accepted such creatures might exist, unlike the complete dismissals of later explorers when confronted with similar stories. Le Jeune, like his fellow colonists, came from a France that still had its own reports of large animals that could "devour"

²⁴⁷ See, *The Codex Canadensis and the Writings of Louis Nicolas, The Natural History of the New World, Histoire Naturelle des Indes Occidentales*, edited by François-Marc Gagnon, with Nancy Senior and Réal Ouellet (Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011).

²⁴⁸ Paul Le Jeune, *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, Vol. 5, edited and translated by Reuben Gold Thwaites, (Cleveland, OH: Burrows Brothers, 1901), 101.

whole families—namely, werewolves, something many French rural dwellers believed in well into the eighteenth century.²⁴⁹ When some of these rural folk migrated to New France, they brought these monster beliefs with them, finding considerable common ground with their Algonquian counterparts' stories of windigoes. Le Jeune himself would soon invoke the werewolf to partially interpret Algonquian stories.

In 1636 Le Jeune related an incident that he witnessed involving a “shaking tent” ceremony, a kind of ritual performed among various northern Algonquian tribes to communicate with spirits.²⁵⁰ Le Jeune does not include any variation of the word “windigo” in his account but rather something called an “Atchen,” which he explained as “a sort of werewolf:”

This Demon,—or rather this Devilish woman, for it was this shameless person who made them believe that it was the Manitou who spoke,—added that he had eaten some Attikamegouekhin,—these are Tribes that live north of the River which is called the three Rivers,—and that he would eat a great many more of them if he were not called elsewhere. But that Atchen (a sort of werewolf), would come in his place to devour them, if they made a village, as they had decided to do; that he would come to get them, even up to the French Fort; that he would slaughter the French themselves. Oh, wicked woman!²⁵¹

Despite Le Jeune's apparent skepticism, his reference to this monster as “a sort of werewolf” (“*c'est une espece de loup garou*”) again reveals the striking overlap between Algonquian and French cosmologies in the seventeenth century. Both nations had similar traditions about the existence of frightening, cannibalistic creatures that humans could be transformed into. Indeed, the Jesuit Bonaventure Fabvre, in what appears to be the first written appearance of the word windigo in French, translated it in his 1695 dictionary of the Innu (Montagnais) language of

²⁴⁹ Smith writes, “In the eighteenth-century French countryside, however, few doubted the reality of the werewolf,” an idea he explores at length in his *Monsters of the Gévaudan*, (pg. 22 for the quote).

²⁵⁰ This “shaking tent” ceremony is described by Thompson, Nelson, and other explorers in similar terms nearly two centuries later. See, Christopher Vecsey, *Traditional Ojibwa Religion and Its Historical Changes* (American Philosophical Society: 1983).

²⁵¹ Paul Le Jeune, *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, vol. 9. ed. by Reuben Gold Thwaites, (Cleveland, OH: Burrows Brothers, 1901), 315. Preston identified a similar term from northern Quebec in the 1960s for the windigo, “Atoosh,” see Preston, “Algonkian Knowledge and Whiteman Knowledge,” 126.

Algonquian as meaning “loup garou.”²⁵² As Podruchny argued relying on later sources, Canadian voyageurs shared their Algonquian counterparts’ windigo beliefs and intermingled them with their own imported werewolf traditions.²⁵³ The intellectual forces popularized by the Enlightenment would gradually alter that dynamic. The largely illiterate coureur des bois and voyageurs who were not part of that paradigm shift would increasingly be represented by their social elites as representing an archaic, simple-minded and outdated belief system that retained a healthy respect for Indigenous monster lore.

Le Jeune later became the Jesuit superior at Quebec. In 1661, also in the *Jesuit Relations*, he again mentioned reports of “werewolves” near Lac St. John, north of Quebec:

What caused us greater concern was the intelligence that met us upon entering the Lake, namely, that men deputed by our Conductor for the purpose of summoning the Nations to the North Sea...had met their deaths the previous Winter in a very strange manner. Those poor men (according to the report given us) were seized with an ailment unknown to us, but not very unusual among the people we were seeking. They are afflicted with neither lunacy, hypochondria, nor frenzy; but have a combination of all these species of disease, which affects their imaginations and causes them a more than canine hunger. This makes them so ravenous for human flesh that they pounce upon women, children, and even upon men, like veritable werewolves, and devour them voraciously, without being able to appease or glut their appetite—ever seeking fresh prey, and the more greedily the more they eat. This ailment attacked our deputies; and, as death is the sole remedy among those simple people for checking such acts of murder, they were slain in order to stay the course of their madness. This news might well have arrested our journey if our belief in it had been as strong as the assurance we received of its truth.²⁵⁴

²⁵² Bonaventure Fabvre, *Racines Montagnaises*, transcribed by Lorenzo Angers and Gerard McNulty (Quebec: Presse de l'Université Laval, 1970). See also, Robert A. Brightman, “The Windigo in the Material World,” *Ethnohistory* (35/4), 1988: 342.

²⁵³ Carolyn Podruchny, “Werewolves and Windigos: Narratives of Cannibal Monsters in French-Canadian Voyageur Oral Tradition,” *Ethnohistory* vol. 51, no. 4, Fall 2004. 677-700.

²⁵⁴ In the original French, the account reads: “Ce qui nous mit plus en peine, fut la nouvelle que nous apprismes d’ils l’entr’ée du Lac; à sçavoir, que les deputez par nostre Conducteur, qui devoient conuoquer les Nations à la Mer du Nort, & leur donner le rendez-vous pour nous y attendre, auoient esté tuez l’Hiuer passé, d’une façon étonnante: Ces pauvres gens furent saisis (à ce qu’on nous a dit) d’un mal, qui nous est inconnu; mais qui n’est pas bien extraordinaire, parmi les peuples que nous cherchons; ils ne sont ny lunatiques, ny hypochondriaques, ny phrenétiques: mais ils ont un mélange de toutes ces sortes de maladies, qui leur blessant l’imagination, leur cause une faim plus que canine, & les rend si affamez de chair humaine, qu’ils se jettent sur les femmes, sur les enfans, mesme sur les hommes, comme de vrais loups garous, & les deuorent à belles dents, sans se pouoir rassasier, ny saouler, cherchant tousiours nouvelle proye, & plus aidement que plus ils en ont mangé. C’est la maladie dont ces deputez furent atteints: & comme la mort est l’unique remede parmi ces bonnes gens, pour arrester ces meurtres, ils ont esté massacrez, pour arrester le cours de leur manie. Cette nouvelle eust esté bien capable d’arrester nostre

Although Le Jeune, a formally educated Jesuit, was apparently skeptical of the story to an extent that Champlain and his *coureur des bois* were unlikely to be, he notably did not entirely dismiss it either, let alone mock it like a later generation of frontier travellers would do in similar instances. (The rather loose English translation, written in 1901, makes it seem like Le Jeune was more skeptical than the original French implies, which states they might well have turned back had it been “*indubitable*” that the story was true.)²⁵⁵ While Le Jeune’s more skeptical views would eventually become the dominant European opinion on Indigenous monsters (albeit not for another century), the majority of New France’s explorers, *coureur des bois*, and voyageurs retained beliefs closer to their Algonquian guides and companions, accepting that such monsters were likely real.²⁵⁶ Alas, few of them left any written records. Their culture, like their Algonquian counterparts, was largely an oral one.

Whereas the French colonists seem to have mostly understood the windigo as akin to a werewolf, eighteenth-century British fur traders and explorers on Hudson Bay had a different impression. They were more inclined to interpret the windigo as an evil spirit or a Cree version of the Devil. This perhaps reflected a slightly different Cree variant on the larger Algonquian legend. At least four different eighteenth-century English explorers or fur traders left records that allude to the windigo along these lines. The oldest of these is found in the fur trader James Isham’s 1743 *Observations of Hudson Bay*, which included a vocabulary of Cree words (an Algonquian language) translated into English. Unlike later writers in the nineteenth century,

voyage, si nous y eussions adiousté autant de foy, qu'on nous le donnoit pour indubitable.” Paul Le Jeune, *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, Vol. 46, edited and translated by Reuben Gold Thwaites, (Cleveland, OH: *Burrows Brothers*, 1901), 264-265.

²⁵⁵ Le Jeune’s actual text read: “Cette nouvelle est esté bien capable d’arrêter nostre voyage, si nous y eussions adiousté autant de foy, qu'on nous le donnoit pour indubitable.” Ibid.

²⁵⁶ For a fascinating monster story, and one of the few written by a colonist raised in New France, see Pierre-Esprit Raddison, *Pierre-Esprit Radisson: The Collected Writings, Volume 1: The Voyages*, edited by Germaine Warkentin (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2012), 151.

Isham did not write dismissively of it as a mere imaginary being or superstition.²⁵⁷ Instead, he equated it with the Devil of Christian belief, translating the word “the Devil” into the Cree as “Whit te co.”²⁵⁸ Isham, however, did not provide any further details. But he was not alone in understanding the windigo in these terms. In 1748 the surveyor Henry Ellis, after first detailing the Cree belief in the existence of a “Being of infinite Goodness” (whom Ellis understood in terms similar to the Christian God), added: “They likewise acknowledge another Being, whom they call Wittikka, whom they represent as the Instrument of all kinds of Mischeif and Evil; and of whom they are very much afraid; but however we know of no Methods made use of by them to appease him.”²⁵⁹ Neither Isham nor Ellis mocked such beliefs; indeed, many of their fellow English would have held similar views of the Devil’s role in the world.²⁶⁰

Nearly half a century after Isham’s and Ellis’ accounts, in 1790 Edward Umfreville, another Hudson’s Bay Company trader, provided a more detailed account of the windigo, but one that also depicted it as a kind of “evil Being:”

They [the Cree] further say there is an evil Being, who is always plaguing them; they call him Whit-ti co. Of him they are very much in fear, and seldom eat or drink any brandy, without throwing some into the fire for Whit-ti-co. If any misfortune befalls them they sing to him, imploring his mercy, and when in health and prosperity do the same, to keep him in good humour. Yet, though obsequious sometimes, at others they are angry with him, especially when in liquor; then they run out of their tents and fire guns in order to

²⁵⁷ For example, in 1830 Edwin James translated the term as: “Weendegoag, Cannibals. This last is an imaginary race, said to inhabit an island in Hudson’s Bay. They are of giant dimension, and extremely given to cannibalism...” See Edwin James and John Tanner, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner During Thirty Years Residence Among the Indians in the Interior of North America* (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1830).

²⁵⁸ James Isham, *Observations on Hudson’s Bay* (1743) and *Notes and Observations on a Book Entitled a Voyage to Hudson’s Bay in the Dobbs Gallery* (1749), Champlain Society edition, edited by Edwin Ernest Rich (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1949).

²⁵⁹ Henry Ellis, *A Voyage to Hudson’s Bay by the Dobbs Galley and California, in the Years 1746 and 1747* (Dublin: Printed for George and Alexander Ewing, 1748(?)), 90. Theodore Swaine Drage, in his *An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of the Northwest Passage by Hudson’s Streights* (1748), similarly described the windigo as a Cree version of the devil.

²⁶⁰ Recent scholarship suggests that belief in the Devil as an active agent in human affairs remained stronger in eighteenth century England than previously supposed by historians. See, Owen Davies, “Talk of the Devil: Crime and Satanic Inspiration in Eighteenth-Century England,” academia.edu, accessed online, August 2018, http://www.academia.edu/224811/Talk_of_the_Devil_Crime_and_Satanic_Inspiration_in_Eighteenth-Century_England.

kill him. They frequently persuade themselves that they see his track in the moss or snow, and he is generally described in the most hideous forms.²⁶¹

Umfreville's reference to tracks has some parallels with the supposed "Mammoth" tracks David Thompson came across in the winter of 1811 with his guides in the Athabasca pass.²⁶² Like Thompson's experience with the "Mammoth," Umfreville voiced some skepticism about the windigo's tracks actually being what Cree hunters claimed them to be. However, he was not entirely prepared to discount the existence of creatures unknown to Europeans lurking in North America's interior. He noted that he thought it possible that animals unknown to European naturalists might still be found in the North American West.²⁶³

The relative openness to the existence of the windigo found in these various early accounts, both French and English, especially compared with later ones, reflects both the genuine mystery that much of North America still held to Europeans of the day, along with the fact that these fur traders, missionaries, and explorers were coming from cultural backgrounds that largely accepted belief in malignant supernatural entities, whether it was werewolves or devils. Gradually, however, European observers moved away from a certain agnosticism, if not actual acceptance of the windigo, toward attitudes that were more critical. Once that happened, like with the "sasquatch," the windigo began to be used to depict Algonquian peoples (and sometimes voyageurs who were seen as sharing their Indigenous companions' beliefs) as cowardly and superstitious. This shift was tied with both the rise of Enlightenment attitudes

²⁶¹ Edward Umfreville, *The Present State of Hudson's Bay*, (London: Printed for Charles Stalker, 1790), 42-43.

²⁶² Umfreville did not provide any further detail of what windigo tracks were supposed to have looked like—but his comment that finding such tracks was a common occurrence is collaborated by later sources and Cree oral histories. The geologist and explorer Henry Youle Hind, in his 1863 book, also wrote that his guides claimed to have found windigo tracks (discussed below). Stories of finding large, strange tracks in the moss or mud are common in anthropological records of Algonquian folktales. Preston noted a case in the latter twentieth century in northern Quebec. See, Preston, 126.

²⁶³ Umfreville, 166-169.

toward monsters and supernatural beings, as well as increased European exploration of North America and the changed circumstances of the observers.

This shifting paradigm with how European fur trade explorers understood and represented native monster lore, specifically in this case windigo tales, can be seen with the generation of explorers and fur traders that included Samuel Hearne, Alexander Mackenzie, David Thompson, George Nelson, François Antoine Larocque, and Daniel Harmon. They were on the whole more skeptical about Indigenous monster lore than earlier generations of Canada's explorers, yet remained far from the condescension, mockery, and humour that came to characterize late nineteenth century windigo accounts penned by Euro-Canadian observers.

Hearne (1745-1792), the eldest of this generation of explorers, was also the most thoroughly immersed in Enlightenment discourse, particularly the Linnaeus-inspired scientific zoology, and, as might be expected, the one most skeptical about supernatural monsters. From his isolated post on Hudson Bay, Hearne corresponded with European naturalists, sending them descriptions of the subarctic's plants and animals. Like his predecessor Isham, Hearne kept a remarkably detailed appendix of the plants and animals he encountered, which was studied by subsequent naturalists, including Charles Darwin.²⁶⁴ He was also in keeping with Enlightenment fashion in preferring Voltaire to the bible, and deism to Christianity, a habit that irked his younger, pious colleague, David Thompson.²⁶⁵

Hearne, unlike other eighteenth century travel writers, did not give any indication that he believed in monster tales recited to him by his Indigenous guides.²⁶⁶ His posthumously published

²⁶⁴ Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 2004), 220.

²⁶⁵ See Thompson, *Narrative*, 7.

²⁶⁶ For example, see Jonathan Carver, *Travels through the interior parts of North America, in the years 1766, 1767, and 1768* (London: C. Dilly, H. Payne, and J. Phillips, 1781), 167, and 118, 442, and 450 and Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de La Vérendrye, *Journals and Letters of La Vérendrye and his Sons*, edited by Lawrence J. Burpee, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1927), 247-248 and 51.

narrative of his long wanderings with Dene companions across the North American subarctic never makes any direct mention of monsters.²⁶⁷ However, despite his apparent skepticism, Hearne mostly directed his critiques at European naturalists whom he felt had unrealistic understandings of North American wildlife.²⁶⁸ As for the windigo, Hearne does not seem to have ever explicitly mentioned it under that name (or any variation in spelling of it). But he discussed incidents that could be considered a textbook example of what twentieth century psychologists argued was a “windigo psychosis.”²⁶⁹ Hearne wrote that although the Cree did not approve of cannibalism they, “...are frequently driven to the necessity of eating one another.”²⁷⁰ This in turn produced further bloodshed since as Hearne explained, “It is the general opinion of the Southern Indians [Cree], that when any of their tribe has been driven to the necessity of eating human flesh, they become so fond of it, that no person is safe in their company.”²⁷¹ Such a suspected person would therefore be murdered. This, however, may have reflected the editing of Hearne’s manuscript by his publisher who posthumously released it in 1795, as his unpolished journals reveal at least some doubts about the reality of cannibalism.

For example, in 1775 Hearne had met with an alleged case of cannibalism while inland from Hudson Bay. In his journal Hearne recorded the incident but was skeptical that the individual had really committed cannibalism. Without reference to anything supernatural, he noted that a man had returned to the trade post after a long journey alone, and having apparently

²⁶⁷ Hearne does, however, mention the “Chipewyan” (a Dene subgroup) belief in “fairies.” See, Samuel Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay, to the Northern Ocean: Undertaken by Order of the Hudson's Bay Company, for the Discovery of Copper Mines, a Northwest Passage, &c., in the Years 1769, 1770, 1771, & 1772* (London: A. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1795), 346-347.

²⁶⁸ See the discussion of Hearne’s critique of the zoologist Thomas Pennant in Chapter 4.

²⁶⁹ Morton Teicher, *Windigo Psychosis: A Study of a Relationship Between Belief and Behaviour Among the Indians of Northeastern Canada* (American Ethnological Society, 1960).

²⁷⁰ Samuel Hearne, *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to The Northern Ocean: 1769, 1770, 1771, 1772* ed. Richard Glover (Toronto: Macmillan, 1958), 22.

²⁷¹ Hearne, 22.

been poorly provisioned, aroused the suspicions of other Cree trappers. He noted, "...the Indians suspects him of being guilty of Murder and by some particular simtoms and appearance of the face they also pretend to know that hees not only ben guilty of Murder but has also eat those whome he had killd. Uppon such mear Suspision they have Promous'd to kill him."²⁷²

While apparently skeptical about windigoes, Hearne's experiences are worth contrasting with those of his younger contemporary, David Thompson. Thompson had as a youth served under Hearne in the Hudson's Bay Company before joining the North West Company. He did not approve of Hearne's deism and remained a devout Christian, but like Hearne, also thought of himself as a participant in the Enlightenment. Thompson also reported incidents of cannibalism or alleged cannibalism among Algonquian peoples, but he differed from Hearne in that he explicitly discussed these incidents with reference to the "Evil Spirit" known as the "Weetego." This mirrors not only Thompson's unwillingness to rule out the existence of a dreaded "Mammoth" feared by his men, but also his own relation that he himself had once encountered the physical manifestation of the Devil.²⁷³

Thompson's first passage on windigoes relates an incident that occurred in 1796 in what is today northern Saskatchewan and it is notable for its detail. It reflects the tradition of windigoes as real human cannibals possessed by an evil spirit, not the more monstrous giant spoken of elsewhere:

Wiskahoo was naturally a cheerful, good natured, careless man, but hard times had changed him. He was a good Beaver worker and trapper, but an indifferent Moose Hunter...he had been twice so reduced by hunger, as to be twice on the point of eating one of his children to save the others, when he was fortunately found and relieved by the other Natives; these sufferings had, at times, unhinged his mind, and make him dread being alone, he had for about a month, been working Beaver, and had now joined

²⁷² Hearne, in a footnote in his later book, elaborated on this incident. Of course, Hearne may also have had reason to change his views as he gained more experience of life in the subarctic. See Hearne, 22.

²⁷³ See, David Thompson, *Writings of David Thompson: The Travels, 1850 Version*, Volume I, edited by William E. Moreau (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 57.

Tapappahtum; and their Tents were together; he came to trade, and brought some meat the other had sent. It is usual when the Natives comes to trade to give them a pint of grog; a liquor which I always used very sparingly; it was a bad custom, but could not be broken off: Wiskahoo as soon as he got it, and while drinking of it, used to say in a thoughtful mood “Nee weet to go” “I must be a Man eater.” This word seemed to imply “I am possessed of an evil spirit to eat human flesh”; “Wee tee go” is the evil Spirit, that devours humankind. When he had said this a few times, one of the Men used to tie him slightly, and he soon became quiet....

Three years afterwards this sad mood came upon him so often, that the Natives got alarmed. They shot him, and burnt his body to ashes, to prevent his ghost from remaining in this world.²⁷⁴

Thompson wrote about a similar windigo incident that occurred in 1799 near Lake of the Woods. The “sad affair” had involved a young man who confessed that he was afflicted with cannibalistic urges.²⁷⁵ At first, since the young man was a respected hunter, his comments were ignored by the band, but his behaviour only became more alarming. The man’s “Parents attempted to reason him out of this horrid inclination” but it proved to no avail. The man’s condition grew worse, he insisted he “must have human flesh to eat.”²⁷⁶ A council was called, and it was determined the young man was possessed by “an evil Spirit” that would make him “become a Man Eater (a Weetego).”²⁷⁷ It was resolved to put him to death, and that his own father should carry out the sentence. The young man accepted his fate, and was executed by his father. Like in the earlier windigo case, the man’s body was then burned to ashes in order to prevent his “soul and the evil spirit which possessed him from returning to this world...”²⁷⁸ Thompson further explained that, “It may be thought that the Council acted a cruel part in ordering the father to put his Son to death, when they could have ordered it by the hands of another person. This was done, to prevent the law of retaliation which had it been done by the

²⁷⁴ Thompson, *Narrative*, 103.

²⁷⁵ Thompson, *Narrative*, 193.

²⁷⁶ Thompson, *Narrative*, 193-194.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

hands of any other person, might have been made a pretext of revenge by those who were not the friends of the person who put him to death.”²⁷⁹

Thompson, in keeping with his interest in other monsters, made detail notes about the windigo phenomenon. He noted that it was confined to the Algonquian cultures in the subarctic forest (and was not found on the Plains or among the more northerly Dene). Though his views are not always clear, he seems to have partly accepted that windigoes really existed in the terms Algonquian accounts commonly portrayed them. Unlike the deist Hearne, he did not express any doubt about the reality of cannibalism, and again unlike Hearne, he explicitly connected such incidents to the existence of an “Evil Spirit.” He concluded that:

The word Weetego is one of the names of the Evil Spirt and when he gets possession of any Man, (Women are wholly exempt from it) he becomes a Man Eater, and if he succeeds; no longer keeps company with his relations and friends, but roams all alone through the Forests, a powerful wicked Man, preying upon whom he can, and as such is dreaded by the Natives. Tradition says, such evil Men were more frequent than at present, probably from famine. I have known a few instances of this deplorable turn of mind, and not one instance could plead hunger, much less famine as an excuse, or cause of it. There is yet a dark chapter to be written on this aberration of the human mind of this kind.²⁸⁰

In rejecting that these disturbing incidents were caused by “hunger, much less famine,”

Thompson seemed to partly accept the Algonquian point-of-view that something darker, an “Evil Spirit,” was the cause.²⁸¹ Later travellers, operating in an area less sympathetic to Indigenous monster beliefs, would write much more critically about Algonquian windigo traditions.

Thompson, in contrast, was part of an era of fur trade explorers that maintained close relations with northern Algonquian groups. This partially explains why his and other trappers’

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Thompson, 194.

²⁸¹ Based partly on Thompson’s statement that the instances of windigo cannibalism he knew of were not motivated by actual famine, but some “deplorable turn of mind,” twentieth century anthropologists and psychologists concluded that Algonquian peoples had been occasionally prone to a “cultural bound” psychiatric disorder that manifested itself in a compulsion to eat human flesh. This medical condition was named “windigo psychosis.” See for example, Morton I. Teicher, *Winido Psychosis: A Study of the Relationship Between Belief and Behaviour Among the Indians of Northeastern Canada* (1960).

perspectives on windigoes and monsters were much less divergent from their native guides' views compared with later generations of frontier travellers. Thompson had not only been sent to the "Indian country" as a fifteen year old, he learned to speak several Indigenous languages (including Cree and Ojibwa), and had by all accounts a close partnership with his Métis wife, Charlotte Small.²⁸² Together they were married for fifty-eight years and had thirteen children. Thompson was also, as other historians have noted, unusually interested in the recording of Indigenous oral history.²⁸³ And while his views are not entirely clear, it seems that Thompson, unlike Hearne and Le Jeune but perhaps more like Isham and Ellis, as well as Champlain and French-Canadian voyageurs, apparently accepted the existence of the windigo, equating it with an evil spirit.

One overlooked account of an apparently windigo-like monster in exploration literature can be found in François Antoine Larocque's journal from 1805. It is one of the few accounts of the era written by a Canadien in the fur trade. Larocque, a young Canadien clerk with the North West Company, in 1805 was sent from the Assinboine River on a trading mission to the Rocky Mountains, an unfamiliar environment to Larocque and his voyageurs. Having reached the mountains and travelled some distance up the Yellowstone River watershed, Larocque, in his August 31, 1805 journal entry (which he wrote in English with some French phrases mixed in), recorded a story told to him by his Indigenous Apsáalooke (Crow) guides: "There is a fall in this River 30 or 40 miles above this where presides a Mantoine or Devil. These Indians say it is a Man Wolf who lives in the fall and rises out of it to devour any person or beast that go to near. They

²⁸² For a discussion of fur trade marriages, including Thompson's, see, Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-trade Society, 1670-1870* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983).

²⁸³ See, Germaine Warkentin, *Canadian Exploration Literature: An Anthology* (Toronto Dundurn), 269-270.

say it is impossible to Kill him for he is ball proof.”²⁸⁴ Larocque’s journal gives no indication that he doubted this tale; certainly he did not write anything dismissive of it, and he never alluded to it again in what was otherwise a journal devoted to recording factual information relevant to the fur trade. (Immediately after recording the details of the “Man Wolf” Larocque noted the dimensions of a “Ram’s” horn he found beside the river—another animal Europeans had not previously encountered: bighorn sheep.) This sense of unfamiliarity, coupled with a cultural background in which many of New France’s colonists accepted belief in windigoes, equating them with Old World traditions about werewolves, led to Larocque’s apparent unwillingness to reject the tale. His youth too, he had turned twenty while on the journey, may also have played a role in his apparent acceptance of the story. It also seems clear that in interpreting this frightening creature as a “Man Wolf” or “Devil” Larocque was mixing up Algonquian and French Canadian monster traditions of werewolves and windigoes with a quite separate Apsáalooke monster tradition. Language barriers likely also played a role in this. While Larocque could speak Ojibwa, he could not understand the Apsáalooke language, leaving him to communicate through a third-party translator who could speak both languages.

Larocque’s contemporary in the fur trade, George Nelson (1786-1859), has attracted more interest from scholars studying the windigo. Like Larocque, Nelson was born in Lower Canada and entered the fur trade while still an adolescent. His journals and “letter-books” constitute one of the most detailed early nineteenth century sources on the windigo. Nelson, like most of the fur traders in the North West Company, learned to speak Algonquian languages (i.e. Ojibwa and Cree). Also like most fur traders of the era, he lived for decades in the Northwest, before eventually retiring with his Ojibwa wife and family to Lower Canada. This duality—a life

²⁸⁴François Antoine Larocque, *Journal of Larocque from the Assiboine to the Yellowstone 1805*, edited by L.J. Burpee, *Publications of the Canadian Archives*, No. 3 (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1910), 41.

spent half immersed in Ojibwa culture and half in British settler society—is evident in his sometimes conflicted and contradictory views expressed on windigoes in his candid notebooks (similar to the ambiguity in much of what Thompson, another adolescent sent to the “Indian country,” wrote about windigoes and the “Mammoth”). For example, in his 1823 notebook, Nelson explained:

There is a kind of disease (or distemper rather, and of the *mind* I am fully persuaded) peculiar to the Crees and Sauteux’s, and of which they have the greatest dread and horror; and certainly not without the very great[est] cause, the consequences 49 times out of 50 being death unfortunately to many besides the subjects or objects, themselves. They term *this* Win-di-go (according to the French pronunciation, which is more correct than the English, in this word) — the proper signification of which, to me at least, and no one I think can doubt it, is *Giant*, of the anthropophagi Genus, sect, tribe, or kind &c. The stories related of these are extravagant and fantastic as those we read in our old romances *in the day of Chivalry*; differing in no one circumstance hardly but the means used in their destruction, which of course is often done by the intervention or assistance of their Guardian Genii. However, there are some few more rational than those of *ours* and tho’ still beyond all bounds of credibility, are as devoutly believed by these poor creatures as the Gospel is by the most orthodox among us....”²⁸⁵

Nelson believed that Europeans had once (“in the day of Chivalry”) held similar beliefs of giants and monsters. He elaborated in considerable detail about these giant windigoes:

Suffice it to say that they are of uncommon size — Goliath is an unborn infant to them; and to add to their dread, they are represented as possessing much of the Power of Magicians. Their head reaching to the tops of the highest Poplars (about 70, or 80, feet), they are of proportionate size, of course they must be very heavy: their gait tho’ grand and majestic, at every step the Earth shakes. They frequently pursue their Prey (*indians* of course) invisibly, yet they cannot so completely divest themselves of all the incommodities of nature as to prevent their approach being known. A secret and unaccountable horror pervades the whole system of one, several, or the whole band, of those of whom he is in pursuit: Phenomena in the heavens, earth &c, &c.”²⁸⁶

Nelson believed that there was a connection between the giant windigoes and human cannibalism:

²⁸⁵ George Nelson, “*The Orders of the Dreamed*”: *George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823* edited by Jennifer S.H. Brown and Robert Brightman (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1990), 85-86.

²⁸⁶ George Nelson, “*The Orders of the Dreamed*,” 86.

These Giants as far as I can learn reside somewhere about the *North Pole*; and even at this day frequently pay their unwelcome visits, but which, however, are attended with a complete fright only. It seems also that they delegate their Power to the indians occasionally; and *this* occasions that cannibalism which is Produced, or proceeds rather from a distemper much resembling *maniaism*.²⁸⁷

Nelson's copious notes on all aspects of windigoes constitute one of the most extensive treatments of the windigo by any fur trader. He recorded folktales about them from the distant past, windigo "cures" and how to guard against them, as well ritual executions of human windigoes, and several windigo cases that he knew of, including one at Lake Winnipeg sometime around 1812-1813, and another incident involving a voyageur. He concluded there were three different "sorts or Kinds" of windigo: the giant monsters, and the humans they occasionally "delegated" their power to (i.e. possessed), which turned ordinary people into cannibals, two, people who were "driven to this dreadful extremity by starvation" i.e. people who when faced with starvation murdered others and ate them to survive, and lastly, a third type of windigo that could be created through dreams apparently connected with an evil spirit and involving images of ice and winter.²⁸⁸ Nelson had personally witnessed several cases of what he thought were Ojibwas turning into windigoes. He described what he had seen as:

a sort of mania, or fever, a distemper of the brain. Their eyes (for I have seen [people who are] thus perplex'd) are wild and uncommonly clear — they seem as if they glistened. It seems to me to lodge in the Head. They are generally rational except at short, sudden intervals when the paroxysms cease [seize] them: their motions then are various and diametrically contrary at one time to what they are next — Sullen, thoughtful, wild look and perfectly mute: staring, in sudden convulsions, wild incoherent and extravagant language.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁷ Nelson, 88.

²⁸⁸ Nelson, 88-91.

²⁸⁹ Nelson, 91.

Nelson, like many of the voyageurs who were his close companions, came to believe that there was indeed an evil spirit or other unseen malignant power at work in these cases.²⁹⁰ In his journal Nelson remarked: “There is such a singular, strange, incomprehensible contradictoriness in almost all these cases, and many I have heard, that I do most verily believe they are denunciations, witch or wizardisms; in any other manner they are not to be rationally accounted for...”²⁹¹ Clearly, as the historian Shawn Smallman perceptively noted: “Nelson did not think of the Cree and Ojibwa beliefs as superstition....it is clear from his account that his encounters with windigos puzzled him deeply and left him troubled.”²⁹²

By the 1820s “Indian superstitions” about “imaginary” windigoes were not supposed to trouble the minds of white Anglo-settlers, especially one who was the son of a “prominent schoolteacher.”²⁹³ Nelson’s musing were never published in his lifetime. When the journals of some of his colleagues in the fur trade, such as Daniel Harmon, were published, they were sometimes edited by third-parties in ways to minimize their authors’ affinities with Indigenous points-of-view and to make them seem more skeptical than had often been the case.

This can be seen with Harmon’s journal, which was edited and published by the Reverend Daniel Haskell in 1820. Haskell noted in his introduction to the volume that Harmon—who had spent nineteen years as a fur trader—had never intended to make his journal public, so that Haskell had found it necessary to extensively revise it.²⁹⁴ However, he frequently did so in ways to remove or minimize Harmon’s sympathy and affinity with Algonquian points-of-view

²⁹⁰ Shawn Smallman concludes that Nelson “became firmly convinced that the Cree and Ojibwa in fact communicated with spirits...” See, Smallman, “Spirit Beings,” 577.

²⁹¹ Nelson, 103.

²⁹² Smallman, “Spirit Beings,” 577.

²⁹³ Nelson’s father was a schoolteacher in Lower Canada of modest means. See, Sylvia Van Kirk in collaboration with Jennifer S. H. Brown, “George Nelson,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed August 2018, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/nelson_george_8E.html.

²⁹⁴ Daniel Williams Harmon, *A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the Interior of North America*, edited by Daniel Haskell (Andover: Flagg and Gould, 1820), x.

that had been expressed in the journal. For instance, Harmon had written in his unedited journal that upon visiting a Cree and Assiniboine camp for a period of several days, he had, "... met with more real politeness...than is often shown to Strangers in the civilized part of the World, and much more than I had expected [to] meet with from Savages as the Indians are generally called, but I think wrongfully."²⁹⁵ Haskell, in his published version, removed Harmon's last line that Indigenous people were wrongfully called "Savages."²⁹⁶ Harmon had also recounted a conversation that he had witnessed take place among the Cree and Assiniboine: "...after their repast was over they smoaked their Pipes and conversed rationally on the great difference there is between the manners & customs of Civilized People and those of Savages."²⁹⁷ In the published version however, the editor Haskell saw fit to add a new sentence to this passage: "They readily conceded, that ours are superior to theirs."²⁹⁸

Harmon recorded a reference to what may possibly have been a windigo-inspired story in his May 18, 1820 diary entry. He reported the existence of a cave on the Mattawa River that was said to be connected with many "remarkable tales:"

Sunday 18...We have left the Otaway [Ottawa] River on our right hand side, and come up a small one that falls into it [the Mattawa River]. About twelve we passed a Cave in the side of a high hill, which I am told is spacious but we were in too great a hurry for me to go see it, of which the Natives know many remarkable tales to relate.²⁹⁹

Haskell embellished Harmon's reference to the cave by adding details about a windigo-like monster, which Harmon was now supposedly skeptical about. Haskell's edited version reads:

Sunday 18....About noon, we passed a cave, in the side of a high hill. This cave, I am told, is spacious; but we were in too great haste, to permit my examining it. This I was the more inclined to do; as I am told that the natives relate many remarkable stories

²⁹⁵ Daniel Williams Harmon, *Harmon's Journal, 1800-1819*, edited by W. Kaye Lamb (Surrey, BC: TouchWood Editions, 2006), 33.

²⁹⁶ Harmon, *Voyages*, (Haskell), 302.

²⁹⁷ Harmon, *Journal*, edited by Lamb, 32-33.

²⁹⁸ Harmon, *Voyages*, (Haskell), 215.

²⁹⁹ Harmon, *Journal*, edited by Lamb, 7.

respecting it; and among others, that a large animal remains in it, which they call a Man-eater, and which devours all those, who have the presumption to approach the entrance, of his solitary dwelling.³⁰⁰

In addition to having added details about the natives believing the cave to be the home of a man-eating monster, Haskell's version makes it seem as if Harmon was the skeptical explorer wishing to go investigate an Indigenous monster legend (he was supposedly "*more inclined*" to investigate it because the natives believed it to be the lair of a "Man-eater.") This dynamic, namely the skeptical and apparently fearless European explorer who debunks or investigates native monster tales, as noted in the previous chapter, became a convention in nineteenth century exploration literature. But Harmon's journal suggests that his views were closer to his Algonquian counterparts than his editor's revisions implied. He had said nothing about a "Man-eater" dwelling in the cave, merely "remarkable tales." One suspects that if the natives had said a windigo lived in the cave, Harmon would have preferred to give it a wide berth, much as Larocque had been careful not to go near the waterfall that his guides had said was the home of a "Man Wolf."³⁰¹

Other surviving sources further suggest that fur traders and other white frontiersmen lower down the social scale of the early nineteenth century may have partly shared, or at least respected, their Algonquian companions' windigo beliefs. Few of them made any written records of their thoughts, and fewer still have survived. Those that have, like Harmon's, were often edited for publication by third-parties that did not share the same indulgence toward Indigenous beliefs. Another example of this is the narrative of John Tanner, who was even more immersed in Indigenous culture than Harmon. Tanner, who was born circa 1780 near the Kentucky River, became an acculturated Ojibwa, or in colloquial terms, a "white Indian." He had been kidnapped

³⁰⁰ Harmon, *Voyages*, (Haskell), 32.

³⁰¹ Lacrocque, 40-41.

at the age of nine or ten by Shawnees, and while still a child was sold to Net-no-kwa, an Odawa woman. She adopted Tanner as a son and took him to live near Lake Michigan, and then subsequently to the Red River area with her Ojibwa husband. Tanner gradually assimilated into Ojibwa culture, becoming fluent in their language and losing most knowledge of his former life, including much of the English language. He lived as an Ojibwa for many years, and married and had children who were raised as Ojibwas. Eventually, after over twenty-five years of this life, Tanner came to the attention of Lord Selkirk, governor of the Hudson's Bay Company and patron of a newly established Scottish settlement in Red River, who helped reunite Tanner with his birth family. But Tanner preferred his adopted life; he remained in the Northwest, eventually relearning enough English to serve sporadically as an interpreter in the 1820s at Sault St. Marie, including for Henry Schoolcraft, an American Indian agent and prominent early ethnologist. While in Sault St. Marie, Tanner also made the acquaintance of Edwin James, an American medical doctor with an interest in Indigenous cultures. James befriended Tanner and recorded his memoirs, which he published in 1830 as a first-person account in Tanner's name, along with an appendix and endnotes by James on Indigenous languages, culture, and customs.³⁰²

In his memoir, Tanner had alluded to a curious tradition about the "Weendgoag." He had apparently included the "Weendgoag" in a detailed list of the various Indigenous nations and tribes (some thirty-two in all) known to the band of Odawa (an Algonquian sub-group) that he had lived with.³⁰³ This notion, that the windigo were a whole tribe, is found in a few other sources, ranging from twentieth century oral histories to a source penned in the early eighteenth century by a French colonist. It reflects the high variability in windigo traditions across the

³⁰² Edwin James and John Tanner, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner During Thirty Years Residence Among the Indians in the Interior of North America* (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1830).

³⁰³ James and Tanner, *A Narrative*, 316.

diversity of Algonquian cultures. However, when it came to the existence of actual giant windigo monsters, the editor James dismissed them as “imaginary.” He explained in an endnote that: “Weendegoag, Cannibals. This last is an imaginary race, said to inhabit an island in Hudson’s Bay. They are of giant dimension, and extremely given to cannibalism....³⁰⁴ Whether Tanner also felt that the “Weendegoag” were merely imaginary is uncertain. That they were included in a list of otherwise recognizable tribes known to the Odawa implies they were regarded as existing in the material world by his Odawa band. The implication seems to be that, like with Haskell’s editing of Harmon’s private journals, Tanner’s views were closer to his Indigenous counterparts than to his editor’s. Certainly by 1830, the year James published Tanner’s memoir, it had become unusual for Europeans explorers or settlers to express literal belief in Indigenous monster legends—at least in print. But for earlier generations of frontier travellers, that had not been the case.

Increasingly by the mid-nineteenth century in exploration and travel literature it was the norm for explorers to depict windigoes and other monsters as merely native “superstitions,” rather than manifestations of the Devil or actual monsters. Moreover, Canadian exploration literature by this point was increasingly no longer primarily penned by fur traders—that is, traders who had entered the “Indian country” as youths and grown up there—but more obvious outsiders less sympathetic to Indigenous points-of-view. The artist and traveller Paul Kane, for instance, not only recorded one of the earliest proto-sasquatch accounts, but also discussed windigoes in his narrative of his travels between 1845-1848 in western North America. Kane reported an incident involving an Ojibwa family in his June 1, 1846 journal entry:

...they were, as I afterwards learned, considered to be cannibals, the Indian term for which is *Weendigo*, or “One who eats Human Flesh.” There is a superstitious belief among the Indians that the Weendigo cannot be killed by anything short of a silver bullet.

³⁰⁴Ibid.

I was informed, on good authority, that a case had occurred here in which a father and daughter had killed and eaten six of their own family from absolute want.³⁰⁵

After relating a gruesome tale of windigo cannibalism, Kane explained that: “The Weendigoes are looked upon with superstitious dread and horror by all Indians, and any one known to have eaten human flesh is shunned by the rest; as it is supposed that, having once tasted it, they would do so again had they any opportunity.”³⁰⁶ Kane did not give any indication that he believed an actual evil spirit was at work in these incidents. Similar to his encounter with a sasquatch-like legend in western North America, Kane treated such beliefs as “superstitions.” However, compared to later writers, Kane did not ridicule the Ojibwa for belief in windigoes, as he seemed to accept that famine cannibalism was a real phenomenon.

Shortly after Kane, the German traveller and scholar Johann Georg Kohl journeyed to Lake Superior in 1855 and wrote a book about his experiences that focused on the local Ojibwa.³⁰⁷ He noted Ojibwa accounts of both human windigoes and also traditions about the giant, terrifying monsters of the same name.³⁰⁸ He felt that the root of windigo beliefs was that the Ojibwa were “devoted to fancies and dreams” and ruled by “superstition.”³⁰⁹ However, Kohl also felt that pre-Enlightenment Europeans had been similarly superstitious. He likened the contemporary Ojibwa belief in windigoes to the European belief in witches during “the middle ages.” He observed:

It is very natural in a country which really produces isolated instances of such horrors, and with a nation so devoted to fancies and dreams, superstition should be mixed up in the matter, and that at last, through this superstition, wonderful stories of windigos should be produced, as among us, in the middle ages, the belief in witches produced witches. Just as among us...superstition endowed these magicians and witches with greater and

³⁰⁵ Paul Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist: Among the Indians of North America* (Dover Publications: Mineola, New York, 1996, first published Toronto, 1859), 40-41.

³⁰⁶ Paul Kane, *Wanderings*, 41.

³⁰⁷ Johann Georg Kohl, *Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway*, edited by Robert E. Bieder, translated by Ralf Neufang and Ulrike Bocker, (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1985), 355.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

more dangerous powers than they really possessed, and people grew at last into giving themselves out as witches and magicians—here, too, some men have become windigos by necessity; in the same way fear has some caused some gloomy-minded people to be regarded as windigos; and, worst of all, this fear and the general opinion have so worked upon some minds, that they believe themselves to be really windigos, and must act in that way.

Kohl did not, however, doubt the reality of occasional cannibalism among the Ojibwa in times of famine. He noted the details of three separate windigo incidents that he was told, one involving a man who had killed and cannibalized his two wives and children in succession, another where a man had cannibalized his friend, and a third where a man had “wandered about the forests like a hungry wolf, and hunted his fellow-men.”³¹⁰ Kohl recorded further details of these incidents, including dates and locations.³¹¹ He explained that these people were given:

...the opprobrious name of “Windigo,” which is nearly synonymous with our cannibal. And it is quite certain that if a man has ever had recourse to this last and most horrible method of saving his life, even when the circumstances are pressing and almost excusable, he is always regarded with terror and horror by the Indians. They avoid him, and he lives among the savages like a timid head of game.³¹²

Again, he saw this as comparable to medieval Europeans treatment of witches. He explained:

“There seems not a doubt that these poor people, persecuted and shot as windigos, are, like our witches, very often wretched persons driven to extremities by starvation.”³¹³

Curiously, however, Kohl noted that: “...the word [windigo] is much more frequently used with reference to the giant race of cannibals known by the name, than to the monsters now having their being among us....”³¹⁴ This mirrors Nelson’s observation that belief in the existence of giant windigos remained a part of Ojibwa cosmologies, something Tanner’s memoir had also implied. Kohl, like Nelson, emphasized the parallel with traditional European folklore,

³¹⁰ Kohl, 356.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Kohl, 364-366.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

suggesting the common ground Indigenous and European cultures had formerly shared with regard to monster lore. He noted that: “It is curious enough, too, that the Indian fancy, like that of the Scandinavians and other nations, invented and created a dwarf-like race by the side of the cannibal giants.”³¹⁵

Kohl’s treatment of Ojibwa windigo tales is indicative of the widening divide between Algonquian peoples and European explorers and colonial settlers. Not only were Kohl’s views of Ojibwa tales of giant cannibal monsters obviously starkly different from Champlain’s, they were a shift from the views of fur traders like Isham, Thompson and Nelson, who had seemed to accept the windigo as a genuine manifestation of an evil supernatural entity (i.e. the Devil or an “Evil Spirit”). Yet, in allowing that there were similarities between Ojibwa windigo lore and traditional European monster lore or witchcraft cases, Kohl was still closer to a sympathetic representation of Ojibwa beliefs than travel writers of the late nineteenth century who tended to ignore or discount any such similarities.

Kohl’s views on windigoes also match those of another travel writer of the 1850s, the University of Toronto professor and explorer Henry Youle Hind. Hind led several colonial government-backed expeditions in remote areas of Canada in the 1850s. His publications about these journeys relate several windigo stories, including both giant monsters and human cannibals. In his 1860 account, besides discussing an earlier windigo cannibalism incident in some detail, Hind recorded that:

...Several instances of cannibalism were mentioned to us by the voyageurs as having occurred on this route; and in the following summer noted spots in the basin of Lake Winnipeg were pointed out, which preserve a similar dreadful reputation. Both voyageurs

³¹⁵ Kohl, 364-366.

and Indians always spoke of these horrible deeds in subdued tones and with an expression of anxiety and alarm.³¹⁶

Hind's brief account does not ridicule Algonquian peoples for the windigo like later travellers' began to do; from his account one feels the quiet sense of horror that must have haunted the memories of voyageurs and natives about certain place along their routes. His comment that such "horrible deeds" were always mentioned in "subdued tones and with an expression of anxiety and alarm" by both the voyageurs and natives, is another indication that voyageurs immersed in the world of the subarctic fur trade shared their native counterparts' dread of the windigo.

Six years later, in his 1863 *Explorations in the Interior of the Labrador Peninsula, The Country of the Montagnais and Nasquapee Indians*, Hind recounted a different variant of the windigo legend. In Labrador, far removed from the well-paddled canoe routes of the fur trade, Hind was told by his guides that the windigo was a giant monster that stalked the subarctic forests. He recorded:

The Indian sat looking at the fire for many minutes. I did not want to interrupt his thoughts....At length he spoke, looking at the body, and pointing to it, saying, "He said last winter that some one would die before the year was out."

I knew well enough that it was one of their superstitions that had troubled him, for he was a heathen not more than a year ago; and a man not get rid of his heathen notions by being touched by a drop of Manitou water. So I said to him, "Did he see anything?"

"He came across tracks."

"Tracks?"

"A Windigo," said the Indian.

"Have you ever seen one?" I asked him.

"I have seen tracks."

"Where?"

"On the St. Marguerite, the Mingan, the Manitou, the Oa-na-ma-ne. My cousin saw tracks on the Manitou last winter, and he said to me and many of us, 'Something will happen.'"

"What were the tracks like?" I said to him.

"Windigoes," he replied.

"Well, but how big were they?"

³¹⁶ Henry Youle Hind, *Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857 and the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858*, in Two Volumes, Volume I, (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860), 65.

He looked at me and said nothing, nor would he speak on the subject again. “These Montagnais think,” continued Pierre, “that the Windigoes are giant cannibals, twenty and thirty feet high. They think that they live on human flesh, and that many Indians who have gone hunting, and have never afterwards been heard of, have been devoured by Windigoes. They are dreadfully superstitious in the woods, but brave enough when they get on the coast.”³¹⁷

Hind’s Montagnais guide’s reticence on the subject of windigoes (“nor would he speak on the subject again”) reveals an apparent unwillingness on part of Indigenous guides to have their beliefs mocked by white explorers who were increasingly removed from their world (i.e. a university professor from the city instead of a fur trader). This dynamic suggests the widening rift between the two groups when it came to windigoes and other monsters, much like the “sasquatch” in western Canada. While Hind did not overly mock or ridicule his Montagnais’ guides’ belief in windigoes (unlike other Euro-Canadian authors who would soon begin to do so), he also did not share his guides’ beliefs in monsters the way earlier explorers and fur traders once had. By the 1860s, at least in their written accounts, most European explorers had long since ceased to treat Indigenous monster tales very seriously. Unlike with Thompson’s discovery of “Mammoth” tracks in 1811 in the Athabasca Pass, Hind did not wrestle with whether such a creature might actually exist.

As for French-Canadian voyageurs, Hind’s account seems to suggest that Pierre, the French-Canadian voyageur, did not openly share the “superstitions” of his Montagnais companions. Most sources, however, suggest that the opposite was generally true, including some of Hind’s own writing. Hind, for example, had earlier lumped French-Canadian voyageurs in with Algonquians as sharing the same “anxiety and alarm” when it came to windigoes. It may have been that Pierre was less dismissive of windigo beliefs than he had implied to Hind, and

³¹⁷ Henry Youle Hind, *Explorations in the Interior of the Labrador Peninsula, The Country of the Montagnais and Nasquapee Indians*, Vol. I, (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, & Green, 1863), 58-59.

merely appeared so for the same reason that the Montagnais were reluctant to speak much on the subject—an unwillingness to be chided by a white, bourgeois Anglo-Canadian explorer. Of course, we have only Hind’s version of the conversation, not a voyageur’s or a Montagnais guide’s.

Overall, while Hind’s books indicate the growing divide between explorers and their Algonquian guides on how windigoes were treated, like Kane and Kohl he did not use the windigo to lampoon, mock or belittle Algonquians, or portray them as savage and backwards, like the generation of frontier travellers who came at the end of the nineteenth century would. Rather, Hind described the Montagnais as, “...an honest, hospitable, and benevolent race,” but ultimately one, “with much superstition, which can never be erased from their minds for want of education.”³¹⁸ It was that “want of education” Hind felt that led the Montagnais to live in terror of windigo monsters, a sentiment similar to Kohl’s belief that pre-Enlightenment Europeans had entertained comparable “superstitions.”

European Attitudes Toward Windigo Cannibalism:

It might be assumed that Europeans who encountered cases of “windigo” cannibalism among Indigenous people would have used these incidents to try to justify European cultural and moral superiority, and even to further the process of constructing a non-European “Other” that was barbaric and primitive. And while there is reason to think that this was true of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers, it does not seem to have been the case with earlier explorers and fur traders. Instead of condemning alleged cases of cannibalism, they generally tried to defend their Algonquian companions from charges of barbarism, and even to lessen any notion of European moral superiority, by making comparisons with European

³¹⁸ Hind, *Explorations in Labrador*, 120.

examples. In contrast, from approximately the 1870s onward European and Euro-settler accounts of windigo cannibalism became less sympathetic and more critical. This reflects not only a wider cultural change in attitudes as racist sentiment became more pronounced in the late Victorian era, but also the changed circumstances of the observers—who were no longer the close fur trade companions of Algonquian peoples, but rather more obvious outsiders, like sportsmen, gentlemen travellers, and Christian missionaries.

Both Hearne and Thompson, despite their philosophical differences, seem to have largely refrained from embellishing their accounts of windigo cannibalism into something that could be used to condemn Algonquian culture more broadly. Thompson treated people who became windigoes *as individuals* with personal quirks, not as broadly representative of all Algonquian people. He also sought to explain—lest readers should interpret his examples as showing the Ojibwa as needlessly cruel—why it was necessary for the young windigo to be executed by his father. Hearne, though he does not seem to have believed in an actual windigo spirit, likewise did not think such incidents of cannibalism could be used to condemn Indigenous cultures more broadly. He insisted that such cases were only done when faced with starvation, which as a former sailor, Hearne could possibly appreciate as famine cannibalism was certainly not unknown among eighteenth-century European sailors.³¹⁹

As far as cannibalism went, Hearne denied that it was ever done out of anything other than dire necessity. In that view he was supported by his fur trade contemporary Alexander Mackenzie, who made two journeys of exploration in 1789 and 1793 respectively.³²⁰ Mackenzie

³¹⁹ The so-called “Law of the Sea” was the custom, if shipwrecked or adrift in small lifeboats and faced with starvation, of drawing lots to determine who would sacrifice themselves to save the others (through cannibalism). There are a number of well-known cases, and the practice became subject to a famous legal trial in England in 1884, *R v Dudley and Stephens*. See Neil Hanson, *The Custom of the Sea* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000).

³²⁰ The historian Arthur Lower concluded that, “Mackenzie’s is the greatest non-French name in the annals of North American exploration and either one of his exploits would have made him a famous man.” See Arthur Lower, *Colony to Nation: A History of Canada* (Toronto: Longmans, Green & Company, 1946), 143.

denied there was any true cannibals among any Indigenous nation he had encountered—and he had likely met with more Indigenous groups than any other European of his era—and as far as famine-induced cannibalism was concerned, Mackenzie implied that Europeans would likely do the same if faced with the same circumstances. He wrote of the Dene in particular:

If there be any people who, from the barren state of their country, might be supposed to be cannibals by nature, these people, from the difficulty, they, at times, experience in procuring food, might be liable to that imputation. But, in all my knowledge of them, I never was acquainted with one instance of that disposition; nor among all the natives I met with in a route of five thousand miles, did I see or hear of an example of cannibalism, but such as arose from that irresistible necessity, which has been known to impel even the most civilised people to eat each other.³²¹

Mackenzie also defended the Dene from charges of “a savage insensibility,” and cited examples that showed their humanity and warmth.³²² And in pointing out that cannibalism was something “even the most civilised people” might succumb to when faced with necessity, Mackenzie’s narrative missed a prime opportunity to construct a barbaric “Other.”

A slightly earlier example of these attitudes can be found in the notes of the Hudson’s Bay Company fur trader Andrew Graham. Graham’s notes, which cover his time on the coast of Hudson Bay from 1767-1791, mention several incidents of cannibalism that arose during harsh winters or hunting failures. He noted that even in these extreme circumstances cannibalism was not condoned by the Cree, and that anyone who engaged in it: “...is always shunned by the others...He cannot procure another wife, but goes about like a vagabond, or outcast on the earth.”³²³ Unlike later European observers, Graham did not see these incidents as a basis to

³²¹ It has been argued (based mainly on a comment made by David Thompson) that Mackenzie’s cousin and close confidant Roderick Mackenzie was the real author of this passage. This argument seems unconvincing; however, even if this were the case, it was a sentiment Alexander Mackenzie clearly agreed with enough to put his name to it in print. Alexander Mackenzie, *Voyages from Montreal, on the River St. Laurence, Through the Continent of North America, To the Frozen and Pacific Oceans, In the Years 1789 and 1793, With a Preliminary Account of the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Fur Trade, of That Country*, (London: 1801, this edition, Toronto, 1927), 131.

³²² Mackenzie, 130-131.

³²³ Andrew Graham, *Observations on Hudson’s Bay 1767-1791*, edited by Glyndwr Williams, *Volume 27 of the Publications of the Hudson’s Bay Record Society* (London: Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1969), 154-155.

portray the Cree as backwards or savage. Instead, he stressed that such incidents were only a last resort after “incredible hardships,” and noted that, when faced with the same circumstances, European sailors were also known to have turned to cannibalism.³²⁴ Graham also did not think the Cree were cruel or hard-hearted. On the contrary, he wrote: “The natives of Hudson’s Bay are courteous, benevolent, humane, and kind, relieving the necessities of one another to the utmost of their power...They frequently take the children of other people and adopt them as their own. They have a strong affection for their offspring, often caressing them even to a fault, seldom or never correcting them, alleging when they grow up they will know better themselves.”³²⁵

Another example of this sort of thinking among fur traders of the era is found in George Nelson’s letter-books. Nelson’s sympathy for Indigenous cultures extended to criticism of European civilization:

I am forced to say, that so far as regards intellect, uncultivated, as a people, they are far, very far, our Superiors. Many, no doubt, will deny this, and few, perhaps none of *us* will relish it...how many excesses, or follies at least, do we every day commit....The Indians are savages and barbarous; but our wars—our courts of law also shew a catalogue of crimes never Surpassed and seldom equalled by those we complacently call Barbarians.³²⁶

These sentiments toward Algonquian cultures were shared by other fur traders, such as Daniel Harmon, whose criticism of European civilization and objections to the use of the word “savages” to describe Indigenous peoples have already been noted.³²⁷

³²³ Graham, *Observations on Hudson’s Bay*, 150.

³²⁴ Ibid.

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ George Nelson, “*The Orders of the Dreamed*”: *George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823* edited by Jennifer S.H. Brown and Robert Brightman (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press), 23-24.

³²⁷ Another example of these attitudes is the fur trader Charles McKenzie, who bore witness to a panic caused by reports of a windigo in 1837 near his fur trade post. McKenzie married an Indigenous woman with whom he had four children and reportedly remained devoted to her until his death. The anthropologist Charles A. Bishop noted that McKenzie had been “reproached by two NWC proprietors for having adopted Indian dress,” and that he “was a strong advocate of Indian concerns,” which often involved criticizing fur-trade policies he considered unfair to

Even some non-fur traders of the era who were active in exploration in Canada's north, such as the Royal Navy midshipman Robert Hood, on the matter of cannibalism among Algonquian groups, commented in 1819 that: "They (the Cree) detest cannibals, though the unhappy persons have been rendered so by extreme necessity."³²⁸ Here again, whereas one might reasonably have expected a European explorer—and an officer of Britain's Royal Navy—to have exploited examples of cannibalism to paint an unflattering picture of Indigenous people as a "primitive Other," Hood refrained from doing so. On the contrary, Hood, like the fur trader Nelson, actually condemned the effect European civilization had on the Cree, and felt that it had degraded them, especially the introduction of alcohol.³²⁹ Of the Cree, he wrote pointedly, "Their minds have suffered more from European principles, than their health by European diseases" and their present deplorable condition was "a monument of ignominy to civilization."³³⁰ Yet Hood stressed that, "The moral character of the Crees, with all these blemishes, is honourable to human nature."³³¹

Even James, the editor of Tanner's memoir of life as an Ojibwa, tried to contextualize Ojibwa cannibalism in ways that could refute perceptions of Indigenous people as either savage or highly exotic. Presumably, he had been influenced by his discussions with Tanner who had lived as an Ojibwa for most of his life. James drew parallels with Europe's own history: "We doubt not that our pagan forefathers, in the wilds of Scotland, Ireland, or Hungary, ate the flesh, and particularly the hearts, of their enemies slain in battle."³³² James also defended northern

Indigenous people. See, Charles A. Bishop, "Charles McKenzie," *Canadian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume VIII, accessed January 2016, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mckenzie_charles_8E.html.

³²⁸ Robert Hood, *To the Arctic by Canoe 1819-1821: The Journal and Paintings of Robert Hood, Midshipman with Franklin*, edited by C. Stuart Houston, (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974), 87.

³²⁹ Hood, *To the Arctic by Canoe*, 85-86.

³³⁰ Hood, *To the Arctic by Canoe*, 85.

³³¹ Hood, *To the Arctic by Canoe*, 85.

³³² James and Tanner, *Narrative of Captivity*, 380.

Indigenous peoples from accusations of undue savagery: “The horrible practices to which men of all races have been driven in besieged cities, in cases of shipwreck, and other similar emergencies, should admonish us that the Indians, as a race, deserve no peculiar detestation for growing unavoidably out of their situation.”³³³ Indeed, if their roles were reversed, “we ourselves, in the same circumstances, should probably yield, as they do.”³³⁴ Events proved James right; shortly after he wrote those words Sir John Franklin’s Royal Navy crews were reduced to cannibalism on their ill-fated quest for the Northwest Passage.³³⁵

Even the artist Paul Kane had expressed a surprisingly sympathetic view when writing about windigoes: “I do not think that any Indian, at least none that I have seen, would eat his fellow-creature, except under the influence of starvation; nor do I think that there is any tribe of Indians on the North American continent to whom the word ‘cannibal’ can be properly applied.”³³⁶ In this he was similar to the German traveller Kohl, who in his discussion of windigoes also denied that there were any true cannibals among North American Indigenous people. Instead, he held that cannibalism was done only out of necessity.³³⁷ Kohl, as noted earlier, had likened the Ojibwa belief in windigoes to European examples from the “middle ages” involving witchcraft. However, he went even further when he added that he thought the same basic psychology still applied to contemporary Europeans:

In all physical and mental diseases incidental to humanity, there is a certain epidemic tendency, and a spontaneous self-production and propagation. It is just like the “Sorrows

³³³ James and Tanner, *Narrative of Captivity*, 293.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ When the revelation that Franklin’s crew had resorted to cannibalism was made public, it brought scorn and condemnation from Lady Franklin and much of the Victorian press on the explorer John Rae, who had been the first European to learn of it and bring news back to England. See Ken McGoogan, *Fatal Passage: The Story of John Rae, the Arctic Hero Time Forgot* (New York: Carol & Graf Publishers, 2001).

³³⁶ Kane, *Wanderings*, 41.

³³⁷ Johann Georg Kohl, *Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway*, edited by Robert E. Bieder, translated by Ralf Neufang and Ulrike Bocker, (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1985), 355.

of Werther.” First, there is a Werther in real life, whom the poets render celebrated, and at last the nation is inoculated with Werthers.³³⁸

In likening the windigo phenomenon to a European example, Kohl downplayed any idea that the Ojibwa were barbaric or unduly superstitious, and instead emphasized his belief that humans all share the same basic psychology. Kohl further stressed that windigo cases were rare, noting that, “...that you hear more frequently of windigos than you find or see them...”³³⁹ Kohl thus largely refrained from depicting windigo cannibalism as a custom peculiar to a “primitive” people, instead portraying it as something that was rare and only occurred as an ultimate last resort, which he found understandable given extreme circumstances. The psychology surrounding it Kohl saw as comparable to European witchcraft, and even the myths of giants he likened to European examples.

Of course, not everyone agreed with the perspectives of fur traders and explorers toward windigo cases or Algonquian peoples more generally. One contemporary voice in the 1830s who disagreed with these sentiments was the American Indian Agent and ethnologist Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. Although Schoolcraft devoted much of his career to the study of Indigenous languages and culture and authored numerous books and papers on the subject, he was a prominent supporter of President Andrew Jackson’s “Indian Removal” policies.³⁴⁰ After his posting in 1822 as U.S. Indian agent to Sault Saint Marie in northern Michigan, he married a local woman of mixed Scottish-Ojibwa ancestry, from whom he learned the Ojibwa language and much of their mythology. Despite this, in his voluminous writings on Indigenous myth and culture Schoolcraft seldom wavered from his condescending attitude. In 1839 Schoolcraft

³³⁸ Kohl, 357-358.

³³⁹ Kohl, 364-366.

³⁴⁰ See, Gregory Evans Dowd, “Michigan Murder Mysteries: Death and Rumour in the Age of Indian Removal,” in *Enduring Nations: Native Americans in the Midwest* edited by Russell David Edmunds, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 147.

published a book which included a folktale about giant windigo monsters, something that Schoolcraft not surprisingly regarded as a purely imaginary “superstition.” In a postscript to that story, he commented:

This story exhibits the mind of the Saginaws in a characteristic light...the Saginaws have never made the least advances in education or religion. Cruelty, deception, intemperance, and a blind adherence to the idolatrous customs and superstitions of the nation from which they sprang, have been their characteristics....They have been, emphatically, a band of plunderers...

The tales of this tribe...partake strongly of the character of the tribe....³⁴¹

Schoolcraft's views as a United States' Indian agent appear sharply at odds with those of explorers and fur traders like Hearne, Mackenzie, Thompson, Graham, McKenzie, Hood, Tanner, Harmon and others. These fur traders or explorers—with the exception of Hood—all spent decades living in remote areas with Algonquian peoples. Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that their books, journals and letters display attitudes toward Indigenous culture, including the phenomenon of windigoes, that are markedly more tolerant and sympathetic (and even critical of Europeans) than what many contemporary scholars have come to expect from European exploration literature.

³⁴¹ Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, *Alcic Researches, Comprising Inquiries Respecting the Mental Characteristics of the North American Indians* Volume I, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1839), 117-118. Schoolcraft's views were at odds with his fellow Sault St. Marie residents James and Tanner. In the introduction to Tanner's narrative, James had written a scathing condemnation of United States' Indian policy. James called United States' treaties with native nations nothing more than a “vain mockery,” since “the *negotiation*, the *reciprocity*, and the benefits, are all on one side.” The “efforts” to civilize Indigenous people he thought were “feeble and misdirected” and no one, wrote James, should deceive themselves into “the belief that we have either regard for their rights, where they happen to come into competition with our interests, or a sincere desire to promote the cause of moral instruction among them.” James and Tanner, *Narrative*, 14-15. Schoolcraft condemned James' and Tanner's book, and disparaged Tanner as “more suspicious, revengeful, and bad-tempered than any Indian I ever knew.” As quoted in, Gregory Evans Dowd, “Michigan Murder Mysteries: Death and Rumour in the Age of Indian Removal,” in *Enduring Nations: Native Americans in the Midwest* edited by Russell David Edmunds, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 147. Schoolcraft had actually hired Tanner as an interpreter in 1828, but their relationship had soured. When Schoolcraft's brother was murdered in 1846, he accused Tanner of the crime—though evidence was lacking, and Tanner fled into the wilderness, never to be heard from again. See Dowd, “Michigan Murder Mysteries,” 124-159, and the introduction to “White Indian: John Tanner,” in *Captured by the Indians: 15 Firsthand Accounts, 1750-1870*, edited by Frederick Drimmer (New York: Dover Publications, 1985, reprinted of 1961 first edition), 142-144.

Nor were these relatively sympathetic understandings of windigo cannibalism confined to fur trade explorers; the midshipmen Hood, as shown above, expressed similar views. French Canadian voyageurs likewise shared many of their Algonquian counterparts' beliefs about windigoes. And other writers and explorers of a slightly later era—such as the artist and traveller Paul Kane and the geologist and explorer Henry Youle Hind—also seem to have refrained from using the windigo phenomenon as something to portray Algonquian peoples as primitive or barbaric. The major shift in attitude to a less tolerant and sympathetic one on windigoes occurred in the later Victorian era, roughly from the 1870s onward, with obvious exceptions such as Schoolcraft, though given his status as a United States government agent that is not unexpected.

By the 1870s, with the North American frontier receding and the industrial revolution spreading a network of railroads across the continent, Euro-settler attitudes toward traditional Indigenous knowledge, including monster lore, became much more negative. Historian Michael Adas has found this same dynamic in other contexts as part of what he argues was a major shift in how Europeans perceived non-Western cultures.³⁴² Increasingly, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries exploration and travel literature that touched on windigoes was no longer dominated by fur trade explorers, but instead missionaries, sports hunters, and gentleman travellers. They were less understanding of these incidents than earlier generations of European explorers and were more inclined to treat windigo cases as indications of what they claimed were Indigenous peoples' primitive superstitions and savage natures. They were also much less inclined to express belief in the windigo as an Algonquian equivalent of demons or the Devil in Christian theology, instead depicting it as only a primitive delusion. However, French-Canadian voyageurs were frequently also lampooned alongside Algonquian peoples as similarly sharing

³⁴² Michael Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men: Science, Technology, and Ideologies of Western Dominance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

pre-modern, superstitious beliefs about windigoes. While some of these representations might have been spurred by Anglo-Canadian bigotry toward French-Canadians, it also mirrored similar depictions of low-status white trappers in western North America who were frequently ridiculed alongside their Indigenous counterparts as clinging to old “superstitions” about “sasquatch.”

These late-nineteenth-century windigo accounts also contain a major thematic shift in how the subject was portrayed in Euro-Canadian literature, namely, the substitution of what had once been near universal dread and horror when discussing windigoes to a condescending humour about these incidents. This reflects a more profound shift: the reality that the old fur trade partnerships that had bonded explorers and other frontier travelers with their Algonquian guides and companions, and had seen them experience the same material culture (including periodic famines) was becoming a thing of the past.³⁴³ From the 1870s onward explorers and travel writers active in Canada’s hinterland were increasingly removed from Indigenous societies. Examples of these new, more negative attitudes toward windigo cases can be found in books written by such sportsmen travel writers as the Earl of Southesk, Edward Chambers, W.B. Cameron, and William Francis Butler, missionaries like Egerton Ryerson Young and J.E. Saindon, and even later fur traders like Philip H. Godsell.

The journalist, sportsman, and outdoor writer Edward Chambers (known as E.T.D. Chambers), an English immigrant to Quebec who promoted the province as a sportsman’s paradise, penned several popular books about hunting and angling. Chambers described several windigo cases that occurred in northern Quebec in his *The Ouananiche and its Canadian Environment* (1896), a book about sport fishing for the ouananiche, a type of freshwater Atlantic

³⁴³ The fur trader Alexander Henry the Elder left a vivid account of a harsh winter in which the fishery failed on Lake Superior in 1767, which produced famine and windigo incidents that he personally witnessed. See, Alexander Henry, *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Country*, edited by James Bain (New York: Burt Franklin, 1969), 199-201.

salmon. Chambers' passages about the windigo reveal a much harsher perspective on both the Montagnais (Innu), an Algonquian group in northern Quebec, as well as a strikingly different attitude toward windigoes. He claimed that:

...before the advent of missionaries among them, the Montagnais were of the lowest Algonquin type....often, goaded by deadly famine, they would subsist on roots, the bark and buds of trees, or the foulest offal; and in the cases of extremity, even cannibalism was not rare among them. The Indians of the interior have continued most of these practices up to quite modern times. No later than 1850, Father Arnaud...met at Sept Isles a Nascapsee woman, who, before her conversion to Christianity...was not only a noted sorceress of her tribe, but an inveterate cannibal. Her first victim was her husband, who had died of hunger and starvation, and she continued her feast until she had devoured three of her children...She next raised her hand against a woman of her own tribe who had herself feasted upon the dead body of one of her children, and became food in turn for the miserable Véronique, as the wretched woman was called....Another missionary tells of the murder in the same year, by another Indian woman, of two entire families...Her victims included two men, two women, three boys, and four girls, and she subsisted for some time upon their flesh.

As late as 1867 Father Nedelec...reported the murder of a young man eighteen years of age by his own mother, who was assisted in the crime by another young man, and declared that she could not resist the impulse to murder, to which she was compelled by the devil. At a neighboring Indian post during the next summer, a man killed a woman to prevent her being changed into a Windigo...The same missionary saw the skulls and bones of another woman who had been killed for a similar reason. And he declares in his letters that the decrease in the number of these Mistassini Indians is due not only to the lack of provisions and other hardships when game is scarce, but to their gluttony in times of plenty, their gross immorality, and the debilitating effect upon their nerves and temperament of their constant practice of the dark arts of juggling and sorcery....

Father Arnaud corroborates the tales of occasional anthropophagy among the Nascapsee, ... the missionary relates the story of a hunter, who, being anxious to put away his wife and marry another, (and having never heard, it is charitable to presume, of the divorce courts of the West), left her to perish alone in the woods. The poor creature, however, contrived to track her husband to his next encampment, only to be pierced through the heart by an arrow...

Though still clinging to many of their old superstitions, deeds of blood and violence are far less common than formerly. Up to quite recent times, however, it was the custom among both the Montagnais and Nascapsee, to strangle their old and infirm whenever they became unable to accompany the rest of the party upon their hunting trips.³⁴⁴

³⁴⁴ E.T.D. Chambers, *The Ouananiche and its Canadian Environment*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1896), 302-305.

Chambers' windigo story has a different tone to it than the earlier ones made by explorers and fur traders. Notably, none of those earlier accounts made any attempt at levity when discussing the subject, whereas Chambers apparently felt sufficiently removed from the subject to make light of it (i.e. his joke about divorce courts). His account is also quite different in his condescension toward the Montagnais and in the more racist attitude displayed, such as his description of them as of "the lowest Algonquin type" and their "gross immorality."

Other contemporaries, again with backgrounds far different than the fur trade, treated the windigo with humour tinged with condescending mockery, such as the British army officer Sir William Francis Butler and the Methodist missionary Egerton Ryerson Young. Butler, who travelled to Red River in 1869 as part of the military expedition dispatched to deal with Louis Riel and his followers, wrote in his *The Great Lone Land: A Narrative of Travel and Adventure in the North-West of America* about a supposed "windigo" he encountered near Rat Portage (present-day Kenora, Ontario):

Civilization on the rocks had certainly a better time of it, as far as catching fish went, than barbarism in the canoe. With the shining thing we killed three for the Indian's one. My companion, who was working the spinning bait while I sat on the rock, casually observed, pointing to the Indian,—
'He's a Windigo.'
'A what?' I asked.
'A Windigo.'
'What is that?'
'A man that has eaten other men.'
'Has this man eaten other men?'
'Yes; a long time ago he and his band were starving, and they killed and ate forty other Indians who were starving with them. They lived through the winter on them, and in the spring he had to fly from Lake Superior because the others wanted to kill him in revenge; and so he came here, and he now lives alone near this place.'
The Windigo soon paddled over to us, and I had a good opportunity of studying his appearance. He was a stout, low-sized savage, with coarse and repulsive features, his eyes fixed sideways in his head like a Tartar's. We had left our canoe some distance away, and my companion asked him to put us across to an island. The Windigo at once consented: we got into his canoe, and he ferried us over... The Windigo looked with wonder at the spinning bait, seeming to regard it as a "great medicine;" perhaps if he had

possessed such a thing he would never have been forced by hunger to become a Windigo.³⁴⁵

Butler's account, like Chamber's, again strikes an altogether different note than earlier fur traders' and explorers' treatments of windigo incidents. Whereas Graham, Hearne, Nelson, Thompson and others had been reluctant to judge those who had resorted to starvation cannibalism too harshly, Butler joked about he and his companion's supposedly superior abilities as fisherman, catching three fish with their spinning lures "to the Indian's one."³⁴⁶ Butler's insinuation was that cannibalism was a result of Indigenous peoples' ineptitude—mockingly implying that a simple European fishing lure could have prevented windigo cannibalism.³⁴⁷ Butler also, unlike most of the earlier commentators on windigoes, evinced a personal disgust at the unfortunate man accused of this crime, whom he depicted in crudely racist terms. Perhaps most tellingly of all about the contrast in outlook between Butler and his predecessors, however, is the fact that there is none of the sense of dread, horror, or solemnity found in earlier accounts of windigo cases in Butler's, which makes light of the whole windigo phenomenon. To jest about such incidents suggests how far removed Butler—as a career British army officer only temporarily in Canada—was from the world of Algonquian peoples, and how little regard he had for the people who had faced such horrific choices. Again, this is in sharp contrast to earlier commentators on windigoes.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ Sir William Francis Butler, *The Great Lone Land: A Narrative of Travel and Adventure in the North-West of America* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Low & Searle, 1872), 175-176.

³⁴⁶ Indeed, as noted earlier, some fur traders, like Alexander Henry the elder, had actually experienced famine alongside his Ojibwa colleagues when the fishery failed.

³⁴⁷ This is altogether implausible, given that cases of famine tended to happen during harsh winters when fishing with a spinning lure is not effective; jigs or live bait being the preferred method of those who ice fish. Nor is ice fishing possible during the spring breakup, when famine cases normally occurred.

³⁴⁸ One irony about Butler's dismissive account is that as a child in Ireland, he had witnessed the famine brought on by the potato failures of the 1840s. Butler's family, according to Roderick C. Macleod's biography of him, were "Tipperary gentry with a tradition of service to the British crown" and Butler's "education was interrupted because his father spent all his money aiding famine victims." See Roderick C. Macleod, "Sir William Francis Butler," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Volume XIII (1901-1910), accessed online December 2015, <http://www.biographi.ca/>. Another example of the shift in how windigo incidents were treated post-1870 can be

W.B. Cameron, a fur trade clerk who later became a journalist, local politician, scout for the North-West Mounted Police, and an the editor of *Field and Stream* magazine, wrote an account of a windigo incident that he witnessed as a captive of the Cree leader Big Bear during the 1885 Northwest Rebellion. While Cameron, despite his two-month captivity, was sympathetic to Big Bear and testified in his defence at his trial in Regina, his views on the windigo incident he witnessed are closer to his contemporaries (like his fellow outdoor writer Chambers) than to the earlier fur traders. (Cameron was only briefly a fur trade clerk, and only after settlement on the prairies had already begun, an altogether different experience than Mackenzie's, Thompson's, Hearne's, Nelson's and others of their generation). Cameron described an incident in which an elderly female member of Big Bear's Cree band was executed on suspicion that she was in danger of becoming a windigo:

Frog Lake, 1885...The doomed woman, the weetigo, crouched on the floor of the lodge groaning and mumbling to herself, a poor demented creature, a helpless, aged and ailing imbecile. We [Cameron and the other white captives] had tried to persuade the Indians that nothing serious was wrong, that she could do no harm—we saw, now, unavailingly...

They sat her down on the [animal] skin, blindfolded her and an old half-breed named Charlebois, the lower half of his face painted black, leaped toward her brandishing a heavy club.

"You have asked everybody to kill her and all were afraid. Don't laugh at me for striking a woman, and don't say I did it!" he cried.

He swung the club and struck her a frightful blow on the temple. She fell forward, blood gushing from her mouth. A boy named Bright Eyes stepped out and shot the senseless skull. Afterward, it was severed from the trunk. The body was flung into a well and the

found in the Earl of Southesk's *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains: A Diary and a Narrative* (1875) about his 1859-1860 journey. Southesk reported a windigo case among "Saulteaux" (Ojibwa) natives he described as "superstitious savages." Southesk reported: "On the neck of land a Saulteaux Indian was put to death last year under singular circumstances. Being afflicted with some sort of madness he spoke to no one, and apparently ate nothing for a month. His tribe took the idea that he was a cannibal, and after wounding him severely buried him before life was extinct. Many hours afterwards the unhappy wretch was heard moving in his grave, so they dug him up and burned him to ashes." See, Earl of Southesk, *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains: A Diary and a Narrative of Travel, Sport and Adventure, During a Journey Through the Hudson's Bay Company's Territories in 1859 and 1860* (Toronto: James Campbell and Son, 1875), 342.

battered head burned into a pile of brush. The superstitious savages were determined there should be no possibility of the resurrection of the weetigo.³⁴⁹

Again, the language here is much less sympathetic; the execution of the woman is portrayed as a senseless act of savagery motivated by superstition and bloodlust.

Sportsmen writers on hunting and angling like Chambers and Cameron were not the only new voices to pen accounts of windigo cannibalism in the late Victorian era. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also witnessed an increase in missionary activity among northern Algonquian groups, which because of their isolation, had been less influenced by European religion than Indigenous peoples living in the lower Great Lakes watershed and St. Lawrence Valley. Missionaries such as Egerton Ryerson Young, a Methodist missionary from 1868-1888 to an Ojibwa-Cree band north of Lake Winnipeg, exhibited less sympathy toward Indigenous spiritual beliefs and culture than the explorers and fur traders of an earlier era—many of whom, as shown previously, actually tended to criticize European culture and compare it unfavourably with Algonquian cultures. Young, in contrast, wrote a condescending and paternalistic passage about windigoes in his 1893 *Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-Fires*:

Among the many errors and superstitions into which they have fallen is the belief in the existence of windagoos, or gigantic creatures half satanic and half human.... We found the Saulteaux Indians especially living in dread of these imaginary monsters. At many a camp-fire they used to tell us with bated breath that these windagoos were terrible cannibals... When I tried to disabuse their minds of these fears they proceeded to tell me of this one and that one who had been seized and devoured....

Of the power and grip this superstition had on these Saulteaux I had a startling and somewhat amusing illustration shortly after I had gone as their first missionary to live among them.... one Sunday afternoon.... I took into the church my large maps of the world, with a number of pictures of heathens of many lands. I explained the map to them and showed them their own country... Then I showed them pictures of the cannibals of the isles of the Pacific, and described others of the wild, wicked nations of the earth, and told them that good white people were sending missionaries to a great many of these lands, and they must not expect to have them all come to them. "For," said I, "as bad as you and your forefathers were, some of these other people were much worse;" and then I

³⁴⁹ W.B. Cameron, *The War Trial of Big Bear* (London: Ryerson, 1926), 144-146.

particularized by describing some of the vilest and most degraded of the sinful races. I dwelt on cannibalism especially, and told of the man-eaters of the Pacific islands...They were intensely interested, and also became very much excited before I finished, especially at what I had said about cannibals.³⁵⁰

Young's moralizing language, which reflects both his background as a missionary and the dominant attitudes of the 1890s, makes a sharp contrast with the explorers and fur traders of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Whereas fur traders like Harmon and Nelson as well others, had questioned the supposed superiority of Europeans, Young was not at all subtle in his discussion of the "vilest and most degraded of the sinful races" as opposed to the "good white people", which reveals the growing tendency by the late Victorian era to conceive of "races" in hierarchal terms. But perhaps what is most striking about Young's story, like "sasquatch" ones of the same era, is his portrayal of Indigenous people as cowardly, something few early explorers in Canada's hinterland who had shared the trail with their guides had ever claimed. Indeed, many of them, such as Hearne and Thompson, had praised their guides' fortitude and courage.³⁵¹

Young's story of "windagoos" continued with the church service ending and Young, early the next morning, finding the village apparently deserted. Young later in the day spotted a "solitary Indian" paddling toward shore in his canoe who informed him that the whole community had paddled out to an island on Lake Winnipeg. Young emphasized their supposed cowardice:

"Why are they there?" I asked.

"Very much afraid," he said.

"Very much afraid! Of what are they afraid?" I asked.

"Windagoos! Cannibals!" he answered.

"Did any of you see any windagoos?" I asked.

"No, I don't think we did, but what you said about them in your address in the church made our hearts melt like water, and then the winds began to blow, and there from the dark forests, with the sighing winds we seemed to hear strange

³⁵⁰ Egerton Ryerson Young, *Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-Fires* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1892), 84-85.

³⁵¹ See Chapter 4 on the grizzly bear for a discussion of some these attitudes.

sounds, and some said, ‘Windagoos! windagoos!’ and that was enough, so we all got so alarmed that we launched our canoes, and, taking our families and dogs, away we paddled out to that distant island, and there the people all are now.”³⁵²

Young, with the man in the canoe, paddled to the island, where he demanded to know why everyone had abandoned the village:

“Windagoos, windagoos!” they fairly shouted. “When you told us about those windagoos who used to eat the missionaries and their people you made us very much afraid, and our hearts got like water, and the more we talked the worse we got, and so we all hurried over here.”

“Did I not tell you that those windagoos were more than a hundred days’ journey away, even with your best canoes?” I asked.

“O, yes, you did, missionary,” they said; “but we did not know but some of them might have started many days ago to come and catch us, and so we hurried out here.”

“And you left your missionary and wife and their little ones, whom you profess so to love, behind to be eaten by the windagoos, did you? And yet you say you so love us and are so thankful we have come to live among you and teach you the good way. Why, I am ashamed of you. Suppose the windagoos had come and no stalwart men had been there to help the missionary fight them off. What would he have thought of your love when he heard you had all, like a lot of old grandmothers, run away?”

Heartily ashamed of themselves, they speedily launched their canoes and returned with me to their village, and very little did we hear after that about the windagoos.³⁵³

Young’s treatment of the windigo with condescension and humour, is strikingly unlike earlier accounts, as is his unflattering depiction of the Ojibwa-Cree people of his mission as both simple-minded and cowardly. Even the eighteenth-century Hudson Bay traders like Isham, Ellis, and Umfreville did not mock the belief in windigoes—instead they compared it to the Christian belief in the devil or demons. Yet, by the 1890s, the growing cultural divide between Indigenous cosmologies and European/Euro-Canadians had apparently become too wide for even a missionary like Young to admit of such similarities. Young voiced nothing but scorn for talk of windigoes. What is also striking about his account is that unlike, for example, Hearne’s,

³⁵² Young, *Stories from Indian Wigwams*, 85-87.

³⁵³ Young, *Stories from Indian Wigwams*, 85-87.

Thompson's, or Nelson's, there is no discussion of individual characters with particular names and temperaments—no person in Young's story is mentioned by name, they are all just faceless, interchangeable, naïve and cowardly "Indians."

Other missionaries told stories about how they had intervened successfully in suspected windigo cases, preventing panic, murder, or even cannibalism. The Catholic priest J.E. Saindon, who worked as a missionary among the James Bay Cree in the early twentieth century, claimed to have cured a woman who thought she was turning into a windigo. The woman had become depressed and withdrawn, and eventually shut herself up in her tent, refusing to go out or see anyone, including her own family. According to Saindon, the woman did not wish to harm anyone, but felt that she was turning into a windigo and would inevitably succumb to the compulsion to kill and eat humans. Saindon went and saw the afflicted woman in her tent, and in his own words: "...said to her with all the assurance of which I was capable: 'You are going to get well. I am certain of it, absolutely certain. Go to Confession. Tomorrow receive Communion. Go out abroad as you used to do formerly.' The suggestion succeeded perfectly. These simple people are easily influenced by suggestion."³⁵⁴ He thought that this "mental disorder" was something these "simple people" were innately susceptible to (in contrast to previous travellers, such as Nelson, Kohl, and Hind who had rejected any notion that "superstitious" beliefs were an innate characteristic of non-Europeans). Saindon later authored several academic papers on, "mental disorders among the James Bay Cree," in which he detailed this example and others of what he termed "Windigo sickness."

Another windigo account from this era that fits this pattern of a less sympathetic approach to the subject, and again one that treats windigoes with paternalistic, condescending

³⁵⁴J.E. Saindon, "Mental Disorders Among the James Bay Cree," *Primitive Man* (6), 1933, 1-12.

humour, similar to J.W. Burns' sasquatch stories from the same era, is found in Philip H. Godsell's *Arctic Trader: The Account of Twenty Years with the Hudson's Bay Company*, which was published in 1934. Godsell discussed a windigo incident that occurred in 1907 while he was stationed at the fur trade post at Norway House, the same post, coincidentally, that Young had been at a few decades earlier. Godsell's account is perhaps not as hostile as that found in Butler's, Chamber's, and Young's stories, which perhaps suggests that northern fur traders may have retained a slightly less patronizing attitude to Indigenous people than outside sportsmen and missionaries. Nevertheless, Godsell's treatment of windigoes is closer to his contemporaries than to the explorers and fur traders of a century earlier. He tells a story similar to Young's about the native people at Norway House being terrified of windigoes and how he caused a panic among them by pretending there was a windigo in their village, and then became a hero when he pretended to have killed it. Godsell wrote in the climax of his story that:

As night again approached there were unmistakable signs of excitement and nervousness around the encampment, and it was barely dark when two young lads tore breathlessly into my room to say that the dreaded Weetigo was around once more as the woman had heard him in the bush.

Things were breaking nicely. Here, I thought, was an admirable opportunity to gain a little personal glory and renown which I might capitalize in future trading with the Indians. Picking up my Winchester rifle I...walked over to the camp. The story of the monster's reappearance was immediately shouted at me from all directions. To calm their fears I now told them in Cree that the Weetigo could harm only Indians but could not hurt a white man...With my rifle under my arm I strolled jauntily down the trail in the direction from which the latest sounds were supposed to have come and penetrated some distance into the darkened woods.

Here I waited a while...then uttering one or two piercing cries and moans I discharged my rifle, time after time, into the heavens, while, from the ridge, arose despairing cries of frightened squaws and children. Having emptied the magazine I slowly retraced my steps toward the camp...I told them that their minds might rest in peace as I had encountered the Weetigo and rendered him *hors-de-combat*; that the cries they had heard were emitted by the ogre as I pumped lead into his person. Then, lest some more skeptical members of the band should...decide to investigate and take a look at the "remains" I informed my

listeners that I had treated the bullets with a special preparation known only to white men which made such spirits dissolve into thin air.

A day or so later, while I was still looked upon as the hero of the hour and the saviour of the squaws and children, the hunters returned with big packs of fur upon their backs. Immediately I made a round of wigwams... While I modestly and nonchalantly puffed upon my pipe my trippers loudly extolled my courage. It was a simple matter to get the furs regardless of my almost empty store, and when we got through I was satisfied that hardly a pelt remained in the camp.³⁵⁵

In Godsell's account, the Cree are again portrayed as cowardly and simple-minded, as well as extremely superstitious, much like Burns' contemporary treatment of Salish "sasquatch" stories.

Also like Young and Saindon in their windigo stories, Godsell represents himself as the supposedly brave white man who banishes windigoes (or in Young's case the fear of them). Furthermore, in another indication of the much wider rift regarding monster beliefs that had developed between dominant Euro-settler cosmologies and Algonquian ones, Godsell even claimed to his Indigenous neighbours that white men were invulnerable to windigoes—a claim at odds with what earlier generations of voyageurs and some fur traders, notably George Nelson, had believed. Perhaps most tellingly of all, Godsell, if his story is to be believed, claimed to exploit his newfound status as a windigo slayer to improve his trade.³⁵⁶

Godsell's account, as noted previously, echoes contemporary stories about "sasquatch" written by J.W. Burns, which also presented Indigenous belief in monsters as a subject for humour. This was a major shift from earlier treatments by European or Euro-Canadian writers who had always written of such monsters as things of real terror, or at least apprehension. Other

³⁵⁵ Phillip H. Godsell, *Arctic Trader: The Account of Twenty Years With the Hudson's Bay Company* (New York: 1934).

³⁵⁶ Although Godsell's story of a windigo panic may seem far-fetched, anthropologists in the latter twentieth century did report that windigo panics or scares were real occurrences. The anthropologist Richard Preston, for example, who did field work in northern Quebec Cree communities in the 1970s, noted that, "...actual Witiko scares are a part of the experience of many Northern Algonkians of middle age or older. These are often related to the mystery and great concern over lost persons or may be a more complicated matter of group terror." See, Preston, "Algonkian Knowledge and Whiteman Knowledge," 126-127.

writers in the twentieth century continued to use the windigo as something that could be joked about.³⁵⁷ In a Canada that was increasingly industrial, interconnected, and urban (and therefore farther removed from the older patterns of life on the frontier), windigo monsters had lost much of their relevance and potency to Euro-settlers and apparently even fur traders.

Conclusion

The source material on the windigo includes accounts ranging from early seventeenth-century French sources through to twenty-first-century Indigenous oral histories, as well as a variety of sources written by Scottish, English, American, Canadian, and German fur traders, explorers, travellers, missionaries, and sportsmen.³⁵⁸ From these sources, it is clear that there was a striking change in attitude toward representations of the windigo in Euro-literature that fits a wider pattern seen with other North American frontier monsters. Contrary to what might be expected, eighteenth and nineteenth century explorers and fur traders in Canada's Northwest generally seem not to have exploited windigo stories and cases of famine cannibalism to portray Algonquian peoples—the largest Indigenous group in Canada—as barbaric, primitive, or savage.³⁵⁹ This is in spite of the fact that a subject as sensitive as famine cannibalism tied up with tales of monsters would seem to have been the perfect fodder for the construction of an

³⁵⁷ Besides the humorous treatments of the windigo discussed earlier (i.e. the stories by Egerton Ryerson Young, Sir William Francis Butler, and Phillip H. Godsell), the windigo was lampooned by the poet Ogden Nash in his "The Windigo" (1936), also published later in his children's anthology, *Custard the Dragon & The Windigo* (F. Warne, 1977). The windigo was also the subject of the 1999 black comedy, *Ravenous* (Heyday Films, 20th Century Fox).

³⁵⁸ For a comprehensive list of all windigo accounts see the appendix.

³⁵⁹ This may not be contrary to the expectations of an older generation of scholars familiar with works such as Robin Fisher's *Contact and Conflict Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977), but it seems more unexpected in light of recent scholarship that has generally portrayed Indigenous-explorer/fur trader relationships as unsympathetic and even antagonistic. For example, see Janice's Accose, *Iskwewak Kah' Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princesses Nor Easy Squaws* (Toronto: Canadian Scholar's Press, 2016), Sidney L. Harring "The Enforcement of Extreme Penalty," Canadian Law and the Ojibwa-Cree Spirit World" in *White Man's Law: Native People in Nineteenth-century Canadian Jurisprudence* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), Ken S. Coates, *Best Left as Indians: Native-white relations in the Yukon Territory 1840-1973* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), *Anti-Colonialism and Education: The Politics of Resistance*, ed. George J. Sefa Dei and Arlo Kempf (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2002), as well as portrayals in other mediums, such as the acclaimed film *Ikwe* (1986) released by Canada's National Film Board.

uncivilized “Other.” Nevertheless, explorers and fur traders of the eighteenth and nineteenth century generally portrayed these incidents with understanding, cautioned that they were not representative of Algonquian cultures more broadly, and pointed out that cannibalism was never condoned. They were generally sympathetic observers with close ties to northern Algonquian societies that had begun with their adolescent immersion in the fur trade—and was often later cemented by intermarriage and through their children. Some, like Nelson, Hood, Harmon, Tanner and James, even went so far as to condemn European civilization and the effect it had on Indigenous peoples. Such sentiments might not be unexpected among classically educated European philosophers, but they are much more striking coming from fur traders with little formal schooling.

However, these more receptive attitudes toward the windigo phenomenon and Algonquian cultures declined over the course of the nineteenth century. This change in attitude reflected not only a wider cultural shift away from belief in supernatural monsters, but the changed circumstances of the observers, who were no longer the close fur trade companions of Indigenous peoples, seldom intermarried, could not speak their languages and did not share the hardships of life as a hunter-trapper in the subarctic, and had never faced the dangers of long sea voyages in the age of sail like an earlier generation of explorers had—which had presumably given them some insight into survival cannibalism. Later windigo accounts from roughly the 1870s through the 1930s tended to be written by missionaries, sportsmen, military officers, and gentleman travellers. These observers often depicted windigo incidents with condescending mockery and humour, or else as evidence of Indigenous peoples’ innate primitiveness and savagery. This hardening of attitude is also indicative of the economic shift that had taken place as the decline of the fur trade had left many bands economically marginalized with little role in

the emerging Canadian economy—and were now confined to reserves with the expectation of eventual assimilation into the larger society. Windigoes, in other words, went from something that had once bonded European explorers and travellers with their Algonquian guides—such as Champlain, Thompson, and Nelson—to something that increasingly divided them.

This shift in treatment of the windigo also mirrors the evolution of other frontier legends, notably the sasquatch and grizzly bear, both of which also evolved from creatures that were once regarded with a certain mixture of fear, ambiguity, and genuine mystery by Europeans and settlers before being reduced to less threatening incarnations. Like with the sasquatch, belief in monsters gradually shifted from something European explorers and their Indigenous counterparts held in common to something that increasingly divided them. With the windigo, this re-conceptualization took the form of dismissing the creature as a bizarre “superstition” that afflicted Algonquian peoples, and their voyageurs counterparts as well. In that regard, the windigo, like sasquatch stories from the same era, came to serve as fodder for lampooning Indigenous peoples and often low-status whites in the fur trade as cowardly and superstitious.

The “Grisly Monster”:

The Grizzly Bear in North American Exploration and Travel Literature 1666-1919

The North American brown bear, popularly known as the grizzly bear, differs in some respects from the previous wilderness monsters so far examined. This is not so much because it was a “real” animal, but rather related more to the place it assumed in mainstream Euro-settler belief, a position that the other two frontier legends never quite achieved. While the windigo was an Indigenous monster tradition, and the sasquatch myth arose from hybrid origins, the “grisly bear,” this chapter argues, was mostly a monster of the European and Euro-settler imagination, the last such monster that achieved mainstream status in natural history works. The grizzly was—in the eyes of the explorers, fur traders, and naturalists who encountered it—the most formidable and terrifying of all New World mammals. Many of them branded it with no sense of irony “grisly” instead of “grizzly,” in reference to what they saw as its hideous appetite for human flesh. The earliest accounts of it from the late seventeenth century seem almost more like the description of a monster akin to the windigo rather than an ordinary part of the animal kingdom. This image of the bear as a veritable monster became so deeply ingrained that it was even initially accepted by naturalists and scientific authorities, long after other monster accounts in frontier and exploration literature had ceased to be seen as respectable. In 1815 the man-eating grizzly was given a name thought suitable in Linnaeus’s system: *ursus arctos horribilis*—the horrible bear.

The perception of the grizzly as a genuine monster proved remarkably resilient, and was not seriously questioned until the end of the nineteenth century, coinciding with the bear’s near total extirpation from much of its historic range. That extirpation was in large measure connected with the fruits of the Industrial Revolution, especially the invention of breech-loading, repeating

firearms that made hunting grizzlies vastly easier, as well as the elimination of much of the bear's natural habitat. By the twentieth century the grizzly was virtually exterminated from the lower forty-eight American states, and much of its range in Canada had been similarly reduced. Only then, after it had been pitilessly hunted for centuries and most of its territory brought under the plough, did skepticism about its status as a “monster” start to appear in travel literature and natural history texts. This resulting shift in the grizzly's representation does, in fact, fit with a larger pattern of “monsters” like the sasquatch and windigo, which as seen in previous chapters, also evolved in exploration literature from innately hostile, “real” monsters into more dubious and benign creatures over the same timeframe. However, in this case, in keeping with the propagation of the legend, it was mainly lower class white hunters and trappers, rather than Indigenous guides, who were chastised by upper class explorers or social elites for their belief in a monster legend.

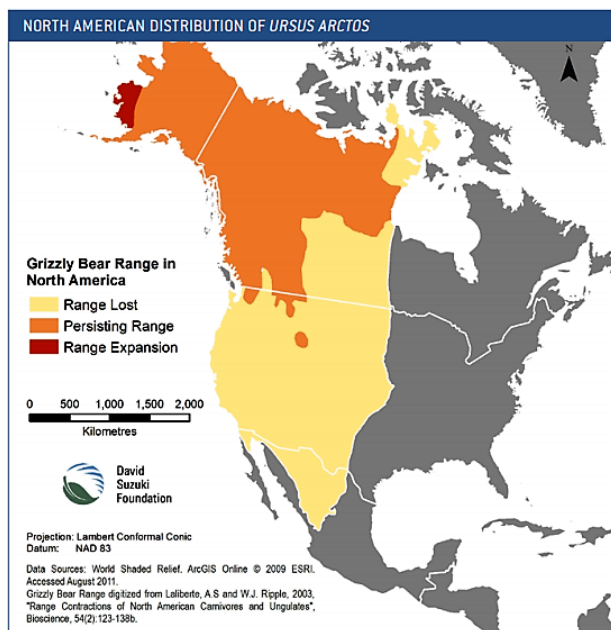


Figure 4.1 *The Grizzly Bear's current North American range in orange, and historic range in yellow, showing the loss of territory. (Courtesy David Suzuki Foundation.)*

The grizzly bear as a “monster” has not been previously studied by historians, but scholars have examined evolving perceptions of other large animals. One article that partly mirrors much of this study’s thinking on the subject of European explorers and the grizzly bear, is geographer James Newman’s “Discovering Gorillas: The Journey from Mythic to Real.”³⁶⁰ Newman traces the history of European encounters with gorillas from the seventeenth century when the mysterious beasts were described as violent, fearsome monsters, through to the animal’s eventual recognition by Western science in the mid-nineteenth century. There are parallels between this story and European explorers’ encounters with grizzly bears. This process of reconceptualising creatures once regarded as monstrous into ordinary parts of the animal kingdom was a by-product of the emergence of the formal discipline of zoology in mid-eighteenth century Europe.³⁶¹ However, the grizzly bear managed to defy this trend for a long time, as explorers and naturalists continued to describe it in monstrous and fanciful terms.

The Grisly Monster:

The oldest European account of a grizzly is probably the one that appeared in the *Jesuit Relations* of 1666-67 by the missionary Claude Jean Allouez. Allouez himself never saw a grizzly, but when exploring the country around the Upper Great Lakes in the 1660s he heard alarming tales from his Cree guides of some monstrous creature living to the west: “He made mention of another nation, adjoining the Assinipoualac, who eat human beings, and live wholly on raw flesh; but these people, in turn, are eaten by bears of frightful size, all red, and with

³⁶⁰ James Newman, “Discovering Gorillas: The Journey from Mythic to Real.” *Terrae Incognitae*, Vol. 38, (Jan. 2006): 36-54.

³⁶¹ As noted earlier, nineteenth century naturalists like Audubon and Roosevelt were already aware of this transformation in the perception of animals endemic to the Americas. See the Introduction, pg. 8. For a history of zoology, see Paul Lawrence Farber, *Finding Order in Nature: The Naturalist Tradition from Linnaeus to E. O. Wilson* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000), and also Wilfrid Blunt and Thomas Stearn, *Linnaeus: The Compleat Naturalist*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

prodigiously long claws. It is deemed highly probable that they are lions.”³⁶² Allouez, up to this point only familiar with the smaller and relatively timid black bears of eastern North America, apparently had difficulty imagining a bear so large and “frightful” that it ate humans. Instead, he suspected the creatures might be lions, animals he knew from classical literature. But, thirteen years after Allouez’s account, in 1691 for the first time a European explorer would venture far enough west to describe first-hand one of these bears.

Henry Kelsey was about sixteen or seventeen when in 1684 he arrived at York Fort on Hudson Bay as an apprentice with the Hudson’s Bay Company. It was reported of him that he was, “a very active Lad Delighting much in Indians Compa., being never better pleased than when hee is Travelling amongst them.”³⁶³ This perceived congeniality with Indigenous lifestyles and modes of travel led to Kelsey being selected in 1690 to explore the interior alone with some Assiniboiné hunters, thus making him the first HBC trader to venture inland from the coast, and probably the first European to reach the Great Plains in what is now Canada. It was while travelling on the plains that Kelsey encountered grizzlies and recorded what seems to be the first description of one in English. In his August 20, 1691 journal entry, he noted: “To day we pitcht to ye outermost Edge of ye woods this plain affords Nothing but short Round sticky grass & Buffillo & a great sort of Bear wch is Bigger than any white Bear & is Neither White nor Black But silver hair’d like our English Rabbit....”³⁶⁴ Kelsey provided some further details about this “great sort of Bear” in the preamble to his journal, which oddly enough he wrote in verse:

³⁶² Allouez’s account in the original French reads: “*Il me parla d’une autre nation, qui est ioignant celle des Assinipouïalac, laquelle mange les hommes, & ne vit que de chair crüe: mais aussi ces peuples sont reciproquement mangez par des Ours d’une horrible grandeur, tous roux, & qui ont les ongles prodigieusement longs; on iuge bien probablement que ce sont des Lyons.*” *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, vol. 51, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites (Cleveland, OH: Burrows Brothers, 1901), 117. His reference to the “Assinipoulac” is presumably the Assiniboiné.

³⁶³ Henry Kelsey, *The Kelsey Papers*, with an introduction by John Warkentin, Arthur G. Doughty, and Chester Martin (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 1994), xxiv.

³⁶⁴ Kelsey, *Kelsey Papers*, 8.

Thus it continues till you leave the woods behind
And then you have beast of several kind
The one is a Black a Buffillo great
Another is an Outgrown Bear well is good meat
His skin to gett I have used all ye ways I can
He is man's food and he makes food of man
His hide they would not me it Preserve
But said it was a god and they should starve³⁶⁵

The similarities between these first written accounts of a grizzly are interesting—the one by a Jesuit missionary, the other by an English fur trader—both describe it as enormous in size and explicitly a man-eater. *A true monster*. Indeed, to contemporaries these grizzly accounts would have had obvious similarities with windigo and other monster descriptions. In other words, in the seventeenth century the lines between real animals and monsters could be quite blurry.³⁶⁶ Allouez was not even sure what this terrifying creature was despite the fact that the Cree had told him they were “bears of frightful size...with prodigiously long claws.” Allouez conjectured that they might actually be man-eating lions. Kelsey meanwhile believed that this “Outgrown” bear which “makes food of man” was worshipped as a “god” by the Plains peoples. While it might be thought that these seemingly fantastic notions reflect language barriers (both men, however, were said to be skilled in Indigenous languages), or the difficulty Allouez and Kelsey had of making sense of such an alarming and unfamiliar creature, they are partially supported by other sources.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁵ Kelsey, *Kelsey Papers*, 2.

³⁶⁶ The *Codex Canadensis* (circa 1700) is a manuscript on the wildlife of New France, which freely mixes real animals with mythical ones. It is believed to have been the work of Louis Nicolas, a Jesuit missionary in Canada in the late seventeenth century. See *The Codex Canadensis and the Writings of Louis Nicolas, The Natural History of the New World, Histoire Naturelle des Indes Occidentales*, edited by François-Marc Gagnon, with Nancy Senior and Réal Ouellet (Kington, Ontario: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011).

³⁶⁷ For Allouez's talent with native languages, see Léon Pouliot, “Claude Allouez,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 1, University of Toronto/ Université Laval, accessed online November 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/allouez_claude_1E.html and for Kelsey, see K. G. Davies, “Henry Kelsey” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 2, University of Toronto/Université Laval, accessed November 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/kelsey_henry_2E.html.

Allouez, who was not far enough west to have encountered any grizzlies, was presumably hearing second-hand accounts of them from a group of northern Cree who themselves seldom, if ever, encountered the bears. Some indication of how Indigenous peoples outside of the grizzly's range might have perceived the bears is suggested in an 1814 account by the reverend John Heckwelder.³⁶⁸ Heckwelder reported a tradition of the Delaware and Mohican people that seems to corroborate the picture presented in Allouez's account. Heckwelder reported that according to the Delaware and Mohicans grizzlies had once ranged further east in North America (coincidentally a claim that has been supported by modern archaeological findings), and that the memory of this was preserved in traditions about ferocious, man-eating bears that were used as a bogeyman to terrify native children when misbehaving.³⁶⁹ As for Kelsey's claim that the terrifying bear that "makes food of man" was worshipped as a god, this is also not without some foundation. That the grizzly occupied a central role as a powerful spirit in the mythology of many Indigenous nations is well attested. The classic study is anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell's *Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere*, but more recent examples of the grizzly's religious importance also exist.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁸ The question of how the grizzly bear may have been perceived by various Indigenous peoples of the time is a difficult one to answer. Europeans, like Kelsey and Allouez, suggest the bear was regarded with a mixture of horror and awe; a view that seems consistent with later sources.

³⁶⁹ See DeWitt Clinton, *An Introductory Discourse Delivered Before the Literary and Philosophical Society of New York, on the Fourth of May, 1814* (David Longworth, 1815), 27. For the archaeological record, see John E. Guilday "Grizzly Bears from Eastern North America," *The American Midland Naturalist* Vol. 79, No. 1 (Jan., 1968): 247-250 and Arthur Spiess, "Labrador Grizzly (*Ursus arctos* L.): First Skeletal Evidence," *Journal of Mammalogy* Vol. 57, No. 4 (Nov., 1976): 787-790.

³⁷⁰ For example, the grizzly's enduring importance in religious belief can be seen with the 2017 Ktunaxa Nation's Supreme Court appeal to block a ski resort development on the grounds that it would interfere with a deity in their belief system, the Grizzly Bear Spirit. See, *Ktunaxa Nation v. British Columbia (Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations)*, Judgments of the Supreme Court of Canada, November 2, 2017, accessed online August 2018: <https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/16816/index.do>. See also, A. Irving Hallowell, *Bear Ceremonialism in the Northern Hemisphere*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania (1924), accessed online, August 2018: <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1525/aa.1926.28.1.02a00020>.

Another early grizzly account written about twelve years after Kelsey's appears in the French adventurer and soldier the Baron de Lahontan's *Nouveaux Voyages de Mr. le Baron de Lahontan dans l'Amérique Septentrionale*, which was published in two volumes in both French and English editions in 1703. Lahontan's adventures and travels took him from Newfoundland to the Upper Great Lakes, and possibly even the Mississippi River, if his account is to be believed. Lahontan, like Kelsey and Allouez, developed close relations with his Indigenous guides. He spent several winters in the "upper country" living with various Algonquian peoples and learning their language. In his book, Lahontan included extensive notes and a dictionary of the "Algonkin" language, as well as descriptions of New World animals he encountered or learned about. This included such seemingly fantastic creatures as "sea-wolves," "tygers," "flying squirrels," "white beavers," and what seems like a reference to the grizzly. In addition to the black bears and "white bears" (i.e. polar bears), Lahontan wrote of a third, fierce bear, which he called the "Reddish Bear." Of this kind of bear, Lahontan warned: "The Reddish Bears are mischievous Creatures, for they fall fiercely upon the Huntsmen, whereas the black ones fly from 'em."³⁷¹ Lahontan, however, believed that the "white bears" (i.e. polar bears) of which he had more direct experience, were even more dangerous: "The White Bears are a monstrous Animal, and extraordinary long; their Head has a formidable Aspect, and their Hair is very large and thick; they are so fierce, that they'll come and attack a Sloop in the Sea, with seven or eight Men in it."³⁷²

³⁷¹ Baron de Lahontan, *New Voyages to North-America, Reprinted from the English Edition of 1703*...Vol. I, edited by Rueben Gold Thwaites, (Chicago: A.G. McClurg & Co. 1905), 346.

³⁷² Lahontan's more detailed description of the polar bear likely reflects his greater familiarity with it than with the grizzly, which he presumably never saw and only knew from second-hand reports. In contrast, Lahontan reported that he had seen a polar bear along the coast of Newfoundland. Polar bears have been known to occasionally cross over to Newfoundland from Labrador. Lahontan, *Voyages*, 347-348.

Aside from Allouez and Lahotan, the grizzly remained mostly unknown to the colonists of New France since few ventured far enough west to encounter any. One notable exception to this is the Sieur de La Vérendrye and his sons, who travelled at least as far west as the Great Plains in the 1730s and 1740s on fur trading expeditions. However, there does not seem to be any surviving accounts by La Vérendrye or his sons that discuss grizzlies. La Vérendrye did report that on the so-called “great river of the West” he was told there were “all kinds of wild beasts in abundance, and snakes of a prodigious size...” as well as “...a tribe of dwarfs not over three feet or so in height...”³⁷³ These seemingly fabulous notions reinforce what we have already seen with Lahontan’s account—that more than a century after Champlain’s journeys much of North America’s wildlife and many of its inhabitants remained mysterious to the point of fantasy to Europeans. Certain animals endemic to the Americas, like the musk-ox, opossum, skunk, raccoon, and mountain lion, were wholly new to the first European explorers and colonists. The mountain lion in particular intrigued early explorers, who were unsure at first exactly what it was; most only saw skins of it traded from natives, and thus assumed they were female lions since they lacked manes.³⁷⁴

It was thus not hard for explorers to accept tales of monsters as reflecting actual creatures, or for the line between monsters and real animals to blur. The Jesuit Jacques Marquette, for example, when exploring the North American interior in 1673, described seeing a “monster” that may have simply been an animal he had never before encountered: “We saw also a hideous monster; his head was like that of a tiger, his nose was sharp, and somewhat resembled

³⁷³ Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de La Vérendrye, *Journals and Letters of La Vérendrye and his Sons*, edited by Lawrence J. Burpee, (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1927), 247-248 and 51.

³⁷⁴ For a discussion of early explorers’ and colonists’ accounts of mountain lions, see *The Eastern Cougar: Historic Accounts, Scientific Investigations, and New Evidence*, edited by Chris Bolgiano and Jerry Roberts (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2005), 1-5.

a wildcat; his beard was long; his ears stood upright; the colour of his head was gray; and his neck black.”³⁷⁵ Not until the late eighteenth century would European explorers and naturalists start to gain a better idea of the grizzly bear and other native fauna.

Hudson’s Bay Company traders posted at the forts on Hudson Bay in the later eighteenth century became particularly active in this regard. Several of them, including Andrew Graham and Samuel Hearne, made significant contributions to the emerging field of zoology, as they identified birds and animals previously unknown in Europe and studied the life history of various animals.³⁷⁶ Their first-hand observations were eagerly read and incorporated into scientific treatises by naturalists back in Europe, such as Carl Linnaeus and the British ornithologist and zoologist Thomas Pennant.³⁷⁷ Hearne for his part had a certain sense of irony about all this; he mentioned meeting “Indians” who had never previously seen a white man and who intently examined him the way, “European Naturalists would a non-descript animal.”³⁷⁸

Hearne also discussed errors made by European naturalists in cases where they had relied upon second-hand reports. He corrected, for instance, an error made by Pennant about the moose and the elk:

I shall therefore only make a few remarks...in order to rectify a mistake, which, from wrong information, has crept into Mr. Pennant's Arctic Zoology. In page 21 of that elegant work, he classes the Moose with the We-was-kish, though it certainly has not any affinity to it.... The person who informed Mr. Pennant that the we-was-kish and the moose are the same animal, never saw one of them; and the only reason he had to suppose it, was the great resemblance of their skins...³⁷⁹

³⁷⁵ Marquette’s account seems vaguely suggestive of a bobcat. See Jacques Marquette, “An Account of the Discovery of Some New Countries and Nations in North America, in 1673, by Pere Marquette and Sieur Jolliet,” in *Historical Collections of Louisiana*, vol. II, edited and trans. B.F. French (Philadelphia: Daniels and Smith, 1850).

³⁷⁶ C. Stuart Houston, Tim Ball and Mary Houston, *Eighteenth-Century Naturalists of Hudson Bay* (Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003).

³⁷⁷ Wilfrid Blunt and Thomas Stearn, *Linnaeus: The Compleat Naturalist*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) and Thomas Pennant, *Arctic Zoology*, Volume I (London: Henry Hughs, 1784).

³⁷⁸ Samuel Hearne, *A Journey From Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean...in the Years 1769, 1770, 1771, & 1772* (London: Printed for A. Strahan and T. Cadell: 1795), 121.

³⁷⁹ Based on Hearne’s description it seems the “we-was-kish” was most likely the elk. See Hearne, 360-361.

Hearne's extensive notes about the different animals he encountered were later included in his posthumously published work. He discussed not only the "principal Quadrupeds" that inhabit the "the high Northern latitudes" but birds, fish, frogs, insects, mollusks, whales, and "sea unicorns" and "sea-horses."³⁸⁰ These latter two creatures may sound like mythical beasts, but Hearne's notes reveal that they are what is now known as the narwhal and walrus. The "sea-horse" in particular Hearne warned about: "Those tusks, and their red sparkling eyes, make them have a very fierce and formidable appearance...They often attack small boats merely through wantonness, and not only put the people in great confusion, but subject them to great danger; for they always aim at staving the boat with their tusks, or endeavour to get in, but are never known to hurt people."³⁸¹ Given this description of the walrus, it might be expected that Hearne would have equally sensational things to say about grizzly bears. But this surprisingly was mostly not the case.

Of the grizzly, Hearne noted simply: "...I saw the skin of an enormous grizzled Bear at the tents of the Esquimaux at the Copper River; and many of them are said to breed not very remote from that part."³⁸² In July, 1771, when Hearne had finally reached the isolated Coppermine River after a journey on foot that had taken over a year, he further noted a place called:

Grizzled Bear Hill; which takes its name from the numbers of those animals that are frequently known to resort thither for the purpose of bringing forth their young in a cave....On the side of the hill...there is a large cave which penetrates a considerable way into the rock, and may probably have been the work of the bears....This, though deemed very curious by some of my companions, did not appear to me, as it neither engaged my attention, nor raised my surprise, half so much as the sight of the many hills and dry ridges...which are turned over liked ploughed land by those animals, in searching for ground-squirrels....It is surprising to see the extent of their researches in quest of those animals, and still more to view the enormous stones rolled out of their beds by the bears

³⁸⁰ Hearne, 358.

³⁸¹ Hearne, 389.

³⁸² Hearne, 371-372.

on those occasions. At first I thought that these long and deep furrows had been effected by lightning; but the natives assured me they never knew any thing of the kind happen in those parts, and that it was entirely the work of the bears seeking for their prey.³⁸³

Hearne, though astonished by the grizzly's enormous strength, otherwise did not make any claims about its fierceness or man-eating proclivities. Hearne was thus one of the earliest writers to treat the grizzly bear with something like scientific curiosity, rather than sensationalism or sinister mystery. His observations on grizzlies and other bears were relied upon by Pennant in his celebrated multi-volume *Arctic Zoology* (1784-1787), and were later cited by Charles Darwin in his *On the Origins of Species* (1859), two authors who moved natural history away from sensationalism and toward greater realism.³⁸⁴

However, Hearne's relative restraint in his description of the grizzly was decidedly unusual and not shared by his contemporaries. His fellow Hudson's Bay Company trader, Edward Umfreville, who believed that there were still unknown species of animal in North America's interior which a "person of ingenuity" might discover, noted in 1790:

Bears are of three kinds;—the black, the red, and the grizzle Bear. The former is the least offensive, and, when taken young, the most docile and susceptible of kind usage. As to the other kinds, their nature is savage and ferocious, their power is dangerous, and their haunts to be guarded against. The number of maimed Indians, to be seen in the country, exhibit a melancholy proof of their power over the human species. A Canadian last summer had his arm lacerated in a dreadful manner by one of these destructive animals: yet if a man is mounted upon a good horse, he may attack one with success; nor will they always fall upon a person unprovoked.³⁸⁵

Umfreville's warnings about the grizzly as "savage and ferocious" and how "their haunts" had to be "guarded against" seems sensational when read alongside Hearne's journey of over two years on foot through grizzly territory in which he makes little mention of taking any precautions

³⁸³ Hearne, 139-141.

³⁸⁴ Thomas Pennant, *Arctic Zoology*, Volume I (London: Henry Hughes, 1784), 62-64 and Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 2004), 220.

³⁸⁵ Edward Umfreville, *The Present State of Hudson's Bay*, (London: Printed for Charles Stalker, 1790), 166-168.

against the bears, or any examples of their attacking anyone. Still, the *vast majority* of explorers who did travel in grizzly territory clearly agreed with Umfreville's warnings. Hearne, after all, was regarded as something of an eccentric by his contemporaries.³⁸⁶

One explorer who seems to have taken Umfreville's warnings to heart was his younger Hudson's Bay Company colleague Peter Fidler. In 1791, the twenty-two-year-old Fidler was sent far into the interior west of Hudson Bay with a group of Dene, with the intention of learning their language as well as surveying more territory. His candid journal reveals some of the terror that grizzlies inspired in a young European in an unfamiliar environment:

About midnight as I supposed I was terribly alarmed out of my sleep by an uncommon loud noise which appeared not far off. I immediately rose & made a large fire & put my gun in order ready for an attack which I expected every moment. I thought it to have been Bears that was going to fall upon me. After the fire began to blaze much I was agreeably surprised to hear the noise recede... I then lay down but durst not venture to sleep. The surprize & consternation I had lately been in prevented sleep from falling upon me. Afterwards I told the Story to the Indians describing the kind of noise & they told me that it proceeded from 2 Moose Deer calling to one another. Being lost & a stranger to the parts also but a young lad in this Country such was the cause of my great terror & consternation...³⁸⁷

Fidler's candour captures the sense of the grizzly as a monster in the European imagination—the bogeyman that kept an explorer up at night or made them throw an extra log onto the fire. One suspects his Dene companions must have had a good laugh at Fidler's expense, the reverse of other monster legends in which European explorers, like Umfreville with the windigo, chided Cree beliefs that they had seen its tracks (or at least claimed they did in published versions of their accounts). This is not to imply Indigenous people did not have reason to fear grizzlies;

³⁸⁶ Hearne kept fur-bearing mammals as pets, apparently rejected Christianity, adopted native modes of travel which entailed living isolated and alone for years in Dene society, and choose to surrender his post without a shot to a French squadron rather than spill unnecessary blood; a decision mocked by David Thompson. See, David Thompson, *David Thompson's Narrative 1784-1812* edited by Richard Glover (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1962), 7-8.

³⁸⁷ Peter Fidler, "A Journal of a journey with the Chepawyans or Northern Indians to the Slave Lake..." in J.B. Tyrrell, ed. *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1934), 554-555.

plenty of evidence suggest that they quite often did. But to them, it was a different kind of fear, the fear of the familiar, not unlike what shepherds who were killed by wolves had to contend with in Europe's hinterlands.

Fidler's contemporary David Thompson recorded various grizzly stories and incidents (including several attacks) during his time in western North America. In again keeping with the idea of rather blurry boundaries between the real and the mythical, Thompson's account also hints at the idea that the grizzly—terrifying enough in its own right—helped spawn other monster lore. As discussed in Chapter One, Thompson reported finding large tracks in the Athabasca Pass in 1811, which he believed were the tracks of an “old grizzled Bear” of “very large” size, but his voyageurs and hunters, (mostly Indigenous people from eastern North America), believed they were the tracks of an even more dreaded creature—something they called a “Mammoth.”³⁸⁸ Thompson confessed that “the sight of the track of that large beast staggered me,” yet he clung to the belief it had to be the track of “some monster Bear” while conceding he could not rule out the existence of a “Mammoth.”³⁸⁹ As discussed in previous chapters, European explorers' attitudes toward monsters had become more skeptical than they had been a century earlier, though Thompson, like Umfreville and others, still remained open to the possibility of unknown beasts.³⁹⁰ Curiously too, Thompson reported his Iroquois companions were caught off guard by their unfamiliarity with bears much larger and more aggressive than the

³⁸⁸ David Thompson, *David Thompson's Narrative 1784-1812*, edited by Richard Glover (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1962), 320.

³⁸⁹ Thompson, *Narrative*, 383-384. As noted earlier, Thompson explained: “...this animal having never been seen, there is no direct evidence of it's [sic] existence. Yet when I think of all I have seen and heard, if put on my oath, I could neither assert, nor deny, it's [sic] existence; for many hundreds of miles of the Rocky Mountains are yet unknown, and through the defiles by which we pass, distant one hundred and twenty miles from each other, we hasten our march as much as possible.” See Thompson, *Narrative*, 384.

black bears of their eastern homelands.³⁹¹ This again suggests that unfamiliarity with grizzlies inspired visions of it as a monstrous creature.

Thompson's North West Company colleague Daniel Harmon, in his notes on animals he met with in his travels, also testified to the terror inspired by the grizzly, which he labelled as the "grey bear:"

There are three kinds of bears, the grey, the brown or chocolate coloured, and those which are perfectly black. The grey bears, which are by the far the largest, are about the size of a common cow; and are remarkably strong built, and very ferocious. They attack human beings, as well as all kinds of beasts, that fall in their way; and in their terrible paws, the resistance, even of the male buffaloe, weighing fourteen or fifteen hundred pounds, is utterly vain. Three or four of the Natives join together whenever they attempt to hunt them, and each man is well armed, with a musket and a long spear.³⁹²

Harmon had in effect described a "real" monster, a giant, "ferocious" beast that would "attack human beings." In this case, unlike later exploration literature, there was no sense of doubting the beliefs or courage of Indigenous guides who had to face such "monsters." Harmon also recorded the discovery of something that might have interested Thompson and his men, had they known about it. The discovery of a mammoth thigh bone, proof that even larger "monsters" had once roamed the continent and, in the opinion of some, might still be found in the unknown wilderness of the Northwest.³⁹³ Such examples serve as another indication that the line between legendary monsters and real animals remained blurry in the early nineteenth century, or put another way, that belief in the existence of unknown monsters was not treated, at least not by those actually active on the frontier like Harmon, with the same derision it would be later in the

³⁹¹ Thompson reported that the Iroquois did not at first heed local advice about the grizzlies; until experience taught them better after several dangerous encounters. See Thompson, *Narrative*, 312-3123.

³⁹² Daniel Williams Hamon, *A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the Interiour of North America* (Andover: Flagg and Gould, 1820). 382.

³⁹³ Thomas Jefferson was reportedly among those who believed mammoths and other similar creatures might be found in the wilderness of northwestern North America. See Stephen Ambrose, *Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 55 and 91. Lewis and Clark found mammoth bones on their travels, but despite his interest in the matter, Thompson reported he never found any. See Thompson, *Narrative*, 146.

century. The editor of Harmon's journal, however, writing from afar, had revised it in a way that he believed would make Harmon seem more worldly and skeptical. This included inserting lines about him disparaging Indigenous customs or doubting voyageur lore about "man-eating monsters."³⁹⁴ Things that, in reality, Harmon does not seem to have actually done much.

Indeed, while European naturalists, following Linnaeus' example, were beginning to insist on neat categories to separate the real from the fanciful, fur traders and explorers on the frontiers continued to blur the lines. Ross Cox, for example, who had recorded the "Upper Cree" tradition about giant creatures living near the headwaters of the Athabasca, listed in his same 1831 book the major animals that he had encountered in western North America:

The principal quadrupeds are the elk, red deer, black-tailed deer; the black, brown, and grizzly bear, the last of which is extremely ferocious; the wolf, panther, tiger-cat, wild-cat, marmont, beaver, land-otter, musk-rat, wood-rat, and, the most valuable of all the fur tribe, the sea-otter. White bears are occasionally killed on the coast to the northward of Columbia; but they are scarce.³⁹⁵

Cox's account of the "principal quadrupeds" is of interest not only for his by now familiar comment that the grizzly is "extremely ferocious" but for his reference to a "tiger-cat," "panther," and "white bears." Cox's panther is probably the mountain lion, the wild-cat the bobcat, but "tiger-cat" is a rather more mysterious term—probably it meant the lynx, the only other member of the cat family native to northern North America. The "white bears" that were "occasionally killed on the coast northward of the Columbia" must also have struck many of Cox's readers as perplexing, since polar bears are found nowhere near the temperate rainforests of the Pacific Northwest. Cox's colleague Gabriel Franchère, in his *Relation d'un voyage à la côte du nord-ouest de l'Amérique septentrionale*, which was first published in 1820 in Montreal, eleven years before Cox's book, had also similarly listed the "principal quadrupeds" of the

³⁹⁴ Harmon, *Voyages*, (Haskell), 32. See also the discussion of Harmon's journal in Chapter 3, page 118-120.

³⁹⁵ Ross Cox, Vol. II, 131.

Pacific Northwest. Like Cox, he not only described the grizzly as extremely ferocious (“*l’ours gris est extrêmement féroce...*”) but also made the curious claim that white bears were found on the Pacific seashore toward the north.³⁹⁶ In 1904, Franchère’s book was published in English as part of Rueben Thwaites *Early Narratives of the Northwest*. Thwaites, evidently perplexed by the reference to “white bears” on a list of Pacific Northwest wildlife, and being unable to find a match to it in existing natural history books, added an explanatory footnote about Franchère’s list of animals: “Lewis and Clark describe all these animals, save the ‘white bear,’ by which term Franchère apparently refers to the polar bear.”³⁹⁷ Thwaites, however, was the one who was mistaken. Franchère’s reference to white bears, like Cox’s, is actually one of the earliest references to the elusive “spirit bear” in the rainforests of the Pacific Northwest, animals that the local Kwakwaka’wakw and Nuxalk people knew well, but that most outsiders likely saw as myths no more real than “sasquatch” or windigoes. Franchère and Cox had never actually seen one of these creatures and had only a vague knowledge of it based on stories that circulated in the fur trade, as well as perhaps the occasional skin seen at trade posts. Not until 1905 would zoologists accept the white “spirit bear” was an actual animal.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁶ Gabriel Franchère, *Relation d’un Voyage à la Côte du Nord-Ouest de l’Amérique Septentrionale dans les Anées 1810, 11, 12, 13, et 14* (Montreal: De L’Imprimerie de C.B. Pasteur, 1820), 180.

³⁹⁷ *Early Western Travels, 1748-1846: Brackenridge’s Journal up the Missouri, 1811; Franchère’s Voyage to Northwest coast, 1811-1814*, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites (A.H. Clark Company, 1904), 323.

³⁹⁸ In 1905, the naturalist William T. Hornaday published a short paper, “A New White Bear, From British Columbia,” which for the first time documented the bear as a different species. Hornaday called it the “inland white bear” and named it *ursus kermodei*, after Francis Kermode, a curator at the Provincial Museum of British Columbia who had obtained skins of the bear. (Neither Hornaday nor Kermode ever saw a live specimen.) Hornaday, after considering all possible explanations for the four curious specimens of creamy white fur and a few samples of teeth and skulls that he had obtained, and ruling out that they could be from polar bears or albinos, wrote: “There is no escape from the conclusion that a hitherto unknown species of white bear, of very small size, inhabits the west-central portion of British Columbia...” In this case then, the seemingly mythical became real, and was christened in the Linnaean system, *ursus americanus kermodei*. See, William T. Hornaday, “A New White Bear, From British Columbia,” *Reprinted from the Ninth Annual Report of the New York Zoological Society* (New York: Office of the Society, 1905), 6.

Most naturalists, on the other hand, would not have a hard time accepting stories of ferocious, man-eating grizzlies, given how many accounts claimed they existed. A few of the more adventurously inclined naturalists even went West to find out for themselves. In the 1820s, fifty years after Hearne's journey on foot with his Dene companions to the Coppermine River, Dr. John Richardson, a leading naturalist of the era, joined John Franklin on an overland expedition to the Coppermine in search of a Northwest Passage. Richardson had no illusions about the danger of the "Grisly Bear:"

The strength and ferocity of the Grisly Bear are so great that the Indian hunters use much precaution in attacking them....The strength of this Bear may be estimated from its having been known to drag to a considerable distance the carcass of a Buffalo, weighing about one thousand pounds...I have been told that there is a man now living in the neighbourhood of Edmonton-house, who was attacked by a Grisly Bear, which sprung out of a thicket, and with one stroke of its paw completely scalped him, laying bare the skull, and bringing the skin of the forehead down over the eyes. Assistance coming up, the Bear made off without doing further injury, but the scalp not being replaced, the poor man has lost his sight, although he thinks that his eyes are uninjured.³⁹⁹

In this case, a European naturalist like Richardson did not mock or reject, or even express any skepticism, about the tales told by voyageurs or Indigenous guides regarding dangerous creatures. Richardson met with grizzlies both on the prairie and north on the Arctic tundra. He believed that the brown bears of the tundra might be a different species from the grizzly, due to their different environment and what he saw as their more timid nature, calling it the "Barren-ground bear." It was later given the scientific name *ursus richardsoni* in his honour but is now no longer considered a distinct species.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁹ John Richardson, *Boreali-Americana; or the Zoology of the Northern Parts of British America: Containing Descriptions of the Objects of Natural History Collected on the Late Northern Land Expedition, Under the Command of Captain Sir John Franklin, R.N.* (London: John Murray, 1829?), 26-29.

⁴⁰⁰ See John Richardson, *Boreali-Americana; or the Zoology of the Northern Parts of British America: Containing Descriptions of the Objects of Natural History Collected on the Late Northern Land Expedition, Under the Command of Captain Sir John Franklin, R.N.* (London: John Murray, 1829?), 21-24. Other naturalist-explorers of the nineteenth and early twentieth century believed that there were other North American subspecies of bears, though few of these varieties are recognized as having any validity today. The American naturalist C. Hart Merriam was almost comically overzealous when in 1918 he identified no less than 86 different subspecies of brown bears in

In 1839 the fur trade explorer Thomas Simpson returned to the Coppermine to map more of the Arctic coast and wrote of a grizzly bear his party crossed paths with near there:

The day we left Bloody Fall, while still together, we gave chase to a huge grizzly bear, that terror of the Indians. Bruin, with his shuffling gait, proved too nimble for us, and four shots were fired after him without effect. We followed up his track for some distance, thinking he was wounded, but in vain: his foot-prints in the snow measured fifteen inches by six! The monster had been amusing himself with digging up marmots and lemmings; the deep furrows in the frozen ground, and the large stones removed, bearing witness to his prodigious strength.⁴⁰¹

Here we see once more the reference to the grizzly as a “monster” and “terror,” as well as its enormous tracks, which had earlier made such an impression on Thompson and his men. The grizzly’s large tracks were a reoccurring theme in accounts of the “monster,” which parallels both windigo and proto-sasquatch tales that similarly highlighted these creatures’ ominous tracks.

Even Alexander Mackenzie, usually an explorer not given much to exaggeration, in his account of his expeditions in search of a route across North America to the Pacific, noted the bear’s formidable reputation and giant tracks:

We perceived along the river tracks of large bears, some of which were nine inches wide, and of a proportionate length. We saw one of their dens, or winter quarters, called *watee*, in an island, which was ten feet deep, five feet high, and six feet wide; but we had not yet seen one of those animals. The Indians entertain great apprehension of this kind of bear, which is called the grisly bear, and they never venture to attack it but in a party of at least three or four.⁴⁰²

North America. His work has since been criticized as “fanciful” and only a few of these categories are still accepted as legitimate. See, “The Grizzly Today,” by Paul Schullery, in Harold McCracken, *The Beast That Walks Like a Man*, (Lanham, MD: Roberts Rhinehart Publishers, 2003), 13-14.

⁴⁰⁰ John Richardson, *Boreali-Americana*, (London: John Murray, 1829?), 26-29.

⁴⁰¹ Thomas Simpson, *Narrative of the Discoveries on the North Coast of America: Effected by the Officers of the Hudson’s Bay Company During the Years 1836-39* (London: Richard Bentley, 1843), 391.

⁴⁰² Alexander Mackenzie, *Voyages from Montreal, on the River St. Lawrence, Through the Continent of North America to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans in the Years 1789 and 1793*, edited by Charles William Colby, (Toronto: Radisson Society, 1927, first published 1801), 272.

A few days later Mackenzie noted in his journal, “We this day saw two grisly and hideous bears.”⁴⁰³ Of these “hideous” bears Mackenzie made no further comment, but he later noted that one of his voyageurs was nearly killed by a mother grizzly with cubs.⁴⁰⁴

Mackenzie’s journey across the continent in search of the Pacific inspired the better known expedition eleven years later in 1804 by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. They had been instructed to imitate Mackenzie’s example by United States President Thomas Jefferson, who had read Mackenzie’s account of his explorations. Lewis and Clark would be the first Euro-Americans to encounter grizzlies; all previous written accounts had been made by French colonists or else British fur traders, explorers, or settlers in Canada. If this latter group saw the grizzly as an alarming monster, the American explorers and naturalists took things even further in their depictions of the grizzly as a monster of mythic proportions. Jefferson, who had an interest in natural history, had instructed Lewis to take careful notes of any zoological discoveries. And while some Americans would eventually credit Lewis and Clark with “discovering” the grizzly, a claim that is far from accurate, in their expedition journals they did describe it extensively.

Lewis and Clark, both professional soldiers, soon acquired an even more hostile view of the grizzly than the typical more northern fur trade explorer. They reported that their party were attacked several times by enormous grizzlies. The first published account of their journey, which appeared in 1809, explained: “Several times, many of our party were in imminent danger of being devoured by the wild beasts of prey; but happily we escaped. Frequently we were annoyed

⁴⁰³ Mackenzie, *Voyages*, 275.

⁴⁰⁴ See Mackenzie, *Voyages*, 449.

by a kind of light coloured bear, of which the country, near the head of the Missouri, abounds. After being attacked, they give no quarter, but rush with great fury toward their enemy.”⁴⁰⁵

When their edited journals were published, the American reading public thrilled at the explorers’ tales of facing man-eating bears. Lewis and Clark sometimes referred to these animals as “white bears,” presumably because of the silver-blond fur grizzlies often exhibit. Regardless, there is no doubt that the animals they were encountering in the North American West—and frequently killing—were grizzlies. Like earlier explorers, the sheer size of grizzly tracks staggered them. Clark, for instance, in one journal entry noted: “I saw Several fresh track of those animals which is 3 times as large as a mans track.”⁴⁰⁶ Despite their fearsome size, Lewis and Clark and the soldiers under their command (about twenty-seven in total) always shot at grizzlies whenever they encountered them. In their eyes, grizzlies were monsters that had to be killed on sight, lest they attack first. In other words, unlike the windigo or proto-sasquatch lore, it was a monster that it remained fully respectable to believe in. In total, judging from their journals, they seemed to have killed around forty grizzlies over the course of their expedition. Killing a grizzly, however, was often easier said than done.

In his May 14, 1805 journal entry, Lewis provided some indication of how difficult it could be to kill one with the weapons of the time:

In the evening the men...discovered a large brown bear lying in the open grounds about 300 paces from the river, and six of them went out to attack him, all good hunters; they...got within 40 paces of him unperceived, two of them reserved their fires...the four others fired nearly at the same time and put each his bullet through him...in an instant this monster ran at them with open mouth, the two who had reserved their fires discharged their pieces at him as he came towards them, both of them struck him...this

⁴⁰⁵ *The Travels of Capts. Lewis & Clarke, From St. Louis, By way of the Missouri and Columbia Rivers, to the Pacific Ocean; performed in the Years 1804, 1805, & 1806, by order of the Government of the United States* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1809), 29.

⁴⁰⁶ See William Clark, “October 20, 1804 Journal Entry,” *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, University of Nebraska Press, edited by Gary E. Moulton, accessed online October, 2016, <http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu>.

however only retarded his motion for a moment only, the men unable to reload their guns took to flight, the bear pursued and had very nearly overtaken them before they reached the river; two of the party betook themselves to a canoe and the others seperated an[d] concealed themselves among the willows, reloaded their pieces, each discharged his piece at him as they had an opportunity they struck him several times again but the guns served only to direct the bear to them, in this manner he pursued two of them seperately so close that they were obliged to throw...themselves into the river...so enraged was this anamal that he plunged into the river only a few feet behind the second man...when one of those who still remained on shore shot him through the head and finally killed him; they then took him on shore and butched him when they found eight balls had passed through him in different directions...⁴⁰⁷

Lewis' and Clark's copious notes and journals, and the specimens they collected on Jefferson's orders, did much to stimulate American scientific interest in North America's fauna. The explorers' descriptions of aggressive, ferocious bears excited particular interest—especially since the bear was not yet formally classified by any naturalist.

In 1813 Henry Marie Brackenridge, a journalist and United States government agent in the western territories, corroborated Lewis' and Clark's view of the fierceness of the grizzly:

This animal, is the monarch of the country which he inhabits. The African lion, or the tyger of Bengal, is not more terrible or fierce. He is the enemy of man; and literally thirsts for human blood. So far from shunning, he seldom fails to attack; and even to hunt him. I am credibly informed that he has been known to pursue the track of a hunter an hour after his having passed. The Indians make war upon these ferocious monsters, with the same ceremonies, as they do upon a tribe of their own species: and in the recital of their victories, the death of one of them, gives the warrior greater renown than the scalp of a human enemy.⁴⁰⁸

Brackenridge recognized that this terrifying monster was as of yet still unclassified by science, and referred to it and other animals of similar status as “*non-descript*.” He commented:

The Grizzly Bear, is a *non-descript*, and much the largest of the species. He is twice the size of a common brown bear, and four times that of the European...they sometimes exceed 1,000 [pounds]. When full grown, commonly weigh six or eight hundred. He possesses an amazing strength, and attacks without hesitation and tears to pieces the largest buffalo...

⁴⁰⁷ Meriwether Lewis, “May, 14 1805 Journal Entry,” *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, University of Nebraska Press, edited by Gary E. Moulton, accessed online October, 2016, <http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu>.

⁴⁰⁸ Henry Marie Brackenridge, *Views of Louisiana: Containing Geographical, Statistical and Historical Notices of that Vast and Important Portion of America*, Book I, (Baltimore: Schaefer & Maud, 1817, first printed 1813), 113.

The grizzly bear is sufficient to disprove, the idle theories of Buffon or Raynal, as to the impotency of the NEW WORLD in the production of animals.⁴⁰⁹

Buffon and Raynal were two of the most eminent European naturalists and geographers of the day—who apparently, at least in Brackenridge’s estimation, did not have a proper understanding of the monstrous nature of the still unclassified grizzly. Brackenridge’s jab at these two European naturalists, who Brackenridge doubtless would have dismissed as mere armchair travellers, is the closest an American naturalist came to pushing back against the rising tide of European skepticism regarding monsters.

To a much greater extent than any other “Indian legend” or voyageur one for that matter, belief in a grizzly monster remained respectable among North American explorers and scientific authorities. As Brackenridge’s comment about Buffon and Raynal suggests, this was at least in part because the grizzly as a dangerous monster served a social purpose in Euro-settler cosmologies that the sasquatch or windigo never quite achieved; in the newly formed United States, the grizzly helped provide a romantic bit of monster lore seemingly useful to any nascent national mythology. Brackenridge had tellingly disputed European naturalists’ notions that the New World did not produce large, dangerous animals. But more obviously, some of the most popular early American heroes of the nineteenth century were celebrated grizzly hunters. In their own lifetimes soldiers-turned-grizzly hunters like Lewis and Clark, Davy Crockett, and Kit Carson enjoyed folk hero status in American popular literature. Yet less than a century after Brackenridge and other naturalists were proclaiming the grizzly a true monster, a different generation of American naturalists would be scorning these early pioneers for considering the grizzly as such. By that point, the late 1890s, the American frontier had closed, industrialization

⁴⁰⁹ Brackenridge, *Views of Louisiana*, 113-115.

had triumphed, and the bears were nearly extinct in the United States. Like the “sasquatch” and windigo, the grizzly had thus lost much of its potency as a monster.

But in Brackenridge’s day that was far from the case. In 1814, a year after he had written about monstrous flesh-eating grizzlies, the American naturalist, antiquarian, and politician DeWitt Clinton attempted to summarize what was known of the grizzly after the example of Carl Linnaeus, based mostly on what he read in Lewis’ and Clark’s reports and journals. Clinton referred to the creature as, “...the white-brown or grizzly bear; the ferocious tyrant of the American woods....a distinct animal from the *ursus arctos*, or polar bear, with which it is confounded.”⁴¹⁰ In a footnote, he added: “The Linnaean name for the polar bear is given as *ursus maritimus*; the common bear of Europe is *ursus arctos*; and the common black bear of America, *ursus americanus*. The grizzly bear has no scientific name.”⁴¹¹ Clinton summarized what he knew of the terrifying beast in language that expressed no greater “scientific” restraint than the sensational accounts of early explorers:

It is principally carnivorous, and will generally attack a man whenever it sees him...No wound except through the head, is mortal; and they have escaped after being shot in several places through the body. The Indians never attack him but in parties of six or eight persons, and even then are often defeated with the loss of one or more of the party; and when they go in quest of him, paint themselves, and perform all the superstitious rites customary when they make war on a neighboring nation. The Indians say these bears have killed numbers of their bravest men...It has long been supposed that this animal was the *ursus arctos* of Linnaeus, and is so characterized in the 6th volume of the Philosophical Transactions...I am sorry to say, that such is the low state of natural knowledge among us, that Dr. Belknap the inestimable historian of New Hampshire, has even represented our common bear as the *ursus arctos*.⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ DeWitt Clinton, *An Introductory Discourse Delivered Before the Literary and Philosophical Society of New York, on the Fourth of May, 1814* (David Longworth, 1815), 27.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Clinton, 74-75.

The grizzly then was still quite a mysterious and terrifying creature—a “non-descript” in the Linnaean system. That, however, soon changed. Lewis and Clark, as per their instructions from Jefferson, gathered plant and animal specimens with the intention of increasing scientific knowledge. The specimens they obtained, and descriptions they furnished, along with those of their contemporary explorer Zebulon Pike, allowed the Philadelphia-based naturalist George Ord—who would later be called “the Father of North American zoology”—to describe and classify several new species, including in 1815 the grizzly bear. Ord’s “scientific” description of the grizzly accepted it as a genuine monster and quoted Brackenridge’s startling account of it as something that “literally thirsts for human blood.” To Brackenridge’s description, which Ord quoted in full, the “Father of American Zoology” added:

In the history of the expedition under the command of Lewis and Clark, we have much interesting information relating to this dreadfully ferocious animal. These enterprising travellers made many narrow escapes from the attacks of this monster, who in some instances were not brought to the ground until he had received seven or eight balls right through his body. As a wonderful proof of the tenacity of life of this animal, one that was killed the nineteenth of May, 1805, ran at his usual pace nearly a quarter of a mile, after having *been shot through the heart*.

The Grizzly Bear has been long known to naturalists; but the above mentioned travellers were the first to give us a particular account of this monarch of the American forests...They give an account of one which measured nine feet from the nose to the extremity of the tail; and the talons of another were six and a quarter inches in length. It is said that this animal when full grown and fat will exceed a thousand pounds.⁴¹³

Ord, like previous writers, dwelt on the grizzly’s seeming invulnerability to lead musket balls—something that (unacknowledged by Ord) put it into the same category as legendary creatures like werewolves, vampires, or for that matter, windigoes and “sasquatch.” Clinton had believed

⁴¹³ Despite its importance in the history of zoology, no copies of Ord’s 1815 original survives, and it is known only from an 1894 reprint. See, George Ord, *A Reprint of the North American Zoology, By George Ord, Being an Exact Reproduction of the Part Originally Compiled by Mr. Ord for Johnson & Warner, and First Published by Them in Their Second American Edition of Guthrie's Geography in 1815*, edited by Samuel N. Roads (Haddonfield, NJ: Published by Samuel Roads, 1894), 299-300.

that with a grizzly, “no wound except through the head, is mortal.”⁴¹⁴ Lewis and Clark’s account of grizzlies that withstood seven or eight shots, and still remained alive and dangerous, was indeed the very stuff of monster legends. The fur trader François Antoine Larocque had in 1804 described a “Man Wolf” that was said to be “ball proof.”⁴¹⁵ David Thompson had written about the fear inspired by the realization that “the balls of our fowling guns” would be ineffective against the dreaded “Mammoth.”⁴¹⁶ Contemporaneous with those legends, in 1815 Ord provided this formidable animal—a monster of the wilderness which the Republic’s knights-errant, Lewis and Clark, had done battle with on orders of their chief, Jefferson—with a suitably descriptive name under the Latin Linnaean system: *ursus horribilis*—the horrible bear. At last, there was a real “monster” in Linnaeus’ catalogue.

Nearly forty years after Ord’s “scientific” description of the grizzly, perceptions of it as a monster showed no indication of diminishing. Even John James Audubon, a naturalist who like Ord has been honoured as a “father of zoology” and especially ornithology in North America, had views not much different than his predecessors’ on the grizzly. Of the grizzly Audubon wrote:

Our readers must therefore imagine, the startling sensations experienced on a sudden and quite unexpected face-to-face meeting with the savage Grizzly Bear—the huge shaggy monster disputing possession of the wilderness against all comers, and threatening immediate attack! Whilst in a neighbourhood where the Grizzly Bear may possibly be hidden, the excited nerves will cause the heart's pulsations to quicken if but a startled ground-squirrel run past...⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁴ Clinton, 27.

⁴¹⁵ Larocque, *Journal*, 41-42.

⁴¹⁶ Thompson, *David Thompson’s Narrative*, 383.

⁴¹⁷ John James Audubon and John Bachman, *The Quadrupeds of North America*, vol. III (New York: V.G. Audubon, 1854), 143.

Audubon, despite his partial humour, shared his predecessor Ord's view of the grizzly as a "monster" that would aggressively attack humans. Indeed, the use of the word "monster" to describe the grizzly had become *de rigueur* among nineteenth-century writers.⁴¹⁸

While monster legends would eventually drive a wedge between most explorers and travel writers and their Indigenous or lower status white guides, with the grizzly, prior to at least 1880, Euro-travellers were open about sharing these groups' fear of the "grisly," and admiration for those native people who managed to kill one. Many sources state that it was considered a rare and exceptional feat for native warriors to kill a grizzly, owing to their size and ferocity, as well as the toughness of their hide. The fur trader Alexander Henry the younger, for example, noted in his October 18, 1800 journal entry that the "grisly bear" is "very malicious" and that it was an "uncommon" feat for one to be killed by a native hunter, and as such would always be celebrated.⁴¹⁹ This ceased to be the case after the introduction of breech-loading, repeating rifles in the mid-nineteenth century, which made killing grizzlies much less difficult. From the middle nineteenth century onwards there were American mountain men (i.e. white fur hunters or trappers) who achieved a measure of fame as grizzly hunters, and some like Seth Kinman and Ben Lilly, were reputedly to have killed hundreds of these bears.⁴²⁰ This was quite an astonishing reversal brought on by the Industrial Revolution and modern firearms. As late as 1847, when single-shot, muzzle loading firearms of limited accuracy were still the norm, the artist Paul Kane remarked in his journal that: "There is no animal on the whole continent that the Indians hold in

⁴¹⁸ See the Appendix's Google Books Ngram Graph for "Grizzly Monster."

⁴¹⁹ Alexander Henry, *The Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger, 1799-1814*, Vol. I edited by Barry M. Gough (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1988), 72-73. (His father, Alexander Henry the elder, who wrote of windigoes, giant snakes, and strange caves, did not travel far enough west to encounter any grizzlies.)

⁴²⁰ Kinman, who reputedly killed 800 grizzlies over his lifetime, became famous for the grizzly bear chairs he made out of their hides with the heads and claws still attached. He presented one of these chairs to American president Andrew Johnson, who kept it at the Whitehouse. See, Charles Howard Shinn, "With the Humboldt Trappers," in *Outing*, Vol. XIX, November 1891, 94-95.

so much dread as the grisly bear, and few will attack one of them alone, unless with a very fleet horse under him.”⁴²¹ This was understandable, given that multiple shots were usually required to kill a grizzly—and this had to be done at fairly close range, given the limitations of flintlock weapons. Many accounts state that at close range bears were killed with knives or spears, after first being shot.

One comparatively early big-game hunter who journeyed to the Great Plains to hunt grizzly for sport, as well as bison and other animals, before the advent of modern firearms would radically alter the experience, was the Anglo-Irish adventurer John Palliser. In his popular book about his travels, *Solitary Rambles and Adventures of a Hunter in the Prairies* (1853), Palliser related all sorts of hair-raising encounters with the “grisly monster.” Palliser was effective in setting the scene for his readers of a place on the edge of the known world where monsters might still be found. Of his first approach onto the Great Plains in search of his quarry Palliser wrote: “I know not when I have felt so forcibly conscious of my own insignificance, as when struggling through this immense waste, and feeling as though I were encroaching on the territories of the Mammoth and the Mastodon.”⁴²² Palliser noted that the “grisly bear” was still little known in Europe, and explained that it was the “monarch of the Rocky Mountains” and utterly fearless.⁴²³ He hunted the bears on horseback with several French-Canadian companions. One bear they encountered he described as “a lean hungry-looking monster, prowling about...and to judge from his appearance, likely to afford us a pretty severe fight.”⁴²⁴ Palliser succeeded in killing several grizzlies during his trip, but warned others about imitating his example without proper

⁴²¹Paul Kane, *Wanderings of an Artist: Among the Indians of North America* (Dover Publications: Mineola, New York, 1996, first published Toronto, 1859), 91.

⁴²² John Palliser, *Solitary Rambles and Adventures of a Hunter in the Prairies* (London: John Murray, 1853), 88.

⁴²³ Palliser, *Solitary Rambles*, 253.

⁴²⁴ Palliser, *Solitary Rambles*, 277.

precautions. He cited stories of grizzly attacks on less fortunate hunters. Such tales of fatal grizzly attacks and savage man-eaters became part of the lore of the western frontier, and were sometimes memorialized in ominous place names where the attacks were said to have occurred.⁴²⁵

One example is the story behind Deserted Bay, on the coast of mainland British Columbia. The name “Deserted Bay” derives from a legend first recorded in 1860, when a Captain Richards of the Royal Navy while on a nautical survey noted it. British Columbia’s official geographic names archive explains: “A party of Indians once landed here and were attacked by grizzly bears; four were killed before they could get back to their canoes. Thereafter the place was avoided by the Indians and came to be known as the deserted bay. Prior to the encounter with the grizzlies, the native name was Tsuahdie, ‘place to shelter.’”⁴²⁶ Whether or not this story is true (it seems doubtful), it is reflective of many such oral traditions and legends that were told and retold across the bear’s range.

This was thus a monster legend, though largely of European making, that seems to have allowed Indigenous guides and their European explorer counterparts, in their experiences of travelling together, to bond over. As noted earlier, explorers and fur traders like Kelsey, Lahontan, Fidler, Mackenzie, Henry, Kane, Richardson, and many others, remarked on the prowess and courage needed to face such “monsters,” something their accounts make clear that

⁴²⁵ Palliser claimed that the grizzly was so universally feared by other animals, even wolves, that no animal would dare scavenge from a grizzly’s kill—the mere sight of a grizzly’s tracks being sufficient to make wolves turn in fear. Theodore Roosevelt, however, without mentioning Palliser, commented that this was “nonsense.” See Palliser, *Solitary Rambles*, 277 and Theodore Roosevelt, *The Wilderness Hunter: Sketches of Sport on The Northern Cattle Plains*, Two Volumes in One (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1893). 65. Wolves and grizzlies battling over elk carcasses has been documented more recently in Banff National Park. See “Grizzly Harmony,” *Canadian Geographic Magazine*, December 2010.

⁴²⁶ “Deserted Bay,” Provincial Archives’ Place Names File (the “Harvey File”) compiled 1945-1950 by A.G. Harvey from various sources, with subsequent additions. See BC Geographic Names Office, accessed September 2013, <http://apps.gov.bc.ca/pub/bcgnws/names/14518.html>.

the bravest of Indigenous hunters won renown for. Further indicative of this is that grizzly attacks on joint parties of Indigenous guides and Euro-explorers are mentioned in a large number of explorers' and fur traders' accounts.

However, an interesting dichotomy emerges in these accounts when read carefully. While the grizzly was invariably described as “extremely ferocious” (Ross Cox, Gabriel Franchère), from a close reading of these accounts a slightly different picture emerges. Most of these attacks, it seems, were instances where a bear was first wounded by hunters or else a female bear protecting her young (or a combination of both these scenarios), or less commonly a starving bear seeking food. Several accounts, like the fur traders Ross Cox's, Roderick R. McFarlane's, and Simon Fraser's, when read closely seem to contradict their authors' suggestion that grizzlies aggressively preyed on humans. Cox, for example, discussed a grizzly attack on a party of French-Canadian voyageurs in the spring of 1816. The bear, however was starving when it attacked and actually stopped once it had got hold of the food that the voyageurs had been eating.⁴²⁷ The cases cited by McFarlane—a fur trader in Canada's mainland Arctic who was also one of the most prolific collectors of bird and mammal specimens of his time, which he sent to the Smithsonian Institute—involved bears that were acting defensively once they were already wounded or pursued by native hunters.⁴²⁸ Simon Fraser reported in his July 16, 1804 journal entry a bear attack on a native man and woman that were attached to his exploring party—but again, in this instance it was a mother grizzly with two cubs, which attacked only *after* it had been fired upon and wounded, and even more interestingly, ceased the attack after the woman

⁴²⁷ Ross Cox, *The Columbia River; Or Scenes and Adventures During a Residence of Six Years on the Western Side of the Rocky Mountains, Among Various Tribes of Indians Hitherto Unknown: Together With a Journey Across the American Continent*. Vol. II. (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), 105-107.

⁴²⁸ Roderick MacFarlane, "Notes on the Mammals Collected and Observed in The Northern Mackenzie River District, North-West Territories of Canada, With Remarks on Explorers and Explorations of the Far North," in *Proceedings of the United States National Museum*, vol. 28 (1905), 718-719.

played dead. Fraser and his men killed and ate the bear.⁴²⁹ It was these kind of discrepancies in accounts that led later naturalists to wonder about the grizzly's status as a "monster."

Similar to these cases but even more striking for the apparent discrepancy between the view of the grizzly as extremely aggressive toward humans and what the account actually seems to indicate, are examples found in Richardson's *Fauna Boreali-Americana* (1829-1837). In his section on "grisly bears," Richardson recounted a bear story involving the botanist and naturalist Thomas Drummond, who had been one of Richardson's companions on his Arctic journeys.

Richardson wrote:

Mr. Drummond, in his excursions over the Rocky Mountains, had frequent opportunities of observing the manners of Grisly Bears, and it often happened that in turning the point of a rock or sharp angle of a valley, he came suddenly upon one or more of them. On such occasions they reared on their hind legs and made a loud noise like a person breathing quick, but much harsher. He kept his ground without attempting to molest them, and they on their part, after attentively regarding him for some time, generally wheeled round and galloped off, though, from their known disposition, there is little doubt but he would have been torn in pieces had he lost his presence of mind and attempted to fly... In the latter end of June 1826, he observed a male caressing a female, and soon afterwards they both came towards him, but whether accidentally, or for the purpose of attacking him, he was uncertain. He ascended a tree, and as the female drew near, fired at and mortally wounded her. She uttered a few loud screams, which threw the male into a furious rage, and he reared up against the trunk of the tree in which Mr. Drummond was seated, but never attempted to ascend it. The female, in the meanwhile retiring to a short distance, lay down, and as the male was proceeding to join her, Mr. Drummond shot him also.⁴³⁰

The view of the "grisly" as an aggressive beast that preyed upon humans was evidently so well-entrenched that even examples like these did not lead Richardson to question it. The accounts might seem to suggest that the bears were not acting aggressively, but Richardson assured his readers that had Drummond "lost his presence of mind" the bear would have killed him.

⁴²⁹ Simon Fraser, *The Letters and Journals of Simon Fraser 1806-1808*, edited by W. Kaye Lamb (Toronto: MacMillan, 1960), 225-226.

⁴³⁰ Richardson, *Fauna Boreali-Americana*, 29-30.

Another seemingly contradictory grizzly account is found in George Catlin's 1866 travel book about his journeys in the western United States. Catlin reported that he and his companions had a narrow escape from a grizzly that had surprised them in their camp while they were asleep. The bear had eaten through their provisions, but left them unharmed as they lay under buffalo robes, despite sniffing around them. Catlin, however, felt that they had only escaped from what he called the "path of this grizzly and grim monster" because they had remained lying down.⁴³¹ He claimed, "...it is a well-known fact, that man and beast, upon their feet, are sure to be attacked when they cross the path of this grizzly and grim monster, which is the terror of all this country; often growing to the enormous size of eight hundred or one thousand pounds."⁴³² Remarkably, this incident did not lead Catlin to conclude that the grizzly was anything other than a "grim monster." They had been saved, Catlin believed, only because they remained lying down; had they risen it was assumed the bear would have devoured them. This points to something made clearer in subsequent accounts; namely, the "grisly" monster that "thirsts" for human blood owed almost as much to European and Euro-American imaginations as it did to reality.

Even the most notorious grizzly attack of the nineteenth century—American mountain man Hugh Glass' harrowing ordeal following his near fatal encounter with a grizzly and subsequent abandonment by his companions—did not involve a predatory attack. On the contrary, the grizzly that attacked Glass was a mother with two cubs, and while details are vague and contradictory, it seems Glass probably attacked it first. In subsequent retellings of the story

⁴³¹ George Catlin, *Illustrations of the Manners, Customs and Condition of the North American Indians, with Letters and Notes Written During Eight Years of Travel and Adventure Among the Wildest and Most Remarkable Tribes now Existing*, vol. 1 (London, England: H. Bohn, 1866), 71.

⁴³² Ibid.

though, the bear's innate savagery and fierceness were emphasized—rather than that Glass had stumbled upon a female with two cubs, and possibly shot first.⁴³³

Given the grizzly's reputation and the fear it inspired, in some of these legends the bear seems to have taken on even more monstrous attributes. Theodore Roosevelt, himself an enthusiastic grizzly hunter, had captured something of this in the tale he recorded from Bauman, the “grizzled, weather beaten old mountain hunter... who was born and had passed all of his life on the Frontier.”⁴³⁴ Bauman believed that no ordinary grizzly, but a monster of a different species, had killed his friend. Other stories circulated in the West of particularly fierce grizzlies that had killed dozens of people and horses. This included grizzlies dubbed “Red Robber,” “Old Silver,” “The Bandit,” and perhaps most famously, “Old Mose.”⁴³⁵

Old Mose, the so-called “King of the Grizzlies,” was an infamous Colorado grizzly that supposedly “murdered” five men and “scores” of cattle over a period spanning thirty-five years from 1869-1904.⁴³⁶ For decades hunters attempted to track and kill “Old Mose” without success. Finally in 1904 the bear was tracked by dogs and killed after it had been shot multiple times, which made news across the United States. The full story of Old Mose's demise was told in a celebratory article in *Outdoor Life* by Jack Bell, who proclaimed that: “the most dreaded grizzly bear in the entire United States, met a death befitting his long life of murder and outrage.”⁴³⁷ In

⁴³³ Glass' story has become the stuff of legend—so sorting fact from fiction is not easy. However, three contemporary accounts that discuss the incident are Thomas James, *Three Years Among the Indians and Mexicans*, edited by Walter B. Douglas (St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society, 1916), 266, James Clyman, *Frontiersman: The Adventures of a Trapper and Covered Wagon Immigrant as Told In His Own Reminiscences and Diaries*, edited by Charles L. Camp (Cleveland, OH: Champoege Press, 1960), 15, and James Hall *Letters from the West* (London, England: H. Colburn, 1828), 295-305. James said Glass shot the bear first, whereas Hall said he was about to but failed to get the shot off in time, and Clyman did not specify.

⁴³⁴ Roosevelt, *Wilderness Hunter*, 441.

⁴³⁵ For stories of these bears, see W. P. Hubbard, *Notorious Grizzly Bears* (New York: Sage Books, 1960).

⁴³⁶ “Conquest of the King of the Grizzlies,” by Jack Bell, in *The Best of Outdoor Life: 100 Years of Classic Stories* (Cowles Creative Publishing, 1998), 11-13. The story first appeared in the July 1904 issue of *Outdoor Life*.

⁴³⁷ Bell, “Conquest of the King of the Grizzlies,” 11.

the story, the bear is described as a “monster,” an “outlaw and degenerate,” “more cunning than a fox,” with eyes that “burned as with fire,” “wicked teeth,” and an “unearthly growl.”⁴³⁸ Even the hardiest of ranchers and cowboys were said to live in fear for their lives under the monstrous bear’s “reign of terror.”⁴³⁹

Finally, in 1904, the aged bear was tracked by dogs to its cave, where it was shot repeatedly and killed. *Outdoor Life*’s stirring account by Bell, however, is somewhat belied by the facts of his own story—the bear, probably so old it was near a natural death anyway, made almost no resistance even as it was being torn at by hunting dogs and repeatedly shot at. Bell himself, perhaps on some subliminal level, seemed to wonder about the bear as a monster in his own story. He reported that despite being shot “through his jawl” the bear “did not even strike at them (the dog), but sat still and seemed to ponder and try to unravel their unknown and untried quality that he had never before been called upon to meet.”⁴⁴⁰ When the old bear attempted to walk away, the hunter fired again and again at it, until it finally turned and slowly walked toward him. When shot for a fourth time, the bear: “turned and went back to the point where the dogs had stopped him and sat up for a moment...and acted as though there was neither man nor dogs within a thousand miles. The fifth and sixth shots were hurled into the carcass...and never a howl, growl or snarl did he make.”⁴⁴¹ A final shot to the head finished the bear.⁴⁴²

⁴³⁸ Bell, 11-13.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Bell, 13.

⁴⁴¹ Bell, 13.

⁴⁴² The remains of “Old Mose” were taken as a trophy to California by the hunter who killed him (James Anthony), and are now at the University of California’s Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. “Old Mose” was an exceptionally large bear and reportedly weighed 900 pounds at the time of his death, which since it was in April, suggests that in the fall when grizzlies are at their largest, he was much bigger. See, Vickie Makings, “King of grizzly bears ‘terrorized’ Colorado until 1904,” *Denver Post*, August 29, 2012, <http://blogs.denverpost.com/library/2012/08/29/king-grizzly-bears-terrorized-colorado-1904/3207/>.

Already by 1904, in fact, views of this dreaded “monster” had begun to shift, much like the similar transition windigo and “sasquatch” stories underwent around the same time as industrialization largely eliminated the old frontier. After the death of “Old Mose” there were no more than a few grizzlies left anywhere in Colorado, and within another few decades the bear was entirely extirpated from the United States, excepting only Alaska.⁴⁴³ In part, it was harder to fear a creature that seemed to have become an underdog in an industrial age of high-powered repeating guns and other modern innovations.

This skeptical discussion of the grizzly that began to recast it in a more benign guise corresponded with similar rebranding of proto-“sasquatch” and windigo legends in less threatening, more light-hearted incarnations. And while with the “sasquatch” and windigo the skeptics’ scorn was mainly directed at Indigenous people, who were often mocked or belittled for belief in monsters, with the grizzly, it was mostly lower status white hunters and trappers who received the brunt of criticism. However, Indigenous people were sometimes included in it. The well-heeled sport hunter John M. Murphy presaged some of what was to come when he lampooned a Sioux chief’s status as a grizzly slayer in his *Sporting Adventures in the Far West* (1880):

I remember distinctly with what, to me, seemed ludicrous dignity or gravity, a Sioux chief once pointed out a string of ugly-looking grizzly claws that hung around his dirty neck and then to the anklets of the same material....and in what a heroic tone he assured me that he had killed their former owner himself, and was now considered to be unrivalled as a brave. He thought if the Great Father in Washington knew he was so great he would send him plenty of meat, flour, tea, coffee, and sugar....He wished me to tell the Great Father in Washington who he really was, and what were his wants; and I when volunteered to do so on condition that he gave me the prized trophies, he rejected my offer at once, and said he would not part with them on any account....When he saw that I seemed indifferent to the matter....[I explained] I could get them, if I wished, by simply going on a hunt myself, he looked rather astonished, if an Indian can express that feeling,

⁴⁴³ The decline of the grizzly across its historic range is examined in Harold McCracken’s *The Beast That Walks Like a Man: The Story of the Grizzly Bear* (Lanham, MD: Roberts Rhinehart Publishers, 2003, first published 1955).

and grunted out an "uch" of disapprobation, as if he thought I was lessening his importance.⁴⁴⁴

Murphy's mockery of the Sioux chief's status as grizzly hunter contrasted sharply with the opinion of earlier western travellers, such as Mackenzie, Henry, and Harmon, all of whom reported with no sense of irony the difficulty and prestige associated with killing a grizzly. But, though not so far removed in terms of generations, they had nevertheless lived in a profoundly different era, before the advent of modern, high velocity repeating firearms made killing a grizzly vastly easier, and before trains had existed that could easily transport in comfort an eastern sport hunter like Murphy westward for some sport. These changed material circumstance played a major role in not only literally killing bears, but shifting the dominant image of the bear in respectable literature from monster to misunderstood animal.

Soon, other naturalist-explorers would begin to reconsider the belief that grizzlies were monsters. One of the most significant voices on the matter was another well-to-do eastern sport hunter, Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt, a respected ornithologist, differed from most naturalists who wrote about grizzly bears in that he was also a dedicated hunter of them. He recounted hunting grizzlies in his books, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* (1885) and *The Wilderness Hunter* (1893).⁴⁴⁵ Roosevelt crafted his hunting stories with appreciable literary skill—he invoked a gothic atmosphere full of mystery and quiet terror. He also insisted upon referring to it as the “grisly bear” as opposed to “grizzly,” which by his time had become the norm. But Roosevelt, insisted that “grisly” was the correct name, as he felt that the early travellers’ who had called it that were referring to the bear’s character, not the silver-tipped (i.e. grizzled) appearance of the

⁴⁴⁴ John Mortimer Murphy, *Sporting Adventures in the Far West*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1880), 50-51.

⁴⁴⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Wilderness Hunter: Sketches of Sport on The Northern Cattle Plains*, Two Volumes in One (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1893). *The Wilderness Hunter* was also printed as separate volumes, with the second volume called *Hunting the Grisly*.

fur.⁴⁴⁶ Nevertheless, despite his preference for the more sensational name, Roosevelt could not help pointing out that the grizzlies he encountered did not seem nearly as aggressive or dangerous as the ones described by earlier explorers and fur traders. He attributed this partly to exaggerations on the part of earlier writers, but more especially to the invention of superior firearms, which he felt in just a few generations had made the bears less aggressive:

...the danger of hunting the grizzly has been greatly exaggerated, and the sport is certainly very much safer than it was at the beginning of this century...when the [first] restless frontiersmen pressed out over the Western plains, they encountered in the grizzly a beast of far greater bulk and more savage temper than any of those found in the Eastern woods, and their small-bore rifles were utterly inadequate weapons with which to cope with him. It is small wonder that he was considered by them to be almost invulnerable...He would be a most unpleasant antagonist now to a man armed only with a thirty-two calibre rifle, that carried but a single shot and was loaded at the muzzle...But the introduction of heavy breech-loading repeaters has greatly lessened the danger, even in the very few and far-off places where grizzlies are as ferocious as formerly. For nowadays these great bears are undoubtedly much better aware of the death-dealing power of men, and, as a consequence, much less fierce, than was the case with their forefathers, who unhesitatingly attacked the early Western travelers and explorers. Constant contact with rifle-carrying hunters, for a period extending over many generations of bear-life, has taught the grizzly, by bitter experience, that man is his undoubted overlord...and this knowledge has become a hereditary characteristic. No grizzly will assail a man now unprovoked, and one will almost always rather run than fight; though if he is wounded or thinks himself cornered he will attack his foes with a headlong, reckless fury...⁴⁴⁷

Roosevelt further believed that the “change in the grizzly’s character over the last half century” matched what was happening with other large predators around the world, such as African lions

⁴⁴⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman: Sketches of Sport on the Northern Cattle Plains, Presidential Edition*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1885), 314. The Oxford English Dictionary explains the word “grisly” as: “ADJECTIVE (grislier, grisliest): Causing horror or disgust...Usage: The words grisly and grizzly are quite different in meaning, though often confused. Grisly means ‘causing horror or disgust’, as in grisly crimes, whereas grizzly is chiefly used with reference to a kind of large American bear, and can also mean ‘grey or grey-haired’.” Roosevelt was only half-right; while Alexander Mackenzie in 1793 undoubtedly used the word “grisly” to refer to the bear’s alleged character, Samuel Hearne’s even earlier notes from the 1770s called it the “grizzled” bear and would seem to be a reference to the colour of the bear’s fur. Hearne seems to be the first instance of anyone using grizzly/grisly to describe the bear.

⁴⁴⁷ Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips*, 297-299. It will be noted that the spelling in this edition is “grizzly” instead of “grisly” despite Roosevelt’s comment that “grisly” was the correct name. In his next book, *The Wilderness Hunter*, Roosevelt always used “grisly” instead of grizzly, and he called the second volume of *The Wilderness Hunter*, *Hunting the Grisly*. In some later editions of *Hunting Trips* the name “grizzly” was changed back to “grisly.”

and polar bears, all of which Roosevelt theorized had become less aggressive due to modern firearms.⁴⁴⁸ Roosevelt also cautioned that stories of the bear's ferocity in his time had to be met with a degree of skepticism if they were made by an "uneducated" hunter: "Of late years our estimate of the grisly's ferocity has been lowered; and we no longer accept the tales of uneducated hunters as being proper authority by which to judge it."⁴⁴⁹ Still, lest anyone start to get the impression that the grizzly was no longer very impressive, Roosevelt offered a comparison of it with other large carnivores: "Any one of the big bears we killed on the mountains would, I should think, have been able to make short work of either a lion or a tiger; for the grizzly is greatly superior in bulk and muscular power to either of the great cats, and its teeth are as large as theirs, while its claws, though blunter, are much longer..."⁴⁵⁰ Roosevelt concluded that, while the grizzly was certainly dangerous, they could no longer be regarded as the ferocious beasts they had once been:

A grizzly will only fight if wounded or cornered, or, at least, if he thinks himself cornered. If a man by accident stumbles on to one close up, he is almost certain to be attacked really more from fear than any other motive...I have personally known of but one instance of a grizzly turning on a hunter before being wounded....[and] But two instances have come to my personal knowledge where a man has been killed by a grizzly.⁴⁵¹

Roosevelt returned to these themes eight years later in *The Wilderness Hunter*, in which he again concluded that the bear had dramatically changed in character as a result of modern firearms:

At the beginning of the present century, when white hunters first encountered the grisly, he was doubtless an exceedingly savage beast, prone to attack without provocation, and a redoubtable foe to persons armed with the clumsy, small-bore, muzzle-loading rifles of the day. But bitter experience has taught him caution....save in the wildest districts, he

⁴⁴⁸ Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips*, 299-300.

⁴⁴⁹ Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips*, 300.

⁴⁵⁰ Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips*, 301.

⁴⁵¹ Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips*, 302. Despite this passage, in his subsequent hunting book, *The Wilderness Hunter*, Roosevelt wrote that he personally knew of eight men who had been killed by grizzlies, and many more who had been severely mauled. He discussed in detail a large number of these attacks. Most, however, seemed to have involved bears that were wounded or being pursued by hunters, or else mothers with cubs. See Roosevelt, *The Wilderness Hunter*, 101-123.

has learned to be more wary than a deer, and to avoid man's presence almost as carefully as the most timid game.⁴⁵²

Roosevelt's opinion represents a small but significant shift in depictions of the grizzly as an extremely fierce and natural predator of humans. Some two decades after his *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* first appeared, other authorities on the subject were prepared to go even further in their revisionist view of the grizzly. The veteran grizzly hunter William H. Wright, who after years of killing grizzlies laid aside his rifle in favour of a camera, and seemed to regret the slaughter, authored one of the most comprehensive books on the bear, which first appeared in 1909. In it, Wright reflected on the grizzly's reputation and all he had learned in his years of studying them:

We are now arrived at a division of our subject where we are to meet what, at first sight, appears to be a tangle of contradictory evidence...On the one hand, we shall find the sincere convictions and repeated statements of early writers, and a century of unquestioning belief on the part of the public. On the other, we shall find the calmer judgments of trained observers, and the overwhelming weight of contemporaneous experience. Were our fathers wrong about the nature of the grizzly? Or has the animal radically changed in a hundred years?

Personally, I believe that we have to answer "Yes" to both questions; but I am convinced that the amount of alteration in the nature of the grizzly is insignificant compared to the extent to which preconceptions of early hunters colored their judgment.

...That they will not fight when they think they have to, no sane man would maintain....But that they habitually seek trouble when they can avoid it, or that they ever did, I do not believe.⁴⁵³

Wright thus rejected over two centuries of belief about this "grim monster" of the wilderness. He noted certain contradictions in early accounts of allegedly ferocious grizzlies with a hunger for human flesh, and notably stressed, like with other frontier monsters, that it was opinion of "trained observers" that mattered—not low-status trappers or voyageurs, or even Indigenous

⁴⁵² Roosevelt, *The Wilderness Hunter*, 93.

⁴⁵³ William H. Wright, *The Grizzly Bear: The Narrative of a Hunter-Naturalist, Historical, Scientific and Adventurous* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), 229-230.

people. Wright also felt that the early settlers' expectation of facing monsters in the wilderness had coloured their views:

...we see, plainly enough, that the white pioneers, even before they had seen a grizzly, were prepared to meet a dragon, and that, when they peppered a tough old bear or two with their pea-gun ammunition, they found their expectations realized. That the Indians regarded the grizzly as the king of brutes; that the tale of his terribleness had passed into their folk-lore; that "they never hunted them except in parties of six or more"; that they gave greater honor to one of their young men who had killed one unaided, than to him who took the scalp of an enemy,—all this we can well believe and understand. And that the early explorers accepted the Indian verdict and thought it upheld by their own experiences is no less credible. For the grizzly bear, pursued into his fastnesses and attacked with bows and arrows, would be terrible indeed. And hostilely faced by men armed with the muzzle-loading smooth-bores of small calibre and still smaller penetration, he would be an antagonist but slightly less formidable. These things being so, it is scarcely to be wondered at that our predecessors overlooked two salient features of their experiences: first, that they were themselves invariably the attacking party; and second, that, even so, for every bear that stayed to fight them, there were one or more that ran away.⁴⁵⁴

Wright also rejected—without mentioning him by name—Roosevelt's argument that the bear's character had changed through a newfound "hereditary" fear of man. On the contrary, Wright felt that the bears retained the same character they always had—since if anyone were brave (or foolhardy) enough to attack a grizzly in his own time with an antique firearm, it would result in much the same circumstances of a century earlier. He also argued that, from his own personal experiences hunting bears in the wildest areas, they acted no more aggressively than ones in more settled areas, again going substantially further than Roosevelt in his skepticism. And while Wright agreed that any grizzly would likely fight ferociously if attacked or that a mother if threatened would defend her cubs, he stressed this was not a fair judge of the bear's normal character. Wright concluded pointedly: "In short, the notion that the grizzly roams about seeking for whomsoever he may devour, is pure nonsense, and that, ordinarily, he will attack on sight, I

⁴⁵⁴ Wright, *The Grizzly Bear*, 230-231.

believe to be equally a myth.”⁴⁵⁵ At last then, the North America’s frontier’s final lingering monster myth, the man-eating grisly, had been dismissed by a naturalist as “pure nonsense” and a “myth.”

In these views, Wright was supported by another eminent naturalist, Dr. William T. Hornaday, who had also moved away from the views of earlier naturalists and concluded: “The grizzly’s temper is defensive, not aggressive; and, unless the animal is cornered, *or thinks he is cornered*, he always flees from man.”⁴⁵⁶ Other naturalists joined the chorus, which began to seep into popular consciousness. The naturalist Enos A. Mills published in 1919 a book about grizzlies that categorically rejected the notion that the bears were dangerous to humans. Mills went further than even Wright, and recast the grizzly as a victim, not a monster, claiming: “He had no evil intentions, but he was greeted with yells and bullets. Relentlessly down through the years he was pursued. Dogs, guns, poison, and traps have swept a majority of the grizzlies away...”⁴⁵⁷ As for the heroics of those frontier travellers, hunters, and trappers who had killed grizzlies, Mills implied they were cowards who had been attacking an animal that would rather flee than fight. He remarked of his own experiences that in thirty years of encounters with grizzlies he had “camped alone and unarmed” and had trailed grizzlies without carrying any gun.⁴⁵⁸ Mills wrote the bears were never aggressive, and certainly not “ferocious.”⁴⁵⁹ Mills called for legal protection for grizzlies and a ban on hunting them, adding: “He is not a bad fellow, there is no just claim against him, but he has the paid the penalty of being misunderstood....Fear of bears and prejudice against them is all too often taught and developed in childhood. Mothers

⁴⁵⁵ Wright, *The Grizzly Bear*, 234.

⁴⁵⁶ As cited in Wright, *The Grizzly Bear*, 234. Clearly, Hornaday was also influenced by Roosevelt, as his comment is a paraphrase of Roosevelt’s views.

⁴⁵⁷ Enos A. Mills, *The Grizzly: Out Greatest Wild Animal* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919), vii-viii.

⁴⁵⁸ Mills, ix.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

and nurses hush children by telling them, 'Bears will get you if you're not good.' People, however, are now learning that bears are not ferocious, that they do not eat human flesh, and that in the wilds the grizzly flees from man as though from a pestilence.”⁴⁶⁰ Mills thus reduced the grizzly as a monster to little more than a bedtime story, not much different than a dragon, or a windigo or sasquatch, for that matter, the kind of thing no self-respecting person ought to believe in. Only ignorant hunters and those naïve enough to believe their “superstitions” might swallow such legends, in Mills’ telling.

At last then, the paradigm on North America’s final frontier monster to enjoy mainstream status, especially among naturalists, had fundamentally shifted. In this case, however, unlike the “sasquatch” and windigo, the scorn of the skeptics had largely been directed not at Indigenous people, but at white trappers and hunters (who had also received derision for taking the other two legends seriously). Of course, the new skepticism did not entirely supplant the older monster tradition, but it did weaken it and push it out of zoological discourse. Even the bedtime stories of grizzlies as monsters that Mills had found so objectionable had already begun to change. One of the earliest examples of a more sympathetic approach to the grizzly can be found in the popular animal stories of Ernest Thompson Seton, such as *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1898), *Biography of a Grizzly* (1900), and *Monarch, The Big Bear of Tallac* (1904) all of which depicted grizzlies sympathetically. Other books took similar approaches, notably James Oliver Curwood’s novel, *The Grizzly King: A Romance of the Wild* (1916), which featured sympathetic bears trying to flee from villainous human hunters.⁴⁶¹

Conclusion:

⁴⁶⁰ Mills, 274.

⁴⁶¹ James Oliver Curwood, *The Grizzly King: A Romance of the Wild* (New York: Doubleday, 1916).

In the eyes of the first European explorers and fur traders to encounter it, the grizzly bear was a terrifying creature widely believed to aggressively stalk and eat humans—a *true monster*. The word “monster” was used almost habitually to describe it by eighteenth and nineteenth century explorers and naturalists. While other legendary beasts were debunked and eliminated from scientific papers, such as mermaids and griffins, and still other animals that had once seemed fabulous because of their unfamiliarity to Europeans, like mountain lions and narwhals, were becoming “de-sensationalized” and re-conceptualized as ordinary animals, the “grisly bear” managed to partly defy this trend for a long time. When the creature that earlier explorers had called “grisly and hideous” was formally classified by a naturalist for the first time in 1815, it was even given a suitably monstrous appellation: *ursus horribilis*—“horrible bear.”

Despite these early enthusiasms, the grizzly as a monster ultimately followed the same trajectory as other frontier monsters like the “sasquatch” and windigo, evolving in literature from a creature of genuine mystery and terror to something more muted and benign (alongside a separate and enduring horror tradition of less respectability). In this case, however, the middle and upper-class skeptics were mostly targeting lower-class white trapper and hunter lore, and only secondarily Indigenous stories (the reverse of the “sasquatch” and windigo). Much like in those cases though, respectable opinion increasingly held that the views of lower-status white hunters, “untrained” or “uneducated” as they were, like “superstitious” Indigenous people, could not be taken as reliable testimony when it came to grizzlies. Perhaps some doubts about the grizzly as a flesh-eating monster had initially been muted in part because it fit a larger heroic national narrative in the United States. The ferocious “grisly monster” that “literally thirsts for human blood” was the kind of monstrous “Other” that had to be slayed to enable the spread of European civilization across the North American continent. But after the bear had been nearly

extirpated from the lower forty-eight American states and its range in Canada much diminished, skepticism set in. With the Industrial Revolution having wrought such extraordinary changes, respectable opinion became increasingly unreceptive to the idea that monsters were to be found lurking in the mountains or forests—or that they had ever lurked there. The grizzly was thus rebranded as an animal that had been misunderstood, one that could even be in cases like Seton's stories, gentle and lovable.⁴⁶²

⁴⁶² Indeed, the most iconic grizzly of the latter twentieth century was “Smoky the Bear,” a friendly-looking brown bear sporting a park ranger hat first introduced in 1944. A more recent example of this sympathetic treatment of the grizzly is the live-action film *The Bear*, (Tristar Pictures, 1988), by the French director Jean-Jacques Annaud. It portrays a young, orphaned grizzly that befriends an older bear. The film's antagonists are human hunters.

The Skeptics Challenged: Truth Behind the Legends

By the late nineteenth century, skepticism, or even contemptuous mockery, came to predominate in exploration and travel literature pertaining to each of the three frontier “monsters” examined here. As the frontier was fading away, tales of “sasquatch”-like creatures, windigo giants, and even grizzly monsters were dismissed as baseless superstitions of cowardly Indigenous peoples or their almost equally superstitious white trapper or voyageur counterparts. Such sentiments about monsters were part of a wider literature that saw increasingly negative depictions of other cultures by Europeans during the late nineteenth century, a time when to many the Industrial Revolution seemed to be subduing the uncertainties of the natural world. That transformation had already begun making major inroads into the Pacific Northwest, Rocky Mountains, and Canada’s North by the 1880s and 1890s, as railroads, river steamers, telegraphs, logging camps, timber mills, mining projects, expanding settlements, and other developments seemed to be taming the wild. Increasingly too, travel narratives were penned not by fur trade explorers who were immersed in an Indigenous cultural milieu, but more obvious outsiders like gentlemen travellers or explorers, (Pike, Butler, Southesk, Milton, Cheadle), upper-class sport hunters (Roosevelt, Murphy), later-day missionaries (Walker, Macfie, Young, Saindon), and government Indian agents (Schoolcraft, Burns).⁴⁶³ None of these travellers expressed any indication that monster legends, with the partial exception of the grisly bear (and even that was questioned), might have any validity—any deeper meaning beyond baseless superstitions. However, contrary to what these skeptics thought, each of the three frontier monsters examined here had some basis in real material circumstances, and ones that presented genuine danger. This

⁴⁶³ Many of the fur traders entered the trade as adolescents, meaning they were sent to the “Indian country” while still young teenagers (i.e. Henry Kelsey, David Thompson, George Nelson, and Daniel Harmon).

important fact was obscured, if not altogether dismissed, in skeptical accounts of these folk monsters penned by outsiders increasingly removed from the worlds that had produced them. While earlier explorers, like Ross Cox, had wondered if the Cree legends that he heard might have been inspired by the discovery of mammoth bones, later observers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when dominant narratives had become much more negative toward the value of Indigenous knowledge, even discounted this notion. Not only did Warburton Pike ignore it in the 1890s when exploring northern British Columbia, in 1913 the folklorist Donald Alexander Mackenzie rejected any suggestion that the unearthing of large bones of extinct creatures or any other material basis could have inspired legends of giants or other monsters. In his study of folklore, Mackenzie admonished that, “Those who seek for a rational explanation for the belief in the existence of mythical beings should remember that primitive man required no models for the creatures of his fancy.”⁴⁶⁴ Mackenzie, after rejecting the notion that belief in giants or other monsters could have been inspired by actual bones, further expounded: “Giants and fairies are creations of fancy. Just as a highly imaginative child symbolizes his fears and peoples darkness with terrifying monsters, so, it may be inferred, did primitive man who crouched in his cave, or spent sleepless nights in tempest-stricken forests, conceive with childlike mind of demons thirsting for his blood and giants of wind and fire intent on destroying the Universe.”⁴⁶⁵ Mackenzie’s argument mirrored the sentiments of many contemporary skeptical explorers and travel writers toward Indigenous knowledge, the belief that such legends were mere superstitions, dreamed up by “childlike mind(s).” Such sentiments represent a strong rejection of the materialist school of thought on monsters.

⁴⁶⁴ See Donald Alexander Mackenzie, *Indian Myth and Legend* (Glasgow: Gresham Publishing, 2014, first published 1913), 71.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.

But contrary to Mackenzie, belief in monsters and other extraordinary beings, at least in this context, was not the product of idle superstitions or fanciful imaginations. While that view may still have its adherents, there is growing support for the concept that ancient myths and legends in many cases encapsulated metaphorical warnings of real threats and dangers in the natural world.⁴⁶⁶ Recently, this theory has even spawned a new field of study, known as geomythology, which specifically explores this notion. Some researchers in the field even claim that “folklore can save lives” by advancing modern societies’ understanding of natural disasters and other natural phenomenon.⁴⁶⁷ Still other approaches to the study of folklore, contrary to Mackenzie, have found that legends of monsters were inspired by ancient fossils (i.e. Adrienne Mayor’s work discussed previously), or by the existence of real animals or other threats (i.e. Jay M. Smith’s study of werewolves). The anthropologist Wayne Suttles, who in the 1970s studied Coast Salish oral accounts of sasquatch, hypothesized that such stories, like most folklore, probably were intended to serve a social purpose of warning about dangers in the mountains, such as rock falls, becoming lost, or other natural hazards.⁴⁶⁸ While Suttles did not go into further detail and was limited to oral traditions recorded by himself and other anthropologists, this chapter demonstrates that such theories do fit many of the monster legends recorded by earlier explorers, thus refuting the more extreme skepticism about them.

Truth Behind Legends

Chapter One suggested that “mountain monster” or proto-“sasquatch” accounts which featured Indigenous guides warning explorers about monsters in certain places, might have

⁴⁶⁶ For a general discussion of this concept, see *Handbook of Native American Mythology*, edited by Dawn Bastian Williams and Judy K. Mitchell, (ABC-CLIO, 2004).

⁴⁶⁷ Robin McKie, "Ancient Legends Give an Early Warning of Modern Disasters," *The Guardian*, December 4, 2005, accessed August 2018: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/dec/04/naturaldisasters.climatechange>.

⁴⁶⁸ Suttles, “On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch,” 66.

encapsulated long-held wisdom about avoiding certain dangerous locations like the avalanche-prone headwaters of the Athabasca River, an active volcano emitting poisonous gas, or dangerous stretches of white water that had drowned previous travellers. Here, additional evidence is brought to bear to argue that these warnings and monster tales were likely not the groundless superstitions some European explorers and other observers made them out to be. In other words, the widening rift in exploration literature between the two groups may have actually blinded explorers and travel writers to important realities.

David Thompson had recorded that the haunt of the “Mammoth” was “about the defiles of the Athabasca River” and that “Report from old times had made the head branches of this River (the Athabasca), and the Mountains in the vicinity the abode of one, or more, very large animals....”⁴⁶⁹ Cox in 1831 had also recorded that the “Upper Crees” believed in the existence of large, frightening beasts in the same area of the mountains. This location, the Athabasca’s source, is the Athabasca Glacier, which forms part of the Columbia Icefield, the largest icefield in the Rocky Mountains and an area prone to deadly avalanches.⁴⁷⁰ Some of the details in Cox’s account are more directly suggestive of an allegorical warning about avalanches. Cox had recounted that a Cree trapper had “asserted that his grandfather told him he saw one of those animals in a mountain pass, where he was hunting, and that on hearing its roar, which he compared to loud thunder, the sight almost left his eyes, and his heart became as small as an infant’s.”⁴⁷¹ The roar made by an avalanche could be described in similar terms. Since the advent of modern mountaineering in the twentieth century, dozens of hikers have been killed by

⁴⁶⁹ Thompson, *David Thompson’s Narrative*, 383.

⁴⁷⁰ See, “Land of Thundering Snow,” Revelstoke Museum and Archive, Interactive Map of Avalanche Fatalities, accessed August 2018: http://www.landofthunderingsnow.ca/lecons_du_passe-lessons_from_the_past/index-eng.php.

⁴⁷¹ Ross Cox, *The Columbia River; Or Scenes and Adventures During a Residence of Six Years on the Western Side of the Rocky Mountains, Among Various Tribes of Indians Hitherto Unknown: Together With a Journey Across the American Continent*. Vol. II. (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), 207-208.

avalanches on or around the Columbia Icefield.⁴⁷² In 1996, for example, an experienced mountaineer was killed on the icefield by an avalanche, and in 2008, two German climbers were killed in an avalanche near the Athabasca headwaters on Mount Athabasca.⁴⁷³ Media reports and other sources list dozens of similar fatalities over the last century.⁴⁷⁴ Part of what makes avalanches so deadly is their unpredictability, even with modern safety measures and warning systems. Ironically, a 2016 CBC story on Canadian avalanche fatalities, without any reference to ancient lore, noted that the key to reducing avalanche fatalities was for people to, “develop greater ‘respect’ for mountains.”⁴⁷⁵ Viewed in this light, the story Cox recorded about a Cree grandfather who had told his grandson of monsters that made thunder-like roars in high mountain passes begins to look quite different. If a belief that such alarming creatures lived near the Columbia Glacier was sufficient to keep people from straying up there, it would have demonstrable practical or “adaptive” value. Notably, neither Thompson nor Cox made any attempt to scale to the headwaters of the Athabasca; they seemed to have listened to their guides’ warnings.

However, in 1827 the botanist David Douglas, a European naturalist who was not one to heed Indigenous “superstitions” like the fur traders and voyageurs might be inclined to, left his guides behind and climbed alone to the Athabasca headwaters in the Columbia Icefield, becoming the first known person to do so. Douglas was suitably awed by what he called “a

⁴⁷² See, “Land of Thundering Snow,” Revelstoke Museum and Archive, Interactive Map of Avalanche Fatalities, accessed August 2018: http://www.landofthunderingsnow.ca/lecons_du_passe-lessons_from_the_past/index-eng.php.

⁴⁷³ Andy Genereux, *Yamnuska Rock: The Crown Jewel of Canadian Rockies Traditional Climbing*, (Rocky Mountain Books Ltd, 2006), 265 and, “Two Climbers Killed in Avalanche in Jasper National Park, Moose Jaw Times Herald, 30, August 2008, accessed August 2018: <https://www.pressreader.com/canada/moose-jaw-times-herald/20080830/281904473973532>.

⁴⁷⁴ See, “Land of Thundering Snow,” Revelstoke Museum and Archive.

⁴⁷⁵ Robson Fletcher, “Avalanche Death Rates on the Decline as Canadians Develop Greater ‘Respect’ for Mountains,” CBC News, Feb 1, 2016, accessed August 2018: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/avalanche-analysis-mcbride-risk-data-studies-1.3428071>.

mountain of pure ice,” and reported hearing the thunder of major avalanches in the area.⁴⁷⁶ But while Douglass had succeeded in his risky ascent, things did not exactly work out well for him. Seven years later in 1834, while on a botanical collecting expedition in Hawaii, Douglas hiked up the island’s highest peak, the volcano Mauna Kea. On his return from the summit while hiking down the mountain slope, Douglas, age thirty-five, fell to his death in a pit.⁴⁷⁷ Ironically, Indigenous Hawaiians had a longstanding prohibition (*kapu*) on anyone other than the high-ranking hereditary rulers (*ali ‘i*) ascending the volcano due to its association with powerful deities.⁴⁷⁸ While it cannot be known whether Douglas might have lived longer had he made a habit of heeding warnings about monsters or deities inhabiting glaciers or volcanoes, it does seem clear that in terms of evolutionary theory, belief in monsters, if it deterred someone from climbing up dangerous mountains, might have had real “adaptive value.” Thus, far from being irrational superstitions, such lore likely represented ancient wisdom that helped humans cope with particularly difficult environments or natural hazards.

This is similar to the example found in Paul Kane’s 1847 journal of his Salish guides warning him against venturing up the volcano Mount St. Helens. Kane had dismissed these concerns as the “superstitions” of guides who were “not hardy” enough to want to go up the mountain out of fear that supernatural “skookums” lived there.⁴⁷⁹ In fact though, the Salish belief that bad things happened to people who went up the volcano was perfectly sound. Active volcanoes, which includes Mount St. Helens, can emit a plethora of lethal gases, including

⁴⁷⁶ David Douglas, *Journal Kept By David Douglas Through His Travels in North America 1823-1827* (London: William Wesley & Son, 1914). 259.

⁴⁷⁷ See, “A List of the Plants Introduced by Douglas and an Account of his Death in 1834,” in Douglas, *Journal*, 331-332.

⁴⁷⁸ Leslie Lang, David A. Byrne, *Mauna Kea: A Guide to Hawaii's Sacred Mountain* (Honolulu: Watermark Publishing, 2013).

⁴⁷⁹ Kane, *Wanderings*, 136-137.

carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, hydrogen sulfide and hydrogen halides.⁴⁸⁰ Carbon dioxide, since it is invisible and odourless, can be particularly deadly. As the US Geological Survey explains:

In volcanic or other areas where CO₂ emissions occur, it is important to avoid small depressions and low areas that might be CO₂ traps. The boundary between healthy air and lethal gas can be extremely sharp; even a single step upslope may be adequate to escape death. In 2006, three ski patrol members were killed at Mammoth Mountain ski resort after falling into a snow depression surrounding a volcanic fumarole filled with cool CO₂ gas.⁴⁸¹

Thus, while nineteenth century Coast Salish cosmology might not have understood atmospheric chemistry (neither would most Euro-settlers), by possibly conceptualizing the threat as summit-dwelling supernatural beings, an effective allegory is created to instruct or warn people away from scaling the mountain. While Kane might have viewed this as a “superstition,” it was one that may well have saved his life, particularly since as the Geological Survey notes a “single step” in an area with volcanic gases can be fatal. Moreover, during the time of Kane’s journey Mount St. Helens was in the midst of its longest active eruption period within historical memory (lasting from 1800-1857), which included an increase in lethal volcanic gases.⁴⁸²

It is easy to imagine, with both the Athabasca Glacier and Mount St. Helens, that at some point cases must have occurred where local hunters had strayed up these mountains and never returned, the story of their disappearances being preserved in allegorical lore about mountain-dwelling monsters. The details of such “monsters” might be fleshed out by the findings of actual bones of extinct creatures, like woolly mammoths, real “monsters” that had indeed formerly lived in the mountains. Cox had wondered in 1831 if this might be the case with the stories about

⁴⁸⁰ See, “Volcano Hazards Program,” United States Geological Survey, accessed August 2018: <https://volcanoes.usgs.gov/vhp/gas.html>.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

⁴⁸² See, “Which volcanoes in the conterminous United States have erupted since the Nation was founded?” United States Geological Survey, accessed August 2018: https://www.usgs.gov/faqs/which-volcanoes-conterminous-united-states-have-erupted-nation-was-founded?qt-news_science_products=0#qt-news_science_products.

giant creatures he heard. Later fossil discoveries in Alberta and elsewhere would seem to indicate that it was, contrary to Donald Alexander Mackenzie's claim in 1913 that stories of giant monsters could not possibly have been based on the unearthing of ancient bones.

The upper-class British explorer Warburton Pike's dismissal in the 1890s of what seems to have been an allegorical monster warning proved perhaps the most ironic. Pike's opinion of his guides' abilities was much more negative than Thompson's, Cox's or even Kane's.⁴⁸³ Pike had explained, when discussing the country around the upper tributaries of the Laird River, that:

...the Indians do not like the country. Something evil lives there; and once, a long time ago...a party of hunters met with a terrible fate at the head-waters of Hyland River. According to the story, they were working their canoe through a canon [sic] when a sudden darkness overtook them, and the evil thing rose out of the water, turned over the canoe, and dragged the unlucky hunters down into the depths of a whirlpool. Since then, the Indians are chary of going far up any of these streams, and turn back, by their own account, as soon as they see bones of huge animals lying on the river bars.⁴⁸⁴

This seems clearly to have been a warning about a dangerous stretch of white-water that had drowned previous travellers, a warning mixed in with the discovery of actual mammoth bones. The surveyor George Dawson, who had been in the area just a few years before Pike, actually noted that a number of canoeists had drowned some years earlier in dangerous canyons near the conflux of the Hyland and Laird Rivers.⁴⁸⁵ As for "bones of huge animals lying on the river bars," woolly mammoth remains are found along rivers in northern British Columbia. A 1919 report noted mammoth bones found near the Hyland River.⁴⁸⁶ Pike, however, dismissed the monster as an "Indian superstition" and set off for the area anyway.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸³ See, Chapter 1, page 50, or else Pike, *Through the Subarctic*, 125 and 134.

⁴⁸⁴ Teit, "Kaska Tales," 450.

⁴⁸⁵ Dawson, *Report on the Exploration of the Yukon District and Adjacent Northern Portion of British Columbia*, 188.

⁴⁸⁶ Teit, "Kaska Tales," 450.

⁴⁸⁷ Pike, 66.

Eventually, after long delays and the loss of his main guide who turned back, Pike recorded that he accidentally stumbled upon the mouth of the river his guides had apparently feared. He concluded that:

This must be the river the Indians speak of when they tell their stories of the evil spirits that live in the black canons among the mountains...Secatz [Pike's native guide who had earlier turned back] must have heard of this river from the Indians at Frances Lake, but either thought it was not worth while mentioning to us, or else considered it better for our own safety that we should know nothing about it.⁴⁸⁸

Again, Pike seemed to only dimly grasp that his guide, who had quit, had been warning him for his own safety not to attempt to navigate these dangerous, swollen mountain rivers plunging down from some of the highest peaks in all of North America. But Pike, who had thus far been following routes already known to fur traders, was pleased at his chance to finally make a geographic discovery of his own.⁴⁸⁹ But then, Pike's actions seem to indicate he had a change of heart. Instead of setting off up the river, Pike decided to wait at its mouth for the water levels to fall and to lay up a stock of provisions. After three days of waiting, Pike claimed the fishing and hunting had been unsuccessful, and that the water was still too high, so, much to his disappointment, he had no choice but to "reluctantly" give the order to his men to turn back without exploring the river.⁴⁹⁰ Pike defended himself by stating that he had been hit with bad luck, and that no one could have done differently in his circumstances.⁴⁹¹ In reality, it seems Pike belatedly realized he was in over his head, but was too proud to admit that he had been mistaken. Thus ironically, Pike, who had set off in part to debunk what he saw as a foolish superstition, unintentionally ended up verifying the wisdom of his Indigenous' guides, who, with their monster warning, had told him that the river was too dangerous to safely navigate. Pike of course

⁴⁸⁸ Pike, 180-181.

⁴⁸⁹ Pike, 180-182.

⁴⁹⁰ Pike, 183.

⁴⁹¹ Pike, 182-183.

did not see it this way, and never acknowledged it in his account. But, like Thompson, Cox, and Kane, Pike's belated adherence to his guides' warning about a monster in a dangerous place might have spared him from a potentially fatal attempt to navigate a raging river through unknown canyons.⁴⁹²

The fur trader François Antoine Larocque's waterfall-dwelling "Man Wolf" seems to have been a similar allegorical monster warning about a particularly dangerous section of river. Larocque's Apsáalooke (Crow) guides had told him: "There is a fall in this River 30 or 40 miles above this where presides a Mantoine or Devil. These Indians say it is a Man Wolf who lives in the fall and rises out of it to devour any person or beast *that go to near*. They say it is impossible to Kill him for he is ball proof."⁴⁹³ Like with the previous examples, this seems to have clearly denoted a sensible warning about venturing "to(o) near" a dangerous waterfall. While Larocque's interpretation of the "monster" as a "Man Wolf" is likely a reflection of his French-Canadian background, there are good reasons why a "monster" in the falls might specifically be said to "devour" either humans or animals that came too near. Bodies swept over powerful waterfalls are commonly broken to pieces on underlying rocks, the dismembered legs or torso washing ashore downstream; the kind of thing a "Man Wolf" might be thought to do. This gruesome reality is well documented at Niagara Falls.⁴⁹⁴ The tributaries of the Bighorn River (where Lacroque was) certainly contain waterfalls and white-water capable of inflicting similar

⁴⁹² Pike had in fact, earlier on his journey on the Stikine River, witnessed the drowning deaths of several voyageurs when they upset in a rapid. See, Pike, 41-42.

⁴⁹³ Larocque, *Journal*, 41-42.

⁴⁹⁴ I learned this unpleasant reality during three years seasons working for the Niagara Parks Commission. Understandably, these details are seldom publicized; but older travel literature was less reluctant to mention it. See, Samuel de Veaux, *The Travellers' Own Book, to Saratoga Springs, Niagara Falls, and Canada...A Complete Guide, for the Valetudinarian and for the Tourist* (Saratoga Springs, NY: Faxon & Read, 1843), 251.

damage.⁴⁹⁵ Unlike the wealthy Victorian explorer Pike, Larocque had no compunction about admitting to the terror such a river inspired in him and his caution about getting too close to the canyon's edge.⁴⁹⁶ Thus, rather than an idle superstition, once again an Indigenous monster story seems to have contained practical wisdom that would serve anyone well living or travelling in the area. Certainly Larocque's lack of skepticism seems to have served him well; in contrast, recent decades have seen a surprising number of tourists fall to their deaths at Yellowstone Falls (the falls Larocque appears to have been referring to).⁴⁹⁷

Still other monster stories that might have seemed purely fanciful to skeptical Europeans were possibly accurate descriptions of real animals Europeans as yet had little knowledge of. This may especially have been the case when language barriers were an issue. For example, the Spanish naturalist José Mariano Mociño, who in 1792 had recorded hearing about a fearsome “matlox” from the Nuu-chah-nulth, in fact might have been recording a story about an empirically verifiable animal. On first reading, it seems like the “matlox” could not possibly have been an actual creature:

I do not know what to say about the matlox, inhabitant of the mountainous districts, of whom all have an unbelievable fear. They imagine his body as very monstrous, all covered with stiff black bristles; a head similar to a human one but with much greater, sharper and stronger fangs than those of the bear; extremely long arms; and toes and fingers armed with long curved claws. His shouts alone (they say) force those who hear them to the ground, and any unfortunate body he slaps is broken into a thousand pieces.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁵ See “Yellowstone Falls,” Wikipedia, accessed August 2018: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellowstone_Falls. See also, Lee H. Whittlesey, *Death in Yellowstone: Accidents and Foolhardiness in the First National Park* (Roberts Rinehart, 2014) 141-157.

⁴⁹⁶ In his journal Larocque confessed: “It is awful to behold and makes one giddy to look down upon the river from the top of those Rocks. The Riper [sic] appears quite narrow and runs [sic] with great rapidity immediately under our feet, so that I did not dare to look down but when I could find a stone behind which I could keep & looking over it to see the foaming water without danger of falling in.” Larocque, *Journal*, 41.

⁴⁹⁷ See, Lee H. Whittlesey, *Death in Yellowstone: Accidents and Foolhardiness in the First National Park* (Roberts Rinehart, 2014).

⁴⁹⁸ José Mariano Moziño, *Noticias de Nutka: An Account of Nootka Sound in 1792* edited and translated by Iris Higbie (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1970).

But, equipped with more detailed knowledge of local ecology and geography, the account starts to take on new meaning. Readers might naturally assume that the “bear” mentioned in comparison with the “matlox” is a grizzly. But this would not have been the case. The Nuu-chah-nulth homeland was in Nootka Sound on the west (Pacific-facing) coast of Vancouver Island. Grizzly bears are found only on the North American mainland. The only bears native to Vancouver Island are black bears, which are much smaller than grizzlies, and notably lack “long curved claws.” Moreover, it seems Mociño was not yet aware that Vancouver Island was separate from the mainland. Thus his “mountainous districts” refer to a vague inland area, and not necessarily the island’s mountains. Read in this context, and given allowance for language barriers, the account starts to seem quite different:

I do not know what to say about the matlox [*grizzly*], inhabitant of the mountainous districts [*mainland*], of whom all have an unbelievable fear. They imagine his body as very monstrous, all covered with stiff black bristles; a head similar to a human one but with much greater, sharper and stronger fangs than those of the [*black*] bear; extremely long arms; and toes and fingers [*paws*] armed with long curved claws. His shouts [*roar*] alone [they say] force those who hear them to the ground, and any unfortunate body he slaps is broken into a thousand pieces.⁴⁹⁹

This would be a fair description of an actual grizzly—an animal unknown to Mociño but one that the Nuu-chah-nulth would have encountered on their occasional and hazardous forays to the mainland in their ocean-going dugout canoes. The reference to “long curved claws” is particularly descriptive of grizzlies. An animal as thoroughly impressive as a grizzly might well have inspired legendary lore among the Nuu-chah-nulth just as it did in other cultures, especially ones also outside the bear’s native range. As discussed in Chapter Two, there are later recorded traditions of hairy, long-clawed man-eating monsters from Vancouver Island First Nations. (Nor, it should be clear, does this theory contradict the previous argument in Chapter Two, that

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid.

explorer's like Mociño's description of "monsters" reflected genuine Indigenous traditions; as recording a tradition and understanding what inspired it are two quite different things.) Thus, assuming these were based on grizzly bears, it appears skepticism would be mistaken in dismissing the "matlox" as purely imaginary (something Mociño notably did not do).

Other Indigenous people seemed to have done remarkably well in inferring from the skeletal record the existence of past "monsters." Among the Kaska, legends were told of the *a'tix*, which was described as:

A very large kind of animal which roamed the country a long time ago. It corresponded somewhat to the white men's picture of elephants. It was of huge size, in build like an elephant, had tusks, and was hairy. These animals were seen not so very long ago...but none have been seen now for several generations. Indians come across their bones occasionally. The narrator said that he and some others, a few years ago, came across a shoulder-blade which they at first thought was a peculiarly shaped rock, sticking out of the ground. This was on the top of a mountain near the Hyland River.⁵⁰⁰

This, all things considered, is a remarkably accurate description of a woolly mammoth that belies Donald Alexander Mackenzie's idea that such legends were purely the products of "childlike minds" conjuring monsters out of thin air. Only the timeframe on the creature's disappearance was off. The timescale had been compressed from many generations (the last mammoths on mainland North American went extinct around 8000 BCE) to sometime in the recent past.

As for the windigo and "grisly monster," these too, quite clearly, were not purely imaginary monsters. In an environment like the boreal forest, natural cyclical fluctuations in animal populations and periodic harsher than normal winters caused starvation among all "apex predators," including lynx, wolves, and humans.⁵⁰¹ To limit the threat of cannibalism (something

⁵⁰⁰ Teit, "Kaska Tales," 450.

⁵⁰¹ See, Charles J. Krebs, Rudy Boonstra, Stan Boutin, A.R.E. Sinclair, "What Drives the 10-year Cycle of Snowshoe Hares?" *BioScience*, Volume 51, Issue 1, 1 January 2001, 25–35, and Charles J. Krebs, "Of Lemmings and Snowshoe Hares: the Ecology of Northern Canada," *Proc Biol Sci.* 2011 Feb 22; 278(1705): 481–489, and also Leo G. Waisberg, "Boreal Forest Subsistence and the Windigo: Fluctuation of Animal Populations," *Anthropologica New Series*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1975), 169-185. It might be wondered why, if the boreal forest is a difficult environment, the seemingly even harsher Arctic landscape did not produce similar effects. But, owing to the rich

human groups everywhere have turned to when confronted with starvation), Algonquian cultures developed strong taboos against it. These taboos were so strong that even under the most extreme deprivation the consumption of human flesh remained impermissible.⁵⁰² Harshly dealing with anyone who violated such taboos was the Algonquian way of ameliorating such threats. This was buttressed by the construction of the “windigo,” the belief that anyone who engaged in such an unspeakable act was no longer human—and could therefore be put to death.⁵⁰³ In allegorical storytelling, the monstrous, inhuman traits of transgressors further reinforced the taboo against the practice and the necessity of swiftly dealing with anyone who turned to it. Thus, rather than an irrational superstition some later European travellers saw it as, the belief in windigoes was a logical response to the existence of a real environmental threat.⁵⁰⁴ Many early fur traders, immersed in that environment, understood this; later outside observers, typically only transitory summer visitors to the region, misunderstood and mocked it.

As for the “grisly monster,” despite later skepticism, it too had a basis in a grim reality. While grizzlies are emphatically not the extremely aggressive monsters that “literally thirst for human blood” some travel writers and naturalists imagined them to be, the more extreme skepticism of authors like Enos A. Mills also seems mistaken. Though rare, instances where grizzlies have stalked and eaten humans do exist and are well-documented.⁵⁰⁵ If such cases have happened in recent decades, they also must have happened in the past; in the process providing

maritime waters, the Arctic has more stable food resources. Inuit subsistence was largely based around the seals, char, whales, and other marine life that could be harvested year-round.

⁵⁰² As discussed in Chapter 3, numerous observers, such as Hearne, Thompson, Hood, and Kohl commented upon this fact.

⁵⁰³ Virtually all the accounts mention human windigoes were executed for their crimes; sometimes at their own request.

⁵⁰⁴ Refutations of the more extreme kind of skepticism toward windigoes can be found by a variety of scholars. See, Robert A. Brightman, “The Windigo in the Material World,” *Ethnohistory* (35/4), 1988: 337-379. For the historical record and oral histories, see the appendix.

⁵⁰⁵ See Wikipedia, “List of Fatal Bear Attacks in North America” accessed January 2015, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_fatal_bear_attacks_in_North_America.

foundations for legends of “man-eater” grizzlies. Moreover, Roosevelt’s supposition in 1885 that the bear’s behaviour had changed as a result of hunting pressures introduced by modern rifles, can be supported by recent science that has found evolutionary adaptations can take place relatively rapidly due to human sport hunting.⁵⁰⁶ Other research has also found that hereditary behavioural changes in animals can happen quicker than previously supposed.⁵⁰⁷ In light of this, grizzlies might conceivably have once been more aggressive toward humans. Even with much reduced bear numbers, there has been at least 66 documented fatal grizzly attacks on humans in the wild since 1900 in North America. The actual number is probably substantially higher, since data is not as readily available for earlier decades (56 of the 66 total has been since 1970).⁵⁰⁸ Considering that prior to the mid-nineteenth century, the ratio of bears-to-people in the North American West would have been vastly less lopsided than in Mills’ time, attacks must have been proportionately considerably more common.⁵⁰⁹ Thus, it seems that the more ardent skeptics of the early twentieth century likely erred in totally discounting older “monster” lore about grizzlies.

It might be thought that, even if the skeptics did err in their dismissive opinions of windigoes, grizzlies, and various “mountain monsters,” they were surely not wrong about the core of the “sasquatch” legend—the anthropomorphic giants that lived in the mountains. As we

⁵⁰⁶ See, Fred W. Allendorf and Jeffrey J. Hard, “Human-Induced Evolution Caused by Unnatural Selection Through Harvest of Wild Animals,” in *In Light of Evolution: Volume III: Two Centuries of Darwin*, ed. JC Avise and FJ Ayala, (Washington: National Academy of Sciences, 2009), accessed August 2018: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK219730/>.

⁵⁰⁷ See Anna V. Kukekova et. al. “Red fox genome assembly identifies genomic regions associated with tame and aggressive behaviours,” *Nature Ecology & Evolution*, Vol. 2, (2018): 1479–1491.

⁵⁰⁸ Wikipedia, “List of Fatal Bear Attacks in North America” accessed January 2015.

⁵⁰⁹ In 2002, the North American grizzly population was estimated at approximately 56,000. The same report noted the bear’s natural range had shrunk by almost half due to human hunting and habitat alteration. The pre-Columbian grizzly population has been estimated at 100,000. See, Grizzly Bears in *British Columbia: Ecology, Conservation, Management*, Ministry of Land, Water, and Air Protection (2002), accessed September 2018: <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/documents/grizzlybear.pdf> and Florian Schulz, *Yellowstone to Yukon: Freedom to Roam* (Braided River, 2008), 36.

have seen, many explorers, travel writers, and later journalists mocked and discounted these “superstitious” beliefs. However, a review of multiple strands of evidence strongly suggest that “sasquatch” in its original incarnation was as empirically-based as any of these other legends. Specifically, a strong argument can be made that the original basis for the “sasquatch” legend was Coast Salish stories about interior tribes of hunter-gatherers that later became embellished.

To demonstrate this, it is important to first consider what the term “sasquatch” actually meant.⁵¹⁰ The Indian agent J.W. Burns had presented “sasquatch” as the name for “hairy ape-like giants” that Salish people supposedly believed lived in the mountains. That understanding of the word caught on in popular stories, and “sasquatch” were soon firmly established as seven to eight foot tall gorilla-like creatures. But Burns, as indicated in Chapters One and Two, was not serious in his commitment to faithfully represent Indigenous beliefs and seems to have also been influenced by Euro-settler lore about “gorillas.”

In contrast, if we turn to the earliest articles actually written by a Coast Salish person on the matter as well as later ethnographic literature by anthropologists, a different image of the “sasquatch” emerges. As discussed in earlier chapters, Jorg Totsgi, a member of the Clallam tribe in Washington State (part of the Coast Salish culture), authored two articles in 1924 that offered an explanation for recent reports in local newspapers about ape-men sightings, including an alleged attack on a cabin that subsequently became one of the most famous sasquatch stories. Totsgi, however, explained that the basis for these stories were in fact “the Seehtik tribe of

⁵¹⁰ The word “sasquatch,” is an anglicized corruption of the Halkomelem (one of the Salish languages) word *sásq'ets*, which means something akin to “wild man.” Salish is a different language family from the neighbouring Kwak'waka, which is part of the Wakashan language family, but there are some cross-cultural and linguistic affinities between them. See Suttles, “On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch,” 39-40.

Indians.”⁵¹¹ Totsgi named nearly a dozen individuals who could corroborate his story among Salish nations, and further added, “Every Indian, especially of the Puget Sound tribes, is familiar with the history of these strange giant Indians...”⁵¹² Totsgi described them as an interior people who lived up in the mountains and who in the past had conducted deadly raids against coastal Salish villages as well more benign actions like stealing fish from nets. Other details that Totsgi included were similar to what early European travellers like Walker, Kane and Macfie had reported, such as his statement that: “...the Seeahtik Indians are not less than seven feet tall...They have great supernatural powers.”⁵¹³ Besides deadly raids, Totsgi added that: “The Seeahtiks....steal their [the costal Salish tribes] Indian women. Sometimes an Indian woman comes back. More often she does not, and it is even said by some northwestern Indians that they have a strain of the Seeahtik blood in them.”⁵¹⁴

However, Totsgi’s explanations seemed to have been quickly forgotten. Burns’ more sensational stories, in contrast, reached a much wider audience in bigger magazines, and some were printed in newspapers across North America. That version of the sasquatch became a wider pop culture phenomenon especially in the post-1960s, when supposed photographs and even video footage emerged of hairy ape-like creatures. In response to this phenomenon, which frequently included claims that “Indians” had always believed in such creatures, two anthropologists who specialized in Pacific Northwest Indigenous cultures, Bruce Rigsby and Wayne Suttles, began to enquire into these claims. Rigsby and Suttles do not seem to have known about Totsgi’s earlier articles, nor any of the pre-twentieth century accounts analyzed

⁵¹¹ Jorg Totsgi, “BIG HAIRY INDIANS BACK OF APE TALE – MOUNTAIN DEVILS’ MYSTERY GROWS DEEPER,” *The Oregonian*, July 16, 1924, accessed online at The Olympic Project, November 2014, <http://www.olympicproject.com/1924-oregonian-july-16/>.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

here. Instead, they worked mainly from oral stories told to them by contemporary Indigenous (mainly Salish) elders as well as earlier ethnographic literature by anthropologists in British Columbia.

Suttles found that Northwest coast Indigenous stories of “sasquatch” were highly variable in terms of what they were describing. He noted that Salish stories tended to depict a creature that was more human than animal and not necessarily covered entirely in hair, contrary to popular depictions of sasquatch.⁵¹⁵ Suttles detailed several dozen sasquatch or potential sasquatch stories collected from Indigenous sources by himself and other anthropologists and amateur collectors.⁵¹⁶ Most of these stories seem to emphasize human-like characteristics of these creatures (such as occasionally even intermarriage with Salish women but more commonly their abduction) while also attributing supernatural or nonhuman attributes to them. Based on the oral traditions he encountered, Suttles speculated that sasquatch stories might originate from, “real people there—hostile strangers in the mountains—who were so little known they could be given non-human attributes.”⁵¹⁷

Taken together, these recorded traditions and the stories recounted by Totsgi consistently seem to describe as the “real” or authentic “sasquatch” a human tribe of large stature who were said to live in the mountainous interior, wander about as nomadic hunter-gatherers (unlike the coastal Salish who lived in villages), speak languages different from Salish ones, conduct raids and kidnap people from the villages, and, according to some of the stories, paralyze or poison

⁵¹⁵ Wayne Suttles, “Sasquatch: The Testimony of Tradition,” in *Manlike Monsters on Trial*, 248. Suttles’ also found that the creatures in coast Salish storytelling identified with sasquatch were not, properly speaking, regarded as “mythical” but rather as a part of the real world—which is consistent with real people rather than monstrous hairy giants.

⁵¹⁶ Suttles, “On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch,” *The Scientist Looks at the Sasquatch*, 40-41.

⁵¹⁷ Suttles, “On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch,” 66.

people. A few of the stories mention these “Seehtiks” or *sásq’ets* (i.e. “sasquatch”) as hairy, but not all do.⁵¹⁸

Some of these details might still seem fantastic, and as we have seen, the skeptical trajectory that developed in exploration and travel literature eventually discounted (and even ridiculed) such traditions. But like with the other “monster” legends, much of this can surprisingly be matched with the historical record. To begin with, it is useful to remember the major cultural and material differences that separated the sedentary coastal nations in the Pacific Northwest from their smaller interior neighbours in the mountains. The former lived in large communities centred on sedentary coastal villages, with cedar plank houses, totem poles, large ocean-going canoes, wooden armour, shields and helmets, and elaborate social hierarchies. They relied on maritime food resources, above all salmon, which were harvested with elaborate nets, weirs, or else speared. Their communities typically numbered at least several thousand people living in fortified villages.⁵¹⁹ In contrast, in the mountains were smaller bands of nomadic hunter-gathers.⁵²⁰ These striking differences—more profound than anywhere else in northern North America—also mirrored major linguistic divisions as well. Thus, it can be understood why

⁵¹⁸ Rigbsy research focused mostly on linguistics. Among Northwest Coast groups, he identified various names for what he theorized was a single (possibly mythical) creature within a relatively limited geographical area along coastal British Columbia. Rigbsy briefly noted that stories of these creatures often included abductions of people from villages, and that his Indigenous informants, people who were living in the 1970s, variously translated the names of this “monstrous” creature as “ape,” but other translations given were “Stick-Indians” and “man of the woods” or “man of the jackpines.” See, Bruce Rigbsy, “Some Pacific Northwest Native Language Names for the Sasquatch Phenomenon,” in *The Scientist Looks at the Sasquatch*, 28-32.

⁵¹⁹ Jenness, *The Indians of Canada*, 327-347, and Canadian Museum of History (Formerly the Museum of Civilization), Permanent Exhibits, visited 2013, 2014, and 2016.

⁵²⁰ One such isolated group was a small band of Athapascan-speakers that were otherwise surrounded by Salish-speaking peoples in the interior of British Columbia. The Athapascan language family is unrelated to Salish, and culturally the Dene, (the main Athapascan group in Canada), are a subarctic people very different from the West Coast native populations. Diamond Jenness commented about this group: “At the end of the eighteenth century there was a small Athapascan-speaking tribe, wedged in among the five Salishan tribes, which occupied the valley of the Nicola river and part of the valley of the Similkameen. Early in the nineteenth century the Thompson River Indians absorbed it so completely that only a few legends, and a small vocabulary of names, bear witness to its former existence.” Jenness did not specify what these legends were. See, Diamond Jenness, *The Indians of Canada*, Seventh Edition (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1932, 1977), 351.

the coastal Salish cultures might look upon the small bands of fur-clad hunters in the mountains—who did occasionally raid their villages and even abduct women—as *sásq'ets* (i.e. “wild people”). In particular, the taking of female captives is well-attested in the historical literature from British Columbia, and the archaeological record likewise shows considerable raid-style warfare of the sort described by Totsgi.⁵²¹ Some of these raids, maybe even most, occurred at night—exactly as the “superstitions” maintained.

These are not the only facts behind the legends. In British Columbia, certain interior tribes are known to have poisoned their arrowheads with rattlesnake venom or else from the toxins in the ranunculus flower, which may explain the stories about how these mysterious beings could “paralyze” people.⁵²² Likewise, several interior peoples, particularly some Athabaskan-speaking groups, lived in semi-subterranean houses, which would match the description often given in oral accounts that, “their homes were like the dens of animals.”⁵²³ In any case, the temporary dwellings of nomadic mountain peoples were very different from the large cedar-plank houses of the Pacific coast.⁵²⁴ Other details recounted by Totsgi about the Seehtik, including the ability to speak and understand languages, that they lived high up in the mountains but periodically came down to the coastal valleys to fish, that there was occasional warfare with them, and that in the past they might have intermarried with Salish groups, again point to a real human group that became embellished in the eyes of their enemies. This was

⁵²¹ See Herbert D.G. Maschner and Katherine L. Reedy-Maschner, “Raid, Retreat, Defend (Repeat): The Archaeology and Ethnohistory of Warfare on the North Pacific Rim. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 17, 19-51 (1998), and Leland Donald, *Aboriginal Slavery on the Northwest Coast of North America*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), and Jenness, *Indians of Canada*, 353.

⁵²² Jenness, 356-357.

⁵²³ Suttles, “On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch,” 59-60.

⁵²⁴ Jenness, 354.

perhaps especially the case in heavily mountainous areas that encouraged isolation and limited interactions over long distances.⁵²⁵

Even the descriptions of these “wild people” as hairy, which was not consistently featured in the stories but occasionally referenced, was probably based on something in the material world. On the relatively mild Pacific coast, Salish peoples most often wore garments and hats made of cedar bark, woven spruce roots, blankets made of goat’s wool, or tanned skins shorn of hair. In contrast, interior peoples living at colder, higher altitudes had to cloak themselves in thick furs (often bear skins) for warmth.⁵²⁶ Viewed from a distance, they would indeed appear “hairy.”

As for the differences in height—the hostile Seehtik or *sásq’ets* (that is, sasquatch), were reputed to be seven foot giants—despite the sneers of many later skeptical explorers and the mockery of Burns, surprisingly enough, this too, may have had an empirical foundation. Buried in the journals of some early explorers crossing the Rocky Mountains from the east are intriguing hints that there were a few unusually tall groups of people living in what is now the interior of British Columbia. In 1789, when the explorer Alexander Mackenzie was seeking a route over the mountains to reach the Pacific, he noted in his journal that some of the local Dene had told him in the interior were people who “...are Big and very wicked [and] kill Common Men with their

⁵²⁵ That unfamiliar cultures were often ascribed with fantastic or monstrous traits—especially before the Industrial Revolution and mass media shrunk distances and erased borders—is well-attested. The French scholar and Jesuit Joseph François Lafitau, in his *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times* (1724), theorized along these lines, and conjectured that tales of monsters were based on names given to other tribes by their enemies, as well as the horns and masks worn by foreign or unfamiliar tribes. See, Joseph Francois Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, edited and translated by William N. Fenton and Elizabeth L. Moore, Vol. I, The Publications of the Champlain Society (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1974 [1724]), lxxv.

⁵²⁶ Diamond Jenness coincidentally noted that: “Tsetsaut, or ‘inland people,’ was a term applied by the Tsimshian to every Athapaskan tribe in the interior of British Columbia. The true name of what we know as the Tsetsaut tribe cannot now be recovered. The Tahltan called them the Black Bear People, because, unlike the neighbouring peoples, they frequently wore clothing of bear black bear skin. They had many feuds with the Tahltan, particularly with an extinct branch of that tribe, the Lakuyip, that hunted around the headwaters of the Skeena and Stikine rivers.” See, Jenness, 358.

Eyes.”⁵²⁷ When in 1806 Mackenzie’s compatriot Simon Fraser actually ventured into the interior where most “sasquatch” tales were set, (Mackenzie himself had ended up following a more northern route), he met a tribe whom he denoted in his journals as simply the “Big Men.” These “Big Men” traded with Fraser, and his journal and letters seem to depict them as otherwise ordinary participants in the interior fur trade, although one entry does record that they had reportedly killed a member of a neighbouring group.⁵²⁸ A third explorer, the skeptical botanist David Douglas, while travelling across the mountains in 1826 noted in one of his diary entries meeting with, “...a chief of the Kyeuuse tribe and three of his young men, who are the terror of all other tribes west of the mountains [i.e. coastal nations]....This very friendly Indian [the chief]...is the finest figure of a man that I have seen, standing nearly 6 feet 6 inches high...”⁵²⁹ Taken together, these three separate accounts imply that the Coast Salish tales told to travel writers or missionaries like Walker, Kane, and Macfie of giant tribes that lived in the mountains, though naturally embellished, might not have been without some basis. Moreover, the accounts by Mackenzie, Fraser, and Douglas all imply these taller peoples were feared by their neighbours.

Recent studies have attributed significant average height differences between different human populations to different national diets.⁵³⁰ Rather strikingly, a 2001 study found that the tallest people in the world in the mid-nineteenth century were North American Indigenous people of the Great Plains, who were significantly taller on average than both Euro-settlers and

⁵²⁷ Alexander Mackenzie, *The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie*, edited by W. Kaye Lamb (Toronto: MacMillan, 1970), 212.

⁵²⁸ Simon Fraser, *Simon Fraser: Letters and Journals, 1806-1808*, edited by W. Kaye Lamb (Toronto: MacMillan, 1960), 165.

⁵²⁹ Douglas, 159.

⁵³⁰ A. E. J. M. Cavelaars, A. E. Kunst, J. J. M. Geurts, R. Cialesi, L. Grötvedt, U. Helmert, E. Lahelma, O. Lundberg, A. Mielck, N. Kr. Rasmussen, E. Regidor, Th. Spuhler & J. P. Mackenbach, “Persistent variations in average height between countries and between socio-economic groups: an overview of 10 European countries,” *Annals of Human Biology*, 27:4, (2000): 407-421.

other Indigenous peoples.⁵³¹ The study attributed their unusual average height to diets rich in protein and energy combined with a nomadic lifestyle that lessened their disease load compared to sedentary populations. This may similarly account for the apparent differences in average height between the sedentary coastal peoples in the Pacific Northwest, with their heavily fish-based diet, and the nomadic hunters of the interior. Moreover, the Kutenai, a traditional Plains people, actually migrated into the interior of what is now British Columbia sometime in the late eighteenth century, sparking hostilities with some of the Salish and other groups.⁵³²

Seen in this light, the stories Salish guides in the Pacific Northwest told mid-nineteenth century explorers or travellers like Walker, Kane, and Macfie of “giants” who occasionally raided their villages, stealing salmon from nets or abducting people, seem less like “superstitions” and more like embellished references to real conflicts. Indeed, with this knowledge, especially Totsgi’s explanations, even Burns’ sensational *Maclean’s* story seems to have been derived from some actual foundation. Despite Burns’ continual insistence on sensationalizing the stories of “sasquatch” with references to them as “hairy ape-like giants,” his long quotes from his various Indigenous informants often seem to belie his more fantastic presentation of them and mirror more closely what Totsgi had recounted.

Suttles also highlighted the work of other oral collectors and anthropologists in the early and mid-twentieth century who had recorded similar stories, all of which seems to inadvertently confirm Totsgi’s summary of “sasquatch” legends rather than Burns’ (i.e. the version that actually appears in earlier exploration literature). Nels Bruseh, who collected oral stories in the 1910s in the Upper Skagit area among the Stillaguamish, Suiattle, and Sauk, was told stories of a

⁵³¹ Richard H. Steckel and Joseph M. Prince, "Tallest in the World: Native Americans of the Great Plains in the Nineteenth Century," *The American Economic Review* Vol. 91, No. 1 (Mar., 2001), 287-294.

⁵³² Jenness also noted in his time the usual average height of Kutenai people. See Jenness, 358.

sasquatch-like creature called “Steetathls” which very nearly matches Tostgi’s word for them. Bruseth explained that the Steetathls were: “...strange and ghostlike Indians, who travelled about and had to be appeased or guarded against...There were certain trails that were unsafe; strange tracks had been seen on them. There were noises in the night...disappearances of Indian children, all charged to the Steetathls.”⁵³³ Marian W. Smith, who recorded oral traditions in the southern Puget Sound era, recorded similar traditions, including belief in a “race of tall Indians, called ‘wild’ or ‘stick’ Indians...said to wander through the forest.”⁵³⁴ Another work from the same time, *The Indians of Puget Sound*, which was based on oral stories collected by the anthropologists Hermann Haeberlin and Erna Gunther, notes:

The Sound tribes seemed to have some knowledge of the people of the interior. They mentioned the *ste’tat* identified by Teit as the Thompson. They believed that these tribes lived on the Fresh River. They called these people “wild tribes” who traveled by night and attacked lone wayfarers...They spoke a language unintelligible to the Snohomish. The Sound Indians said that the *ste’tat* used to be savages but they had become civilized now.

Another tribe they mentioned are the *qlo’sabc*, which has not been identified. These people were supposed to be “savages” living in underground houses. The Snohomish did not know exactly where the *qlo’sabc* lived permanently, for they roamed over the country most of the time. They were supposed to be “built like giants” and were noted for their thieving.⁵³⁵

These stories are also similar to later ones recorded by Suttles in the 1970s. For example, one of Suttles’ informants, an elderly Lummi man (a Coast Salish group in southern British Columbia) named Patrick George told Suttles about a man named David Crow who had been captured in the late nineteenth century by the *ciEtKW*: “These were wild Indians who had some kind of poison which they could throw at a person and make him crazy...They wore no clothes but had guns.

⁵³³ Nels Bruseth, *Indian Stories and Legends of the Stillaguamish, Sauks, and Allied Tribes*, Second Edition, (Arlington: Arlington Times Press, 1950), the quote is from Suttles, “On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch,” 59.

⁵³⁵ As quoted in Suttles, “On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch,” 58-59.

They killed beavers and dried the skins and sold them to the whites.”⁵³⁶ All these oral stories point to something that does not match the pop culture sasquatch but does inadvertently collaborate Totsgi’s articles from the 1920s. Clearly what is being described is something more akin to interior tribes rather than an animal, just as Totsgi had earlier explained.

Reviewing all the evidence, it seems clear that the “sasquatch,” or at least the *sásq’ets*, were not simply imaginary monsters. Rather, like other monster legends, belief in such beings had a basis in a real threat or danger that historically had existed within the world of Pacific Northwest Indigenous peoples, much as Jorg Totsgi had claimed in 1924. But it is telling that Totsgi’s explanations were largely ignored or forgotten compared to the Indian agent J.W. Burns’ more sensational take, which popularized the “sasquatch” as a hairy ape-like creature. This enduring version of the myth has featured a creature more and more animal-like, and less and less human. But it has also featured, in fitting with a wider trend already noted, a folk animal that is generally benign, even humorous, compared to the original lore that was much darker and more violent, given its basis in real threats. This evolution in the folklore mirrors the changes that occurred in a wider North American society, as old frontier dangers, like tribal raids, or encountering grizzlies, or dealing with a harsh environment and the attendant threat of starvation, or natural hazards, became less and less of a concern, especially to the “culture makers” like Burns and other moulders of “sasquatch” stories for public consumption who were mostly middle-class journalists.

Conclusion

The historical record offers ample evidence to indicate that the various “monster” legends featured in North American exploration literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were

⁵³⁶ Suttles, “On the Cultural Track of the Sasquatch,” 51-52.

not the groundless superstitions that so many Euro-American and Euro-Canadian observers made them out to be. In many cases, such beliefs contained practical insights into real environmental dangers, dangers that later skeptical explorers and travellers often ignored at their peril. Indeed, in important respects, the skeptical trajectory that had developed in exploration literature toward the value of Indigenous knowledge actually left many explorers less able, not better, to understand the monster lore they heard from their guides. But as the rift widened between Indigenous and European cosmologies as it concerned monsters, and as the material circumstances that had originally spawned the legends diminished, many of the original stories did not fade away, but rather survived largely for entertainment value rather than allegorical warnings about threats. They had essentially morphed from something universally connoting dread and even terror, to generally more benign guises, often with a newfound humorous slant injected into them.

Conclusion

Scholarly and popular histories of North America have frequently emphasized the differences in cosmologies between Indigenous peoples and European explorers and colonists. While there are certainly sound reasons for such a focus, one important aspect that can be obscured by it is the extent to which nearly all cultures shared something that was directly relevant to exploration, a common belief that the world contained dangerous monsters. It is thus not surprising that stories of “monsters” and fantastic beasts abound in North American exploration literature; what is surprising is how little direct interest this has attracted from Canadian historians.⁵³⁷ As this dissertation illustrates, there are rich and diverse records of monsters in Canadian exploration records, which can provide an interesting window into the past, especially as a window into frontier encounters between Indigenous peoples and Europeans colonists.⁵³⁸ Within these sources, the three most prolific “monsters” accounts cluster around the “mountain monsters” from western North America that fall into an imperfect but loosely “sasquatch-like” category, windigo records from subarctic Canada, and “grisly” bear accounts, also from western North America. Each of these frontier monsters persisted in exploration narratives long after others had disappeared.

For at least the first two centuries of European exploration of North America, accounts of monsters, including ones given by Indigenous guides, seem to have largely been accepted by

⁵³⁷ As noted in the Introduction, accounts of monsters in Canadian or even North American exploration literature has still apparently never been the subject of any scholarly monograph. The sasquatch, while receiving considerable interest as a contemporary subject from scholars, has attracted scant attention in a pre-twentieth century context; and the windigo, while the focus of much research, has mainly been in the context of debates over human cannibalism rather than the records of nonhuman giant monsters. The “grisly” bear as a category of monster in the historical record had barely been considered at all by historians.

⁵³⁸ Given the absence of a monograph addressing this subject, this assessment is my own. Some examples of monster accounts in these sources can be found in the exploration narratives of Jacques Cartier, Henry Hudson, Samuel de Champlain, Pierre Esprit Radisson, Jacques Marquette, Louis Nicholas, Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de La Vérendrye, Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix, Jonathan Carver, and Jonathan Long, among others.

Europeans as reflecting actual creatures. Gradually, under the influence of a range of factors, this dynamic shifted over time. Continued exploration, the spread of Enlightenment ideas, and changing material circumstances led to a decline in the belief in monsters on the part of those who produced European exploration and travel literature. Belief in monsters, the supernatural, and witchcraft became increasingly unfashionable among elite and educated Europeans over the course of the European Enlightenment.⁵³⁹ In the eighteenth century, prominent Enlightenment thinkers like Jonathan Swift and David Hume ridiculed explorers' narratives for their relations of tales of fantastic creatures. Eventually, most explorers followed Swift's and Hume's example and similarly mocked belief in monsters among those lower down the social scale than themselves.

This eventual transformation gradually widened the rift between dominant European cosmologies and Indigenous ones, such that the latter group, and those of the former who retained a healthy respect for monster lore, were increasingly represented negatively in exploration literature as cowardly or superstitious. To be a respectable explorer or traveller, increasingly meant not to believe in monsters, especially the ones guides and hunters who had lived their whole lives in forests, mountains, and other natural environments took seriously. This occurred with the three similar monster legends examined here: the loose collection of tales about "mountain monsters" that form a proto-"sasquatch" core, the windigo in its own diverse manifestations, and the "grisly monster."

Many scholars who have considered "monsters" have tended to see the subject through the prism of postcolonial studies, applying the concept of the "Other" to what seems like a subject ideally made for it. It is easy to think that the construction and propagation of an inferior

⁵³⁹ Lorraine Datson and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books), 1998.

or dangerous “Other” was connected in some way with monster legends. However, such a theory broadly applied would obscure much of the common ground European travellers and Indigenous peoples initially shared when it came to ideas about dangerous monsters. Primary sources in the form of exploration and travel literature reveal that instead of attempting to construct an “Other” out of monster legends, generally in the earlier phases of contact on frontiers, European explorers and colonists seem to have more often done the opposite. The French colonists interpreted windigoes not as the bizarre superstitions of an alien people, but as akin to their own werewolves, while the English on Hudson Bay saw the windigo as the Cree equivalent of their own belief in the Devil. Allouez, among the first Europeans to hear of a grizzly bear, thought that it might be a lion of the sort known in European texts. The “matlox” was incomprehensible, something that Mociño declined to categorize at all. Not until much later, particularly after the mid-nineteenth century, would explorers and travellers start to exploit these legends in ways to negatively portray their Indigenous guides, though the effect was not necessarily always the same as the intention—as Warburton Pike’s example indicates.

Strikingly, in the earliest accounts of these three frontier “monsters,” stories of each seemed to have been greeted with a genuine mixture of fear and uncertainty in Europeans. Moreover, it is likely that these written accounts understate the consternation such monster stories actually inspired in travellers who listened to them recited around campfires, or while gazing out on mountain ranges they had to cross. Peter Fidler was rare in writing candidly about such fears in his diary, but surely he was not rare in what he felt: “Being lost & a stranger to these parts also but a young lad in this Country such was the cause of my great terror & consternation...”⁵⁴⁰

⁵⁴⁰ Fidler, *Journal*, 555.

Champlain accepted that a cannibal giant of the sort described by his Mi'kmaq guides did exist; even the skeptical Le Jeune could not entirely dispel his doubts about werewolf-like creatures. Thompson would not rule out the existence of a "Mammoth," which he confessed forced him to quicken his pace through the defiles of the Athabasca Pass. Nelson was patently alarmed by windigoes; Larocque confessed his own terror at the sight of the canyons around which the "Man-Wolf" was said to live. Few doubted grisly monsters hungered for human flesh; Mackenzie, Fidler, Henry, Fraser, Harmon and many others praised the courage of their Indigenous guides in facing such "monsters." These monster legends had initially as much bonded as divided European explorers and travellers with their Indigenous guides and companions.

Gradually that dynamic shifted in ways that led to greater estrangement between the two groups. European explorers and travellers came to see "monsters" not as reflecting actual threats, but as little more than the idle superstitions of cowardly Indigenous people, and frequently lower-class whites who had spent too much time associating with them. Prior to the late nineteenth century, even in cases when the travellers or explorers were skeptics, monster accounts almost always had some undercurrent of dread or some threat embedded in them. Not until travel writers were sufficiently removed from the circumstances that had produced these legends did they really begin to adapt them into stories intended to be seen as humorous—like Young and Godsell with the windigo, Burns with the sasquatch, or Murphy's mockery of the Sioux chief's status as a grizzly hunter. In the era of these skeptics, industrialization had fundamentally altered much of the former frontier experience. There was much less isolation than in the days of birch bark canoe travel, less reliance on the uncertainties of wind and weather, and on the other side of the equation much greater firepower in repeating rifles to

reassure a European camped in unfamiliar territory. Such material changes were as equally important as the popularization of Enlightenment skepticism in transforming how monsters were treated in exploration literature. The first brought doubts, the second brought overconfident mockery.

In other words, it was only after the “monsters” had lost their potency that they became connected with the kind of “Othering” narrative many historians have often sought to identify in imperial and colonial literature. That framework does capture much of the prejudice contained in the generally post mid-nineteenth century accounts of these frontier monsters. In that era, it became the norm in exploration literature to write of “superstitious,” “naïve,” or “cowardly” Indigenous peoples. However, while that “Othering” framework is a valuable one, the picture is again more complicated than might be expected. When such treatments did become the standard narrative, especially after the mid-nineteenth century, it was often not done exclusively in a straightforward Indigenous-European binary. Frequently, low-status white frontier figures, the voyageurs, poorer trappers, and “mountain men,” were chastised alongside Indigenous peoples by their social and economic elites. Both groups were depicted as representing a kind of backwards, premodern worldview ruled by superstition that left them quaking at the mere thought of windigoes, “sasquatch,” or later (in some cases) even grizzly bears. In proto-sasquatch lore, it became a theme of travel writers that there were remote places that their “superstitious” guides dreaded to set foot in. Similarly, in windigo accounts, voyageurs and Algonquian peoples were frequently depicted as governed by superstitious fear. The most ardent skeptics, such as the naturalist Enos Mills, even implied that the mountain men who had feared grizzlies were cowards who had been attacking animals that would rather flee than fight.

This widening rift, which led to much harsher depictions of Indigenous peoples in exploration literature, reflected an actual growing divide, rather than merely the literary constructs of European and Euro-settler travel writers. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 5, the monster legends recorded by explorers and travel writers, at least prior to the early twentieth century, reflected genuine Indigenous traditions. Cross-referencing Indigenous oral history and artwork with the stories recorded by explorers in western North America reveals that the loose body of proto-“sasquatch” legends were not merely the inventions of explorers, or conversely, makeshift inventions by Indigenous guides eager to deter European exploration.⁵⁴¹ Thus, there really was a profound and widening rift in cosmologies over monster legends, between Indigenous peoples and lower-status voyageurs and poor trappers on the one hand, and the generally middle or upper-class European or Euro-settlers active in exploration on the other.

The shift toward widespread skepticism in exploration and travel literature was part of a major intellectual transition in Western thought. David Thompson, after his many years as an explorer and mapmaker, noted, “The age of guessing is passed away, and the traveller is expected to give his reasons for what he asserts...”⁵⁴² By 1917, Max Weber, looking back on these transformations, saw it as “the disenchantment of the world.”⁵⁴³ In many respects, that seems to have been a fitting epitaph for an era of exploration that had stretched over four centuries.

And yet, some historians have begun to doubt the accuracy of Weber’s assessment, or at least argue the picture was more muddled. Historian Michael Saler, in a 2006 review essay,

⁵⁴¹ Less focus was given to demonstrating the authenticity of the other two legends, since one was primarily a monster of the European imagination, and the other, the windigo, is so clearly attested in numerous Indigenous oral histories and other Indigenous sources that there is no question of its status as an authentic part of Algonquian tradition. See appendix for a list of anthropology studies and oral anthologies.

⁵⁴² David Thompson, *Narrative*, 213.

⁵⁴³ Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” in Max Weber, *Max Weber's Complete Writings on Academic and Political Vocations*, edited by John Dreijmanis (New York: Algora, 2008), 35.

critiqued what he saw as an older, simplistic “binary” view.⁵⁴⁴ Examining exploration and travel literature would seem to be an ideal subject to test competing theories about “disenchantment”—surely few things speak to “enchantment” as much as monsters and fantastic beasts do. If it could be shown that there was no clear trend toward greater skepticism or disbelief about fantastic beasts and monsters in Western exploration literature up to 1917, then a view founded on Weber’s claim would indeed seem to be on shaky empirical ground.

This dissertation can be seen as partly having tested that theory as it pertains to Canada and the northern United States. In this study, the attempt was made to cast as wide a net as possible, so as to consider all accounts of exploration and travel literature. The results, drawn from hundreds of exploration narratives, do not seem to support newer revisionist narratives that seek to challenge Weber’s characterization. The sources show an overwhelming shift from an openness to the existence of monsters and fantastic animals to widespread rejection. Skepticism about monsters lurking in mountain passes, deep woods, or elsewhere on the edges of the map increased drastically in North American exploration literature up to at least 1917. Taking the “sasquatch,” windigo, and even grisly monster as test studies—three monsters that could plausibly be singled out beforehand as the ones most likely to provide evidence for a counter-argument against disenchantment—still end up validating Weber’s view much more than current revisionism. All three of these monsters reveal strong indications of increasing “disenchantment” or skepticism in how they were viewed in exploration and travel literature over the 1607-1930 timeframe examined here. This fits substantially the same conclusions found by historians such as Alison Winters, Lorraine Datson and Katharine Park in their respective studies, all of which,

⁵⁴⁴ Michael Saler, "Modernity and Enchantment: A Historiographic Review," *The American Historical Review*, (Vol. 111, Issue 3, 1 June 2006), 692–716, accessed online January 7, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr.111.3.692>.

although highlighting many nuances in earlier periods like this one, see a skeptical or “disenchanted” view achieving dominance over the course of the nineteenth century.⁵⁴⁵

This is certainly not to suggest counter-narratives that dispute increasing “disenchantment” are not without merit. Only that the primary source accounts of monsters examined here do not support these revisionist theories. To be persuasive, it should be obvious that one cannot simply cherry-pick a few dubious newspaper claims, a Barnum hoax here, and an eccentric explorer report there, to add up to a compelling case that “disenchantment” or increased skepticism did not characterize the evolution of monsters in North American exploration and travel literature in the 1607-1930 timeframe. Such selective use of sources would only convince those who already want to be convinced that “disenchantment” of the sort Weber saw did not happen. The broader review of the primary source literature offered here clearly does point in the direction Weber saw. Uncritical monster accounts went from very common in early accounts of exploration in northern North America to virtually nil by the mid-nineteenth century. New World zoology texts, derived from these same sources, underwent a similar transformation in a relatively short span of a century and a half. The educated in 1700 might have read in Jesuit Louis Nicholas’ *Codex Canadensis* about “very poisonous” tailed frogs and “sea monsters” resembling mermaids that inhabited Canada, but by John James Audubon’s time (1840s) North American natural history texts had been overwhelming purged of the fantastic.⁵⁴⁶ True, there was

⁵⁴⁵ Datson and Park focused on the 1150-1750 time span, but saw the trend as continuing through to the end of the twentieth century. Saler infers that if they had consulted more sources after their timeframe, their views would have changed to reject a straightforward dialectic. But the sources studied here involving “sasquatch,” windigo, and grisly bears do not support such an assumption and match closer with what Datson and Park concluded. Alison Winters also showed how “mesmerism,” though mainstream in the early Victorian period, gradually was discredited by the end of that era. See, Lorraine Datson and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books), 1998 and Alison Winter: *Mesmerized: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

⁵⁴⁶ A reader of zoology texts relating to Canada would find plenty to be enchanted by in Nicholas’ *Codex Canadensis* (1700) with strange frogs and mermaid-like monsters; moving onto Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix’s *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France* (1744) might make one feel slightly

at least still the flesh-eating grizzly monster. But, by Weber's time, that too had been debunked in natural history texts as "pure nonsense."⁵⁴⁷ Primary source data that falls under the category of "exploration or travel literature," as it relates to fantastic beasts and monsters, does not seem to fit a theory that argues against increasing disenchantment up to 1917 and even post-1917 it seems one would have to be highly selective in the use of sources to claim a reverse trend.

Again with regard to three frontier monsters examined here, the proto-"sasquatch," windigo, and grizzly monster tales that have proved the most enduring in North American folklore and the most prominent in the historical record, this skeptical trajectory is clearly evident. Accounts grow less fantastic with time; more qualified, more skeptical, and more dismissive. Stories of "mountain monsters" or "sasquatch"-like tales, evolved in exploration literature from a mixture of uncertainty and trepidation seen in the earliest accounts by Mociño and Thompson through to increasing skepticism and curt dismissals as "superstitions," to full-blown ridicule and mockery by Weber's day. Accounts of windigo monsters followed a similar evolution. The "grisly monster" gradually lost its more fantastical attributes as the bear that "makes food of man."⁵⁴⁸ By the end of the nineteenth century, the overwhelming opinion in exploration literature had coalesced around a view that held monsters were mere "superstitions." *However*, this was not the whole story. Looking more critically at these exploration narratives

"disenchanted" to discover the poisonous tailed frogs and mermaids had disappeared; but there at least was still the carcajou, an animal that could control foxes and which had a tail so long that it could strangle other animals with it. Readers of Jonathan Carver's *Travels Through the interior parts of North America in the years 1766, 1767, and 1768*, would likewise find plenty of fantastic creatures. But, not long afterwards, turning to Thomas Pennant's *Arctic Zoology* (1784-1785), might bring on serious disenchantment; as he had little of the marvellous to say, and debunked much of what his predecessors had written. In the 1840s, the natural history texts of John James Audubon (1840s) would have even less enchantment to offer.

⁵⁴⁷ William H. Wright, *The Grizzly Bear: The Narrative of a Hunter-Naturalist, Historical, Scientific and Adventurous* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), 229-230.

⁵⁴⁸ Kelsey, *Journal*.

and cross-referencing them with sources drawn from a wider literature reveals some startlingly conclusions.

Contrary to the claims of the skeptics, tales of monsters were not the baseless superstitions of “childlike mind(s),” as one ardent disenchanter put it.⁵⁴⁹ Explorers and travel writers might have thought so, but that does not necessarily mean they were right. On the contrary, there were indeed “more things in heaven and earth Horatio/ than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” Spirit bears, “man-eater” grizzlies, unusually tall mountain-dwelling peoples that launched nighttime raids with arrows tipped with paralyzing poison, enormous bones of fantastic beasts that had once roamed the land, deadly invisible gases that could kill within a few steps on the wrong mountain slope, avalanches that in minutes might level an entire stretch of forest, humans who turned into cannibals; all this was no mere figment of a dream. The various “monster” legends featured in North American exploration literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were not the groundless superstitions that so many Euro-American and Euro-Canadian observers made them out to be. In many cases, such beliefs contained practical insights into real environmental dangers, dangers that later skeptical explorers and travellers often ignored at their peril. Indeed, in important respects, the skeptical trajectory that had developed in exploration literature toward the value of Indigenous knowledge actually left many explorers less able, not better, to understand the monster lore they heard from their guides.

Disenchantment, it turns out, is not necessarily synonymous with reality.

⁵⁴⁹ Donald Alexander Mackenzie, *Indian Myth and Legend* (Glasgow: Gresham Publishing, 2014, first published 1913), 71.

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Appendix

Tables 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 display historical accounts of early western monsters/proto-sasquatch accounts, windigo accounts, and grizzly bear accounts respectively. Chart 5.1 helps illustrate the pre-twentieth antecedents of the sasquatch legend, something that has not generally been recognized in skeptical discussions of sasquatch, which have often treated it as purely a twentieth pop culture phenomenon. Charts 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 also offer an assessment of the treatment of each monster account by its chronicler, ranging from “acceptance” or “matter-of-fact” if the author seemed to accept its existence, to “agnostic” or “neutral” if they do not take a position, to “dismissive” or “contemptuous” or “mock seriousness” if they ridiculed the account. To represent the diversity of views as accurately as possible, I have sometimes also quoted the author’s words, such as “quaint” in the case of W.L. Musick’s description of reports of an “ape” in the western mountains. (In the case of the grizzly bear, accounts were succinct enough to allow for direct quotes of the author’s views rather than the summaries given in Tables 5.1 and 5.2.) Each chart helps make clear the shift away from acceptance of monster legends to greater skepticism and even mockery, as well as the timeframe when this shift occurred. Also for table 5.1 on early western monsters/mountain monsters/proto-“sasquatch” accounts, under the heading “possible basis” some explanation where possible has been suggested for each account (which matches the discussion provided in Chapter 5). Table 5.4 illustrates the sharp decline in the use of the term “grizzly monster” in English language books published between 1800 and 2000 using Google Books Ngram viewer. The graph reveals a peak in the use of the term around 1860 followed by a sharp decline at the start of the twentieth century, which supports the sources discussed in Chapter 4. Table 5.5 provides an overview of the extensive primary sources on the windigo, which strongly rules out the more extreme skepticism claiming that the windigo lacks a basis in the historical record.

Table 5.1, Early Western Monsters/ Mountain Monsters/Proto-“Sasquatch” Accounts

| Account | Year | Location | Description | Possible Basis | Treatment |
|-------------------------------|------|---|--|--------------------------------|----------------|
| La Vérendrye’s letters | 1735 | Great Plains | “snakes of a prodigious size” “tribes of dwarfs” | Unknown | Acceptance |
| Jonathan Carver’s book | 1781 | West of Mississippi River/ Upper Great Lakes | “hissing-snake,” “mandrakes” “tigers” “carcajou” | Unfamiliar animals embellished | Matter-of-fact |
| <i>Times</i> newspaper story | 1785 | 200 Miles from Lake-of-the-Woods. | “Wild Man” | Fictional | Matter-of-fact |
| Alexander Mackenzie’s Journal | 1789 | vague interior beyond Rocky Mountains | “Big and very wicked [tribe who] kill Common Men with their Eyes.” | Tribe | Skeptical |
| John Long’s book | 1791 | Red Lake (Near Lake-of-the-Woods) | “enormous beast” “monster” | Moose? (body covered in | Matter-of-fact |

| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------|----------------------------------|---|---|------------------------------|
| | | | | moss/walked in water) | |
| José Mariano Mociño's journal | 1792 | Pacific Northwest coastline | "matlox" "monstrous" | Grizzly Bear? | Agnostic |
| François Antoine Larocque's journal | 1805 | Rocky Mountains | "Man Wolf" "Devil" | Dangerous Waterfall? | Acceptance (?) |
| Simon Fraser's Journal | 1806 | Rocky Mountains | "Big Men" "Big Men Indians" | Tribe | Matter-of-fact |
| David Thompson's journal | 1807 | Rocky Mountains | "very large Animal" | Extinct Mega-Fauna? | Skeptical |
| David Thompson's narrative | 1811 | Rocky Mountains | "Mammoth" | Grizzly Bear | Skeptical/ Agnostic |
| David Douglas's Journal | 1826 | Rocky Mountains | "Kyeusse tribe" "the terror of all other tribes" "6 feet 6 inches high" | Tribe | Matter-of-fact |
| Ross Cox's book | 1831 | Rocky Mountains | "animals...of frightful magnitude" | Extinct Mega-Fauna/Avalanches | Agnostic |
| Elkanah Walker's letters | 1840 | Mount St. Helens area | "a race of giants" | Interior Tribe | Skeptical |
| Paul Kane's book | 1847 | Mount St. Helens | "beings of a different species, who are cannibals" | Interior Tribe/Volcanic Gases | Skeptical/ Agnostic |
| Matthew Macfie's book | 1865 | British Columbia | "hideous creatures" "monsters" | Interior Tribe | Skeptical/ Dismissive |
| <i>Weekly Butte Record</i> | 1870 | Northern California | "gorilla" | Fictional/Real Person/Racial Stereotypes/Gorillas | Acceptance or either Fiction |
| Jacko Story, <i>British Colonist</i> | 1884 | Interior British Columbia (Yale) | "gorilla" "crazy Indian" | Fictional/Racial Stereotypes/Gorillas | Mock Seriousness |
| George Dawson Report | 1887 | Northern British Columbia | "wild man of gigantic stature and supernatural powers" | Extinct Mega-Fauna/ Interior Tribe | Dismissive |
| Theodore Roosevelt's book | 1893 | Rocky Mountains | "hobgoblins" | Unknown | Dismissive |
| Theodore Roosevelt's book | 1893 | Rocky Mountains | "great goblin-beast" | Grizzly Bear | Skeptical |
| Warburton Pike's book | 1896 | Northern British Columbia | "something evil" "evil thing" | Extinct Mega-Fauna/Dangerous rapids | Skeptical/ Dismissive |

| | | | | | |
|--|------|--|--|--|-------------------------------|
| W.L. Musick's <i>Hermit of Siskiyou</i> | 1896 | Coastal Mountains of Oregon/Northern California | “ape” “spook” | Fictional/ Mistaken Sightings of Bear/People | “Quaint” |
| Vancouver's <i>Daily Province</i> | 1907 | British Columbia Coast | “monkey-like wild man” | Fictional/Person? | Skeptical/Mock Seriousness |
| Jorg Totsgi's news articles | 1924 | Washington State/Vancouver Island | “Seeahtik tribe” “strange giant Indians” | Interior Tribe | Matter-of-fact/ Acceptance |
| J.W. Burn's <i>Maclean's</i> story | 1929 | British Columbia | “hairy giants” | Fiction/ Interior Tribe | Mock Seriousness |

Table 5.2 Windigo Monster Accounts (excludes accounts that only discuss human cannibals)

| Account | Year (recorded/ took place) | Location | Description | Treatment |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| Samuel de Champlain's book | 1607 | Acadia (near Chaleur Bay, coast of modern New Brunswick) | "a dreadful monster" "some devil" | Acceptance |
| Paul Le Jeune's <i>Jesuit Relations</i> | 1633 | Northeastern Quebec | "large unknown animals" "Devils" | Cautiously skeptical "suspected" but not certain |
| Paul Le Jeune's <i>Jesuit Relations</i> | 1634-1635 | Trois-Rivieres, Quebec | "a sort of werewolf" | Skeptical |
| Paul Le Jeune's <i>Jesuit Relations</i> | 1661 | Lac St. Jean region of Quebec | "werewolves" | Cautiously Skeptical |
| Bonaventure Fabvre's Montagnais Dictionary | 1695 | Northern Quebec | "loup garou" | Neutral |
| James Isham's papers | 1743 | Hudson Bay, west coast, York Factory | "the Devil" | Neutral |
| Henry Ellis' <i>A Voyage to Hudson Bay...</i> | 1748 | Hudson Bay watershed | "an Evil Being" | Neutral |
| Andrew Graham's <i>Observations on Hudson Bay</i> | 1767-1791 | Hudson Bay, northwestern watershed | "Evil Being" | Neutral |
| Edward Umfreville's <i>The Present State of Hudson's Bay...</i> | 1790 | Hudson Bay watershed, North Saskatchewan River | "an evil Being" | Neutral/Skeptical |
| David Thompson's <i>Narrative</i> | 1796-1799 | Lake of the Woods | "Evil Spirit" | Neutral/Acceptance |
| François Antoine Larocque's Journal | 1805 | Rocky Mountains | "Man Wolf" "Devil" | Neutral/Acceptance |
| Daniel Harmon's book edited by Daniel Haskell | 1820 | Mattawa River | "a large animal" "a Man-eater" | Skeptical (Haskell) |
| George Nelson's papers | 1822-1823 | Lac La Ronge / English River Hudson Bay watershed | "Giants" "Evil spirits" | Skeptical/partial acceptance |
| James Tanner's memoir, recorded and edited by Edwin James | 1830 | Hudson Bay | "imaginary race" "of giant dimension" | Dismissive (James) |
| Henry Schoolcraft's <i>Algic Researches...</i> | 1839 | Upper Great Lakes | "Giant" | Contemptuous |

| | | | | |
|--|------------------|-------------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| Johahn Kohl's <i>Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway</i> | 1855 | Lake Superior | "anthropophagus giants" | Dismissive/Skeptical |
| Henry Youle Hind's <i>Explorations in the Interior of the Labrador Peninsula...</i> | 1863 | Labrador Interior | "giant cannibals, twenty and thirty feet high" | Dismissive |
| Egerton Ryerson Young's <i>Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-Fires</i> | 1893 (1868-1888) | Norway House, Lake Winnipeg | "gigantic creatures half satanic and half human" "imaginary monsters" | Mockery |
| Charles Mair's <i>Through the Mackenzie Basin...</i> | 1899 | Lesser Slave Lake, northern Alberta | "cannibal spirit" | Dismissive |
| Philip H. Godsell's <i>Arctic Trader: The Account of Twenty Years...</i> | 1934 (1907) | Norway House, Lake Winnipeg | "monster" | Mockery |

Table 5.3 Grizzly Bear Accounts

| Account | Year | Location | Description |
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| Claude Jean Allouez's account, <i>Jesuit Relations</i> | 1666-67 | West of Lake Superior, presumably referring to Great Plains | "these people...are eaten by Bears of frightful size, all red, and with prodigiously long claws" |
| Henry Kelsey's journal | 1691 | Great Plains | "great sort of Bear" "makes food of man" |
| Baron de Lahontan's book | 1703 | Presumably referring to Great Plains | "Reddish Bears are mischievous Creatures, for they fall fiercely upon the Huntsmen" |
| Samuel Hearne's book | 1795 (1770) | Arctic tundra | "an enormous grizzled Bear" |
| Edward Umfreville's book | 1790 | Arctic/subarctic tundra/treeline | "grizzle Bear...their nature is savage and ferocious, their power is dangerous" |
| Peter Fidler's journal | 1791 | Great Slave Lake watershed | "Bears that was going to fall upon me" |
| Alexander Mackenzie's journal/book | 1801 (1793) | Coast/Rocky Mountains | "grisly and hideous bears" |
| Alexander Henry the younger's journal | 1800 | Great Plains/ Rocky Mountains | "very malicious" "grisly bear" |
| William Clark's journal | 1804/ 1806 | Great Plains/Rocky Mountains | "ferocious" "track of those animals which is 3 times as large as a mans track" |
| Meriwether Lewis' journal | 1805 | Great Plains/Rocky Mountains | "monster" |
| Simon Fraser's journal | 1806 | Rocky Mountains | "large grizzly bear" "killed with seven shots" |
| David Thompson's narrative | 1811 | Great Plains/Rocky Mountains | "some monster Bear" |
| Henry Marie Brackenridge's book | 1813 | Great Plains | "ferocious monsters" |
| DeWitt Clinton's article | 1814 | Great Plains/Rocky Mountains | "ferocious tyrant" |
| George Ord's article | 1815 | Great Plains/Rocky Mountains | "dreadfully ferocious animal" "monster" " <i>ursus horribilis</i> " |
| Gabriel Franchère's book | 1820 | Rocky Mountains/Pacific Northwest | "extrêmement féroce" |
| Daniel Harmon's book | 1820 | Great Plains | "very ferocious" |
| John Richardson's book | 1829 | Great Plains/boreal forest | "ferocity of the Grisly Bear" |
| Ross Cox's book | 1831 | Rocky Mountains/Pacific Northwest | "extremely ferocious" |
| John K. Townsend's book | 1839 | Rocky Mountains/Pacific Northwest | "grizzly monster" |
| Thomas Simpson's book | 1839 | Arctic tundra | "monster" "that terror" |
| Paul Kane's journal | 1847 | Great Plains/Rocky Mountains | "grisly bear" |

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| John James Audubon's book | 1854 | Great Plains/Rocky Mountains | "savage Grizzly Bear," "huge shaggy monster" |
| John Palliser's book | 1853 | Great Plains | "grisly bear" "monster" |
| George Catlin's book | 1866 | Great Plains | "grizzly and grim monster" |
| Theodore Roosevelt's <i>Hunting Trips</i> | 1885 | Rocky Mountains | "No grizzly will assail a man now unprovoked" |
| Theodore Roosevelt's <i>Wilderness Hunter</i> | 1893 | Rocky Mountains | "has learned to be more wary than a deer, and to avoid man's presence almost as carefully as the most timid game" |
| William Wright's book | 1909 | General | "the notion that the grizzly roams about seeking for whomsoever he may devour, is pure nonsense" |
| William T. Hornaday's article | 1909 | General | "The grizzly's temper is defensive, not aggressive... he always flees from man" |
| Enos A. Mills | 1919 | General | "there is no just claim against him, but he has the paid the penalty of being misunderstood" |

Table 5.4 Google Books Ngram Viewer: Decline of the term “Grizzly Monster” in printed books 1800-2000.

Google Books Ngram Viewer

Graph these comma-separated phrases: ☐ case-insensitive

between and from the corpus with smoothing of [Search lots of books](#)

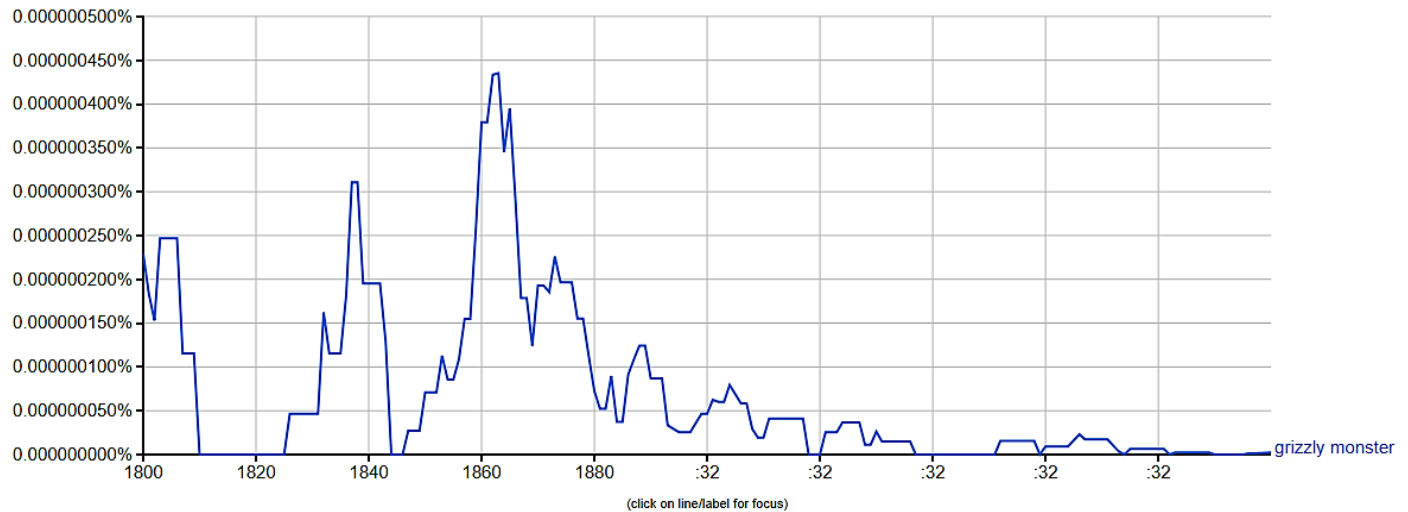


Table 5.5 Windigo Accounts (1634-2007)

(The dates are approximate, as are most locations. When referring to location, modern Canadian provinces have been given in some cases for clarity. The list is not exhaustive; undoubtedly more records exist.)

| Year (year recorded/ took place) | Location | Source | Type/Notes |
|---|---|--|---|
| 1633 | Northeastern Quebec | <i>Jesuit Relations</i> | “large unknown animals” |
| 1634-1635 | Trois-rivières | <i>Jesuit Relations</i> | Human cannibal |
| 1661 | Lac St. Jean region of Quebec | <i>Jesuit Relations</i> | Human cannibals |
| 1680 | St. Croix River, Acadia | Chrestien Le Clercq’s <i>New Relation of Gaspesia, with the customs and religion of the Gaspesian Indians...</i> | Human cannibals |
| 1714 | Northwestern Hudson Bay watershed | Cited in James Smith’s “Notes on the Wittiko” | “apparitions” |
| 1720 | Northeastern Hudson Bay watershed | Nicolas Jérémie’s “Relation du Détroit et de la Baie d’Hudson” | Human cannibals |
| 1722 | “le Nord” i.e. Hudson and James Bay watershed | Bacqueville de la Potherie’s <i>Histoire de L’Amerique Septentrionale</i> | Tribe (human) |
| 1723 | Fort Albany, James Bay | Joseph Myatt papers, HBC Archives, cited in Charles A. Bishop’s “Northern Algonkian Cannibalism...” | “Lunatick” murderer, man killed his wife, went insane, no mention of cannibalism but caused panic among local people. |
| 1732 (sometime earlier) | Near Chicoutimi, Quebec | Joseph Laurent Normandin’s journal | Human cannibal |
| 1741 | Hudson Bay, west coast, inland | Cited in James G.E. Smith’s “Notes on the Wittiko” | Human cannibal |
| 1743 | Hudson Bay, west coast, York Factory | James Isham’s papers | “the Devil” |
| 1748 | Hudson Bay watershed | Henry Ellis’ <i>A Voyage to Hudson Bay...</i> | Devil (singular) |

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| 1748-1749 (based on voyages in 1746-1747) | Hudson Bay watershed | Theodore Swaine Drage's <i>An Account of a Voyage for the Discovery of the Northwest Passage...</i> | Devil/evil being |
| 1767 | North shore of Lake Superior | Alexander Henry's <i>Travels and Adventures in Canada</i> | Human Cannibal |
| 1767-1791 | Hudson Bay, northwestern watershed | Andrew Graham's <i>Observations on Hudson Bay</i> | Devil?/Human cannibals |
| 1774 (and an earlier 1772 incident) | Fort Severn, Hudson Bay | William Falconer's papers, HBC Archives, cited in Charles A. Bishop's "Northern Algonkian Cannibalism..." | Human cannibal (fear that the human murder after his death would turn into a monster) |
| 1775 * | Cumberland House (northern Saskatchewan) | Samuel Hearne letter (also discussed in his book) | Human Cannibal |
| 1790 | Hudson Bay watershed, North Saskatchewan River | Edward Umfreville's <i>The Present State of Hudson's Bay...</i> | "evil Being" i.e. The Devil |
| 1795 | Hudson Bay watershed, northwest | Samuel Hearne's <i>A Journey to the Northern Ocean...</i> | Human Cannibals |
| 1796 | Saskatchewan | David Thompson's <i>Narrative</i> | "evil Spirit"/human cannibal |
| 1799 | Lake of the Woods | David Thompson's <i>Narrative</i> | "Evil Spirit" / human cannibals |
| 1804 | Lake Nipigon Area | Duncan Cameron's "The Nipigon Country, 1804" | Human cannibals (murdered by his wife in fear that he would become a cannibal) |
| 1812/1813 | Lake Winnipeg | George Nelson's papers | Human cannibal |
| 1819-1821 | Hudson Bay watershed, northwest | Robert Hood's journals | Human cannibals |
| 1822-1823 | Hudson Bay watershed | George Nelson's papers | Giants/monsters |
| 1822-1823 "several years" | Lac La Ronge / English River | George Nelson's papers | Human cannibals (numerous incidents, |

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| back” (and more recently) | (northern Saskatchewan) | | one of which involved a voyageur) |
| 1829 | North shore of Lake Huron | T.G. Anderson’s papers | Human cannibals (starvation and by choice) |
| 1830 | Island in Hudson Bay | Edwin James’ <i>A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of James Tanner...</i> | Tribe/ Monsters/Giants |
| 1835 | Mistassini, Northern Quebec | William M. Kay’s Mistassini Report, 1839-40, reprinted in Teicher’s <i>Windigo Psychosis</i> | Human cannibal (old hunter murdered his son out of fear he might become a windigo) |
| 1836 (reporting on an incident in 1832) | Fort Chipewyan, Alberta | George Back’s <i>Narrative of the Arctic Land Expedition to the Mouth of the Great Fish River...</i> | Human cannibal |
| 1837 | Lac Seul, northwestern Ontario | Charles McKenzie papers, HBC Archives, cited in Charles A. Bishop’s “Northern Algonkian Cannibalism...” | Monster |
| 1839 | Upper Great Lakes | Henry Schoolcraft’s <i>Algic Researches...</i> | Monster/Giant |
| 1843 | Hudson Bay watershed, near York Factory | Letitia Hargrave’s letters | Human murderer/ Cannibal? |
| 1846 | Lake of the Woods area | Paul Kane’s <i>Wanderings of an Artist...(journal)</i> | Human cannibals |
| 1847 | Hudson Bay area | J.B. Nevins’ <i>Narrative of Two Voyages to Hudson’s Bay...</i> | Monster/giant |
| 1848 | Hudson Bay area | R.M. Ballantyne’s <i>Hudson’s Bay</i> | Human cannibals |
| 1849 (some years earlier) | Near Fort Simpson, North West Territories | John McLean’s <i>Notes of a twenty-five year’s service in the Hudson’s Bay territories...</i> | Human cannibals (not strictly speaking windigo because this involved a non-Algonquian group) |
| 1854 | Isle Royale, Lake Superior | Johahn Kohl’s <i>Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the</i> | Human cannibal |

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| | | <i>Lake Superior Ojibway</i> | |
| 1855 (sometime earlier) | North shore of Lake Superior | Johahn Kohl's <i>Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway</i> | Human cannibal |
| 1855 (sometime earlier) | Near Grand Portage, west of Lake Superior | Johahn Kohl's <i>Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway</i> | Human cannibal |
| 1855 (at a much earlier date "in the primitive ages") | Lake Superior | Johahn Kohl's <i>Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway</i> | Giants/Monsters ("anthropophagus giants") |
| 1857 | Labrador | Cited in W.G. Gosling's <i>Labrador: Its Discovery, Exploration, and Development</i> | Human cannibals |
| 1860 (1859) | Water Hen River, Manitoba | Earl of Southesk's <i>Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains: A Diary and Narrative...</i> | Human cannibal |
| 1860 (1811) | Brule Lake, present-day Algonquin Park | Henry Youle Hind's <i>Narrative of the Red River Exploring Expedition...</i> | Human cannibals |
| 1860 (earlier date) | Lake Winnipeg | Henry Youle Hind's <i>Narrative of the Red River Exploring Expedition...</i> | Human cannibals |
| 1863 | Labrador Interior | Henry Youle Hind's <i>Explorations in the Interior of the Labrador Peninsula...</i> | Monsters/Giants |
| 1863 | Labrador Interior | Henry Youle Hind's <i>Explorations in the Interior of the Labrador Peninsula...</i> | "Windigo tracks" monster? |
| 1863 | Wamoutashing, Labrador | Henry Youle Hind's <i>Explorations in the Interior of the Labrador Peninsula...</i> | Human cannibal |
| 1867 | Near Great Slave Lake, Northwest Territories | Émile Petitor's <i>Travels around Great</i> | Human cannibal |

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| | | <i>Slave and Great Bear Lakes, 1862-1882</i> | |
| 1872 | Lake of the Woods | Sir William Francis Butler's <i>The Great Lone Land: Narrative of Travel and Adventure...</i> | Human cannibal. |
| 1876 | Berens River, Manitoba | Court Records, discussed in Susan Elaine Gray's " <i>I Will Fear No Evil</i> "...also discussed by A.I. Hallowell, see Teicher's <i>Windigo Psychosis</i> | Human cannibal (Ojibwa woman put to death when it was feared she might turn windigo, i.e. possession, heart of ice) |
| 1878 | Near Great Slave Lake, Northwest Territories | Émile Petitor's <i>Travels around Great Slave and Great Bear Lakes, 1862-1882</i> | Human cannibal (corpse eating, murder) |
| 1879 | "about 80 miles north of Fort Edmonton" (northern Alberta) | Court Records, numerous others, discussed by Teicher, Brightman etc. | Human cannibal: Swift Runner case, man murdered and ate eight people, including his wife and children. Famine was apparently not a factor; claimed an evil spirit, the windigo, made him do it. |
| 1884 | Unknown/Manitoba? | Émile Petitor's <i>Travels around Great Slave and Great Bear Lakes, 1862-1882</i> | Human cannibal |
| 1885 | Frog Lake, (Saskatchewan) | W.B. Cameron's <i>The War Trial of Big Bear</i> | Old woman ritually executed out of fear she was turning into a windigo |
| 1893 (1868-1888) | Norway House, Lake Winnipeg | Egerton Ryerson Young's <i>Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-Fires</i> | Monsters/Giants and human cannibals |
| 1896 | Rat Portage, Ontario | Ontario Court Records (see Teicher's | Criminal trial of a man for murdering |

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| | | <i>Windigo Psychosis</i> , pg 53). | another person he alleged was “an evil spirit in human shape called a Windigo” |
| 1896 (describing an incident that took place “no later than 1850” | Sept Isles, Quebec | E.T.D. Chambers’ <i>The Ouananiche and its Canadian Environment</i> | Human cannibals. (Two female cannibals, ate husband, children.) |
| 1896 (incident that took place “as late as 1867”) | Lake Mistassini, northern Quebec | E.T.D. Chambers’ <i>The Ouananiche and its Canadian Environment</i> | Human cannibals (people murdered out fear they might turn into windigoes) |
| 1898-1900? | Berens River, Manitoba | Primary sources quoted in Susan Elaine Gray’s “ <i>I Will Fear No Evil</i> ” ... | Human cannibals (two persons [both women] in danger of transformation into a windigo). Both were executed. |
| 1899 | Lesser Slave Lake, northern Alberta | Charles Mair’s <i>Through the Mackenzie Basin...</i> | Evil spirit, human cannibal. |
| 1899 (reported in 1903) | “about 75 miles west of Lesser Slave Lake” northern Alberta | Eighteenth Annual Archaeological Report 1903, Court Records, | Human cannibals (“evil spirit”, “body full of ice”) (Probably same incident referred to above) |
| 1900 (circa) | Berens River | A.I. Hallowell’s unpublished field notes, see Teicher’s <i>Windigo Psychosis</i> | Human cannibal (female windigo who committed suicide by hanging) |
| 1900 (circa) | Poplar River | A.I. Hallowell’s unpublished field notes, see Teicher’s <i>Windigo Psychosis</i> | Woman who feared she was turning into a windigo monster |
| 1907 | Norway House, Lake Winnipeg | Philip H. Godsell’s <i>Arctic Trader: The Account of Twenty Years...</i> | Monster/ogre/ cannibal spirit |
| 1907 (various earlier incidents starting in the 1880s) | Sandy Lake, northwestern Ontario | Court Records, numerous others (the trial was held at Norway House, Northwest Territories, present-day northwestern Ontario, | Insane persons / Human cannibals (criminal trial of Joseph Fiddler that revealed four separate incidents in which persons |

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| | | and specifically dealt with a 1906 murder) | accused of being windigoes were murdered (several parties were involved in the executions.) |
| 190? (sometime in the early twentieth century) Recorded between 1965-1969 | Rupert River, Quebec | Cree elder John Blackned's memoirs, as told in Richard J. Preston's <i>Cree Narratives</i> | "out of control woman" put to death, possibly in danger of transforming into a windigo |
| 190? (sometime in the early twentieth century) Recorded between 1965-1969 | Rupert River, Quebec | Cree elder John Blackned's memoirs, as told in Richard J. Preston's <i>Cree Narratives</i> | Human cannibals |
| 190? (sometime in the early twentieth century or possibly late nineteenth century) Recorded between 1965-1969 | Rupert River, Quebec, or environs | Cree elder John Blackned's memoirs, as told in Richard J. Preston's <i>Cree Narratives</i> | Human cannibals (corpse eating) woman with young child, both executed. (Called "atoosh" i.e. cannibal.) |
| 190? (sometime in the early twentieth century) Recorded between 1965-1969 | Rupert River, Quebec | Cree elder John Blackned's memoirs, as told in Richard J. Preston's <i>Cree Narratives</i> | Human cannibals "atoosh" (i.e. "men in the bush who could catch people and eat them raw.") |
| 190? (sometime in the early twentieth century) Recorded between 1965-1969 | Rupert River, Quebec, specifically an island in James Bay, near the eastern coast. | Cree elder John Blackned's memoirs, as told in Richard J. Preston's <i>Cree Narratives</i> | An "atoosh" (i.e. insane human cannibal with some supernatural attributes.) |

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| 1909 | Great Plains | Amelia M. Paget's <i>People of the Plains</i> | Crazed humans (possessed by an evil spirit) |
| 1911 (traditional tale) | James Bay, eastern coast, collected at Fort Albany | Alanson's Skinner's "Notes on the Eastern Cree..." | Cannibal (similarities with eastern European folk traditions of Baba Yaga) |
| 1911 | James Bay, eastern coast, collected at Fort Albany | Alanson's Skinner's "Notes on the Eastern Cree..." | Human cannibals |
| 1915 (traditional tale) | Temagami, Ontario | Frank G. Speck's "Myths and Folklore of the Timiskaming..." | "cannibal monster" |
| 1915 (recorded in 1913) | Recorded at Lake Waswanipi, Quebec | Frank G. Speck's "Some Naskapi Myths..." | Human cannibal |
| 1915 (sometime earlier, oral account) | (collected at Rama Reserve, near Lake Couchiching, Ontario) | G.E. Laidlaw's "Ojibwa Myths and Tales" in <i>Annual Archaeological Reports...</i> | Giant/Monster |
| 1916 (traditional tales) | North shore of Lake Superior | William Jones' "Ojibwa Tales from the North Shore of Lake Superior," | Giants |
| 1916 (traditional tale) | Unknown | Alanson Skinner's "Plains Cree Tales" | Mythical cannibal |
| 1917 (traditional tale first recorded 1903-05) | Collected near Lake Superior | William Jones' "Ojibwa Texts" | Giant |
| 1918 (sometime earlier) | Hudson Bay, (collected at Rama Reserve, near Lake Couchiching, Ontario) | G.E. Laidlaw's "Ojibwa Myths and Tales" in <i>Annual Archaeological Reports...</i> | Giant/Monster |
| 1918 ("Some time ago") | Hudson Bay, (collected at Rama Reserve, near Lake Couchiching, Ontario) | G.E. Laidlaw's "Ojibwa Myths and Tales" in <i>Annual Archaeological Reports...</i> | Monsters |
| 1918 (sometime earlier) | Hudson Bay, (collected at Rama Reserve, near Lake | G.E. Laidlaw's "Ojibwa Myths and Tales" in <i>Annual</i> | Giant/Monster |

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| | Couchiching, Ontario) | <i>Archaeological Reports...</i> | |
| 1918 (“time long ago”) | Unknown, but collected at Rama Reserve, near Lake Couchiching, Ontario | G.E. Laidlaw’s “Ojibwa Myths and Tales” in <i>Annual Archaeological Reports...</i> | Giant/Monster |
| 1918 (“a long time ago”) | Unknown, “a very wild place,” but collected at Rama Reserve, near Lake Couchiching, Ontario | G.E. Laidlaw’s “Ojibwa Myths and Tales” in <i>Annual Archaeological Reports...</i> | Giant |
| 1919 (first recorded 1903-05) | North shore of Lake Superior | William Jones’ “Ojibwa Texts, part II” | Giant |
| 1919 (first recorded 1903-05) | North shore of Lake Superior | William Jones’ “Ojibwa Texts, part II” | Giant (the second of three different tales in this source) |
| 1919 (first recorded 1903-05) | North shore of Lake Superior | William Jones’ “Ojibwa Texts, part II” | Giant (the third of three different tales in this source) |
| 1924-1925 (“a number of years ago”) | Unknown, but collected at Rama Reserve, near Lake Couchiching, Ontario | G.E. Laidlaw’s “Ojibwa Myths and Tales” in <i>Annual Archaeological Reports...</i> | Giant/Monster |
| 1924-1925 (“long, long ago”) | Unknown, but collected at Rama Reserve, near Lake Couchiching, Ontario | G.E. Laidlaw’s “Ojibwa Myths and Tales” in <i>Annual Archaeological Reports...</i> | Giant |
| 1925 (sometime in the past) | St. Maurice watershed, Quebec | D.S. Davidson’s “Some Tete de Boule Tales” | “evil spirit” giant/monster |
| 1925 (“olden times”) | Northern Quebec/Labrador | Frank G. Speck’s “Montagnais and Naskapi Tales from the Labrador Peninsula” | Giant/monster |
| 1927 (“Many years ago”) | Unknown, but collected at Rama Reserve, near Lake Couchiching, Ontario | G.E. Laidlaw’s “Ojibwa Myths and Tales” in <i>Annual Archaeological Reports...</i> | Giants |

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| 1927 | Unknown, but collected at Rama Reserve, near Lake Couchiching, Ontario | G.E. Laidlaw's "Ojibwa Myths and Tales" in <i>Annual Archaeological Reports...</i> | ("devil", humans transformed into windigoes) |
| 1927 ("a number of years ago") | Unknown, but collected at Rama Reserve, near Lake Couchiching, Ontario | G.E. Laidlaw's "Ojibwa Myths and Tales" in <i>Annual Archaeological Reports...</i> | Giant |
| 1927 ("long, long ago") | Unknown, but collected at Rama Reserve, near Lake Couchiching, Ontario | G.E. Laidlaw's "Ojibwa Myths and Tales" in <i>Annual Archaeological Reports...</i> | Giant |
| 1928 (traditional tale) | Upper St. Maurice watershed, Quebec | D.S. Davidson's "Some Tete De Boule Tales" | Giant |
| 1928 (told in more detail in 1933) | James Bay | J.E. Saindon's "Mental Disorders Among the James Bay Cree" | Human cannibal (priest cured woman before she could become a cannibal) |
| 1929 "far distant past" | Unknown | E. Ahenakew's "Cree Trickster Tales" | Cannibal monster with "supernatural power" |
| 1930 (referencing earlier accounts from 1919 and 1924) | Northern Quebec/Labrador | Frank G. Speck's <i>Naskapi: The Savage Hunters of the Labrador Peninsula</i> | Human cannibals/ human-like monster |
| 1930 | Northern Quebec | Joseph E. Guinard's "Witiko Among the Tete-de-Boule," in <i>Primitive Man</i> | Monsters |
| 1931 | Northern Ontario | Grey Owl's <i>The Men of the Last Frontier</i> | Monster ("a thing of horror") |
| 1933 | James Bay | J. Emile Saindon's "Mental Disorders Among the James Bay Cree," in <i>Primitive Man</i> | Human cannibals (temptation to eat human flesh) |
| 1933 (an incident that took place between 1899-1913) | East Main River, Quebec (James Bay, east coast) | Frank G. Speck's "Ethical Attributes of the Labrador Indians" | Human cannibal |

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| 1934 (based on oral history) | James Bay (west coast) | Cree elder David Wynn, told in John M. Cooper's "The Northern Algonquin Supreme Being" | Monster or devil (singular?) |
| Recorded in 1930s (?), referring to sometime earlier | Berens River | A.I. Hallowell's unpublished field notes, printed in Teicher's <i>Windigo Psychosis</i> | Two "female cases" of women who believed they were becoming windigoes (i.e. possession) |
| Recorded in 1930s (?), referring to sometime earlier | Bloodvein River, Manitoba | A.I. Hallowell's unpublished field notes, printed in Teicher's <i>Windigo Psychosis</i> | Human cannibal (man who murdered and ate his family) |
| 1935 (based on oral history) | Parry Sound, Ontario | Diamond Jenness' <i>The Ojibwa Indians of Parry Sound...</i> | Human cannibals /giant monster (which was originally a human) |
| 1937 (based on recent oral history, recorded in 1931-1932) | Manitou Reserve, Rainy River, Ontario | Ruth Landes' <i>The Ojibwa of Canada</i> , and <i>Ojibwa Sociology</i> , "The Personality of the Ojibwa" | Human cannibals, (possession?) |
| 1938 (based on oral histories) | Emo, Ontario | Ruth Landes' <i>The Ojibwa Woman</i> , "The Abnormal among the Ojibwa Indians," | Monster ("giant skeleton of ice") and human cannibals (numerous oral accounts are contained in Landes' works) |
| 1947 | Labrador | V.A. Tanner's <i>Outlines of Geography, Life and Customs of Newfoundland-Labrador</i> | Monster ("giant cannibal") |
| 1947 | Quebec | J.A. Burgesse's "Windigo" in <i>the Beaver</i> , | Human cannibal ("half-breed hunter" ate his brother to survive famine) |
| 1947 (three separate oral histories) | Maniwaki, Quebec | Three oral accounts recorded in Horace P. Beck's "Algonquin Folklore from Maniwaki" | Human cannibals, and a singular monster ("Windigo") said to live on a |

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| | | | mountain in the north. |
| 1949 (testimony given to Cree scholar from a Cree elder) | Hudson Bay watershed | Edward Ahenakew's "The We-ti-koo, or He-who-is alone," unpublished, American Philosophical Society Archives | Human cannibals/some monstrous attributes (i.e. tracks twice the size of a man's.) |
| 1952 | Island Lake Reserve, northeastern Manitoba | B. Paterson, article in the <i>Winnipeg Free Press</i> | Monster? |
| 1952 | Northern Michigan | R.M. Dorson's <i>Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers</i> | Giant |
| 1952 (reporting an incident that took place sometime between 1935-1940) | "Approximately 300 miles north of Seven Islands" (northern Quebec) | Jacques Rousseau's "Persistances paiennes chez les Indiens de la foret boreale" | Human cannibal (ate his brother in a period of famine, possibly the most recent cannibal incident reported) |
| 1960 | Trout Lake, Alberta | Roger Vandersteene's "Some Woodland Cree Traditions and Legends" | Human cannibals /human-like monster |
| 1960 | Subarctic Canada | Morton I. Tiecher's <i>Windigo Psychosis</i> | Monster, and human cannibals (Examines 70 case studies of windigo "transformations") |
| 1965 (traditional tale) | Northwestern Ontario | Norval Morrisseau's <i>Legends of My People, The Great Ojibway</i> | Monsters, cannibals |
| 1969 (traditional tale) | Lake Nipigon, Ontario and Hudson Bay | Herbert T. Schwarz's and Norval Morrisseau's <i>Windigo and Other Tales of the Ojibways</i> | Human being/evil spirit/giant cannibal |
| 1971 (traditional tale) | Sandy Lake, northern Ontario | James R. Stevens' and Carl Ray's <i>Sacred Legends of the Sandy Lake Cree</i> | Human being/evil spirit/monster |
| 1971 | Sandy Lake, northern Ontario | James R. Stevens' and Carl Ray's <i>Sacred</i> | Monster |

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| (traditional tale “many years ago”) | | <i>Legends of the Sandy Lake Cree</i> | |
| 1971 (traditional tale) | Sandy Lake, northern Ontario | James R. Stevens’ and Carl Ray’s <i>Sacred Legends of the Sandy Lake Cree</i> | Human cannibal/evil spirit (controlled by medicine man) |
| 1971 (traditional tale, “about a hundred years ago” i.e. circa 1870. | Berens River, Manitoba | James R. Stevens’ and Carl Ray’s <i>Sacred Legends of the Sandy Lake Cree</i> | Human cannibal with some monstrous attributes |
| 1971 (“a few years ago”) --- apparently based on actual incident from early 20 th century | Sandy Lake, northern Ontario | James R. Stevens’ and Carl Ray’s <i>Sacred Legends of the Sandy Lake Cree</i> | Human cannibals, or alleged cannibals, evil spirit. |
| Recorded in 1972, first told in 1924, based on incident in nineteenth century | Southern Saskatchewan | Chief Dan Kennedy, recorded in James R. Stevens’ <i>Recollections of an Assiniboine Chief</i> | “ogre” i.e. monster |
| 1976, traditional tale | Lake Nipissing and James Bay | Basil Johnston’s <i>Ojibway Heritage</i> | Human being/giant/spirit |
| 1980 (based on earlier field reports) | Hudson Bay watershed (?) | Richard J. Preston’s “Algonkian Knowledge and Whiteman Knowledge,” in <i>Manlike Monsters</i> | Human cannibal with monstrous/ Supernatural attributes |
| 2005 (based on oral traditions) | Winisk River area, southern coast of Hudson Bay, (northern Ontario) | Louis Bird’s <i>Telling our Stories : Omushkego Legends and Histories from Hudson Bay</i> | Human cannibals and monsters |
| 2007 (based on oral traditions) | Winisk River area, southern coast of Hudson Bay, (northern Ontario) | Louis Bird’s <i>The Spirit Lives in the Mind : Omushkego Stories, Lives and Dream</i> | Human cannibals and monsters |