

A Little Green Housing Project: 21st Century Wilderness Architecture

1
Acconci

Vito Acconci has said that architecture can shape our perspective and behavior.¹ What then of the crumbling architecture of wilderness which has produced the myth of America and has captured the imagination of the world since? The foundation of wilderness, the natural world, has been usurped for tourist attractions, vacation homes, hunting trails and more making it hard to imagine a true wilderness exists at all. The 21st Century wilderness experience has been relegated to roadside rock shops, driving through wildlife parks, camping in a “wilderness area” that is also someone’s backyard. I guess everything abuts to something or as one man put it to me at dawn in the high Sierra Nevada Mountains, “The wilderness area ends here, my yard starts here,” as he pointed to the same imaginary line. No end zone, free zone or buffer zone between the two. I thought of Edward Abbey, “We can have wilderness without freedom. We can have wilderness without human life at all; but we cannot have freedom without wilderness.”² What kind of freedom is it that includes this Sierra Nevada resident’s plastic pink flamingos? And if wilderness areas exist for “biodiversity”, for quality air and water, and for a sense of freedom; could a bird, a deer, a bear an elk help me to breathe more deeply the richness of unpolluted oxygen or drink, unreservedly, water from a stream? Probably not, but maybe my fellow creatures could help me to move into a state of peace which could lead to a feeling of freedom or at least relaxation.

So when I read Acconci’s statement about architecture’s influence, I see how such thinking could also be applied to our 21st Century “wilderness” experience which has been manufactured over the last 100 years to resemble a human made product more like a building than say a real forest. Has an architectural designing of the wilderness already taken hold? The prevalent “natural” areas that have taken over after true wilderness lost its isolation, are in a constant state of flux as a succession of managers, shifting ecological principles, and downright lack of common sense have made a wilderness experience difficult if not impossible. How can we define a wilderness experience and then proffer this definition as a goal or at least an inspiration for the management of our remaining wilderness? In assembling this definition, Acconci’s idea on influence seems the best starting point. So, what kind of perception and behavior does a 21st Century wilderness experience create?

Most estimates place wilderness at around 2.5%³ of the total land mass in the lower 48 United States. Seeing the 19th Century defined by its deforestation practices and the 20th Century defined by its concretization practices in building urban areas, how will the 21st Century be defined? Defining by opposites has been the historical approach when defining wilderness. The more civilization civilizes, the more wilderness is defined as its opposite by increasingly manipulating and altering the definition of wilderness so that it can appear as civilizations’ true opposite. As civilization continues to expand its imperialism, the reduction of wilderness in meaning and in physical size and experience also continues. Some people even claim that wilderness did not exist until after civilization did, creating an absurd notion that wilderness needs people in order to exist.

Sitting at Stockade Lake in South Dakota’s Black Hills, I am enthralled by an early May day in the 70’s with blue water that refuses to let a drought disdain mallards, geese, eagles, black birds, ponderosa pines and great musical gusts of wind accompanied by the courage of a lone jet skier braving the still winter cold water. I try to

¹ Ryan, 2004: Zoe Ryan, ‘Profile: Vito Acconci’, Contemporary, No. 60 (2004). Acconci has spoken on the influence of art and design elements on human behavior in several publications but this is where I first encountered it. “Acconci is well aware of this, and he states: ‘I love architecture because it deals with the materials and processes of the everyday world, but I hate architecture because architecture is inherently fascist, architecture determines human behavior.’”

² Edward Paul Abbey was an American author and essayist noted for his advocacy of environmental issues, criticism of public land policies, and anarchist political views.

³ About 102,000,000 acres of wilderness land is currently protected, but through infringements (mainly through litigious action) even on these acres has occurred allowing individuals, corporations and government entities to reside, do business and develop inside and close to wilderness areas. (an estimate from 2010)

pretend the skier is a part of nature but cannot bring myself to thrill at the sight of him as I do the eagle spreading its wings to the upper thermals, extending its feathers like fingers caressing the undulating blue sky, but the beauty of this natural setting allows me to leave the jet to his day. My perception of him is one of indifference instead of disparagement since everything around me is at peace.

Does a tree in the city provide such a perception or is it the overwhelming nature with me here that has created this *liaise faire* attitude? As for my behavior, I can only say no smoking has impaired me these last few days, no sugar, a little coffee and a lot of walking. I know the prosaic tree in the city is incapable of such behavior modification and I wonder how to help that tree help me to have healthier behaviors and perceptions. Since cities really only grow buildings, it's nice to think Acconci meant to say that architecture shapes our behaviors and perceptions for the better, but we all know not every building does that. Or is it the location that minimizes a positive influence? Since the proverbial tree in the city planted in a roadway obstructs the view of a car that might come and hit me. Yet sitting in this romanticized setting which is Stockade Lake on this Spring morning is not a wilderness experience. I am actually sitting in my van, doors and windows open to the beautiful day alongside this reservoir that is called a lake. The birds and trees can't tell the difference so why should I? Since I have this scene to myself I can pretend I hiked I from miles away, recollect past times of doing just that. Or should I accept that the overwhelming peace and serenity found in this collected water is showing me the future of wilderness—that a manipulated environment may be our only alternative?

5/10/2012, 11/3/2012
Stockade Lake, Black Hills

2 A Lone Loon

There is a large scale painting I do sketches for in the hopes I'll make enough money to warrant the extravagance of so much canvas, paint and other media. It will show the former Robert Taylor Homes Housing Projects in Chicago in various states of being torn down since my last few years teaching at the high school, in the shadow of those 32 buildings, 16 stories each filled with generational welfare recipients allowed me to witness their slow but sure destruction in hopes that this symbolic gesture would help socially enact the welfare reform legislation then President Clinton had just signed into law. As the large canvas moves from left to right, the badlands and black hills start to appear until the furthest right side of the canvas is all black hills, a romantic vision of those black hills. I dubiously title this prospective canvas "Robert Taylor got married and moved to the black hills".⁴

The eventuality that this housing project concrete would go back to nature is a major theme I explore; but today watching a lone loon swimming in Stockade Lake and then disappearing completely in a head dive leaving persistent bubbles behind, I realized that another idea lurking behind this large scale painting is about the ever present energy of change, the lurking idea is that these meager sections of "wilderness" or natural areas are really just housing projects in that we have corralled things like trees, loons and grass into designated areas and subsidize these areas with admission, grants and taxes. When I saw a great elk yesterday in the Black Elk Wilderness⁵ I realized he is a welfare recipient. This may sound preposterous, but that tall, tall elk is no longer able to ramble safely beyond his housing project area, nor is he allowed to propagate as nature intended or to

⁴ A dream I had showed me exhibiting this Robert Taylor painting and on an opposite wall was a similar painting with a similar deconstruction to reconstruction motif only this painting showed Pine Ridge Indian Reservation turning into the housing projects that were torn down in the other painting, but that writing, and painting, is for another day.

⁵ The Black Elk Wilderness lies in the center of the Black Hills National Forest in western South Dakota. The wilderness encompasses 13,426 acres including the Harney Range, an area long held sacred by American Indians. The wilderness is named after Black Elk, a Oglala Lakota holy man. It is the only wilderness area in the Black Hills.

even feel wild, ie. not have to see me or have an ear piercing numbered tag (at least not as bad as the mountain goats' rapper sized necklaces that make a bad fashion statement let alone causing neck problems all while stealing any sense of freedom they might have). I saw how the welfare housing projects my high school students lived with did not allow their natural potential to arise, or even be seen, much as this elk has no mind to his actual potential as a wild creature, as a grand part in a larger ecosystem; my students had little mind to the part they could play in our society and our world is worse off for it. My research on the Robert Taylor Homes Housing Projects shows how many of the project designers called it "revolutionary" due to its use of green space and trees. Now I do love trees wherever they may be found, and the oxygen they produce is much needed as we continue systematically deconstructing oxygen to enable a new species to reign where we once did, but a few trees amid abject poverty could be as harassing as that tree hiding oncoming traffic. Maybe a forest would have fared better, since when I worked across the street from these buildings there was nothing but dry dirt and when it rained mud.

My recent elk encounter also reminded me of many years ago when I was camped at Big Game Campground just outside of Yellowstone National Park. After dusk I was getting ready for sleep when I smelled a fellow camper making microwave popcorn in their larger than a regular hotel room sized RV. Since these campers had persisted in playing ping pong until the sun went down, I had originally thanked them for chasing me away and down to the water and 200 foot cliffs to watch the sunset colors displayed on both since I could not bear another bounce of that hard ball, but now the popcorn almost had me get up and play campground host to ask them when they might retire, when a large grizzly had had enough too and came charging into the campground following the smell. He promptly began shaking the popcorn's RV. But even after these campers threw the offensive microwave popcorn outside, the bear did not stop since he had not come for the popcorn. The giant bear proceeded to rampage their entire campsite, even throwing broken pieces of the ping pong table at the RV before heading to each campsite to ravage, scratch vehicles and make an awful mess for everyone--everyone that is except for me.

When the bear approached my campsite he slowed down. Knowing I was camping in bear country, I had put away my camping toys (a chair, a tub of food, a book, since this was not ping-pong playing, popcorn making country) back into my small, maroon Buick station wagon. I was laying in the back of the station wagon since again I knew this was bear country so I didn't want to risk putting up my tent. I had the windows open halfway since the rosehips around my chosen site were in fragrant pink blooms which the humid dusk had intensified. The grizzly came to the closest window and sniffed then we eyed each other calmly. I said out loud, "I'm sorry your habitat has been reduced to you having to deal with me." To which he snorted loudly, almost nodding. I wanted to communicate further, crazy as it sounds now; I felt it was altogether possible at that moment. I could smell wilderness on him, unpolluted dirt, snags of fir trees caught in his hair, a raw fish suggesting his last meal. I wanted him to also communicate with me, tell me what it's like to ramble hundreds of miles across a land called home to him and wilderness to me and who know what countless others might call it. But all I could say was, "You are beautiful" which made him stand on his hind legs and make a sound like a roar mixed with a deep bass vibrato that shook the windows of my car and the insides of my soul before he sauntered away, taking the campground road out of there. It was as if he agreed with me. It was hard to sleep that evening; I had a mixed feeling of having met a loved one who was still a stranger. The next day while surveying the other campers' devastation they all told me it looked like I had been talking to the bear. When I told them what I had said they all disagreed, stuffed up with a wounded manifest destiny pride as they were. None of the other campers could understand why the bear hadn't even eaten the popcorn as we all watched chipmunks and birds feasting on the remnants. I had to agree with the bear since who really needed a microwave or a ping pong table in the wilderness?

So the elk yesterday appeared to remind me of the bear from a few years back, how even then just outside of America's first National Park, wilderness was vanishing since the presence of a microwave seems somehow

more important than trees which is in line with the thinking of Fermi Lab ⁶ when they wrote about their new particle accelerator. ⁷ “I would like to speak about two frontiers: the American frontier explored in the 18th and 19th centuries by pioneer settlers in the West, and the scientific frontier explored in the 20th century by physicists who built Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory”. Racing sub-atomic material around a circle was to usher in a new sense of frontier, producing a new manifest destiny within a new world beyond the atomic age of the 1950s and 60s. This is an interesting position which is supported by such renowned wilderness walkers like John Muir whose famous quote, “...for going out, I found, was really going in.” ⁸ could have been prophetic as well as part of the naturalistic spiritualism of his time. I may disagree with the Fermi Lab scientists who may feel an exploration of our natural planet has been completed simply because of the ongoing exploration I experience on a small Wisconsin farm each season, each day. We do constantly embark on new explorations, this does not mean the old ones are finished. Just as we currently debate whether we have left the Holocene Epoch to enter into the Anthropocene Epoch ⁹ we can also debate along the same themes whether wilderness even exists at all anymore. Once we fully accept that the Age of Man is the geological epoch we are currently in, then the definition of ideas like wilderness will be fully altered to fit a new way of looking at geologic time. Climatologists suggest that if we are in the Age of Man, then climate benchmarks from the Holocene Epoch are irrelevant and all we can hope for is a “man-made” environment that would be manually fashioned. Instead of trying to achieve pre-industrial era atmospheric levels, we would instead attempt to achieve levels we find compatible with the life the masses choose to live. This attempt may be hard to deny when faced with summers so hot it is hard to breathe under those once delicious shade trees who are no match for such privileges as central air conditioning. This way of thinking will directly impact our wilderness ethics since it would mean that I dream of a Holocene wilderness experience but will have to accept an Age of Man wilderness experience.

So the loon leaving its bubbles in this man-made reservoir, the elk trotting across man-legislated lands and the bear expressing his anger about the popcorn, not his want of it—all these help me to see how we have made these fellow members of our family into welfare recipients, but worse since they have less rights and are one wing, antler or paw away from a zoo or worse.

3 Super 8

This morning I woke before dawn mainly to get out of the hotel parking lot before any early riser saw me sleeping in my van. Ok, ok, yes I slept in the parking lot because the wind scared me too much to return to Big Pine and backpack to my campsite on Mt Harney in the Norbeck Wilderness. My lightweight, fiberglass van had been lifted off the road by voracious winds that seemed to come in from all directions, so I ended up sleeping in this parking lot. As I sat in the back trying to figure out what to do on this 30 degree, blustery morn which threatened rain, a small, thin deer came trotting past my van having crossed Route 16 and the parking lot. It started rummaging thru the cut grass when more of its kind came right past my van maybe a foot or two away. Seven deer in all started nosing the grass in front of me, taking their time, looking up every now and again, nonchalantly, to see if they should leave. I was transfixed. First I thought, “These deer were afraid of the wind too and sought shelter in the valley shape of Custer’s city footprint.”

⁶ Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory P.O. Box 500, Batavia, Illinois 60510. Particle physics experiments at the Cosmic Frontier use the cosmos as a laboratory to investigate the fundamental laws of physics.

⁷ A New Frontier in the Chicago Suburbs: Settling Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, 1963-1972 By Adrienne Kolb and Lillian Hoddeson, December 1992 Presented at the 13th Annual Illinois History Symposium, Springfield, Illinois, December 4, 1992

⁸ John Muir, 1913, in L.M. Wolfe, ed., John Muir, John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir, 1938

⁹ Anthropocene Epoch is commonly known as the Age of Man and is now being considered to have started in 1950.

Then a tear rolled down my face, a little for the man I love who does not yet know and more for these unsuspecting welfare recipients. Like dairy farmers who are a part of milk subsidies whether they want to be or not these deer are subsidized too as well as the hotel developers making quite an unequal match for a free market economy to prosper. Like a street gang, these deer were poised for flight or fight depending on the opposition, but not a very sharp poise since both the gang and the deer act nonchalantly trying to survive in their housing project existence. I remembered how my generational-welfare students would stand on street corners waiting to sell drugs, run from the police or defend their territory if needed with murder while inside all were still children at heart whose faces would light up at the mention of ice cream or pizza but then after such treats they would go home and continue their cycle of self destruction. Just as some dairy farmers will continue their cycle of milking cows, for some it is all they feel they know how to do, so too these deer will continue their cycle of nosing this cut grass since it is all they have left to look through.

Why I found such comparisons in my brain on this cold morning is beyond me; however, I think they are valid. Slowly but surely these seven, skinny deer are being pushed out by development, just as the police move gangbangers off street corners or the honest farmer is given just enough to survive. This Super 8 parking lot haven turned into the villain, a symbol of the apex of Capitalism which now has to slump down from its peak grabbing and clawing at anything it thinks will help bring about a new dawn for consumerism, or at least the fiat of a new dawn coming. And in capitalism's waning grip, these seven deer mean nothing or worse mean an undetermined cost in removal, habitat destruction for the glory of another parking lot or simply seen as pests like the pernicious mice that constantly check in to my Wisconsin farmhouse, uninvited, usually leaving through the burn barrel. Yes, more than one tear fell this morning for me, the man I love and those deer. I found I could not blame the aging Super 8 any more than myself since I have slept inside due to blizzards, floods and pure exhaustion (but maybe the sparkling, new hotel right next door could have an evil eye cast upon it). "So what are we to do?" I silently asked the grazing deer as they slowly moved toward a notched opening in the towering rocks behind the Super 8 that looked quite natural and a little like wilderness except that someone's backyard was on the other side. The deer had no answer as one by one they jumped into the notch toward someone else's enjoyment or disapproval. What are we to do for these now generational welfare recipients?

Almost as an answer, once the last deer had disappeared a garbage truck came rumbling up alongside me to empty the dumpster. Almost as if the deer knew the timing of the garbage truck's arrival; and so knew just when to leave. Almost like how some of my former students knew the timing of the Footlocker truck so they could hold it up and steal their Air Jordan's or how the dairy farmer is chained to milking his cows every twelve hours. Timing is everything. The clanging garbage truck didn't even disturb me since those seven deer had helped start my morning in peace and thankfulness that those deer still have the semblance of freedom, even if it is one that we have manufactured. Or maybe I wasn't bothered since I had thrown my garbage into that dumpster last night and I was glad to see it leaving. Or maybe an empty dumpster might symbolize the emptiness capitalism provides at the end of it all.

I also thought it would have been nice if there were 8 deer instead of 7 so that I could refer to them as the Super 8 of wilderness, but when I mentioned this to my brother his reply was, "You are the eighth." Since he knows my constant work to save, or at least conserve, parts of the world and its inhabitants, I had to really think about myself as a part of that skinny deer gang. Yes I suppose I am the eighth member simply because I would love to allow these deer a chance at living wild, a chance at birthing a new existence that might not include me. As far as a Super 8 gang was involved, I was a highly outspoken but ready to relegate myself to the background member.¹⁰

Acconci may be right that architecture can shape our behavior and perception and I may be right that in extension of that idea the natural world's architecture can do the same; but what happens when these deer and

¹⁰ "We abuse the land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect." –Aldo Leopold, from his book A Sand County Almanac, 1949

that garbage truck meet and don't care that the other is in their sight—is wilderness then gone forever? Some animals that have not encountered humans before are called naïve, but what name do we have for these generational welfare recipients formerly known as wild deer? That Yellowstone bear was certainly a thinking bear who probably thought his diminishing habitat might mean each generation after him would come to accept microwave popcorn people—and in that knowing conscious or not the bear had quite a turn through that campground. At least my memory of his campground rampage is a good release for my anger at our current wilderness situation, which frighteningly mirrors our economic and societal situations presently. Just like Pink Floyd's song from their album The Wall called "One of my turns", I too would like to fly into a rage and destroy a hotel room or some campers' sites and then ask "Why are you running away?" All while knowing full well the answer. But then my chosen drug of nature kicks in and relaxes me with rosehips, loons, eagles, skinny deer and a memorable bear.

5/12/12

Super 8 parking lot 4:45am

4

Some of Us Left

After hiking back to my singular campsite on the side of Mt Harney in the Black Elk Wilderness, I surprisingly found my tent was unmoved from the fierce winds the night before, maybe not so surprising since this campsite is ancient and was shown to me by an old Lakota medicine man. He and I would hike up here then sleep open air on this ledge that protrudes out into a chasm filled with glistening rocks and tall, tall pines. Now I backpack in with a tent and some supplies, often staying for days. Which I did this time and the next morning was pure beauty and cold. Standing on the ledge on the side of Mt Harney watching my breath tinge the air with some presence I saw one deer nuzzling the tall grass mixed with faint wildflowers about 10 feet away from me. He moved silently, as if hiding from being managed and marginalized. This deer was more filled out and taller than the Super 8 deer and seemed more alert and attentive—nuzzling the grass and then looking around, nuzzling then looking in a repetition that continued until he suddenly caught my eyes upon him and bounded away. This deer had seemed more wild and cautious, not willing to accept a welfare state, not willing to pass on entitlement as its offspring's inheritance. Not willing does not mean not already in such a state, but as he bounded away through the grass, disappearing behind some neon green, young cottonwoods I thought I felt an old but familiar thrill at seeing something wild in its natural setting. Up above a lone bald eagle crossed over the chasm, a stark blue morning sky allowing the rising sun to highlight his white tail feathers as if to say, "Yes there are some of us left." He disappeared into the profuse ponderosa pine canopy on the other side.

Yes there may be some of us left, but for how much longer?

I know my next proposal will be as popular as barbed wire fencing was when first marketed to cattlemen attuned to an open range, but any road trip out west will show that barbed wire won. My proposal is to fence off wilderness areas so that people can't get into them. Maybe close off Yellowstone first, since it was our first national park, for at least five years and let it go back to nature no vehicles, snowmobilers, hunters, rangers, no one at all. ¹¹

5/14/12

Mt Harney, Black Elk Wilderness Black Hills National Forest

¹¹ "One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds." —Aldo Leopold, 1887—1948, from his book A Sand County Almanac, 1949

So now I am home trying to make sense of what I have written while sitting in the sun room addition my father and brother built onto this ancient Wisconsin farmhouse many years ago. Reading over my welfare ruminations inspired by Acconci's quote and my most recent trip to the black hills, I wonder how will I ever find the courage to tell that man I love him? I'm surrounded by recently planted hay and corn all earmarked for dairy cow bellies, and the "wild" Canada geese that still fly up to 3,000 miles a year but that are still welfare recipients and their breakfast is the new seed from a farmer's bank account. But just a small field away lays a simple, paradisiacal fantasy brought to life in a small lake surrounded by pine and willow and across the lake's damn is a small section of land that my father said he wanted to "give back to nature". This giving has produced a wonderful maple, oak, willow and evergreen, youthful forest. The larger than life parent trees gleam with their newly minted spring leaves and seeded acorns.¹²

I follow the trail down to the lake and over the damn, then up the ridge to the oldest parent tree, an old oak. My father had made this trail with a little yellow mower many years ago and he made a turn around a large, bushy apple tree for the return trip to the agricultural part of this property. I stand at the turn around looking west, out over 3-15 foot tall trees and smile at my now deferred plan to continue this trail up to the fence line, then along the fence before dropping back down to the lake trail on the other side. A scary neighbor who walked over using this new trail, another scary neighbor who would drive his large atv on it and me on a mower would have made this scene today impossible. After only two years of deciding to stop cutting the grass on this new part of the trail the trees have taken over—they definitely grew with a purpose since the new trail is no longer visible.

At the time I decided against the new part of this trail I thought it would keep one neighbor from walking on it and the other from riding on it, but now I see the trees will show me where this part of the trail should go, the trees were the real reason that I deferred a longer trail since their growth has changed my perception from one of wanting a longer walk to one of wanting more land for nature to take hold of. When these trees are older and wiser I will stand here and see a trail I can walk on and maybe even mow. For a little while longer this piece of land is truly nature's—higher taxes or not—it is nature's. And maybe that means I've started my own little green housing project for welfare recipients without intending to do so, but I know we are all better off for it as the great blue heron I've named Hermann (Munster) lifts off from the downed willow he was fishing beside and circles over me, squirming fish in his mouth, before sounding his call and heading home to the other side of the lake where Lilly (Munster) waits. I've learned the difference between a poverty mindset and a mindset of wealth lies not in what you have but in how you take care of what you have. It would be a poverty mindset that would make me grow a trail longer instead of allowing these trees room to grow. It is a mindset of wealth that has me walking this trail, quietly watching the wild raspberries growing into my jam and has me placing my herbs and vegetables in areas that don't require rows, watering or fertilizer. Wealth is all in how I take care of what I have, poverty only wants more. Walking further on the trail, a small red fox crosses in front me not even a foot away. We know each other. I yelled at the drunk-driving hunter who shot his father in my field two falls ago. I waited patiently for his mother to return from her hunting excursions to my barn he was born in with two others. The three kits would play in the warm spring mornings and he would try to follow me on my walks but I would do everything I could to discourage him. Now I let him be. We know each other like an addict knows his drug dealer; he makes me feel high when I see his red coat and notice his tail getting longer and bushier. Just this passing glance of him casually crossing my path, unconcerned over my presence, makes me reconnect to my own personal wilderness since at my core I am wild, an animal just like that fox.

As the farms around me signal night by turning on blazing yard lights that help distance the occupants from the night sky, they are also distancing themselves from themselves. With no sense of the space around us, we can easily think we are the only ones. Those planets, moons and stars above us also lurk within us waiting for the

¹² "What lies before us and what lies behind us are small matters compared to what lies within us. And when we bring what is within out into the world, miracles happen." Henry David Thoreau

moment they can reclaim their connection with that growing blade of grass that brings chaos and wild just by growing, for that moment that we can reconnect with those heavens that speak in blinking lights miles upon miles away. Those blinking lights that are there every night for us to see and feel, just as the grass we walk on and manicure and disregard is there for us to see and feel; each is a part of us just as we are a part of them, just as this fox is a part of me.

I have unsuccessfully tried to save even remote places like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska from encroachments but people can't be stopped. I watch the farmers around me in Wisconsin pile trees several stories high then burn for just few more inches of cropland, not even an acre. I try to reason with them, I try to help them to see these actions create an unsustainable loop, but people can't be stopped. I'll remember the loon disappearing on Stockade Lake when I feel the need to disappear. I'll allow the bear in Big Game Campground to rage against the injustice that has been done to his landscapes and mine. I stay quiet in the forests for a chance to see a deer or elk and allow them the chance not to see or hear me. I must breathe in this welfare state and breathe out wealth so the fragrance of wild raspberry and growing grass can color my perspective even as my credit cards collect balances since there is no work now for years. I'll let this trail shape my behavior so that I remain healthy since I have no health insurance. These things may speak of poverty, but the world around me now as I walk on this trail speaks of wealth which shapes me for the better. It's got to be for the better.¹³

6/19/2012 new moon day 4/22/2013 Earth Day
The Farm Wisconsin

¹³ "Out of clutter, find simplicity. From discord, find harmony. In the middle of difficulty, lies opportunity." Albert Einstein