

**Written Into History?**

**Solastalgia and Emotion Under the Western Gaze**

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### Figure 0.1:

Sister of ocean and sand,  
Can you see our glaciers groaning  
with the weight of the world's heat?  
I wait for you, here,  
on the land of my ancestors, heart heavy with a thirst  
for solutions  
as I watch this land  
change  
while the World remains silent.

Sister of ice and snow,  
I come to you now in grief  
mourning landscapes  
that are always forced to change

first through wars inflicted on us  
then through nuclear waste  
dumped  
in our waters  
on our ice  
and now this.

- *Rise*, by Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner and Aka Niviâna

### I.

In 2003, after witnessing strong emotional distress in populations near new open-pit mining projects, environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht coined the environmental neologism solastalgia to refer to “the pain or sickness caused by the loss of, or inability to derive solace from, the present state of one's home environment.” The term has spread beyond Albrecht, now used in both climate change related academic literature<sup>1</sup> and attempts to grapple with climate change through the arts.<sup>2</sup> In this project, I consider the pathologized presentation of the term solastalgia and its conceptualization through western ‘science’ in order to explore how the

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<sup>1</sup> Lindsay P. Galway, Thomas Beery, Kelsey Jones-Casey, and Kirsti Tasala, "Mapping the Solastalgia Literature: A Scoping Review Study," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16, no. 15 (Jul 25, 2019), doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16152662>.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Rafael Anton Irisarri's album *Solastalgia*.

naming and 'linguaging' of a particular experience influence what is written into history, what is not, and why that writing is being done in the first place.<sup>3</sup>

I refer to naming and linguaging as separate ideas here because I feel that while similar, the verbing of the word "language" highlights the active process of putting a concept into words. 'Naming' brings forward the idea of simply calling out to something which already exists - the act of referring to the thing doesn't necessarily indicate active involvement by the namer. I use the word, 'linguaging,' on the other hand, to indicate the *process* of taking something which doesn't have a name and putting it into the language. It is a reciprocal, if not always positive act, wherein the concept becomes embedded into the language and the act of linguaging embeds certain ideas into the concept. I see this conceptualization of linguaging as a form of theory-making. A name means nothing if it is not mentally associated with a concept/object - by associating a name with an object, we are imbuing meaning and knowledge into language that was not previously there. This use and description is in fact also a form of linguaging being done to the term itself.<sup>4</sup>

I argue that the situating of solastalgia in its current pathologized climate context affirms colonial structures of legitimacy. As an English-language neologism originally created in response to the feelings of primarily white communities, Solastalgia creates a narrative of colonial emotional history. It places this form of homesickness as a new phenomenon, which is recognized and made 'real' like so much of history, only as it comes into contact with the colonizer. Examining

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<sup>3</sup> These questions also apply to the work I am doing here.

<sup>4</sup> The concept of "Linguaging" also exists as an academic topic. Swain defines linguaging as a "process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language" (Merrill Swain, "Linguaging, Agency and Collaboration in Advanced Second Language Proficiency," 2006, 98).

the etymology and usage of solastalgia helps us<sup>5</sup> understand how language can act as a monument, highlighting and documenting certain aspects of history while silencing others.

## II.

After witnessing strong emotional distress within myself in response to the effects of climate change near my home, I came to the term solastalgia in an attempt to grapple with and possibly label and contain my emotions. In this project, I consider myself.

### **Figure 1: Solastalgia**

*From White Christmas (1947 Bing Crosby ver.)*

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas  
Just like the ones I used to know  
Where the treetops glisten and children listen  
To hear sleigh bells in the snow

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas  
With every Christmas card I write  
"May your days be merry and bright  
And may all your Christmases be white"

When I was younger - as in, elementary school age - Christmas was white. It was like the sky had fallen, really, in a comforting way, enveloping me in a crystal white blanket. Later, there was a little more suspense - the snow was coming, but when? In unlucky years, the ground would have only a few, mushy inches. But Christmas was white. Last year, Christmas was only mildly white, and I felt lucky. A half inch of snow was a representation of my own attempts to be grateful for what I could get, and yet also the knowledge that the winters of the past would not return. It is from this place that I write this. Longing for a place that I am in, and yet unable to return. I would tell you more about my lived experience, but what matters is not what happened

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<sup>5</sup> "Inclusive 'we' for 'I' has rhetorical functions similar to those of inclusive 'we' for 'you': It creates a sense of togetherness and blurs the author-reader divide, and this community promotes agreement. As Mühlhäusler & Harré (1990: 175) point out, the use of 'we' instead of 'I' also diminishes the responsibilities of the speaker, since he or she is portrayed as collaborating with the hearer." (Fløttum, Dahl, and Kinn, *Academic Voices: Across Languages and Disciplines*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2006.)

but that it happened. This work is inspired by emotion. I, as the writer, am not objective. I am biased.

### III.

*Solastalgia*—the term—was created when Albrecht “began to notice the increasing number of people who were concerned about the sheer scale of the environmental impacts in the Upper Hunter Region of [New South Wales]. ... Their distress about the threats to their identity and well-being, even over the phone, was palpable” (p 41). After exploring other scholars’ works, he concluded that, “In the Upper Hunter, people were suffering from both imposed place transition (place pathology) and powerlessness (environmental injustice)” (p 44). Thus, “In overview, there seemed to be some justification for the creation of a new concept that captured the conceptual space or territory connected to this particular constellation of the factors that define place and identity” (p 44). Essentially, Albrecht seems to have felt that there wasn’t a concept that could adequately capture the ways place and identity intersect when that place (and thus identity) appears to be under attack.

#### **Figure 2: Alexithymia: inability to identify and express or describe one’s feelings**

*Definition from Merriam-Webster*

*Text from “Solastalgia’: A New Concept in Health and Identity” by Glenn Albrecht*

I sought a suitable concept  
to describe  
the distress these people were suffering

Nostalgia seemed very close yet had an obvious limitation

The places that I was interested in were not being completely ‘lost’  
The people I was concerned about were not being forcibly removed  
However

Distress within the community has been expressed in a multitude of ways but  
constant themes have been

disgust at the assault on the quality of life,  
fear of ill health (risk imposition)

and frustration caused by the inability to stop the pollution  
and have any real say in the way the region is being developed

The emotional impact  
of the extent of physical change to the environment  
and the associated sense of place pathology  
are evident

What comes across  
clearly  
is distress caused by the assault on the interviewees' senses of  
identity, place, belonging, control and good health

It seems that  
many people in a variety of contexts  
sense  
that something is wrong with our relationship with the planet

I thank the people of the Upper Hunter for allowing me to listen to  
their own accounts

*Solastalgia*, as a term, does offer something though its existence. In the process of trying to research emotions surrounding climate change, discovering the term *solastalgia* offered something of a breakthrough, in that it opened up access to academic and creative works of those who identified with or were studying this common emotion. It turns out to be very difficult to do research on specific feelings, if those specific feelings are not named. Words like *solastalgia*, in acting as search terms, provide an access point to a record of an emotion. In creating a common language for the abstract, emotional neologisms offer the possibility to help us remember, document, and track affective experiences. But with this ability to document comes the question of what is being documented. Everything has silences. I wanted to look at *solastalgia*, a term I originally discovered because it appeared to make present something that had felt silenced in my own life, to examine where its own silences may lie.

Despite its origin in affect, the conceptualization and presentation of *solastalgia* by Albrecht encourages a pathologized, sterile version of the experience it attempts to name. In one of the

first articles Albrecht published on the term, Albrecht states that, “It is possible to view solastalgia as either a philosophical or a psychosomatic illness (or both) with conceptual and empirical dimensions.”<sup>6</sup> Although this attempts to present *solastalgia* as an and/or situation, Albrecht’s work primarily portrays it as a psychosomatic illness, as a “pain or sickness” which “is capable of causing a real and diagnosable illness.”<sup>7</sup> Much of the works which cite Albrecht’s concept of *solastalgia* also use it in the medical/health context. Albrecht himself has continued his work on *solastalgia* in partnership with public health researchers to document ‘psychoterrato’ or earth related mental health conditions.<sup>8</sup> The result is that, although born out of real emotional distress, the term *solastalgia* has become sterilized and clinical. Albrecht and others discuss it in the context of “increasing rates of suicide and depression” and increased levels of dry land salinity.<sup>9</sup> The turns to statistics and quantitative research attempt to show the importance of their work within Western conceptions of science and legitimacy and to emphasize the ‘real-world’ applications of the concept of solastalgia; however, this ‘objective’ data also moves toward a monolithic approach which removes the natural complexity of human emotion.

Yet, I observe in Albrecht’s writing a seemingly genuine desire to understand the distress the studied population faces. Like my own lived experience brought me to grapple with my relationship with the environment and eventually the concept of solastalgia, for Albrecht, “the concept of solastalgia had its genesis in his own lived experience of distress in land and people.”<sup>10</sup> In this acknowledgement is evidence of the importance of the subjective affective experience - it is affect that birthed *solastalgia* and the disciplinary work surrounding it, which eventually minimized and sterilized the very emotional experiences it attempted to capture..

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<sup>6</sup> Albrecht, Glenn. “‘Solastalgia:’ A New Concept in Health and Identity.” *PAN*, No 3, 2005, p. 46

<sup>7</sup> Albrecht, 2005, 45-53.

<sup>8</sup> Albrecht, Glenn. "Solastalgia: The Distress Caused by Environmental Change." *Australasian Psychology*. February 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Albrecht, 2005, 49-50.

<sup>10</sup> Albrecht, 2005, 41.

What happened in between? How does valued subjective experience become what Athabascan literary scholar Dian Million has called “Western science’s wet dream of detached corporeality?”

For this examination, it is important to situate Albrecht and *solastalgia*’s positionality within the larger systems of Western knowledge. Moreover, these western systems of science and rationality cannot be viewed simply as neutral approaches to knowing/understanding - western systems of knowledge must be viewed as active, non-neutral systems which influence what is and is not accepted as canon in the narrative of humanity.

#### IV.

In history as a discipline, much has been said about what is and is not truth. There is history as “what happened” versus “that which is said to have happened,”<sup>11</sup> and the potentially impassable gap between them. In discussing *solastalgia* or Western science, I don’t want to focus on how we got here, or even why, in some attempt to resolve the distance between what was and what we say of what was. Instead, here I explore what we are saying now, in order to examine how the future version of “that which is said to have happened” in our present comes to be, and how we can bring that future narrative closer to the what *is* happening of the present we live. History studies the past, the past was once a present. In other words, this is an attempt to reflect on what we leave of our present. *Solastalgia*, for the future, is a remnant of a version of history. Is it accurate? Are there other versions of history we might consider?

As in history, the question of what is truth and fact has plagued humanity in many ways, in ways I’m not going to get into here. I want to focus on the non-neutral influences that certain conceptualizations of knowledge have on what we value, recognize as legitimate, and record in the narrative of humanity.<sup>12</sup> In systems of Western science and knowledge, knowledge is based

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<sup>11</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the past : Power and the Production of History*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> I might use different terms and phrases such as “narrative (of humanity)” “archive(s),” or “history” throughout this paper. These act as turns of phrase to express the general idea of what is and will be

on a scientific process which claims to use hypotheses and testing to find the most logical conclusion. For those fields which don't follow a strict 'scientific' method - the arts, humanities - distance from 'objectivity' is often also associated with decreasing levels of respect and value by those outside those fields. The implication here is that claims which come from the Western scientific method can be considered more objective - and thus, legitimate - than other forms of knowledge which may be viewed as more subjective.

If we hope to find value placed in emotional and subjective knowledge, we have to turn elsewhere, such as Dian Million's concept of felt theory and felt knowledge. In Million's *Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History*, Million emphasises the role of "history that can be felt as well as intellectualized."<sup>13</sup> Felt theory, which is explored through the written works of Indigenous women, posits 'subjective' emotional experiences not only as important on their own, but as an important challenge to exclusionary academic spaces and the Western scientific presentations of history.

Despite its origin in felt experience, the influence of western knowledge systems is seen in the presentation of solastalgia as clinical. In the pathologization of the emotions called *solastalgia* as an "ancient, ubiquitous but newly defined human illness," Albrecht operates under the assumption of 'rational theoretical science,' which falls prey to the false idea that history must be definable, nameable, and categorical in order to be legitimate. The turns to quantitative data, even when conducting qualitative research, attempts to pull a veil of objectivity over subjective experience. The problem here is not that the experiences are subjective; the problem is that Western science dismisses any hint of subjectivity or felt knowledge. But as Million so aptly asks, "what is objective except Western science's own wet dream of detached corporeality?" In dismissing felt knowledge, Western science - even in the study of emotion - both cannot capture

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recorded and given voice by dominant forces in society: i.e., what is taught, what is read, what is published, what is spoken about by those in power. What about our 'now' will be visible to those after us?  
<sup>13</sup> Dian Million, "Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History," *Wicazo Sa Review* 24, no. 2 (2009): 53-76, doi:10.1353/wic.0.0043.

the full history and also weakens attempts at objectivity. If objectivity is truth, the truth of emotion is found in the subjective experiences of those who feel it. Removing subjectivity removes truth. Thus, we find ourselves here: an attempt to conceptualize an emotion and bring attention to the circumstances around it ends up, in the presentation of its own concepts, flattening and sterilizing the subject of study.

## V.

Seldom do they note these distinctions, because if they did they could not articulate a theory. Often as a way of clearing themselves they do acknowledge that women of color, for example, do exist, then go on to do what they were going to do anyway, which is to invent a theory that has little relevance for us.

Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory"

There are attempts to acknowledge the complexity of the emotional origins of *solastalgia*. For example, references to Indigenous people/places/communities/knowledge by scholars who use *solastalgia* are not infrequent - even when the overall work does not focus on those communities.<sup>14</sup> In a review study of solastalgia literature, the authors devote one section to examine how the literature on solastalgia engages with indigenous "worldviews and experiences."<sup>15</sup> Although the authors do more than Albrecht by acknowledging that the concept of solastalgia may not be accurate for Indigenous experiences, the design of the study to include analysis of whether indigenous researchers, voices, and experiences were included - and the general insistence on tying solastalgia with indigeneity - reflects Western sciences extractive approach to indigenous knowledge. In an interview with Naomi Klien, Mississauga Nishnaabeg writer, artist, and scholar Leanne Simpson describes the extrativist mindset that developed with the "push to bring traditional knowledge into environmental thinking" as "the idea that traditional knowledge and indigenous peoples have some sort of secret of how to live on

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<sup>14</sup> See, for example: Albrecht 2005, Richards 2009, Galway et. al. 2019

<sup>15</sup> Lindsay P. Galway, Thomas Beery, Kelsey Jones-Casey, and Kirsti Tasala, "Mapping the Solastalgia Literature: A Scoping Review Study," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 16, no. 15 (Jul 25, 2019), doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16152662>.

the land in an non-exploitive way that broader society needs to appropriate. ... It is very much about extracting whatever ideas scientists or environmentalists thought were good and assimilating it.”<sup>16</sup> Engaging with indigenous voices and experiences when researching a Western concept through a Western institution reflects this process of knowledge extraction and assimilation. I, too, am a white person in a Western institution making use of indigenous knowledge to service my own notions, even if I believe those notions are somehow better than the ones I critique. How much does it matter if we (white people) are including indigenous voices if we are using them in service of Western colonial notions?

## VI.

### Figure 3: Definitions

#### Solastalgia

/säl ɪs'taljə/

noun

1. the specific form of melancholia connected to lack of solace and intense desolation  
Similar: oligarchy, plastic in the ocean, wildfires, extinction, heatwaves, authoritarianism, antibiotic resistance, pollinator death, student debt, oil, drought, topsoil erosion  
Opposite: home



noun

1. The futile attempt to name and categorize aspects of human existence into stable, self-contained definitions and/or concepts  
Similar: solastalgia, climate anxiety, eco-grief, psychoterric, anthropocene, ontology, God  
Opposite: hope, futility

The problems with *solastalgia* and other climate emotions (diseases) such as *eco-grief*, *climate anxiety*, and *ecological distress*, are not necessarily born out of the intentions of the researchers and scholars behind them. In fact, Western knowledge systems, particularly the institutions like

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<sup>16</sup> Naomi Klien, “Dancing the World into Being: A Conversation with Idle No More’s Leanne Simpson,” YES! Magazine (blog), Accessed July 22, 2021, <https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2013/03/06/dancing-the-world-into-being-a-conversation-with-idle-no-more-leanne-simpson>.

academica, present a conundrum for those within. On the one hand, fitting within Western science's limits can bring a sense of 'legitimacy' to concepts like the humanities - or in this case, attention to particular emotions - which don't traditionally get much attention within Western science. On the other hand, the clinical focus limits true understanding of the lived experience that ideas like solastalgia attempt to center. It is a complicated scenario, in part because options available to researchers coming from within Western institutions may not even imagine non-'scientific' approaches to understanding. There isn't just a problem with the sterilization/'scientif-ication' of concepts, but with the inability to imagine alternatives. In the paper introducing *solastalgia*, Albrecht describes a "step to establish the case for the existence of solastalgia," which includes presenting 'evidence' in the form of interview transcripts with community residents.<sup>17</sup> This falls into the Western conceptualization of 'science' - and thus, 'legitimate' knowledge - as the process of "developing and then testing hypotheses to ensure rigor and replicability in interpreting empirical observations or making predictions."<sup>18</sup> There is a failure to consider alternatives - in the case of solastalgia, why couldn't the transcripts of the residents stand on their own, as expression of the lived emotional experiences of the community, rather than scientific evidence of this newly created term? The idea of felt knowledge simply existing, without justification or scientific frameworks to legitimize it, seems to lack enough consideration in western academics. Instead, all must be theorized into something supposedly greater. This evokes Barbara Christian's work in *The Race for Theory*, which was brought in previously through the epigraph in Section V and will be discussed further later on in this work.

We can find in "the enlightenment" the idea that everything, if studied hard enough and properly enough, can be explained through the logic of the scientific process; that everything is

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<sup>17</sup> Albrecht 2005, 52

<sup>18</sup> George Nicholas, "It's taken thousands of years, but Western science is finally catching up to Traditional Knowledge," *The Conversation*.

perfectable by Man. When this need for explanation comes into contact with the palpably subjective, things must get lost, shaved off, from that subjective experience to fit it into the concrete objectivity of Western science. We lose valuable subjectivity to the vestiges of history; we preserve an incorrect, sterilized, falsely objective version of our lived experiences. Anyone who values 'truth' in history - as the Western seekers of truth certainly would claim to - should understand the problems with that.

## VII.

And so we must, again, consider the value of emotion. As Dian Million asks, "Why does the subjective record of these experiences matter?"<sup>19</sup> I could turn here to academic works showing the lack of rationality in humans to try to point out that the idea of truly objective history is implausible. Or, I could discuss the value of high emotional intelligence for relationship and work success<sup>20</sup> to try to make a convincing argument that academics should care about subjective emotional experiences because that understanding can improve quality of life. Unfortunately, I face a bit of a conundrum: 1) those arguments have already been made very well, and it wouldn't do much to restate them here; and 2) in arguing for the value of subjectivity and felt experiences through the process of presenting and defending replicable, scientific studies in an attempt to legitimize emotion, I am playing into the same sterilized Western academic methods that remove the subjective record for which I am arguing in favor.

Solastalgia was born out of an attempt to record lived emotional experiences. My discovery of solastalgia as a term was born out of my own attempt to grapple with my lived experiences surrounding climate change and its impacts on my life and home. First seeing the assigned definition - being homesick while being at home - resonated with the part of me that mourned for the future I couldn't have: the snowy winters I wouldn't see, the smoke-free summers I've left

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<sup>19</sup> Million, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*, 10th Anniversary Trade Pbk. ed. New York: Bantam Books, 2005. (And many others)

behind, the inescapable feeling that the only way to find the the 'home' of my childhood would be to leave it, to go elsewhere with snowy winters and no wildfires; an elsewhere that is not home at all. *Solastalgia* took the hole in my chest and solidified it in health journals and diagnosis scales. *Solastalgia* named the gap and tried to stitch it closed, heal the scar, and ignore what excavated the pit in the first place. *Solastalgia* is a record, but it is a categorical, academic record, not an affective one.

Why does the subjective, emotional record matter? I also ask: How do I express how I feel when I see images of the ocean burning? How *do* I feel when I drive along familiar roads through unfamiliar burnt landscapes? How do I *even feel anything at all* when I cannot find the possibility of return<sup>21</sup> to wherever, whatever the feeling and place of home once was to me? How do any of us?

*Solastalgia* tried. Potawatomi environmental justice activist and scholar Kyle Powys Whyte, in discussing a different neologism of a controversial background (Traditional Ecological Knowledge), writes, "The fact that a term is defined in ways that are problematic and subject to deep differences does not entail that it has no use."<sup>22</sup> The existence of new terms signifies some intention for use, simply in that they were created. There was, through languaging, an attempt to explain in words what previously felt unexplainable. In second language learning, languaging has been described as a "process of making meaning and shaping knowledge and experience through language."<sup>23</sup> In considering the 'languaging' of an emotion, it is not only the act of putting the emotion into words, but also *what* is put into words, which influences what meaning

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<sup>21</sup> "The impossibility of return" is a concept which has been used to describe the challenges of refugees, descendants of enslaved people, and other groups who are unable to 'return' to their, or their families', places of origin. I don't consider my experiences of the same magnitude, but I find this concept helpful, and I am thankful for it.

<sup>22</sup> Kyle Powys White, "On the role of traditional ecological knowledge as a collaborative concept: a philosophical study," *Ecol Process* 2, 7 (2013), <https://doi.org/10.1186/2192-1709-2-7>

<sup>23</sup> Merrill Swain, "Languaging, Agency and Collaboration in Advanced Second Language Proficiency," 2006, 98.

is made and how emotions are remembered in history. In my considerations of solastalgia, it is the conceptualizations of the term and its influence on the emotions, not the emotions themselves, that I find worthy of critique. I, too, want a way to deal with my world being on fire.

## VIII.

The desire to create new words to express our feelings isn't new, and new words have been created and intended for different purposes. Through *The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*, writer John Koenig attempts to create a "compendium of all the aches, demons, vibes, joys and urges that roam the wilderness of the psychological interior." Unlike Albrecht, Koenig doesn't create words that are intended for use in conversation, but "to exist for their own sake; to give a semblance of order to a dark continent."<sup>24</sup> Another project, the book *An Ecotopian Lexicon*, introduces new words "to envision ways of responding to the environmental challenges of our generation."<sup>25</sup> Nature writer Robert McFarland's book *Landmarks* doesn't create new words, but it does collect old, unused ones that name ideas we may have forgotten or not known there were names for, like the Sussex term "sun-scald" - "the eye-scorching gleam of sunlight as it falls on river, lake or sea."<sup>26</sup> These projects, including Albrecht's, have different intentions for their words and different effects, but I believe they all come from a similar place: a desire to know the unknowable, to name that which has no name. If language is what separates humans from other animals, installing a concept into language connects it to humans in a way it cannot be to any other species. Linguaging situates the abstract and unnamable into the narrative of humanity, and in linguaging, humanity builds itself a semblance of control.<sup>27</sup> As Maryam

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<sup>24</sup> John Koenig. *Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows*, <https://www.dictionaryofobscuresorrows.com/>

<sup>25</sup> *An Ecotopian Lexicon*, ed. Matthew Schneider-Mayerson and Brent Ryan Bellamy. University of Minnesota Press, 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Robert McFarland, "The word-hoard: Robert Macfarlane on rewilding our language of landscape," *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/feb/27/robert-macfarlane-word-hoard-rewilding-landscape>

<sup>27</sup> The term "anthropocene" is an example of this. In naming and attempting to define the limits of the current geological era, we attempt to claim some semblance of control through the illusion of understanding.

Monalisa Gharavi writes, “as long as there are humans to do sense-making, we will always try to make new sense under the illusion – perhaps it is a necessary illusion? – that this word, this new word, will help.”<sup>28</sup>

**Figure 4: 53 Words From The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows<sup>29</sup>**

Chrysalism, Onism, Sonder, Altschmerz, Semaphorism, Ambedo, Mal de Coucou, Énouement, Daguerreologue, Avenoir, Vemö dalen, Rückkehrunruhe, Fata Organa, Pâro, Nighthawk, Fitzcarraldo, Midsummer, Midding, Kairosclerosis, Adronitis, Scabulous, Rigor Samsa, Liberosis, Monachopsis, Agnosthesia, Ringlorn, Flashover, Heartworm, Silience, Dead Reckoning, Ecstatic Shock, Jouska, Mimeomia, Kenopsia, Nodus Tollens, Gnessienne, Vellichor, Wytai, Anecdote, Opia, Lachesism, Mauerbauertraurigkeit, The Wends, Degressé, Slipcast, Trumspringa, Contact High-Five, Lapyear, Apomakrysmenophobia, Hiybbprqag, Waldosia, Backmasking, The Standard Blues

Words like *solastalgia* create not just new words, but new concepts, new search terms, new academic disciplines to study and cite. What do we get out of these disciplines? When climate grief and human climate distress become subject to study, become *fields* of study, what do we gain? Does the Western academy bring legitimacy and needed recognition, attention emotion often doesn't get in 'serious' disciplines? Do we not allow emotion to be recognized as legitimate without the scholars who can bring their 'objectivity' to the subjectivity of emotional experience?

**Figure 5: Research Area(s) of Focus**

1. Environmental Humanities
2. Climate Psychology
3. Climate Change Fiction (CliFi)
4. Environmental Identity
5. Hyperobjects
6. Climate Anxiety
7. Eco-Grief
8. Solastalgia

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<sup>28</sup> Maryam Monalisa Gharavi, “Neologism: How words do things with words,” *The White Review*, <https://www.thewhitereview.org/feature/neologism-how-words-do-things-with-words/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.dictionaryofobscuresorrows.com/>

As Barbara Christian writes in *The Race for Theory*, “The critic yearning for attention has displaced the writer and has conceived of himself as the center.”<sup>30</sup> Likewise, the academic yearning for attention displaces the subject and conceives of themselves as the center. As the academic searches for objectivity, the subject becomes the object. The subjective experience becomes objective not through a transition from less legitimate to legitimate, but from the subject's lived experience to the academic's observed experience. The observed experience is not my experience, or any individual's experience; it is the collectively narrativized observations of the Western academy's monolithic tendencies, which “want to make the world less complex by organizing it according to one principle, to fix it through an idea which is really an ideal.”<sup>31</sup> Solastalgia and environmental humanities and climate psychology present theories about what is happening in the present; as academic Theory, they simplify and sterilize that which is neither simple nor sterile.

Another thought that deserves to be explored further than I am able to here: Terms like solastalgia and new theories and disciplines create false “timelines.” Solastalgia being coined in 2003 means the ‘study’ (and thus, documentation) of solastalgia begins in 2003, despite the emotional experience not being chronologically constrained. This is another contribution of theory to the illusion of simplicity and understanding.

And yet:

### **Figure 6: Theory**

Kyle Powys White, again: “The fact that a term is defined in ways that are problematic and subject to deep differences does not entail that it has no use.”

Barbara Christian, on theory: “This is not to say we are not theorizing. Certainly our literature is an indication of the ways in which our theorizing, of necessity, is based on our multiplicity of experiences.”

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<sup>30</sup> Barbara Christian, “The Race for Theory,” *Cultural Critique*, no. 6 (1987): 52, doi:10.2307/1354255.

<sup>31</sup> Christian, “The Race for Theory,” 58-59.

I mean, who am I to stand on my own and say, “this is what I feel, and what I feel matters.” Who are we to say, collectively, that what we feel matters? We can simply look into the Western archives and see what has mattered to the people of the past, and we will know what should matter today. And when those after us look into their versions of the Western archives - the libraries, the journals, the research guides - they will find *solastalgia*, and *climate anxiety*, and *eco-grief*, and they will know what mattered today. Who are we to impose ourselves into the narratives of our own history? Have the scholars not done enough?

**Figure 7: A Narrative/’Enough’**

“Solastalgia’. A new concept in health and identity.” 2005.

Cited by 446.

“Solastalgia: the distress caused by environmental change.” 2007.

Cited by 812.<sup>32</sup>

**IX.**

I wrote this first as an attempt to grapple with my own emotions, then as an academic exploration of a concept, then in critique of both the institutions of academics and concepts themselves. All remain in this work; in subject and in form, I contradict myself.<sup>33</sup> One particular contradiction I want to mention is that, as I’ve discussed how Western science is not unbiased or neutral, the form of this work is not neutral. This is the product of an academic research project which, despite attempts to insert subjectivity, is still based on the academic structure of question, thesis, evidence. Is this the only form this work could have taken? It is the only form I have been taught how to make it take.

I comply with the form, and I wish I wasn’t in compliance with the form. I would like you, the reader, to know that I am afraid of saying too much. I am afraid of telling you my ‘secrets.’ Will this mean nothing if I tell you how it was done? See Figures 0.1 through 8. I’ve called these

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<sup>32</sup> Now 813.

<sup>33</sup> I did write, 5,000 words ago, that I am not objective. That may be the only consistency here.

inserts "figures" because that is what the oft demanded evidence is called in scientific papers. Figures are charts and graphs - the hard quantitative data to prove your point. These figures are not hard quantitative data. Some of them I made, some of them are found poems or other found materials. Many of them are intentionally taken out of their original context. This is subjective knowledge, and it is enough.

**X.**

**Figure 8: Enough**

*Albrecht, 2005*

I thank the people of the Upper Hunter for allowing me to listen to their own accounts