

## *Sheep Mountain Summit*

“they cease to exist” is a phrase chosen by Wikipedia editors in the article discussing *tree line*, the area of a habitat wherein trees “cease to exist” because of environmental stressors. Lack of available moisture is the primary deprivation, and the taller the life form, the more exposed to wind, snow, and sub-zero temperatures. Life itself does not cease here - the life that does persist is abundant and savvy. It is very, very low to the ground. It is in for a ride of difficulty. The scalding snow spares no one. The wind ought to rip you away from the earth. The sun hardly has any decency at any time of year and is sure to singe the last amount of moisture that sits about your surface. The trees are too large to live up here, and they crawl up to try anyway, but they die a few inches higher. Many seedlings attempt. They live short and turbulent lives. They succumb quickly.

We can call this area a margin, of sorts. A margin of altering states, a veritable turn of conditions. Somewhere that only resilient, persistent, resource-considerate and suffering-expectant extremophiles dare go. Where it may be said that they ‘thrive’ above treeline - this is their niche. They endure in this margin because this is where a convalescence of conditions optimizes their existence. They can be sure that their predators are few here; they can be just as sure that even in the absence of a typical food chain scenario, there will be lifelong struggle, and perhaps utter anguish. The elements themselves are a type of predator.

In years and decades and centuries coming, it seems reasonable to assume there may be more obvious marginality in ecologies that are quite affectable by radicalizing patterns of global phenomenon, such as the spreading of the deserts and the peaking of rainfall accumulation alongside coastlines, mimicked for example by the disparity of wealth in a no-holds-barred, infinite growth-oriented society based in capitalism. There is little coincidence in this. Exploitation leads to exasperation. It’s all part of the same system and it’s reaching a last rung.

Adaptation of many remaining species is likely, but many will perish, pushed to the limit of their conditions and habitable zones. What can we say about this? Are we upset? Do we accept?

Do we attempt any action? Do we curb our malignant tendencies? Where do we go from here?