

THE NATURE OF NATURE: ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN  
AMERICAN AND AMERICAN INDIAN LITERATURES  
FROM THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT

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THE NATURE OF NATURE: ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN  
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In the *Nature of Nature*, I define “environmental ethics” in the tradition of Aldo Leopold’s “land ethics.” They are the values that inform, influence, and in some cases, direct human relationships with other-than-human beings and the living earth. I argue that specific environmental ethics expressed in American literature from the first colonial settlements through the present have been central to the formation and character of the contemporary American environmental movement and the dominant public policies and attitudes it has generated. The paradigmatic examples of American literature I explore demonstrate that their environmental ethics are formulated within a Western cultural paradigm that envisions nature as separate from culture and as a collection of resources for human exploitation in a market economy or as a space separated from people who can enjoy it but are never truly part of it. As a result of this philosophical and epistemological separation, I conclude that the American environmental movement and the policies it has generated, while they have to date prevented total destruction of the lands and waters that sustain human beings, have proven ineffective in both preventing and tackling huge environmental challenges like climate change and massive biodiversity decline.

Using Arnold Krupat’s formulation of ethnocriticism and interpretations of American Indian literatures, I find ruptures in the dominant environmental narratives of the works I explore that are open to the possibility of an alternative vision, one that more nearly aligns with American Indian environmental ethics, ethics I interpret as more centrally based on reciprocity and kinship among humans and the rest of the living earth. While I make every effort to avoid framing Indigenous ethics in an unrealistically utopian context, my literary explorations and analyses emphasize possibilities for engaging these ethics in rethinking

dominant models for human relationships to the living earth that sustains us.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Virginia Kennedy received a BA in Dance Performance and Education from Montclair State College in Upper Montclair, NJ in 1983. She went on to receive a BA and then an MA in English from Montclair State University in 1985 and 2001 respectively, and her PhD in English and American Indian Studies from Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, in January of 2013.

Dedicated to my husband, Kevin, and my children, Daniel, Joseph, and Marygrace

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## *Introduction*

### **The Climate Change Context**

*Fall 2012:*

*"My heart sank. I can't imagine trying to explain to another generation of Quinaults how our rich blueback salmon tasted. That's a central part of who we are and that glacier keeps the waters cool and the water levels at an appropriate place. Now it's gone."* **Fawn Sharp, Quinault Indian Nation President in response to the disappearance of the Anderson Glacier in the Olympic Mountains of Washington state in "For American Indians Coping with Climate Change is Ancient History" in *Scientific American*, July 2012**

*"Traditional values teach us to be good ancestors. Future generations are going to look back at us and say, 'What did you do about this?'"* **Micah McCarty, Chairman of the Makah Tribe in Neah Bay, Washington, on PBS, July 2012**

*Since I wrote one of the first books for a general audience about global warming way back in 1989, and since I've spent the intervening decades working ineffectively to slow that warming, I can say with some confidence that we're losing the fight, badly and quickly – losing it because, most of all, we remain in denial about the peril that human civilization is in.* **Bill McKibben, "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math" in *Rolling Stone*, July 2012.**

*Terry Tempest Williams: You know, with Breyten Breytenbach, going back to that comment, 'You Americans have mastered the art of living with the unacceptable,' my next question to him was, 'So what do we do?' And he said, 'Support people on the margins.' Because it's from the margins that the center is moved.*

*Tim DeChristopher: Yeah, that margin—that's the feather. I mean, with climate change, the center is this balancing point between the climate scientists on one side saying, 'This is what needs to be done,' and ExxonMobil on the other. And so the center is always going to be less than what's required for our survival.* **Terry Tempest Williams interviews Tim DeChristopher in *Orion Magazine*, January/February 2012**

*Hold on to your traditions. It's going to be a big ride.* **Kalei Nu`uhiwa, Official witness for the *First Stewards Climate Symposium* sponsored by the National Museum of the American Indian, July 2012**

We find ourselves in a race against time: either this crisis will become an opportunity for an evolutionary leap, a holistic readjustment of our relationship with the natural world. Or it will become an opportunity for the biggest disaster capitalism free-for-all in human history, leaving the world even more brutally cleaved between winners and losers. **Naomi Klein, "Superstorm Sandy—A People's Shock?" in *The Nation*, November 2012**

In a 2010 article in *The Nation* about environmental groups' ineffective battle against climate change, journalist Johann Hari explains the corporatization of green groups from the National Wildlife Federation to the Nature Conservancy. Hari, who references Christine MacDonald's comprehensive critique of the 'conservation industry,' *Green, Inc.*, makes clear that in a world where an environmental nonprofit's survival depends on financial support from donors, it is an easy road from railing against corporate pollution to taking money from corporate polluters. Hari also draws the very bright line connecting green groups, environmental lobbying and politics, and corporations. He writes: "If a bill can pass through today's Senate, it will not be enough to prevent catastrophic global warming. Why? Because the bulk of the Senate—including many Democrats—is owned by Big Oil and Big Coal. They call the shots with their campaign donations" (*The Nation* online).

Hari's article points to the main provocation for my dissertation: "Environmentalism," such as it is deployed in American environmental policies and practiced across a broad range of environmental groups nationwide, is failing, and we need desperately to analyze why and embrace alternatives. The evidence for both the need to understand failure and to seriously engage alternatives is in the broad sweep of crises currently impacting humanity's ability to survive on the planet, from ocean acidification and extreme weather, just two of the incredible impacts of climate change, to rapid biodiversity decline. As Hari, MacDonald, and others have made clear, the connections between environmental groups who espouse "environmentalism," such as it is generally defined in U.S. culture and politics, and a government in bed with the profit motives of corporate capitalism are knotted in detrimental ways.

The purpose of my dissertation is not to analyze the actions and their consequences of “corporate” green groups—MacDonald has already done that. I do not take the position that environmental groups in the U.S. are by definition ineffective and always nefarious. Nor do I deconstruct a broad swath of environmental laws, though I do look closely in Chapter Two at one prominent example, the 1964 Wilderness Act. What I do argue is that environmentalism and environmental groups are not in any way keeping pace with the environmental damage occurring on the planet where humans need to dwell. We need to understand why, though these groups and the policies they generate may win battles, they are ultimately losing the war. Through an ecocritical and Native Studies approach to literary analysis, I hope to make a contribution to both a productive understanding of the failure of “environmentalism” and the creation of imaginative possibilities for viable alternatives in terms of how we approach addressing huge environmental challenges and the many social and economic justice issues that arise from them.

The unifying concerns of my chapters are twofold: First, American environmental policies and laws and the green groups that fight hard to establish them have developed through time within a particular epistemological paradigm that makes ‘nature,’ the physical world of which human beings are a part, separate from people. Within this paradigm, people conceptualize nature as a sacred space to preserve apart from them and their daily lives or a collection of resources to exploit for monetary gain. As a result, the main pillars of American environmental policy, conservation and preservation, are largely invested in an ethos of ‘saving the planet,’ whether that means saving the planet *for* people to use wisely or *from* people who, if left to their own devices, will choose most often to exploit it. As Tim Ingold frames it, these perspectives are framed in a “discourse of intervention,” in a world of which humans

themselves are not actually a part. Humans may “observe [nature], reconstruct it, protect it, tamper with it or destroy it, but they do not dwell in it” (215). It is “privileging a global ontology of detachment over the local ontology of engagement” (216). This nature/culture dichotomy is based on a notion of opposition rather than a notion of diversity.<sup>1</sup> A person’s wooden house, for example, is culture, and a beaver’s wooden house is nature. How people understand the beaver’s home and their – people’s – relation to it, and how they will behave because of this understanding, is rooted in this ontological and epistemological dualism.

Second, the opposition between nature and culture is enacted within a system, in Paul Gilding’s words, of “consumption-based, quantitative, economic growth” (16). In his book, *The Great Disruption: Why the Climate Crisis Will Bring on the End of Shopping and the Birth of a New World*, Gilding highlights the widely criticized 1972 Club of Rome report, *The Limits to Growth*, which was dismissed, in the words of then Yale economist, Henry C. Wallich, as “irresponsible nonsense”(15). Gilding points out that *The Limits to Growth* predicted physical collapse by the 21<sup>st</sup> century if “observed trends in humanity’s growing ecological footprint continued, and with it would come a dramatic decline in our wealth”(15). The vehemence in response to the report was because, in Gilding’s words, “the ideas in it threatened the global assumption that the consumer capitalism model of the time would indefinitely continue its march across the world.” And indeed, as Gilding’s book does a good job of demonstrating, that march has continued, and the report has “proven to be surprisingly

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<sup>1</sup> The word “diversity” also demands further definition in this context. As Ingold makes clear, “the human species is itself so conspicuously absent from mainstream conceptions of global biodiversity. Species can only be enumerated in the natural world by a humanity that has set itself above and beyond it, and that – being simultaneously everywhere and nowhere – can set the whole of nature in its sights. . . human differences . . . are typically understood in terms of a concept of cultural diversity that is seen as *analogous* to biodiversity rather than as an extension of it” (217 author italics). I use “diversity” here to imply precisely the extension of biological diversity to which Ingold refers.

accurate, not just conceptually . . .but numerically as well”(16). Gilding pointedly observes, “if you insist on growing your footprint exponentially within finite limits, this will unavoidably lead to a crash, unless you decide to stop the growth before it is too late.”

The challenge of the current – and severe – ecological dilemma in which human beings find themselves is epistemic and systemic. Therefore, exploring the epistemological sources of environmental ethics based in separation and anthropocentrism and looking for ways to reformulate them in alternative systems based on something other than rampant resource exploitation and simultaneously inadequate attempts at preservation and conservation is essential. My personal journey as a literary scholar and environmental activist directed me toward a deep interest in what I argue here are the alternative environmental ethics communicated by many American Indian cultures. So the main inquiry of my dissertation asks what the stories of Euro-American and American Indian writers and storytellers from the seventeenth century (when European settlement in North America became pervasive) to the present can tell us about where we have landed in terms of environmental policies and practices and where we might go if we can imagine thinking differently about things.

Before summarizing the specific path of my exploration, I should address some of the ethical and scholarly concerns that inform it. The specter of that monolithic stereotype, the *Ecological Indian*, hovers around any study communicating relationships between American Indian peoples and cultures and what we call the “environment” or “nature;” what I will refer to as the “living earth” throughout my dissertation, in an effort to express the diverse array of interlocked systems, beings, and phenomena of the entire planet in which human beings, to

paraphrase Ingold, *actively participate* (218).<sup>2</sup> The Ecological Indian is a manifestation of the Rousseauian “noble savage,” a romantic nature lover who lives in harmony with the earth and rejects technological progress. The Ecological Indian, in ecocritic S.K. Robisch’s words, represents, “the usurpation of indigenous mythologies and the selective assimilation of the elements in them that Euro-Americans found most palatable or entertaining. Such appropriation,” Robisch continues, “then watered down the spiritual depth and complexity of native belief systems and their practice and sold it on roadsides”(166).

Shepard Krech, like Robisch, in his famous, or perhaps more accurately, infamous book, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*, also names the Ecological Indian as a construct of the dominant culture. But Krech goes further to say that many American Indians have come to *believe* this construct about themselves, an assertion that assumes an inability on the part of Indigenous peoples to define themselves within a colonial paradigm. In Krech’s formulation, Indigenous peoples cannot, given the hegemony of Western belief systems, specifically articulate their own philosophies regarding human relationships to the rest of the living earth. Krech writes that, “American Indians have taken on the Noble Indian/Ecological Indian stereotype, embedding it in their self-fashioning, just as other indigenous people around the world have done with similar primordial ecological and conservationist stereotypes”(27). Debunking the Ecological Indian critique has unfortunately often meant, as it does for Krech, establishing just how *anti-ecological* Indigenous peoples can be and were. As Lee Schweninger effectively points out, Krech, most explicitly in his fifth chapter on buffalo hunting, seems to recognize “the possibility of a different worldview,” yet still insists on

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<sup>2</sup> See Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment*, Chapter Twelve, “Globes and Spheres” for his excellent analysis of perceptions of the “globe” upon which people act in relation to perceptions of the sphere in which people dwell and of which they are an active part.

conducting his analysis from within dominant Western narratives where if Indians are not nobly ecological in the Western sense of that word, then they must be environmentally destructive (Schweninger 49-52).

On the other hand, there is no shortage of studies that contest Krech's views. For example, Darren Ranco's essay "The Ecological Indian and the Politics of Representation" (one essay of an entire collection on Krech's thesis, many of which contest it) claims that Krech overlooks "historical, sociological, and representational complexities" and "appears to pass judgment rather than to analyze the current state of Indian identity practices, in his arguments that those identity practices do not live up to the primarily colonial and outside expectations of Indians as conservationists" (33). Schweninger, who in his book *Listening to the Land: Native American Literary Responses to the Landscape* does a comprehensive critique of weaknesses of Krech's arguments, argues that complex constructions of American Indian land ethics "disallow any easy stereotype" and communicate a "reliable and recurrent insistence on a special Native American connection with the land"(154, 183). In a frame that makes irrelevant the whole question of whether there actually were or were not "Ecological Indians," Melissa K. Nelson argues that "whether Indigenous Peoples were, historically, environmentalists or not, is almost irrelevant (13). Environmentalism, Nelson argues, is a modern postcolonial concept being imposed on a "precolonial context." In "Transcending the Debate Over the Ecologically Noble Indian: Indigenous Peoples and Environmentalism," Paul Nadasdy agrees that framing Indigenous people's values in the Euro-North American cultural terms of *environmentalism* and *conservation*, misconstrues specific Indigenous relationships to the land in ways that can have significant political consequences for Indigenous communities.

Contemporary American Indian writers are writing in this historical moment in which

environmentalism and ecology have become specific categories of thought integrated into American culture. Recognition of this fact is not to agree with Krech's argument that American Indians have been acculturated into believing something about their cultural relationships within the living earth that is largely the result of non-Indian constructions of Indian-ness. The problem lies in the fact that stereotypical perceptions like the Ecological Indian are deployed by writers, activists, policymakers, scholars, scientists and so on who are immersed in non-Indigenous narratives regarding human relationships to the rest of the living earth. These narratives, as I have indicated above, most often take forms that make humans the enemy of a natural world to which they do not belong or the saviors or exploiters of an environment over which they are dominant. In these contexts, Indians are destroyers no better than any other humans in terms of decimating nature *or* they are the natural Indians who are one with nature and can teach the rest of us how to live in perfect harmony with a perfect nature, or at the least, to be the perfect conservationists— even though we might not be listening particularly well to what Indigenous peoples might have to say about conservation. Thus, to borrow anthropologist Julie Cruikshank's accurate observation, "indigenous peoples then face double exclusion, initially by colonial processes that expropriate land, and ultimately by neo-colonial discourses that appropriate and reformulate their ideas"(259).

The persona of the Ecological Indian is based on a notion of an essentialized "Indian;" a reduction of numerous distinct cultural groups into one group called "Natives" or "Indians" who, whether loved or despised or something in between by people who understand them in this monolithic way, have one set of ethics and one way of being in the world. I use the term "Indigenous" frequently throughout my dissertation to define the specific group of peoples and cultures indigenous to North America as opposed to Europeans or Euro-Americans who

emigrated from or had/have ancestry in the continent of Europe. I am cognizant of my own deployment of this generalized term, which like “Euro-American” or any other generalized construction – “environmentalists” for example – must necessarily encompass a diverse array of people, ideas, and ethics. My focus here is on commonalities across Indigenous cultural borders with respect to relationships between humans and the rest of the living earth. My first chapter, for example, interprets the very different stories of two Indigenous peoples, the Onondaga and the Navajo, which have in common their prioritization of humans’ integration in and connection to the rest of the living earth. In that same chapter, I look at the *dominant* ethics of Euro-American Christianity with relation to the earth to interpret general trajectories regarding Christianity’s relationship with Indigenous environmental ethics, though I recognize that there is diversity within Christian belief systems as well. At the same time, I assert in that chapter the alternative ethics of *ecotheology*, which are much more nearly comparable to Indigenous perspectives, though there is a diversity of views within the encompassing term, *ecotheology*, too. My point here is that while I have attempted to be very aware of the ways in which I must generalize to argue my points about Euro-American and Indigenous relationships to the living earth and my points about environmental policy and practice, I am, at the same time, well aware of the diversities in these perspectives and focused on alternative readings of texts that have previously been interpreted as communicating one monolithic perspective or another.

My dissertation is by definition focused on American and American Indian literatures, literatures produced within the politically (and by extension physically) designated boundaries of the United States. However, ecological challenges caused and perpetuated by human activities— and climate change is the perfect example—do not honor human-made borders.

The United States has taken the lead on producing pollution with world-wide impacts and on globalizing the *methods* of producing pollution and environmental degradation of all kinds. Examining how American and American Indian literatures, bounded though they are—technically—by national borders, communicate the ethics that make possible a deeper understanding of how the U.S. has achieved such nefarious stature, and how we might rethink the ethics that sustain it, seems like a productive and necessary undertaking for people of the U.S. and for the whole human community.

From a literary perspective, my dissertation is grounded in ecocritical and American Indian Studies paradigms. Ecocriticism, generally defined as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment”(Glofelty xviii) has mainly engaged writing produced from the publications of Emerson and Thoreau, in the mid-nineteenth century, to the present. While Schweninger successfully argues that the American Indian writers of this *particular* time period legitimately express specific American Indian land ethics while “defying stereotypes of Native Americans as inherent land stewards”(203), the question becomes what does literature *prior* to this period communicate regarding American Indian land ethics in the context of encounter between immigrants to the continent and Indigenous peoples. I bring an ecocritical lens to bear on the stories and writing of Indians and non-Indians that *pre-date* the inauguration of American "nature writing" in the mid-nineteenth century. I focus on the development of environmental ethics in the U.S. from the seventeenth century until the present in an attempt to reveal the core metanarratives established far earlier than the nineteenth century, that then manifest in environmental literature and policy from the nineteenth century through the present. In doing so, I hope to communicate what alternate interpretations of these literatures have to say in terms of revealing possibilities for

envisioning an American environmental ethics that will resituate humans within the living earth of which they – and, of course all humans – are a part.

From an American Indian Studies perspective, the arguments of my dissertation, especially in Chapters Three and Four invest in what Shari Huhndorf names as the “transnational turn in contemporary Native culture”(12). Huhndorf writes that “tribes are increasingly being drawn into global relationships that render it ever more difficult to understand them as isolated or autonomous entities”(13). She makes this assertion in the context of an historical analysis that charts the development of Native cultural production within a paradigm of decolonization in the United States in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (1-24). She makes the cogent point that the Indigenous alliances that transcend cultural, tribal, and national borders “bring to the fore issues that extend beyond the tribal”(13).

Groups like the Indigenous Environmental Network and the Bioneers, who are focused on the transnational realities of environmental challenges like, and definitely not limited to, climate change, are illustrative of this reality. The chapters of *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future*, edited by Melissa K. Nelson, collects a series presentations from Bioneers conferences given by Indigenous presenters from around the world. At the same time that Nelson asserts that, “today in the United States alone there are over 550 Native American nations speaking over 175 distinct languages,” she makes clear that “Indigenous individuals coming from distinct lands, cultures, languages, worldviews, philosophies, and ways of life,” have significant commonalities with regard to environmental ethics, and these ethics are tied to matters of justice in all their manifestations across numerous communities around the earth (14-17).

The First Stewards Symposium held at the National Museum of the American Indian in

July of 2012 is another example. An array of diverse representatives from Indigenous coastal cultures gathered to share the common challenges of climate change to their peoples and to articulate possible responses to them. While the regional panels of the conference were focused on West Coast states; Alaska; the U.S. Pacific states and territories; and the Great Lakes, Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, Southeast, and Gulf of Mexico states, one major objective of the conference referred to exploring the experiences of these diverse communities because of the value their *common* ethics, experiences, and responses based in Indigenous knowledge “may have in provid[ing] guidance as communities across the nation respond to our changing climate” (<http://firststewards.org/>). At same time, the First Stewards Conference uses its focus on climate change to assert sovereignty and demand recognition for the relevance of Indigenous peoples as leaders in national decision making on environmental challenges like climate change that are impacting their communities.<sup>3</sup>

According to Dakotah writer and scholar Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Indigenous peoples of this continent – in Cook-Lynn’s case she refers specifically to Plains tribes – “have thousands of years of prior knowledge of the world and environments of North America and imagine them on their own very different terms”(30). This knowledge Nelson writes, “is *practical* knowledge for survival, not some mystical training for transcendence”(author italics13). In Cruikshank’s words, this knowledge articulates “a vision that humans and nature mutually make and maintain the habitable world, a view now echoed by environmental

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<sup>3</sup> See for example, the *Resolution* of the First Stewards Coastal Peoples Address Climate Change Symposium, which states “and Therefore Be It Resolved, that the First Stewards call on the United States government to formally recognize us and our expertise and to consult with our tribal governments and indigenous communities for guidance in all policies that affect our way of life and to support our management efforts, which will strengthen America’s resiliency and ability to adapt to climate change, and that this resolution be sent to the President of the United States and appropriate Congressional committees and government agencies.”

historians”(2). Cruikshank, following Elizabeth Povinelli, argues that a natural physical environment animated by the ability to be in a reciprocally responsive relationship with humans, “a country that listens” in Povinelli’s words, “was not unfamiliar in Europe before conditions underpinning the Industrial Revolution began to spill over into everyday lives, language, and beliefs”(4). Now, however, because of these conditions, people immersed in Western epistemologies “find it difficult to believe that rocks, mountains, and other landscape features like glaciers might listen, [because] the very conditions of the Western material and cultural world are underpinned by language that rejects that possibility.”

Cruikshank also invokes Bruno Latour’s important study, *We Have Never Been Modern* that locates the source for the “great divides” between nature and culture in Western thought in the Enlightenment when “modernism consisted in choosing [an] arrangement” that defined a “total separation between the scientific and political representations” of things and people and engendered the belief that a pure nature separate from culture could be “immediately accessible” through an “arbitrary withdrawal of epistemology”(Latour 143, 142). Cruikshank’s work examines the consequences of the nature/culture split in showing how during colonial encounters in the Northwest, “interpretations of natural, social, and cultural worlds became gradually disaggregated in a place where they were formerly viewed as unified”(4).

Cruikshank argues that though she examines these themes in the context of the Yukon and sub-Arctic regions, they are “by no means limited to this location” and “speak to other arenas of colonial encounter”(4). The complexity and dynamism of local knowledge that “often links biophysical and social processes” is “never crudely encapsulated in closed traditions, but is produced during human encounters, rather than ‘discovered,’” and is focused

on transference of knowledge occurring on *both* sides of the encounter (4). Examining the *dynamics of encounter* with specific regard to environmental ethics from the seventeenth century to the present and the transference of knowledge in *both* directions taking into careful consideration “how knowledge gets identified and authorized in different contexts, and who gets to control it” provides the discursive foundation for my project.

Though my project has a chronological trajectory, I think of it rather like a circle, opening with a first chapter that returns to origin narratives to understand the environmental ethics dominant in the U.S. in the present. I interpret the Onondaga and Navajo creation stories and the Genesis story of the Bible in the context of the relatively new theoretical premise of ecotheology to explore how Christian and Indigenous ethics might complement each other in the necessary work of encouraging life-sustaining forms of engagement with the earth. Through a reading of Linda Hogan’s *Solar Storms* I demonstrate the transformation of the main character, Angel, who is immersed in an understanding of the God of traditional Christian cosmological belief system until, through gaining particular forms of knowledge from her Indigenous relatives, she can reinterpret God within an Indigenous kinship frame.

My second chapter uses the 1964 Wilderness Act as a context to read two canonical origin texts of American literature, Mary Rowlandson’s *Sovereignty and Goodness of God* from the seventeenth century and Hector St. John de Crevecoeur’s *Letters from an American Farmer* from the eighteenth. I explore how these texts elaborate the notion of “wilderness” and construct Indigenous peoples’ place inside it. I show how this early American construction of “wilderness” carries forward until it forms the substance for the 1964 Wilderness Act that defines wilderness as “untrammeled by man” and yet allows for major incursions like mining and timbering. At the same time, I conduct alternate readings of Rowlandson and Crevecoeur

that focus on their interpretations of Indigenous peoples that in the end break down the nature/culture dichotomy and integrate people within the land from which they live.

In Chapter Three, I turn to the nineteenth century when “wilderness” becomes both a desire and utopian construction perpetuated by the simultaneous fear and greed of a rapidly expanding and industrializing nation. I analyze the notions of conservation and preservation that evolve in the nineteenth century to culminate in the famous battle between John Muir and Gifford Pinchot over Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite. I then interpret environmental ethics alternative to those expressed in the Hetch Hetchy debate between conservation and preservation. I interpret Margaret Fuller’s 1844 *Summer on the Lakes* and Leslie Silko’s twenty-first century novel, *Gardens in the Dunes*, which revolves around a later nineteenth century woman based on who Fuller might have been had she not suffered an early death. Through exploring the real Fuller and her fictional embodiment, I articulate what I call a “cosmopolitan” ecological approach, which embraces *connections* between diverse human cultural communities *and* among human communities and the rest of the living earth.

My closing chapter turns to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to explore the relationship between Traditional Ecological Knowledge or TEK and *modern* environmentalism, the period from the early 1960’s to the present. Through a close reading of Scott Momaday essays that appear in two canonical American magazines, *Life* and *National Geographic*, in the 1970’s, I demonstrate how the Momaday essays and the magazine layouts that contextualize them, like the texts I analyze in my previous chapters, simultaneously promote stereotypes *and* create opportunities for considering the alternative environmental ethics that TEK espouses. I include an analysis of the revolutionary ethos of Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead* to show the manifestation of the radical possibilities offered in

the 1970's.

In total, this dissertation is for me an attempt to find hope in what seems to be a more and more hopeless situation everyday. In the texts I analyze throughout these chapters are some seeds for imagining possibilities for transformation away from a paradigm of growth and accumulation and for seeing human relationship with the rest of the living earth in ways that will reconnect us to each other and to the earth that sustains us. I imagine the work I have done here to express the need for continued analysis of how we find ourselves in a situation where our environmental laws, policies, and organizations are proving to be no match against the onslaught of a global capitalism that is consuming and/or irredeemably destroying the ecological conditions upon which human life depends—and to encourage real and effective engagement with the alternative ways of being in the world communicated by Indigenous cultures. My offering here, in the context of issues as huge as these, is small indeed. But, the journey that produced these chapters has been transformational for me, and at the very least, will improve my own contributions in the world.

**Chapter One: Indigenous Creation Narratives, Ecotheology,  
and the Transformation of Ecological Imagination**

*In American Indian cultures human beings are not so privileged in the scheme of things; neither are humans considered external to the rest of the world and its functions. To the contrary, humans are seen as part of the whole, rather than apart from it and free to use it up. There are expectations of human beings. We do have particular responsibilities in the scheme of things, but, then so do all our other relatives in the created realm: from bears and squirrels to eagles and sparrows, trees, ants, rocks and mountains. In fact, many elders in Indian communities are quick to add that of all the created, of all our relations, we Two-Leggeds alone seem to be confused as to our responsibility towards the whole.* **from *A Native American Theology* by Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, and George E. “Tink” Tinker**

In the Navajo creation story the *Diné bahanè*, when First Man and First Woman have their first fight, not only the couple suffers from their marital tension. The rhythm of their biotic community is also upended. When the daughter of Mature Blossoms, or Skywoman as she is more widely known in Iroquois creation stories, dies giving birth to twin boys, the ensuing struggles between the boys and the havoc they reek among all forms of life elevate the centrality of good kin relations to a cosmic responsibility. These Indigenous creation stories come from peoples geographically separated and culturally distinct and are quite distinctive in their plots, settings, and cast of characters. But, they have in common an essential focus on human responsibility to good kinship relations that extend beyond the human community to include the totality of the biological environment – the living earth. They express the challenge of maintaining these relations and the persistent need to course correct in order to keep harmony in the world of humans and the world that humans live in.

In *Defense of the Land Ethic*, J. Baird Callicott articulates the complementariness between the “climatic essay” of Aldo Leopold’s *Sand County Almanac*, “The Land Ethic” and American Indian kinship ethics (Callicott 75, 93-4; Leopold 237-261). Callicott explains that Leopold’s land ethic emphasizes human morality within a biotic community similar in concept to the complex network of social relations among human beings and other-than-human beings

inherent in the environmental ethics of numerous American Indian tribes. In “The Land Ethic,” Leopold writes:

All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in the community, but his ethics prompt him also to co-operate (perhaps in order that there may be a place to compete for). The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soil, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land. (239)

How, Callicott asks, are human beings to “express a manifest respect, while at the same time abandoning our fellow members of the biotic community to their several fates or even actively consuming them for our own needs (and wants), or deliberately making them casualties of wildlife management for ecological integrity” (94). These are “difficult and delicate questions,” and Callicott concludes that American Indian communities “provide rich and detailed models” for navigating human relationships to the living planet because they conduct such navigation within a paradigm of “mutually beneficial socioeconomic intercourse” among human persons and other-than-human persons.

In this chapter, I explore both the limits and the possibilities of the *ecotheology* movement. First, I interpret the kinship ethics expressed in John C. Mohawk’s version of the Iroquois creation story, the Onondaga *Myth of the Earth Grasper* and Irvin Morris’s version of the Navajo, *Diné bahanè*, in *From the Glittering World* that extend as Leopold envisions from humans through the biotic community. I then examine a series of ecotheological readings of biblical texts, highlighting Genesis, to demonstrate ecotheology’s growing emphasis on the philosophical re-integration of humans into the totality of the living earth and the ways in which Indigenous kinship ethics model that re-integration. Finally, I demonstrate how Chicasaw author

Linda Hogan, in her novel *Solar Storms*, resituates the Genesis story in a framework that imagines the re-visioning of Genesis that ecotheology seeks.

David G. Hallman frames ecotheology as a re-visioning and subsequent transformation of traditional theological approaches to understanding humans' place in the world. Hallman asserts that ecotheology specifically questions dominant theological premises that philosophically separate humans from the "rest of Creation,"<sup>4</sup> give the human species supremacy over the rest of Creation, and legitimate the utilitarian use of the rest of Creation as just so many "resources" to exploit for human progress in science and technology and for wealth accumulation. Native philosopher Valerie Cordova, framing the theological separation of humans from the living earth, argues, "since a human being, in the Western/Christian context, is defined as separate from 'the world,' there is no need to include the Earth in one's ethical calculations" (183). Cordova, of course, is speaking in widely general terms. In American history and literature environmental ethics and philosophy specifically focused on the questions of human beings' ethical relationships with the earth have been studied and debated in "Western/Christian" contexts from the nineteenth century to the present.<sup>5</sup> But, as my dissertation argues overall, those ethics have centered largely on 'saving' and/or 'stewarding' the earth – *nature* – that is indeed

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<sup>4</sup> Hallman uses the phrase "the rest of Creation" frequently in his book *A Place in Creation: Ecological Visions in Science, Religion, and Economics*. For Hallman, the word "Creation evokes a very comprehensive holistic perspective" that "refers to all of the natural world, including the expanses of the universe" (xiii). The capital "C" denotes Hallman's perspective that Creation is imbued with spirituality and/or God in the Christian construction. In his use of the phrase, "the rest of," Hallman is indicating that people are part of this whole rather than above or separate from it.

<sup>5</sup> I am not suggesting here that environmental ethics within a Western Christian context have not been considered within American history, literature, and society in general *prior to* the nineteenth century. I specifically address concepts of preservation, conservation, and wilderness, for example, within texts from the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries in my next chapters. What I mean here is that environmental ethics and philosophy defined by *explicit* considerations of humans' relationship to the rest of biosphere from an environmental and ecological perspective can be marked as beginning in the nineteenth century with Emerson and Thoreau.

epistemologically separated from humans or *culture*.<sup>6</sup> In America and globally, these ethics have resulted in environmental policy regimes that have thus far largely failed. Ecotheology seems to be going in a different and more productive direction that can create convergences between Christian and Indigenous ways of being in the world that contribute to better relationships between diverse cultural communities *and* between humans and the rest of the life on earth.

Religious scholars like Regina M. Schwartz and Charles Kimball<sup>7</sup> make clear that biblical narratives, their interpretations in particular contexts through history, and their imbrication in Western secular<sup>8</sup> conceptualizations such as nationhood, imperialism, and exceptionalism have legitimized a violent legacy of oppression against peoples deemed as *other* than Christian-European and a legacy of exploitation of other than human life deemed as separate from and beneath people in a cosmic hierarchy. Myriad Indigenous scholars from Vine Deloria to Cordova to George Tinker have sited the ethics of Christianity as the source of decimation of Indigenous peoples.<sup>9</sup> Wendell Berry makes the case that “the complicity of Christian priests, preachers, and missionaries in the cultural destruction and the economic exploitation of the primary peoples of the Western Hemisphere as well as of traditional cultures around the world is

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<sup>6</sup> Ironically, Thoreau is a major exception here, because in *Walden*, he does indeed formulate humans’ relation to the biosphere in terms of human integration in and kinship with the land and water that sustain us. Thoreau, as is widely known, is largely ignored in his own time, and within the contemporary environmental movement marked by the publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*, Thoreau is constructed as a culture hero for separating himself from the *culture* of Concord and going *to* the isolated *nature* of Walden, only a short distance away.

<sup>7</sup> See for example, Regina M. Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* and Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Lethal: The Explosive Mix of Politics and Religion in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*.

<sup>8</sup> In the next chapter, I elaborate the point that the term “secular” is neither the opposite of religious, nor does it mean without religion. Rather, as Max Weber, Tracy Fessenden, and others make clear, the concept of “secularism” is embedded in a Christian epistemological paradigm.

<sup>9</sup> See for example, Deloria, *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America and God is Red: A Native View of Religion*; George Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide*.

notorious” (2010). Hallman affirms, “that Churches in the North have not yet come to grips with the degree to which Christian theology and tradition are implicated in the Western capitalist development model that has dominated our countries since the Industrial Revolution, many other countries through the colonial period and more recently every part of the world that is touched by the new ‘global economy’”(5). This is not say that there are not examples of Indigenous cultures integrating Christian belief systems into their beliefs and practices as a form of resistance and continuance or, Julie Cruikshank writes, “to incorporate new ideas rather than being colonized *by* them” (119 author italics). In the same vein, there are examples of non-Indigenous Christians, because of their interpretation of Christian theology within a social justice framework, fighting on behalf of social justice for Indigenous peoples. Catholic liberation theology presents a strong example of such a movement.<sup>10</sup>

But, acknowledging that there are Indigenous philosophical frameworks that can *teach* or *lead* Western Christian thinkers in a fundamentally new epistemological direction is a relatively recent development in theology, one that ecotheology seeks to further explore and advance. “Western societies,” Hallman argues in his 2001 article, “Christianity and the Environment,” “seeking to re-conceptualize their relationship to the Earth could benefit from the rich contributions of Indigenous creation stories, the understanding of nature as being members of one's family, rituals used to relate to the various seasons and creatures in the natural world,

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<sup>10</sup> I need to note that it is important not to oversimplify the relationship between Catholic Liberation Theology and Indigenous epistemologies. As Kristin Norget states, that while “much scholarship on Latin American Indigenous theology identifies in the fusion of progressive Catholicism and indigenous ‘popular’ belief systems and practices, a powerful transformative catalyst for a profound political conscientization and empowerment of indigenous people . . . any comprehensive understanding of the phenomenology of the interaction of distinct knowledge systems in a context of cultural confrontation demands cognizance of the political conditions impinging on a particular instance of cultural mixing; nor should these conditions be considered separately from the positionality of the discrete social actors or groups involved in the process” (79,81).

and concepts of community organization for long-term sustainability” (2001). In this chapter, I follow Hallman as well as other religious scholars I elaborate later, who articulate the need to encourage the growing strength of a process already underway of generating fundamentally transformative theologies that reincorporate humans into Creation and critique a capitalist system that by definition must exploit and damage it.

Since, as Kruikshank following Renato Rosaldo argues, “narratives *shape* rather than reflect human conduct”(author italics135), ecotheology’s efforts to re-vision the environmental ethics communicated by the Bible are a powerful way to redirect the largely negative ecological conduct that a theological vision of separate and superior humans provokes. In writing about Yukon prophecy narratives, Cruikshank asserts that these “narratives are one more instance of the continuing use of tradition as a resource to frame explanations about the contemporary world. They offer a competing form of historical consciousness that deserves to be taken seriously”(136). Similarly, in “The Gift in the Animal: The Ontology of Hunting and Human-animal Sociality,” Paul Nadasdy, following Elizabeth Povinelli and Tim Ingold, argues for “taking aboriginal peoples’ ideas seriously”(26). Nadasdy’s article explores the possibilities for rethinking Euro-American theories about the world in the context of aboriginal hunting societies and human-animal relationships. He writes that, “even as we argue for the importance and legitimacy of indigenous knowledge and practices, our own theories remain rooted in Euro-American ontological assumptions that are fundamentally incompatible with them”(26). Since, he writes, “very few Euro-American scholars are willing to accept the proposition that animals might qualify as conscious actors capable of engaging in social relations with humans . . . Euro-American anthropologists—even those familiar with aboriginal theories of human–animal relations—have been reluctant to expand their own analytic concept of society to include

animals, much less sentient spiritually powerful ones” (29). Nadasdy goes on to argue “yet this is precisely what the study of human–animal relations among northern hunting peoples calls for.” As Greg Cajete made clear in comments to me after a climate change conference in Washington DC, “the biggest challenge is for Western thinkers to invite Indigenous people to the table as equals with real ideas, as the teachers for once, instead of the children.”<sup>11</sup>

The ecotheology movement’s innovations in articulating Christian doctrine, generate a complementariness of philosophies that *does* take Indigenous philosophies seriously, as Cruikshank, Nadasdy, and Cajete assert should be the case, and they are a radical departure from using the Bible to rationalize the long history of destructive clashes between Indigenous and Christian ways of being in the world. In two specific Indigenous stories I explore, *Myth of the Earth Grasper* and the *Diné bahanè* in *From the Glittering World*, the social relationships of humans are always considered within the most basic reality that humans are just one member-species of an entire biotic community. Human struggles in terms of decisions about how to treat and value each other are conducted *within* the context of the relationship with, and therefore, the responsibility to, the rest of the living earth. Along with a deepened sense of responsibility to the living earth, an understanding of human connection to the “rest of Creation” generates the possibility for an egalitarianism that creates more openings for valuing difference within *human*

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<sup>11</sup> I had this exchange with Professor Cajete after a climate change conference at the Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC, in July of 2011. Cajete and Melissa Nelson spoke at the conference prior to keynote speaker, author and lecturer, Jeremy Rifkin. Cajete expressed consternation that Rifkin was allotted the most time and paid the most, and yet only very generally discussed the part Indigenous peoples and their knowledge could play in addressing climate change. Rifkin, who is not Indigenous, was at the time advising the European Union on their climate change policy, but did not indicate how Indigenous peoples might have a seat at the table for that discussion. In the question and answer session, Cajete attempted to get him to more specifically articulate actual forms for Indigenous participation on the climate change questions, both in Europe and in the United States, but Rifkin did not sufficiently address the question.

relationships. Conversely, wrangling with those human relationships in the absence of understanding, and I would even say *prioritizing*, our core relationship with the rest of the biotic community as one of integration with it, results in lost opportunities that we can ill afford for conflict resolution and improved global equity among peoples. The direction ecotheology is moving in terms of theological study and Biblical interpretation, as I will show, sees human relationships to the rest of the living earth in ways compatible with the relationships these stories communicate and will benefit from taking Indigenous creation narratives as seriously as they do Genesis.

### **The Onondaga and Navajo Creation Stories: Interconnected Creation and the Perpetual Hope for Human Transformation**

While the *Myth of the Grasper* is an earth-diver story from the Northeast and the *Diné bahaanè* is a Southwestern emergence story,<sup>12</sup> both emphasize a cyclical development of continual education from engagement in the world, whereby humans learn through experience to live in properly respectful relationships with each other, with other-than-human beings, and with the earth and the cosmos—all their kin relations. The kinship ethics of these stories have less to do with praising or elevating “nature” as such than with defining human relationships to other humans and other-than-human beings within the context of the living earth that provides the essentials for human survival. In these stories, creation, mistakes and consequences, learning, and course-correction create a cycle of ever-possible transformation based on experiences that are not solely inscribed in a teleological process.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Indigenous creation stories found in the East and Southwest of North America take two general forms. In earth-diver stories predominant in the East, sky beings in some way fall toward the earth covered in water, which gives rise to the growth of land and eventually humans. In emergence stories, predominant in the Southwest, human beings result from a series of emergences from worlds deep in the earth to the current world.

<sup>13</sup> I express thanks here to Michael (Miishen) Carpentier, Jolene Rickard, and Albert White Hat,

Both stories exist in myriad versions and reflect oral traditions that emphasize the positive power of transformation through time and circumstance. In the introduction to his 1984 translation, Paul Zolbrod writes that “the Navajo creation story was the soul of a distinct Navajo identity that found shape under a particular set of social or ceremonial conditions . . . From telling to telling it could change depending upon the singer, the audience, the particular storytelling event, and a very complicated set of ceremonial conditions having to do with illness, departure, return, celebration, or any one of a number of other social occasions”(19). Likewise, Mohawk explained that the Iroquois story was for centuries, “experienced through the sense of the ear and not the eye, and that the experience of hearing something in a large group, as the story was intended to be told, is quite different from reading it in isolation as is now done”(vii). Long winter nights and large numbers of people living in the closely-knit communities of the longhouse facilitated such an exchange.

His written version of *Myth of the Earth Grasper*, according to Mohawk, “was intended to collect some obvious truths into a collective wisdom about the arrangement humankind has with the universe” – “the fundamental message on the story’s own terms is that human beings should be grateful that they live in a world in which nature provides a life for them” (xvii, xii, xiv). Nature also provides death, and “acts in ways that seem pitilessly cruel tearing loved ones from our grasp even when they have performed every requirement of acknowledgment of the

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Indigenous scholars, who offered me instructive insights into creation stories and their interpretation into English. Miishen, an Anishinaabe speaker, expressed serious reservations with Indigenous creation stories translated to English. The vastly different cultural frames of Indigenous and Western thought systems play out in each culture’s specific languages as well. Out of its original language, the spirit of a story can often be lost, and the dangers of interpretations to suit specific agendas abound. I have chosen translations communicated by Indigenous scholars who were raised in their communities. I attempt here to be cognizant of these issues and approach these stories as revelatory of complex thought systems that communicate important ethical perspectives regarding human relationships to the biosphere.

sacred”(xii). Death is necessary, however, to the ultimately powerful forces of regeneration and transformation, so the Iroquois “culture concludes that humans are nevertheless fortunate to enjoy all that they have”(vii) and must live with the good mind to appreciate it. “Humans exist in a context of nature, and not vice versa,” Mohawk writes, “that which created our world is not society, but the power of the universe”(xviii). Humankind in this context is positioned in direct kin relationships with both the cosmos and the rest of the other than human world. The story “assumes,” in Mohawk’s words, “that a people who have these very strong relationships . . . will be on their way to becoming a good people,” though not without the continual work of correcting inevitable and ever-persistent human folly (xvii).

In the Onondaga story, when a pregnant Mature Blossoms falls through a hole in her sky home to the region of earth below, she becomes the cosmic being that manifests the complex kinship connection between cosmos and the earth and all its beings. She is daughter, sister, and wife of the sky beings and will eventually be great-grandmother to the humans who will be created from the life, blood, and breath of one of her twin grandsons. Mature Blossoms’ fall toward a vast open sea is broken by Water Fowl Beings who place her on the back of a turtle. From the mud at the bottom of the sea, Turtle grows in size to become the earth that supports Mature Blossoms and is eventually the Ancient One who mates with her daughter from whom the twin who creates humans is born. In this complex web of kin relations, the cosmos, the earth, animals, and humans share the ‘cosmic bloodline.’ This web connects all life: Turtle is at once the earth itself, the husband of the cosmic-being Mature Blossoms’ daughter, and the grandfather of the humans that the good twin, Skyholder, creates from earth that is “really alive” (35), and was in first place, the turtle’s back, and in the second, his actual father.

Skyholder creates not only humans, but a vast array of diverse beings necessary to the

complex ecosystems of biodiversity humans need for life. His powers are aided by yet another cosmic being, Mature Blossoms' brother, Elder Brother, whose natural warmth becomes the sun. Sun and earth join to produce abundant life—plants and animals, that like their human brothers, “all become numerous”(36-7). But, good kin relations fostering creation, growth, and cultivation among human beings, other-than-human beings and the rest of the living earth, are continually troubled by bad. Skyholder's brother, Flint, and their grandmother, who believes that it is Skyholder who killed her daughter during childbirth, perpetually trouble Skyholder. Their disruptions, significantly, take the form of abusing Skyholder's gifts of food and sustenance, continually desiring and taking more than their share of what the earth produces, and on Flint's part, of seeking to undo his brother's productive creations with disruptive creatures meant to destroy life rather than advance it.

When Skyholder admonishes his grandmother for “putting too much energy into making life difficult for your grandchildren, the human beings”(43), she challenges him to a “gamble for life”(42). The gamble becomes a climactic moment in creation when Skyholder articulates the priority of good kin relations and comprehends that “eventually [the bad relations of his brother and grandmother will] seek to ruin all of [his] works”(49)—the “works” which make possible human survival *and* integrate humans with the whole of Skyholder's creation. With the assistance of animals he created, Skyholder wins the gamble and gains “charge of everything,”(52) signifying the elevation of good kin relations over self-centeredness and greed for more than one's share of what the living earth produces.

Flint remains untransformed by his loss, but Skyholder's victory is witnessed by human beings whom he tasks with remembering the stakes of the gamble for life and the importance of maintaining good kin relations to each other and to other-than-human beings who will always

assist them. He warns the humans as well: “I believe my brother has the power to seduce the minds of human beings and then all will become spoiled and destitute on the earth” (89). Skyholder admonishes, if “people arrive at my brother’s lodge . . . they will see great suffering” (88). He instructs humans in how to offer thanksgiving to their cosmic and plant and animal relatives for their lives and sustenance and reminds them that good relations to each other are essential for their good minds *and* to the health of the earth. Flint’s continual battles to undo the work of his brother take the form of disruptions that cause humans to forget their kin responsibilities to each other, to the earth, and to their cosmic relatives. Under Flint’s influence, humans fight each other, steal necessities from each other, and they turn away from the ceremonies Skyholder informs them are necessary to show gratitude to and maintain balance in the biotic community. Thus in the story, humans must pay the consequences and learn from their mistakes. The story closes (but begins again rather than ending) with the establishment of the clans as a system of kin, emphasizing the necessity to work as a community in support of each other and toward the maintenance of ongoing creation and regeneration.

Quite different from the Iroquois whose cultural and social systems are linked to well-populated villages anchored by the longhouse in deciduous northeastern forests, the Navajo Nation environment is mainly plateaus and the dry desert-scrub regions and sub-alpine conifer forests of the Southwest. Through a history of hunting, raiding, agriculture, and most recently fossil fuel exploration and production, *traditional* Navajo living remains small communal units on wide expanses of land; what Gary Witherspoon describes as “subsistence residential units” that are “based on a unique combination of individualism and communalism”(94). As Witherspoon makes clear, kinship ethics for the Navajo resemble those expressed by the Iroquois in taking into consideration social relations among the entire biotic community. Witherspoon

writes:

According to Navajo cultural beliefs, each being in the world has the right to live, to eat, and to act for itself. These rights to life and freedom extend to plants and animals as well as to human beings. Only real and present human need justifies the killing of any animal or the cutting down of a tree. When human need requires such action, a prayer must always be said to the plant or animal, explaining one's need and asking the pardon and indulgence of the soul of the animal or plant to be taken. (94)

Families and clans for the Navajo are, in Irvin Morris's words, "very large" and create mutual obligations among a web of relatives who, in the kinship system, extend well beyond nuclear families through both the mother and father's clans (47). "We are parts of large groups, which are in turn strands in the web making up *Diné* society," writes Morris, "knowing your clan weaves you inextricably into that web. Knowing your clan also ties you directly to the *Diné* creation story, because all the clans are descended from the four original clans that were created by Changing Woman from her body"(47).

Changing Woman, *Asdzqá nádleehé*, a central figure of the *Diné bahanè*, is according to Gladys Reichard, the Earth (407), and in Navajo, the Earth or the land itself is called mother (68). Witherspoon describes "Earth Mother, like all mothers," as a being who "cares for, protects and provides for her children"(68). Changing Woman embodies the processes of reproduction and regeneration. As in Iroquois cosmology, in the Navajo worldview, along with kin relationships and the respect of the autonomy of other-than-human beings, regeneration is of central importance. Regeneration is enabled through what Morris labels the elemental concepts of *Diné* cosmology, "duality and reciprocity"(38) achieved in the first place through the "delicate balance between male and female intrinsic to Navajo worldview"(10) and communicated in the

creation story. *Hózhó* or balance is attained, according to Zolbrod, through the achievement and maintenance of sexual harmony that governs male-female relationships and is “reflected in the harmony of relationships between all sorts of counterparts in the broad cosmic scheme: earth and sky, night and day, mortals and supernaturals, summer and winter”(10-11).

In the *Diné bahanè*, the balance among beings that perpetuates regeneration is central to good kin relations in each of the four worlds below our current world, the fifth, where humans finally emerged to stay. First Man and First Woman, *Atsè Hastiin* and *Atsè Asdáázn*, are created in the fourth world by the Holy People, the *Hashch'ééh Diné'e*, from the corn that becomes the central staple of human sustenance, a genesis that ties humans in primary relationships to both earth and the cosmos. For a time after their creation, there is conjugal peace between First Man and First Woman, and ceremonies for rain, good life, and abundant harvests are properly performed. Prosperity is interrupted, however, when First Man and First Woman engage in a quarrel that Zolbrod described as “both sexual and egocentric”(1984: 6). First Man believes First Woman does not appreciate his hunting, and First Woman makes an ungrateful remark. The men, siding with First Man, and the women, siding with First Woman, separate to opposite sides of a river.

The disruption in conjugal harmony leads to disruption of the regenerative ability of humans *and* of their balance with the rest of the biotic community. The women who cannot hunt and have no tools to farm (since the men took all tools not made by women with them) are able to raise fewer and fewer crops each year. They are starving and lonely. Some of the women masturbate with cactus and stones, resulting in grave consequences for the regeneration of human communities later in the story. The men who continue to hunt and raise substantial crops have too much food, and it is left to rot in the fields. First Man realizes life and future

generations cannot be sustained without the reproductive power of the women and without the balanced conjugal relationship between men and women that sustains a proper balance with the earth. He meets with First Woman to talk about this, and they decide “unless they become one people again, they would disappear”(Morris 1997: 10). Though conjugal balance is the focus here, the relationship between what the earth produces and provides *in the context* of that balance is central to the decision. The regeneration of the earth and of the people is intimately tied together with harmony in the relationship between First Man and First Woman, who wisely decide to reunite.

The reunion brings great rejoicing and feasting until a flood threatens to destroy the people. Reminiscent of the partnerships formed by other-than-human beings and humans in times of trouble in *Myth of the Earth Grasper*, Weasel, Squirrel and locust aid the humans in climbing to the fifth world to escape the water. But, it is the soil from the seven sacred mountains *or the actual earth itself* that truly saves the people when it produces the reed the humans climb to safety in the fifth world. The people prosper for a time in their new home until monsters – the consequence of the women’s masturbation during the fight between First Man and First Women – begin to roam the earth. The monsters kill all but four of the people, and it seems as if the people will end in consequence to their ‘original sin’ of bad conjugal relations. In what appears to be the final days for humans suffering the consequences of their bad kin behavior in the fourth world, First Man hears the cries of the infant Changing Woman, *Asdzqq nádleehé*, as he prays. She is a powerful deity and grows to maturity in only four days. Changing Woman, who as Reichard makes clear, is the earth itself, is made pregnant by the sun and gives birth to the twins, *Tobághishchini*, Born for Water, and *Naayéé’neizgháni*, Monster Slayer, who destroy all but four of the monsters. These enemies, Old Age, Poverty, Hunger, and

Cold are left alive by Monster Slayer, so the “people would not grow complacent and immortal”(14). With the presence of the four monsters, the need for regeneration remains central in the fifth world, and the people must remain always in good relation to each other and to their mother earth and father sun in order to have protection from the monsters that can take their lives.

In Zolbrad’s more detailed translation, the behavior and eventual deaths of the monsters and their re-use at hands of Monster Slayer communicate specific environmental ethics. The first set of monsters Monster Slayer kills (with help from his brother called He Who Cuts the Life Out of His Enemy in the Zolbrod text) have habits of eating far more than their share of food, rummaging through crops and drinking lakes dry, and, significantly, giving thanks for none of it. With their destruction of crops and overuse of water, the monsters are creating ecological imbalances that threaten the people as much as their greediness for flesh does. Even though they are responsible for the deaths of the monsters, Monster Slayer and those who help him recognize the use-value of monster blood, bones, skin (hides, feathers) and surviving offspring to “turn evil into something good”(220); an act of recycling and waste reduction, where waste and excess become valuable if broken down, distributed, and reused in alternative ways.

The *Diné bahanè*, like *Myth of the Earth Grasper*, comes to an end at a new beginning. When the land is safe again, Sun, to achieve the final balance for the fifth world marries Changing Woman, who prior to leaving with him, rubs skin from under her arms and her breasts to create the four original clans. Thus, the clans, the earth (Changing Woman) and the Sun “are of one spirit . . . of equal worth”(Zolbrad 277, 275). Like the *Myth of the Earth Grasper*, the *Diné bahanè* avoids, in Donna Haraway’s words, “rising to sublime and final ends”(15). The presence of the clans in kinship relation with each other and with the earth and sun and the

presence of the four monsters intentionally left alive intimate that being human in the world means accepting the persistent challenge to life of impending death and human folly and understanding that to mitigate these challenges maintaining the proper kin relationships that engender regeneration of both people and the earth is imperative.

### **Christian Theology and “Split-head Thinking”**

The kincentric focus of *Myth of the Earth Grasper* and the *Diné bahaanè* results in an earth that is literally alive and part of an animated community of extended kin relations. This epistemological orientation to the biotic community presents a vastly different relationship between human beings and the entire living earth than the *dominant* interpretation of the Christian creation narrative in Genesis that posits humans as the masters or stewards of a non-human world created for their use. Christian cosmology is traditionally based in dichotomies, human/nonhuman, matter/energy, mind/body, material/immaterial, animate/inanimate, and nature/culture, what cultural ecologist, Melissa Nelson describes as “split-head thinking” (288-298).<sup>14</sup> It is this dominant mode of Christianity, famously critiqued by Lynn White, Jr. in his essay, “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis,” that materially separates people from nature—or more accurately, from the rest of the biotic community—that has made finding common ground between Christianity and Indigenous belief systems incredibly challenging.

Attempts to find convergences have often been located in colonial contexts of unequal power relationships and have resulted, Cordova writes, in consistent assumptions on the part of Western missionaries and thinkers “that the concepts of Western society will have direct cognates with the concepts of the indigenous American”(101). This is not the case. “Religion”

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<sup>14</sup> Also see Cheyfitz, “Balancing the Earth: Native American Philosophies and the Environmental Crisis”, Arnold Krupat, *All That Remains*, Rosemary Reuther, “Ecofeminism: The Challenge to Theology”. *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans.*”

such as it is conceived by a theology built upon concepts like “God,” “Heaven,” “Hell,” and “Soul” do not have direct conceptual relations in Native thought, so the term ‘Indigenous religions’ and their relationship to the practice of theology are fraught from the outset. In many Indigenous thought systems since all creation is assumed to be local, each creation story refers to a local and bounded space. Cordova asserts that, “Native Americans share the idea . . . of separate creations. Each group has a creation story that tells only of their unique creation,” therefore “no one argues over the truth or validity of one group’s story over another. It is understood that the story being told is a localized creation” and “no one group sees themselves as the one and only correct group”(104, 5). No one group of humans pretends to understand the fate of the earth for all other humans and other than human beings.

In “Balancing the Earth: Native American Philosophies and the Environmental Crisis,” Eric Cheyfitz, employs Wallace Steven’s construction of a “rage for order,”<sup>15</sup> to engage Max Weber’s articulation of Protestant ethics and show how a determined need for ordered moral progress envisions the trajectory of individual lives and historical time as propelled inevitably forward toward a pre-designed Christian end. This trajectory replicated in a progressively destructive capitalism, “which projects itself as the rational system par excellence” (140), perceives nature only as exploitable resource, useful for but separate from man’s progress toward the grace of God. Kidwell/Noley/Tinker have asserted that Indigenous perceptions of time, on

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<sup>15</sup> Cheyfitz writes: “The story of the west might be projected as the story of what Wallace Stevens calls a ‘rage for order’ in his poem ‘The Idea of Order at Key West’ (128). It is difficult to know whether to read this phrase as paradox or irony. But in line with my purposes in what follows, I read it ironically, as a kind of fundamental or founding contradiction. This is the irony, then, that drives Western history from 1492 forward—a date, the European invasion of the Americas, that can mark the beginning of the emergence of capitalism as a global system. It is an irony constitutive of the capitalist system, as Max Weber suggested a century ago in his formative essay *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905). As Weber conjectured, capitalism, which projects itself as the rational system par excellence, is driven by a terror of chaos, or in Steven’s words a ‘rage for order’”(Cheyfitz 2009: 139-40).

the other hand, are cyclical, rooted in the processes of the physical earth and of the particular place to which specific peoples believe themselves to be related: “Human beings are simply part of the ongoing process of repetition of events in the environment,” so the ceremonial traditions of Indigenous peoples are meant as “human participation in renewing the processes of the world” (12-14).

All this is not to say that Indigenous ways of conceptualizing relationships among a forms of life on the planet have not or do not at times end in environmental damage. The two stories I have explicated make clear the human potential to do harm when good kin relations among humans and the rest of the biotic community are misguided or not upheld. They also make clear the necessity to course correct when it becomes evident that humans have caused disruption—either intentionally or unintentionally. In what circumstances this need is identified and what this course correction might mean are determined within a cultural context that centralizes kinship and the level of respect that kinship with other-than-human beings implies. These kinship ethics lead to an engagement with the biotic community that recognizes its intimate relationship to human health, well-being, and regeneration.

On the other hand, the dominant Christian traditions have interpreted the earth as inanimate and “nature” as “essentially hostile, stingy, unstable, dangerous”(Moore et al Eds. 105), the land outside the garden on which Adam and Eve were made to toil all the days of their lives (Gen. 3:17). Within this paradigm, Earth and its myriad resources are translated as property<sup>16</sup> for use by a people legitimated and authorized by one true and transcendent God in a creation story where man is something apart from and dominant over the earth. Though contemporary concepts of environmentalism may speak to relatively more biocentric and

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<sup>16</sup> See Cheyfitz, *Poetics of Imperialism*; also Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats*, Chapter 6, “‘Just Like a Whiteman:’ Property and Land Claims in Kluane Country.”

ecocentric perspectives, they are still weighted with the influence of Christian ethics that separate humans, in one way or another, from the other-than-human world.<sup>17</sup>

Acknowledgment by ecotheologians of past pain, ongoing damage, and continued failures in eliminating the dominance and exploitation narratives of Christianity indicates the need for a redoubled effort to engage ecotheological frameworks. Christians make up over one third of the world's people including significant numbers of Indigenous peoples.<sup>18</sup> Engaging Christians in the possibilities of theological transformation that ecotheology suggests means engaging huge numbers of people in a new and better vision of their existential relationship with the rest of creation—for anyone concerned with the health of the planet and its living beings, Christianity is not dismissible.<sup>19</sup> I think Richard S. Gottlieb's pragmatic approach in the introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* is worth noting. Gottlieb writes,

So if people do not always or even for the most part, get inspired by religion to act in moral ways, at least they do sometimes. Of course, religious support for environmental sanity cannot *guarantee* success to the environmental movement. But then again, what can? At the very least, having large, wealthy, and highly respected institutions throw some of their weight in that direction can only increase our chances in having a modicum of success. If we are to make the necessary but extraordinarily difficult changes in the way we live, we will certainly benefit from every voice which can help motivate us. (9)

Gottlieb gives the example of the 1997 pronouncement of Bartholomew, spiritual leader to three

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<sup>17</sup> In the following chapters I address *preserving* wilderness as separated from people, *conserving* resources perceived as existing mainly for the benefit of people, and, in the case of radically deep ecologists, seeing people as an enemy from which nature needs to be saved. Each of these concepts serve to philosophically and rhetorically disconnect people from the rest of the biosphere.

<sup>18</sup> Numbers according to <http://www.religioustolerance.org/worldrel.htm>

<sup>19</sup> See Wendell Berry (2010) for his analysis regarding the dismissal of the Bible and Christianity by environmentalists from which I paraphrase the phrase “Christianity is not dismissible”.

hundred million Christians worldwide, making the commitment of a “crime against the natural world” in the form of climate change, deforestation, wetlands destruction, or contamination of lands and waters with poisonous substances, a sin. Raising environmental decimation to the level of sin for Christians, Gottlieb points out, makes environmental responsibility not only a matter of physical health, but of spiritual health as well (13).

While I am advocating, like Hallman and others, engagement with Indigenous philosophies in these efforts to find complimentary ground between Indigenous traditions and Christianity, I also realize the need to do so with reinvigorated sensitivity to the legitimacy of Indigenous belief systems in their own right and a prioritized agenda of the cultural survival and sovereignty of Indigenous communities as opposed to past efforts centered in missionization and assimilation. We need, to again quote Melissa Nelson, a “trickster consciousness” that “mediates between supposedly contradictory forces or elements by retaining [the best] aspects of both, something that our Western paradigm often has a difficult time with”(291).

### **The Genesis Story: New Beginnings**

White’s influential critique of Christianity’s ecological faults, according to Callicott, “provoked a veritable tidal wave of apologetic literature defending the environmental attitudes and values of the larger Judeo-Christian worldview that [White] had so casually excoriated”(66). Though Callicott credited White for “implicitly set[ting] the theoretical agenda for a future of environmental philosophy” (65), he finds fault with White’s conflation of “two very different genesisises, Genesis-P and Genesis-J”(71). Most of the apologia in response to White, Callicott argued, focuses on a stewardship ethic that can be extrapolated from God’s directive to man in the Genesis J (Chapter 2) to “till it [the ‘it’ referring to the Garden of Eden such as it had been created with lush vegetation, valuable minerals, and water] and keep it”(Gen.2:15-6). The

concept of stewardship currently at the center of American environmental policy, while better by degrees than the despotic interpretation, nevertheless engenders an ethic of paternalistic management that makes Christian *man*<sup>20</sup> God's gardener and environmental manager and keeps him at the top of and central to the rest of nature. He is responsible to determine the best management practices that will sustain the earth for his needs. How 'best management practices' get defined is a matter of culturally inflected agendas that can often be at odds with the kinship ethics of Indigenous communities.

Callicott offers what he called a third more radical reading of Genesis suggested to him by John Muir's posthumously published journal, *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf*; one that communicates a more egalitarian relationship between humans and the other than human world. Muir asserts that God made man and "every other creature, however noxious and insignificant to us" from a "common elementary fund"—"the dust of the earth;" therefore, human beings and other than human beings are "our fellow mortals," God's "children" and "part of God's family" whom He loves (Muir in Callicott 70-1). In Muir's interpretation, though God's place as creator of the cosmos, the earth, and all life upon earth is not contested, a human's relationship to creation is not one of despot or steward, but one of a family of autonomous and equally loved beings. Callicott goes on to argue that Genesis J, the *second* chapter of Genesis, which contradicts P in terms of the order of creation – in J the animals are created before man; in P the opposite is the case – when interpreted *without conflation* with Genesis P supports Muir's reading.

Callicott's Murian-based reading of Genesis makes humans kin to other-than-human

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<sup>20</sup> I use "man" because the exchange in Genesis regarding human relationships to the rest of the Creation takes place between God and Adam; Eve in this patriarchal construction is meant to assist Adam in his mandate from God.

beings in a way that moves closer to the kinship ethics of the Iroquois and Navajo creation stories. However, an important distinction remains. Cajete articulates Indigenous kinship ethics as a “natural democracy” that like Muir’s bioegalitarianism, sees humans as “related and interdependent with plants, animals, stones, water, clouds, and everything else”(in Cheyfitz 144). But, Cajete’s construction of natural democracy makes clear that in Indigenous cosmologies, there is no transcendent parent. Rather the “spirit of the universe reside[s] in the earth and things of the earth,” and the “perceptions of the cycles of nature, behavior of animals, growth of plants, and interdependence of all things in nature *determine[ ]* culture, that is, ethics, morals, religious expression, politics, and economics”(in Cheyfitz 144 my italics). Humans, therefore, not only recognize familial ties within the biotic community but comprehend that these relationships in the biotic community influence and direct human enterprise in all its manifestations.

Callicott’s reading also glosses over a fact of J that Jacques Derrida finds central in his claim that both P *and* J are essentially anthropocentric. Derrida argues that God’s order to Adam to name the animals in J makes the categories of humans and animals completely incommensurate and establishes human dominance and control. The moment of naming for Derrida is the moment in which the silence of nature (the animal) is the deafness of man, or more accurately, man’s narcissistic *refusal to hear* that which is not his own voice or even to contemplate the possibility that voices other than his own exist (400). Like Derrida, Donna Haraway, invoking Bruno Latour, argues that the “culturally normal fantasy of human exceptionalism” positing humans as the sole species in possession of language and understanding puts humanity on “the opposite side of the Great Divide from all the *others*” (11 my italics).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> In “others” Haraway includes “the colonized, the enslaved, the not citizen, and the animal – all

As opposed to these separations, principles of ecotheology generally integrate God into nature, simultaneously reintegrating humans with the rest of the living earth as well. Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether write that, “Christianity in the modern period almost lost interest in the revelatory power of the natural world and reinforced the tendency to set humanity over against nature in a manipulative, polluting way. . . contemporary cosmology rediscovers the universe and Earth’s nature to be a *dynamic relational system* – in Thomas Berry’s term, a ‘*communion of subjects*’ with whom humans are to live fittingly”(xxxv my italics). And Gordon D. Kaufman writes, “the very ideas of God, and of humanity’s relation to God, as these have been worked out over the millennia of Christian history, . . . tend to blur or even conceal our *embeddedness* in the natural order as we today have come to conceive it”(24 author italics). Kaufman’s conception brings God and ecological processes into close connection with the idea of “*serendipitous creativity* as a basic metaphor for thinking of God, in place of the personalistic and agential language so prominent in our traditions”(26). The conception of creativity centers an “on going process or activity in the world and does not call forth an image of a kind of ‘cosmic person’ standing somehow beyond the world and working out ‘his’ ([he] use[s] the word advisedly) purposes in it”(26). God becomes then “an expression of awe-inspiring creativity” whose activity is manifest throughout the universe as opposed to the “anthropomorphically conceived divine person that has been the focus of so much Christian faith and thinking” (27).

In his 1991 book, *Loving Nature*, James Nash argues that the creation story in Genesis communicates compelling ecological ethics. In a formulation reminiscent of Indigenous kinship ethics, Nash writes that “since God is the source of all in the Christian doctrine of creation, all creatures share in a common relationship,” that he refers to as a “kinship” symbolized by the

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reduced to type, all Others to rational man, and all essential to his bright constitution – [the discourse] at the heart of racism [that] flourishes, lethally, in the entrails of humanism” (18).

“formation of both humans and other animals from the same element, the earth” in Genesis 2:17-19 (97). In this early work, Nash concludes that the God of the Bible is the God of all creation, not just humankind, and therefore, the Bible indicates a divine mandate for ecological responsibility. In his later thinking, Nash sees Scripture as more of a challenge to ecological ethics than a mandate for them. He maintains that Genesis 1 and a smattering of other texts might be read as ecologically ethical. On the whole though, he strongly asserts that the Bible reflects an anthropocentric mindset, with the emphasis overwhelmingly on the divine–human relationship. Consequently, the Bible can “serve as it does, as a justification for ecological indifference”(225). Nash does not fault the Bible on this premise arguing that a collection of ancient texts written by diverse authors and editors through varied socio-historical conditions should not be expected to express a single moral viewpoint nor to embody “emerging moral sensitivities” regarding the earth in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (225). Nash indicts interpretations of supreme *biblical authority* and argues for Christian ethics that recognize the moral pluralism and moral faults in the Bible, that reject the “prescriptive or legalistic use of Scripture in moral argument,” and that interpret the Bible as functioning “more as exemplary guidance than comprehensive instruction”(226). He focuses, like Cordova and Haraway, on empirical knowledge gained through comprehension of a creation-wide relationality that posits in the first instance, human beings’ non-hierarchical situated-ness within the living earth and the responsibility – and the consequences of irresponsibility – engendered in this context.

Another form of ecotheology, ecofeminist theology resists gender-based hierarchy and critiques traditional models of hierarchy that set God over the world, humans over the rest of the biotic community, and particular communities of humans over other humans. The Iroquois and Navajo peoples are not coincidentally matrilineal societies. However, as the stories indicate,

they do not reverse a patriarchal model by making claims to an inherent feminine superiority. Rather, through their prioritization of regeneration, they emphasize mutual obligations in anti-hierarchical relationships among humans and humans and other than human beings. Ecofeminist theology addresses the fundamental challenge of creating a new theological discourse that “grapple[s] with the whole structure of the Christian story”(Reuther 2000,103). This discourse seeks to replace narratives of domination, separation of matter and spirit, and a drive for immortality structured around the maintenance of patriarchal power with ethical frameworks that “harmonize our lives with the life of the whole earth community” (104) through the reciprocity of responsible relationships within the biotic community and the limitations this reciprocity implies. Process theology, initially conceptualized by Alfred North Whitehead, like ecofeminist theology, also “appears to be summoning the Christian community to the development of a theology of the environment”(Rae 79). Process theology is based on the principle that the Holy Spirit is immanent in all creation and part of the creative process. This Spirit is at once active love embodying “value, purpose, experience, freedom, and relationship” and the passive love that “suggests a willingness to suffer and to be formed by the other” that engenders calls for justice (79).

These ecotheological orientations are radical departures from traditional theological discourse, and they move Christian theology closer to Indigenous kinship ethics such as they are expressed in the Navajo and Iroquois creation stories in which the creative forces of the universe are literally related to, and thus manifest in, all beings of the earth. They share with Indigenous kinship ethics an emphasis on relatedness, respect, and responsibility in terms of the biotic community and, in the critique of hierarchy and separation, imply an environmental justice paradigm focused on prioritization of connections among human communities and between

human communities and rest of the living earth.

### ***Solar Storms and an Indigenous Book of Genesis***

Linda Hogan's 1995 novel *Solar Storms* contains an interpretation of Genesis that I read as bringing together the Indigenous ethics described in the Onondaga and Navajo creation myths and the transformative ethics of ecotheology. In *Solar Storms*, the despotic interpretation of Genesis that authorizes violence against Indigenous peoples and their lands is first exposed for the genocidal text it can be and then transformed into a story of life and regeneration. *Solar Storms* is the story of Angel Jensen, the abused child of a mother who herself had been tortured and abused by her mother and the white men who had come to their home territory in the Boundary Waters between Canada and Minnesota in search of furs and resources. Angel returns to her ancestral home at the Boundary Waters, significantly named Adam's Rib, after years of unhappiness in foster homes. At Adam's Rib, she is reunited with her great and great, great grandmothers on her father's side and her unofficial adoptive mother named Bush. Angel's return to Adam's Rib is the genesis of Angel's transformation from an abused and rootless child to a woman who understands the intimate links between her own identity, the identity of her people,<sup>22</sup> and the significance of human relationship with the rest of the living earth. Angel's arrival at Adam's Rib is also the beginning of the transformation of the Genesis narrative the novel enacts.

Angel's great-grandmother reveals to her the story of her origins and emphasizes the importance of origin stories in determining the ethics of human existence within the living earth. Agnes makes clear to Angel the importance of the stories we tell and how we understand them.

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<sup>22</sup> Though Hogan situates them geographically, she does not specify a particular tribal nation to which Angel and the people of Adam's Rib belong. She makes reference to Dora Rouge, Angel's great, great grandmother being related to the Northern Cree, but no tribally specific designation is given to Adam's Rib.

Hogan writes that Agnes “searched for words. As in Genesis, the first word shaped what would follow. It was of utmost importance. It determined the kind of world that would be created”(37). Agnes tells Angel how the mother that had abused her, had herself been beaten, raped, and starved by her mother and the white men who abused the land. Agnes explains that Angel’s mother “wasn’t the *original sin*”(49 my italics). The original sin had occurred “where time and history and genocide gather and move like a cloud above spilled oceans of blood”(101). In an ecofeminist theological reversal, Agnes removes original sin from Eve and from women in general, and communicates that a male dominated hierarchy means women have historically been oppressed and violated. Agnes places original sin not in man or woman but in the notion of dominance itself. Original sin begins not with Eve, but with the despotic interpretation of the Genesis story that provided Christian rationalization for murder and the forced conversion of ‘savages’ at the dawn of contact in the ‘New World.’

The action of the novel takes place in the early 1970’s during the rise of AIM (the American Indian Movement), a resurgence of active Indian resistance to U.S. government oppression, and the battles against hydroelectric power providers seeking to develop a series of dams that would necessarily flood thousands of acres of Indigenous homelands and destroy their ecosystems. Angel’s direct exposure to the assault on her ancestral lands and her people and her witnessing of and participation in the Indigenous resistance seems to situate her search for self and community in a history of clashing cosmologies that could lead to destruction of both human and the other than human world.

But, *clash* is not the emphasis of the novel; transformation is. Angel’s rewrites her story as she becomes invested in the Indigenous ethics of her people. For her people to survive in the long term, the story of the dominators must be transformed as well. Angel’s return to Adam’s

Rib enables her to begin to understand a new story of creation and existence that breaks the cycle of violence perpetuated by her abuse and the abuse of people and lands before her. The women of Adam's Rib are self-sufficient and independent and the men with whom they partner respect their autonomy and their strength. The partnerships between male and female characters in Adam's Rib resist the patriarchal implications of the despotic interpretation of Genesis, and read the creation of the man-woman couple, like the *Diné bahanè*, as differentiated but *equal*. The equality of man and woman and their kinship with the land is central in Adam's Rib and stands in stark contrast to the ethic of domination that had led to the "broken connections of people to the world and its many gods"(Hogan 96).

As Angel spends more time with the people of Adam's Rib, she begins to see God as something other than the God of domination she had been taught about in her schools and foster homes. She realizes that "the word" the Christians promote as the true beginning of creation is not the only story. Angel thinks:

People say that in the beginning was the word. But they have forgotten the loneliness of God, the yearning for something that shaped itself into the words, *Let there be*. Out of that loneliness, light was conceived, water opened across a new world, and people rose up from clay, there were dreamers of plants and deer. It was this same desire in me, this same longing for creation, and Bush's spare words were creation itself. I had been empty space, and now I was finding a language, a story, to shape myself by. I had been alone and now there were others. I was suspended there on the island of snails and mosses, snow and windstorms, and I was quiet for days on end, but like Bush's wolverine bones, I was partaking of sacred meal and being put back together. (94).

In Angel's new understanding of Genesis, God's loneliness and longing for *connection* is His

inspiration for creation. In Angel's musings she is *like* the God of Genesis bringing creation into being, because she is connecting to the language and story of the land and her kin – her grandmothers – to shape herself. In this construction, God's act of creation in Genesis is not one of power but of *empowerment*, as it empowers Angel's own creative transformation.

Later in the novel, Dora Rouge (Angel's great, great grandmother), Agnes, Bush, and Angel are in the midst of an arduous canoe trip to return Dora Rouge to her place of birth for her impending death. By the time of the trip, Angel has begun to shed the self-hate born of the "original sin" of abuse and dominance passed down through her mother and maternal grandmothers. While traveling through the water, notions of Western time drop away from her, imposed human borders evaporate, and "everything merged and united" in a world where all beings live together well (176, 180). As Angel travels, her knowledge of God is reoriented around a different conception of what makes a sin and what it means to honor creation. The women pass an island significantly named, "God Island," "an appropriate name" according to Dora Rouge who then explains "the people there feared no evil and wanted not" and because, even though those people were gone, the ancient trees remained (168-9). Angel found the island inviting because of the story of its people and because the word "God," in the absence of fear and want, now seemed "inviting" to her. But, this "God" was not the God whom she used to believe she "knew too much about. The one who had tortured Job, who had Abraham lift the ax to his son, who, disguised as a whale, had swallowed Jonah"(169). This was the God who created from loneliness a primal connection that linked all creation. Angel came to understand that the Christian God she had been taught in her schools and foster homes was a God constructed by dominators to "safeguard their domination"(Mieke Bal 110). God, she realized then, was as the ecotheologians have asserted, "everything beneath my feet, everything

surrounded by water; it was in the air, and there was no such thing as empty space” (Hogan 170).

When the women come to the final portage of their journey, shortly after Angel’s great grandmother Agnes has died of natural causes, Bush notices many moose tracks on the trail and comments that “this is a good sign”(210). But when they arrive at what should be the crest above a lake, the water has been drained in the rerouting for the dams, and only mudflats remain. The moose tracks are transformed into a sign of destruction when Bush sees the female moose struggling against the pull of the mud. The women desperately try to save it, but “the moose cried out with a woman-sounding cry, and finally, it was embraced and held by a hungry earth with no compassion for it”(211). Grieving for the death of her great-grandmother and for the moose, Angel states through tears that she “hates God.” She wishes that “the mysteries of creation, the fire of the stars were a nature separate from that of death,” implying that the God she has discovered at Adam’s Rib and came to understand on the trip, the God made manifest in the action of creation is still as ultimately hateful as the God of the dominators because death must necessarily be part life. But Dora Rouge corrects her, “It isn’t God that did this”(212) she states. Agnes’s natural death on the journey to Dora Rouge’s ancestral lands is set against the unnatural death of a healthy moose sucked into an earth altered far beyond what it should be. The devastation is unnatural and wrought by men *playing* God, but not by the God informed by the desire for connection with the rest of creation that Angel has come to know in an Indigenous context.

The novel closes by making clear that creation is an ongoing process, that “inside ourselves we are not yet upright walkers. We are tree. We are frog in amber. Maybe earth itself is just now starting to form”(350-1). The possibility for new beginnings is invested in the understanding that humans and the rest of the living earth are made together out of the common

stuff of creation and in the sense that creation is processional – life proceeds, and we are part of that process, not its directors.

The current capitalistic system based as it is on Christian ethics that encourage exploitation and thus damage to the living earth, as is often and passionately stated, is unsustainable. Ethics like those expressed in *Solar Storms*, the Indigenous stories I have interpreted her and in new discourses of ecotheology connect the on-going hard work of living morally in creation to an awareness of human connection with the rest of the biotic community. Understanding the intrinsic value of other than human life and human connection to the entire living earth cannot be viewed as a utopian pursuit, but rather to borrow Melissa Nelson's words, as "practical knowledge for survival"(13). The other option – human dominance over and exploitation of the earth sanctioned by an all powerful God– can only hasten a self-fulfilling prophecy of apocalypse and prove with finality that – far from being exceptional – we don't measure up at all.

## Chapter Two: Into the Wild<sup>1</sup>: ‘A Vast and Desolate Wilderness,’ Paradise, or Just Where We Live

### **DEFINITION OF WILDERNESS**

*(c) A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. From the WILDERNESS ACT; Public Law 88-577 (16 U.S. C. 1131-1136); 88th Congress, Second Session September 3, 1964*

On the first night of Mary Rowlandson’s captivity in the hands of Nipmuc, Naragansett, and Wampanoag Indians, she and the dying child she held in her arms were taken to a hill above

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<sup>1</sup> I borrow this section of the title from the title of the iconic 1996 book by Jon Krakauer on the story of Christopher McCandless, who at 21 died of starvation while on a quest to experience the ‘the wilds’ of Alaska. In 2007, the book was made into a widely acclaimed movie of the same title. “*Back to the Wild*”(my italics) is a book and DVD released in 2011 that chronicles McCandless’s travels between 1990 and 1992 through his writings and photographs (backtothewild.org). The McCandless story has also inspired a Discovery Channel series, “*Out of the Wild: The Alaska Experiment*” (my italics), in which nine people trained only in rudimentary aspects of survival out of doors and equipped with some basic supplies (including it must be noted a GPS beacon for emergency location) are left in “the rugged Alaska interior.” The promo-article for the show states, “the brave volunteers weren't being offered a million-dollar prize or seven-figure job at the end of their journey. Their reward was the chance to have a life-changing experience; the potential to never see their lives the same way again.”

Sherry Simpson, a University of Alaska writing professor critiques McCandless’s experiences and death as well as the cottage industry that has arisen from them. Simpson writes, McCandless “made some dumb ass decisions and he died,” but “because McCandless starved to death in the wilderness -- or what many people conceive of as wilderness -- by some strange transmogrification he has become a culture hero”(my italics). McCandless is preceded by many other seekers of transformation in the wilderness like Joe Knowles, a part time illustrator who, in 1913, walked naked into the Maine woods with no equipment or supplies vowing to “rever[t] to the primitive”(Nash 141). Knowles returned healthy from the Maine woods after two months to such enthusiastic public acclaim that he “upstaged even an exciting world series;” his book *Alone in the Wilderness* sold 300,000 copies, and Knowles “toured the vaudeville circuit with top billing”(Nash141-2).

and within sight of her town of Lancaster. There, forced to spend the night on the grounds of an abandoned English house in which the Indians would not permit her to take shelter, she witnessed the noisy dance of Indians celebrating their victory. For Rowlandson, it was “a lively resemblance of hell”(71). After a night on the borderlands between Lancaster and the dark forests beyond, Rowlandson, forced to “turn [her] back upon the town,” traveled in the hands of her captors “*into the vast and desolate Wilderness*”(71 author italics).<sup>2</sup> Within a day and about two miles, the hostages and Indians arrived in Indian town of *Wenimesset* (Menameset), where Rowlandson’s young daughter died of bullet wounds received in the attack and was buried, as Rowlandson writes it, “in the Wilderness” and where Mary, “also in this Wilderness-condition,” committed herself and her daughter to “him who is above all”(75). Beyond the borderlands of Lancaster and its farmlands and pastures, Rowlandson’s experiences with wild lands and ‘wild peoples’ become a God-sanctioned trial that tests her faith and fealty to Puritan ideology and ultimately demonstrates her ability to *return* purified to the cultivated lands from which she had been taken. Wilderness for Mary, then, is both hell and redemption—the means to rebirth into personal salvation.

About a hundred years after the publication of Rowlandson’s narrative, Farmer James, Hector St. John de Crevecoeur’s “thinly disguised autobiographical character” (Gray 73) in *Letters from an American Farmer*, laments that his “settlement” is prey to “ruffians” (195), soldiers fighting on either side of the Revolutionary War, who intimidate farmers into making allegiances. “Left to the wild impulse of the wildest nature,” Farmer James complains, these unruly fighters use “wilderness” as a “door” through which they can enter to attack the homes and cultivated lands of frontier farming settlements. The tension of revolutionary violence

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<sup>2</sup> For the remainder of this chapter, unless I otherwise note, all italics within Mary Rowlandson quotations are hers.

finally forces James to take his family and cross the imagined border of his frontier town into what James had earlier characterized as a “hideous wilderness,” which he and his fellow settlers had converted by their “industry into rich pastures and pleasant lawns”(199). James, lamenting the “sacrifice [he is] going to make” and the “amputation [he is] going to suffer” in leaving his farm, ultimately imagines the “hideous wilderness” as transformed into the “great forest of nature” where Native “inhabitants” live in a Rousseau-ian “system [that] is sufficiently complete to answer all the primary wants of man”(199). James’s hope, like Rowlandson’s quest for regeneration after her trials with evil in the wilderness,<sup>3</sup> is for a return to the civilization of cultivated, developed space, where, if he can ever repossess his farm, he would see it “as a gift, as a reward for [his] conduct and fortitude”(204).

Rowlandson’s narrative of her captivity, *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* (*Sovereignty*) and “Distresses of a Frontier Man,” the final chapter of *Letters from an American Farmer* (*Letters*), communicate the essential building blocks for the construction of the current concept of “wilderness” in the American imagination<sup>4</sup> and the policies that attempt to protect it. As Annette Kolodny elaborates, sixteenth and seventeenth century European emigrants to the New World brought with them ingrained perceptions of a European pastoral tradition that compelled them to “carr[y] with them a ‘yearning for paradise’”(4). Whether they were colonists in Maryland and Virginia or New England Puritans, this yearning inevitably produced an essential paradox: “The success of settlement depended on the ability to *master* the land, transforming the *virgin* territories into something else—a farm, a village, a road, a canal, a

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<sup>3</sup> See Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence*, especially 101-115.

<sup>4</sup> My phrase, “wilderness in the American imagination,” is a paraphrase of the title of Roderick Nash’s *Wilderness and the American Mind*, which I reference specifically later in this essay.

railway, a mine, a factory, a city, and finally, an urban nation”(7).<sup>5</sup> Kolodny’s use of the word “virgin” is intentional here to establish her argument that European settlers imagined North America as a fantasized “natural maternal realm”(3). She realizes, of course, that the land was both occupied and utilized by its original inhabitants. Her point as it is relevant to what I will be exploring is that Euro-American perceptions of “wilderness” are embedded in a paradigm that persistently imagines wilderness as a space *separate* from the daily living and development activities of people. For Kolodny, who identifies the embedded Christian patriarchal structure, which I elaborate in my first chapter, that space is the realm of the feminine that is acted upon in one way or another by settlers who seek to *take* from the land as children, lovers, or violators. Within this patriarchal paradigm, wilderness begins as an Eden until the harsh realities of settlement provoke its transformation, first into a dangerous frontier space that needs to be conquered, and then full circle into the sacred space of nature that must be preserved as, in the words of the 1964 Wilderness Act, “untrammelled by man.” In all of these incarnations wilderness remains that space perennially separated from humans’ day to day living and engagement with the world around them and tied significantly to Puritan notions of sacrifice and redemption.<sup>6</sup>

Rowlandson and Crèvecoeur, who articulate wilderness as both salvation and danger, also have in common their construction of Native peoples as embedded in the “wild.” Most often imagined as hunters who do not settle to invest in relationships with cultivated or “developed” land, Indians are like wild animals or wild lands inherently separate from cultivated

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<sup>5</sup> See Kolodny’s *Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience as Experience and History in American Life and Letters*, Chapters One and Two, “Unearthing Herstory” and “Surveying the Virgin Land: The Documents of Exploration and Colonization, 1500-1740,” respectively.

<sup>6</sup> See Nash 9-22 for a good elaboration of Biblical references to wilderness and their translation by Christians in the New World.

civilization.<sup>7</sup> *Sovereignty* and *Letters* communicate the duality of Indian of the Euro-american imagination, the savage-savage and the noble-savage, the descendent of whom becomes the “Ecological Indian,” who I elaborate in my introduction. The Ecological Indian<sup>8</sup> conflates savagery and nobility within a persona who can only survive and be truly happy in the wild

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<sup>7</sup> Regardless of how hugely inaccurate is the myth of Indians as hunters who do not cultivate land for farming, it gains an early foothold in American literature, as is demonstrated by *Sovereignty* and other early Puritan texts. In *Mourt's Relation*, for example, the authors, as a way of both rationalizing their emigration from England and of taking lands from the peoples who were already using them when they arrived in North America, write, “This then is sufficient reason to prove our going thither to live, lawfull: their land is spacious and void, & there are few and doe but run ouer the grasse, as doe also the Foxes and wilde beasts: they are not industrious, neither have art, science, skill or facultie to use either the land or the commodities of it, but all spoiles, rots, and is marred for want of manuring, gathering, ordering. &c. as the ancient patriarkes therefore removed from straiter places into more roomthy, where the land lay idle and waste, and none used it, though there dwelt inhabitants by them, as Gen. 13.6.11.12 and 34.21 and 41.20, so is lawfull now to take a land which none useth and make use of it” (148/69). In the famous (or infamous) Supreme Court decision in *Johnson v. McIntosh* about two hundred years later, the entrenchment of this particular myth and the rationalization for taking land means continued disastrous consequences for Indigenous peoples. In wording that demonstrates the historical trajectory of the ‘hunting-in-the-wilderness’ myth regarding Indigenous peoples, Supreme Court Justice John Marshall writes, “On the discovery of this immense continent, the great nations of Europe were eager to appropriate to themselves so much of it as they could respectively acquire. Its vast extent offered an ample field to the ambition and enterprise of all; and the character and religion of its inhabitants afforded an apology for considering them as a people over whom the superior genius of Europe might claim an ascendancy [sic]. . .the tribes of Indians inhabiting this country were fierce savages, whose occupation was war, and whose subsistence was drawn chiefly from the forest. To leave them in possession of their country, was to leave the country a *wilderness*”(in Cheyfitz, “The (Post)Colonial Construction of Indian Country” 51 my italics). See Cheyfitz’s, “The (Post)Colonial Construction of Indian Country” for an elaboration of how the three cases of the Marshall Trilogy establish the legal fiction that defines Indians as wilderness savages in order to translate Indigenous “communal conceptions of land . . .in the terms of property so that the issue of title could be raised”(50, 48-54).

<sup>8</sup> For a more in depth discussion of the Ecological Indian, please see my introduction. Also see Shepard Krech’s *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*. I follow many scholars who critique Krech’s perspectives. See for example Annette Kolodny, “Rethinking the Ecological Indian: A Penobscot Precursor ” and Lee Schweninger, *Listening to the Land: Native American Literary Response to Landscape*. For varied perspectives on Krech and the Ecological Indian in general, see *Native Americans and the Environment: Perspectives on the Ecological Indian*, Michael Harkin and David Rich Lewis, eds. Also see Paul Nadasdy, “Transcending the Debate over the Ecologically Noble Indian: Indigenous Peoples and Environmentalism” and Melissa Nelson, “Lighting the Sun of our Future” especially the section, “Addressing the Ecological Indian and Romancing the Stone Age” 9-14.

(defined as nature absent ‘civilizing’ structures—like, for example, farmlands and/or the productions of modern-industrial technology), and in this happy savagery, he or she nobly leaves no human footprint to upset nature’s *natural-ness* or *wildness*. As wilderness transforms in the national imaginary from the Edenic to the dangerous to sacred, the Ecological Indian becomes the ultimate environmentalist of Euro-American imagination, divorced from the tensions—political, social, and cultural—inherent in ‘civilized’ life; finding sustenance in the transcendent beauty and freedom of the wild lands beyond the boundaries of civilization.

“Much of American literature,” Matthias Schubnell writes, “deals with the transformation of nature or ‘wilderness’ into civilization, and the Indian figures prominently in it, both as commenting voice and as subject”(4). Schubnell quotations around “wilderness” are appropriate because, in the words of William Cronon’s influential essay, “The Trouble with Wilderness, or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” and as I have been suggesting, wilderness “is quite profoundly a human creation—indeed, the creation of very particular human cultures at very particular moments in human history”(69).<sup>9</sup> *Sovereignty* and *Letters* demonstrate that the *figure* of the Indian *figures* prominently in American literature in terms of how “nature” or “wilderness” is defined at any given historical moment. But, I would argue that Schubnell’s un-self-conscious articulation of the transformation of wilderness into civilization rhetorically perpetuates a duality *actual* American Indian philosophical perceptions of the living earth generally do not recognize, a point made in the very articles that Schubnell’s words introduce. Schubnell’s comments are part of his editorial introduction in a special issue of the *ISLE Newsletter* in which contemporary American Indian writers communicate their perspectives of

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<sup>9</sup> In *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of National Parks*, Mark David Spence also makes the point that wilderness is constructed and that as wilderness transforms in the Euro-American imagination, so do ideas of Indians who are understood as *part* of that wilderness. I return to Spence in Chapter Four.

wilderness. Joseph Bruchac, in his article, “The Four Directions Are Alive” writes, “implicit in such words in English as ‘natural world’ or ‘wilderness’ is a sense of separation. ‘Nature’ is out there. We are here in civilization . . . But in the Native view of things, we never leave nature behind because we are part of it”(8).

*Sovereignty* and *Letters* are origin texts of American literature, and also of environmental discourse on wilderness, each envisioning wilderness lands and American Indians as existing in a space beyond the cultivated lands that have been wrested from it and outside the civilization where human society dwells. However, as I also argue here, both Rowlandson and Crèvecoeur imply other important possibilities in what seems to be at first clearly stated positions about the land that they define as wilderness and about Native peoples place in it. In what follows, I elaborate those possibilities to draw different conclusions about the relationships between Americans, American Indians, and “wilderness” and explore how these *other* relationships might productively contribute to transforming contemporary environmental discourse. Following Timothy Sweet, I believe that “an early American origins model” of ecocritical analysis that envisions continuity from *colonial* America forward in the evolution of environmentalism as opposed to an historical dividing line between “green” and “pre-green” ideologies located at the work of Henry David Thoreau has “heuristic value in diagnosing present concerns”(403). And this “early origins model” must necessarily and intimately engage Indigenous peoples.

### **Preservation, Conservation, and American Environmentalism’s Nature/Culture Split**

A 2010 editorial in the *New York Times* by Ted Stroll entitled, “Aw Wilderness” argued that increasingly strict enforcement of the 1964 Wilderness Act by the U.S. Park Service, Forest Service, and Bureau of Land Management is making “supposedly open recreational areas inaccessible and even dangerous.” These agencies, Stroll writes, are “putting themselves in

opposition to healthy and environmentally sound human-powered activities, the very thing Congress intended the Wilderness Act to promote.” Stroll argues that an “obvious contradiction has emerged between preservation and access uses” since the prohibition of any form of “mechanical transport”<sup>10</sup> could not have anticipated such mechanized modes of back-country recreation as mountain bike cycling and wind-powered skiing. Stroll, identified by the *Times* only as an attorney, is also a mountain bike enthusiast and proponent of increasing access for mountain bikes to millions of acres of designated wilderness.

Stroll’s article precipitated a passionate response across the internet on popular outdoor blogs like the *Chicago Adventure Travel Examiner*, *National Parks Traveler*, and *Adventure Journal*, all of which took exception to Stroll’s critique of the Act. Outdoors journalist Kurt Repanshek asks whether the act, “which was intended to *preserve* natural vestiges of the country, should be malleable throughout the future, bending and changing to each generation's toys?”(*National Parks Traveler* my italics). Writer Ted Nelson states that what Stroll “does not understand is the act is trying to keep the wilderness for those that want to enjoy it similar to the way the woods were when our ancestors first discovered them”(*examiner.com*). Steve Casimiro argues that what is at stake in these conflicting views, is the **Act’s specific wording, “untrammelled by man.”** He makes the point that American wilderness was never “untrammelled;” from the Paleolithic-era through the time of European arrival on the continent, the lands of what we now call America were always used and shaped by people. “Does

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<sup>10</sup> Section 4.(c) of the Wilderness Act states: “Except as specifically provided for in this Act, and subject to existing private rights, there shall be no commercial enterprise and no permanent road within any wilderness area designated by this Act and, except as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration of the area for the purpose of this Act (including measures required in emergencies involving the health and safety of persons within the area), there shall be no temporary road, no use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment or motorboats, no landing of aircraft, no other form of *mechanical transport*, and no structure or installation within any such area” (my emphasis)

untrammeled mean” Casimiro asks, “untrampled [sic] and therefore we can carve it with paths and signage? Or does it mean that wilderness shows the absolute minimum of the human hand?” (*Adventure Journal*).

This debate over wilderness-appropriate recreation, which I admittedly summarize quite briefly here, tangentially addresses an even more significant paradox in terms of the Act’s definition of wilderness. Section 4 (d) (2) of the Act states, “Nothing in this Act shall prevent within national forest wilderness areas any activity, including prospecting, for the purpose of gathering information about mineral or other resources, if such activity is carried on in a manner compatible with the preservation of the wilderness environment.” The fact that prospecting, mining, and timbering are allowed in wilderness areas at all undermines in the first place the illusion of separate and completely *preserved* nature, “untrammeled by man.”<sup>11</sup> The qualifier, “carried on in a manner compatible with the preservation of the wilderness environment” is of central importance because like “untrammeled by man,” the phrase, “a manner compatible with the preservation of the wilderness environment” is forever mutable in a political and legal context.

In its final days after the election of Barak Obama, the Bush Administration living up to its reputation as “anti-environment,” opened up previously unopened public lands for lease auction to extraction industries. A CNN article regarding the auction states that Democratic politicians and seven environmental groups were suing the Administration and characterized the lease sales as “an early Christmas present to the oil and gas industry”(cnn.com/technology).<sup>12</sup> In

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<sup>11</sup> See Section 4 (d) (2), the “Special Provisions” of the Act in its entirety for the restrictions and allowances with regard to prospecting, mining, and timbering.

<sup>12</sup> See Orion magazine, January/February 2012, “What Love Looks Like: A Conservation with Tim DeChristopher” by Terry Tempest Williams for a DeChristopher’s explanation of this auction. DeChristopher is serving two years in a federal prison for posing as a bidder to stop the

December of 2010, almost the exact same rhetoric was used when Interior Secretary Ken Salazar announced that the Bureau of Land Management has the “power to designate tens of millions of acres [of Bureau-held public lands] as ‘wild lands’” — a “new categorization” that ensures the federal government must consider each parcel’s “unique wilderness characteristics as land-use plans are formulated”(Vaughn). In response, “Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah, head of the Congressional Western Caucus, denounced the action as ‘little more than an early Christmas present to the far left extremists who oppose the multiple use of our nation's public lands.’” For Rep. Bishop and the Western Caucus, “multiple use” must necessarily include more oil and gas drilling in public lands than less, and the definition of “wilderness” must accommodate this vision for “our nation’s public lands.”

Contemporary American environmental perspectives evident in this debate and upon which the Wilderness Act is based rest on the twin tiers of conservation and preservation elaborated politically in the famous battle between Gifford Pinchot and John Muir over Yosemite’s Hetch Hetchy Valley, which I analyze in detail in my next chapter.<sup>13</sup> Muir’s preservation ethic in the terms of the definition of wilderness in the Wilderness Act to borrow Aaron’s Sachs’ words, “contrast[s] nature and humanity and favor[s] nature”(315). In a reversal or at least an inversion of the preservation ethic, Pinchot’s conservation ethic enacts the philosophical separation of nature and culture by elevating humanity and envisioning nature in the form of material resources intended for exploitation by the planet’s most important species. In his 1910 tract, *The Fight for Conservation*, Pinchot calls the “conservation of natural resources the basis, and the only permanent basis, of national success”(in McKibben Ed.,

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sell off of public lands.

<sup>13</sup> See Michael Smith, “The Value of a Tree: Public Debates of John Muir and Gifford Pinchot” for a good short synopsis of debate. In *The Historian*. 60:4 (Summer) 1998

*American Earth* 173). Bill McKibben articulates, in arguing for the efficacy of Pinchot's conservation ethic, a defense germane to the Wilderness Act as well: Pinchot's conservation "formula represented an improvement over the prevailing standard" (172) at the time of large companies decimating forests, grasslands, prairies, and just about every other ecosystem where some saleable resource could be extracted for profit. Without an argument for the "commercial potential" of these spaces, McKibben asserts, "Congress would almost certainly have blocked" the legislation forming the national forest system, and later, I would argue, the Wilderness Act, both of which have in fact prevented – to date – the total denuding of American forests and ravaging of uncultivated public lands.<sup>14</sup>

Yet, the conservation and preservation ethics of American environmental policy, though described as separate approaches to protecting lands, specifically lands defined as wilderness, are continually melded together and have proven unsuccessful as a comprehensive long term solution for sustaining the biological capacity of the natural systems of the earth to support people. The *conservation* ethic that envisions nature as exploitable and/or manageable resources within a capitalistic system paradigmatically based on material accumulation and the preeminence of Western science and technology continually places incredible pressure on notions of *preserving* uninhabited wilderness in its 'wild' or 'primeval' state. This conservation/preservation construction of American environmentalism is, I would argue, at best slowing down the ever-strengthening progress toward human exploitation of uncultivated and undeveloped lands and the attendant destruction of species and ecosystems. I borrow Seneca scholar John Mohawk's words to state the epistemological issue simply: "We do not have a system that seeks to promote life. We have a system that seeks to promote profit" (259). Within

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<sup>14</sup> I revisit the Muir-Pinchot debate in more detail in chapter three.

that simple truth lies the challenge to any consistently effective ability to actually *preserve* lands we deem as being worthy of being “untrammelled by man.” As aptly stated by Leo Marx in his “Afterward” to *The Machine in the Garden*, this challenge represents the “cultural divide separating those Americans who accept material progress as the primary goal of our society from those who—whatever their ideals of the fulfilled life—do not”(488).

Battles over who could use *preserved* wilderness areas and for what have been ongoing since the first legally defined national parks were set aside in the nineteenth century. From the clash between tourists hiking in the newly established Yellowstone National Park and Chief Joseph’s band of Nez Perce Indians retreating from the U.S. army in 1877 (Keller and Turek xi) through contemporary conflicts over maintaining traditional subsistence, gathering, hunting, and fishing life-ways, Indigenous peoples have often been—and most often not by choice—in the middle of them. In these battles, American Indians are frequently materially caught up in efforts to define an understanding of what *using*—that is conserving, preserving—*wilderness* is going to mean from a Euro-American perspective. The multiyear pitched battle over drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and the development of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act are prominent examples.<sup>15</sup> In public perceptions, Indigenous peoples who do not live up to the Ecological Indian stereotype because of their own cultural forms of participation in these ‘use’ activities disappoint environmentalists—both of the preservationist and conservationist persuasion—because both those categories, and here I am borrowing words from Paul Nadasdy, “necessarily commit scholars [and environmentalists] to judging indigenous

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<sup>15</sup> See Robert H. Keller and Michael F. Turek, *American Indians and National Parks*, for a good overview of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the national parks system in America. See Theodore Catton, *Inhabited Wilderness: Indians, Eskimos and National Parks in Alaska* for specific national parks issues relating to Alaska Natives.

peoples' actions in accordance with Euro-American cultural assumptions—not only about indigenous people, but also about conservation [and preservation] itself”(294-5).

These battles are indicative of the larger cultural argument among Western scholars regarding the place of humans in nature. Cronon, in the “Trouble with Nature” takes particular aim at Bill McKibben whose 1989 book, *The End of Nature*, makes the claim that human-induced climate change means finally, that “nature has ended”(McKibben 183), because human presence is virtually everywhere and has affected the very workings of the planet’s climate system. Cronon calls McKibben’s thesis an “act of great hubris,” because “it means forgetting the wildness that dwells everywhere within and around us”(89). In his introduction to the 2005 edition to his book, McKibben clarifies his argument. The reality of human induced climate change, he writes, means:

that for the first time human beings had become so large that they altered everything around us . . . we had ended nature as an independent force, that our appetites and habits and desires could now be read in every cubic meter of air, in every increment on the thermometer . . . this historical moment [is] entirely different from any other, filled with implications for our philosophy, our theology, our sense of self. We are no longer able to think of ourselves as a species tossed about by larger forces—now we *are* those larger forces. (xviii)

Roderick Nash, in line with McKibben’s and Carolyn Merchant’s perspectives regarding the end (in Merchant’s words, the death) of nature,<sup>16</sup> finds fault with Cronon’s essay. Cronon, Nash states, critiques the notion of preserved – un-peopled – wilderness areas as “anthropocentric and utilitarian” and as perpetuating a nature/culture duality (387, 386). Nash asserts that Cronon and

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<sup>16</sup> See Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Woman, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*.

others like J. Baird Callicott who “allege that designated wilderness, national parks, and even the idea of wilderness are unnatural, irrelevant, old-fashioned, and elitist” promote an “inhabited, gardenlike environment”(Nash 386, 388n) that Nash believes leaves no space for wildness and the creatures that live there. By the twenty first century Nash concludes, “civilized humans [who] are no longer thinking or acting like a part of nature” need a “time out” (386, 387).

“Integrating humans and nature is acceptable to a degree,” Nash writes, “but it doesn’t work with a powerful, growth-crazed civilization” or “a species notorious for its excesses and greed”(388).

Nash clearly has a point about excess and greed. But, I would argue, he is talking about humans through a conflation of two separate categories: a *civilization* that is the manifestation of a particular cultural orientation and a biological *species*. In line with John Mohawk’s comment about the systemic challenge of capitalism, Louis Owens asserts in “An American Indian Wilderness,” “the global environmental crisis that sends species into extinction daily and threatens to destroy all life surely has its roots in the *Western pattern of thought* that sees humanity and ‘wilderness’ as *mutually exclusive*” (7 my italics).

Here Eric Cheyfitz’s comments in *The Poetics of Imperialism* regarding Leo Marx’s *The Machine in the Garden* are important. For Marx the figure of the ‘machine,’ set in a cultural paradigm of culture separated from nature, is articulated in images and metaphors that impose the technology of industrial capitalism in rural or wild landscapes—the garden—in American art and literature from 1830 to 1860. What Marx sees as “the nation’s obsessive interest in power machinery”(in Cheyfitz 29) in antebellum America during the increasingly rapid industrialization of the nineteenth century, is for Cheyfitz the “apotheosis of a European vision of immediacy, or absolute power that was instrumental in founding the New World”(29). Cheyfitz writes that implicit in Marx’s figure of the machine is the prior or preceding figure of

eloquence—“the ability to translate words grounded in ‘wisdom,’ or ‘reason,’ into power in the world” (23).

Both Cheyfitz and Marx read *The Tempest* as the “prologue to American literature” (Cheyfitz 22). Marx writes that the play, “prefigures the design of the classic American fables, and especially the idea of a redemptive journey away from society in the direction of nature”(in Cheyfitz 22) or what Marx eventually calls “the garden,” a movement I have suggested is explicitly communicated by both Mary Rowlandson and Crèvecoeur’s Farmer James. Marx’s analysis, like Rowlandson’s and Crèvecoeur’s sentiments of salvation in nature, is necessarily located in a prior separation between the place called nature and the place called culture. Cheyfitz articulates that that separation and the definitions of nature and culture that inform it are themselves purely cultural. “The garden” in *The Tempest* Cheyfitz writes, “is the machine;” that is to say, “the garden of *eloquence*”(my italics). The garden – nature – such as it is defined by Europeans and later Euro-Americans, is thus made of words. Nature, then, *is* culture – and here is the central point for my purposes – the conflict “cannot be between the machine and the garden, but only between machines, between cultures”(22). Eloquence creates nature as the separate place to which humans go for redemption, and eloquence appropriates the Indigene to create the savage-savage, the noble savage, and eventually, the Ecological Indian—who can only ever be the preservationist/conservationist defined by a Euro-American environmental discourse epistemologically grounded in the first place in the conceptually separate spaces of nature and culture.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> I want to be clear here that I agree with S.K. Robisch’s concern that some ecocritical theoretical perspectives dismiss “nature” and/or “the environment” as human constructs, and thus, can make irrelevant “any demonstrated ecological knowledge as a requirement for ecocriticism.” My argument here is not that human cultures get to *create* actual material nature. Human beings, even in spite of massive manipulations of the physical world, live within the

But, as Nadasdy articulates in “Transcending the Debate over the Ecologically Noble Indian: Indigenous Peoples and Environmentalism,” traditional American Indian relationships to the land are not to be understood in the Euro-American context of *environmentalism*. Locating these relationships in that context ignores “the rich philosophical worldviews and life practices of land and kin”(Nelson 13), and “privileges one particular set of cultural values while simultaneously obscuring the power relations that make that very privileging possible”(Nadasdy 294). I read Rowlandson and Crèvecoeur to excavate the deeper roots of environmental discourse on a *separate* wilderness and the figure of the Ecological Indian who belongs to it. But, as my larger focus, I also keep in mind *Ethnocriticism* in which Arnold Krupat, following Raymond Williams, writes that “the very nature of cultural hegemony is such that it cannot help but permit breaks, blanks, holes, areas weakly (or un-) colonized, with room, thus, for ‘residual’ and ‘emergent’ elements to have certain play”(78). This play in the “epistemological realm,” may result in a “good deal of practically occupiable space . . . in which probabilistic and tentative statements that offer themselves as more nearly true than others, if not absolutely true, might be made effectively”(78). I, therefore, go further to suggest that there are ruptures in the explicit narratives of these texts that offer implicit alternative narratives that deconstruct the Ecological Indian and the nature/culture split and are centered in Indigenous understandings of ‘wilderness’ that are present even as they are subsumed.

### **Where We Live: Mary Rowlandson and Farmer James at Home with Indians in the**

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biological and ecological systems of a real and material living earth. My focus here is on how Euro-American and American Indian cultures understand this living earth and their relationships within it. American environmental discourse paradigmatically relies on an understanding that makes people materially separate from the rest of the living earth in a way, that I am arguing, they are not. The result is the pseudo-separations created in the nature/culture duality that, in the long run, will not save people from their own destructive approaches to living in the world. The socio-cultural perspective of American Indian relationships to the rest of the living earth lead, in Lisa Brooks words, “to more conscientious action within that environment”( )

## Wilderness

“On the tenth of February 1675, Came the *Indians* with great numbers upon *Lancaster*”(Rowlandson 68), and Mary Rowlandson with three of her children and other townspeople were taken captive by “ravenous beasts” who attacked them “like a company of Sheep torn by Wolves”(70). These “hell hounds” forced her and other captives into “serverall Removes . . . up and down the Wilderness,” a captivity that for Rowlandson lasted three months and concluded with her being ransomed for twenty pounds. In “The First Remove,” the scene of which I describe in my opening paragraph, Rowlandson has been taken to the hills above Lancaster and is forced to witness “the roaring, and singing and dancieng [sic], and yelling of those black creatures in the night” (71). As she does her thoughts turn to her losses, and she contemplates the deaths of “Relations and Friends” and the loss of her “House and home and all our comforts within door and without”(71). Through identifying the citizens of Lancaster with sheep victims of wild wolves and lamenting the destruction of the domestic trappings, pastures, and fields that kept her safe “within door and without,” Rowlandson asserts a trope of domestic tranquility and pastoral gentility against the unpredictability and savagery of the wild beyond her house and the cultivated fields of her town. The separation Rowlandson makes does not just sharply distinguish between human beings, civilized Puritans from wild Indians, but between lands, cultivated lands from wilderness forests. Her narrative quickly establishes a moral dichotomy between lands and peoples in which moral superiority is granted not just to Puritans over Indian savages, but to the cultivated over the wild, wild lands and wild animals, including the wolves—actual and Indian—that threaten Puritan civility and civilization.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Kip Robisch, whose focus is actual wolves in *Wolves and the Wolf Myth in American Literature*, articulates the significant connection between the danger of wolves conflated with Indians in the Puritan mind: “. . . wilderness was inherently evil because its inhabitants were

In “The First Remove,” Rowlandson and the company of captives are moved to the borderlands between the town and the wilderness, specifically marked as a liminal space by a “vacant house (deserted by the English before, for fear of the *Indians*)”(70). The chronological orientation, the day, month, and year of the attack, stated in the first sentence of the unnamed opening section abruptly changes to the spatial orientation of “Removes,” transforming the movement of the narrative from one that takes place through Western time to one that takes place through Western space. Each Remove until the last when Rowlandson is ransomed, carries her and the other captives further away from “civilized light into Indian darkness”(Slotkin 109, Wesley 22-24). In “The Second Remove,” the morning following the scene of Rowlandson’s lament of the loss and death of her domestic and cultivated sphere in the borderland hills above Lancaster, Mary “*must turn [her] back upon the Town, and travel with [the Indians] into the vast and desolate Wilderness*”(73). Rowlandson’s spatial liminality gives way to complete separation as she is *removed* from everything she knows to a space inhabited by “merciless enemies”(74) where she can only rely on the transcendent power of God for mercy. By the Third Remove her injured daughter dies in her arms and the Natives bury her. Mary laments: “*There I left that Child in the Wilderness, and must commit it, and my self [sic] also in the Wilderness-condition, to him who is above all*”(75). What this *commitment* means to Mary as she makes clear by the close of this Remove, is that God would give her mercy from the “curses” that have come upon her in the wilderness if she would “return to him by repentance”(77).<sup>19</sup>

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inherently evil . . . [therefore], divine right would manifest itself in confrontation with a demonized wilderness”(163).

<sup>19</sup> My paraphrase here refers to Rowlandson’s specific reference to Deuteronomy Chapters 28-30. At this point in the narrative, the Native coalition has just returned from successfully attacking the English town of Medfield. Rowlandson writes, “One of the *Indians* that came from *Medfield* fight, had brought some plunder, came to me and asked me, if I wou’d have a Bible, he had got one in his basket. I was glad of it, and asked him, whether he thought the Indians would

In his landmark 1978 study, *Regeneration Through Violence*, Richard Slotkin writes that captivity narratives like the particularly popular story of Mary Rowlandson were the “starting point of an American mythology” that was embedded in Puritan anxiety about “leaving ancestral England” and Puritan fear of the temptation of the “opulent promise of America”(97-99). By this point in the seventeenth century, “the Puritan,” Slotkin writes,

was no longer sure of his ability to conquer the wilderness in a righteous manner [the conversion of Indians to Christianity],<sup>20</sup> instead he felt himself weak enough to be debased by the wilderness to the level of the depraved natural man, the Indian. The safest way of discovering the wilderness, therefore, was as the unwilling captive of the wilderness’s familiar demons. One could then justify the gaining of intimate knowledge of the Indian life as the result of divine agency. (99-100)

Thus, Slotkin asserts, “the landscape of the Puritan mind replaces the real wilderness”(99). In this landscape, coerced entry into the physical wilderness becomes the means through which Christians are tested by God and either fail, as in those who converted to Indians ways, or are reborn into a new state of divine grace; a rebirth or conversion to a new way of being in the old life (100-1). As Slotkin and other scholars have articulated, significant numbers of captives who were adopted into Indian families and incorporated into Native social structures decided to stay with their Native communities or resisted forced return to their European families, a fact that belies, as Rowlandson’s own narrative does as well, the abject evil of Indian ‘savages.’ But,

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let me read? He answered, yes”(76). The gesture of an Indian gifting Rowlandson the Bible is ironic in that she has already identified her enemies as “merciless” and significant to my point that the Indians in her narrative are constructed as both the means for her fall – it is the Indian attack that provides the means for her trial before God in the wilderness – and the means of her redemption.

<sup>20</sup> For an account of the colonial encounter that was New England evangelism, an account that keeps the Native experiences and perspectives at its center, see Kristina Bross, *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons: Praying Indians in Colonial America*.

Puritan leaders, Cotton and Increase Mather, two of the most noted, used captivity narratives as a form of control and definition to make “an account of American origins from which ‘unwanted elements, vestiges, narratives’ are erased”(Fessenden 6, also see Slotkin 114-5). What was required was the figurative “empty[ing] of Indian lands of the resistant spiritual and physical difference of Indians themselves” (Fessenden 6) through defining Indians as bestial occupants of the wilderness. What was left then were lands “void of human occupants, open to and even requiring Puritan habitation.”<sup>21</sup>

The erasure, of course, was always literal as well as figurative. Fessenden makes clear that had Puritan conversion efforts not so consciously linked the trials necessary to achieve grace with “literal trials in the wilderness . . . an entirely different vocabulary might have been expected to authorize external violence and territorial expansion. Instead verbal attempts at control of the wilderness within also licensed the ordering of the wilderness without”(27). The colonists clearing of forestlands, William Cronon writes in *Changes in the Land*, was understood in positive terms as the “progress of cultivation”(126), and Fessenden makes clear that conversion of wild lands to cultivated was synonymous with maintenance of a cohesive – and controlled – Puritan community.

The tensions leading to King Philip’s (Metacom’s) War reached battle pitch as the colonists’ cultivated lands encroached further and further, and finally unacceptably too far into Indian space—or what Indian space was left after decades of European expansion. New England Native peoples<sup>22</sup>, specifically in Metacom’s case, the Wampanoags and Narragansetts, who had

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<sup>21</sup> See Fessenden’s first chapter: “Puritanism’s New World Narrative,” especially the section “Indian Captivity and Protestant Expansion” for a fuller explanation of how captivity narratives functioned as a means for the Puritan fathers to rationalize Indian removal and wilderness conquest.

<sup>22</sup> New England Natives include mainly Nipmuk, Narragansett, Pequot, and Wampanoag, along

long been economically and to varying degrees socially and politically, involved with European immigrants concluded “they could no longer do so peacefully” (Salisbury, Introduction 2). Not that there had not been war and tension prior to Metacom’s War. The shifting alliances, cooperation, tensions and warfare that marked Indian/European relationships from the time of first encroachment by explorers, traders, and settlers are well documented. But by late in the seventeenth century, more and more “wild lands” were transformed by the “progress of cultivation.” Indigenous peoples, located literally and figuratively in lands defined as wilderness, were being systematically dispossessed through wars and other means, legal and illegal in the Euro-American sense of those words, while the “wilderness” itself was being simultaneously transformed.<sup>23</sup>

Important to note, as Cheyfitz asserts, “ideologies are not consciously constructed at a moment’s notice, but are the deep places cultures are founded on through the complex production, projection, and reading of signs”(Poetics 56). The means of dispossessing Indians were always (and continue to be) interpreted through historically developed Western frameworks specifically grounded in conceptions of property that make land alienable and own-able through legally (in Western legal terms) engendered *title* (see Poetics 45-58). Cheyfitz and Fessenden elaborate in detail how Puritan ideology is embedded in property ethics in the colonies, and become “secularized,” in America’s system of legal land ownership; even public lands are, of course, the *property* of the American public. I put the term “secularized” in quotations to follow Fessenden in asserting that “the secular” is not the opposite of ‘religious,’ but merely a category

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with numerous smaller tribes.

<sup>23</sup> In addition to Cronon’s *Changes in the Land*, also see Jean O’Brien’s *Dispossession by Degrees: Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts, 1650-1790*, for a good description of how New England Indians (O’Brien focuses specifically on the Indian town of Natick) were removed figuratively, legally, and materially from their lands.

of the ‘religious’ that connotes the sublimation of Judeo-Christian ethics into everyday ‘non-religious’ life. I emphasize that point to argue that inherent in the *secular* environmental discourse of wilderness are the founding Puritan ideologies of purity, separation and boundedness, and property ownership, all ethics that clearly inform the Wilderness Act. As Cronon writes, “thus it is that wilderness serves as the unexamined foundation on which so many of the quasi-religious values of modern environmentalism rest”(The Trouble . . . 80).

I will add to the confluence of Cheyftiz’s and Fessenden’s studies, Cronon’s point about *resources* in *Changes in the Land*. Following anthropologist Maurice Godelier, Cronon asserts that “human communities label certain subsets of their surrounding ecosystems as resources, and so locate the meeting places between economics and ecology” (165). The expansion of European capitalism into the American colonies embedded in Puritan ethics brought a cultural construction of resources as “commodities” into conflict with an Indian understanding of resources as those things that supported a community’s need for food and shelter. Cronon writes, “ironically, though colonists perceived fewer *resources* in New England ecosystems than did the Indians, they perceived many more *commodities*, and so committed much wider portions of those ecosystems to the marketplace”(167 author italics). Cronon continues, quoting colonial historian Edward Johnson in 1653, “nor could it be imagined that this Wilderness should turn a mart for Merchants in so short a space, Holland, France, Spain, and Portugal coming hither for trade.”

The Puritan push to transform wild lands into cultivated along with the commodification of the resources contained in spaces defined as “wilderness” at the time of Metacom’s defeat becomes by the eighteenth century when *Letters* is published, the intimate “linking [of] capitalism and narratives of American national identity . . . in the early years of the

republic”(Schell 583).<sup>24</sup> Like *Sovereignty, Letters* perpetuates the construction of Indians inside wilderness’s ideologically separated space, a construction that belies the actual ubiquitous and active presence of Native peoples in the developing American nation. Significantly, Indian absence in the developing national imaginary defined by their narrative relegation to wilderness space in literary texts like the two, *Sovereignty* and *Letters*, that I am reading becomes, as Fessenden makes clear, a complete erasure in the eighteenth century *New England Primer*, a widely used educational text for children and adults (39). The post-Great Awakening *Primer* came to “endorse a white, Protestant ‘ethnoreligion’ alongside (and emanating from) the resolutely Puritan theology of its seventeenth- and early eighteenth century sources”(41). The *Primer* is significant to my analysis because as Fessenden writes, “the invisibility of Indians in the *New England Primer* was in fact crucial to its strategies for inculcating in its readers the forms of discourse required to constitute the new nation, discourse in which the absence of Indians was simultaneously assumed and enforced”(37). Placing Indians in wilderness lands specifically imagined as oppositional to cultivated—read civilized—lands implicitly imagined an evolving national plan carried forward in the figure of Manifest Destiny in the nineteenth century, for the simultaneous elimination of both Indians and the lands defined as wilderness from which Indians live. Narratives of Indians secured within a specifically defined wilderness space lead to actualities of bounded-ness and control of Native peoples eventually confined to reservation spaces and of uncultivated or ‘uncivilized’ lands defined as national *property*, confined to parks and wilderness areas while still commodified as sources of market resources.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See Cheyfitz *Poetics* especially 122-4 and 156-7, See Max Weber *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, especially on Benjamin Franklin 48-78.

<sup>25</sup> See Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness*, especially chapters one and two, “Looking Backward and Westward: The ‘Indian Wilderness’ in Antebellum Era” and “The Wild West, or Toward Separate Islands” respectively.

*Letters*’ like *Sovereignty* is a spatially oriented text that finds its central protagonist forced from the domestic tranquility of his farm into the “hideous wilderness,” where Indians live. Author, Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, was a surveyor and cartographer writing at a time when “the language of geography permeated almost every facet of American culture” (Schell 582). In *Letters*, Crevecoeur maps both a physical and moral geography that, also like *Sovereignty*, associates the manner of residence on the land with the morality of the residents. The simple dichotomy remains consistent—cultivators are good; inhabitants of wilderness are bad. The author of the letters, Farmer James, establishes a utopian and Eurocentric America, the product of European origins enhanced (Crevecoeur 40) by a “boundless continent” where “nature” whose “broad lap” can “receive the perpetual accession of new comers” is open to “a race of cultivators [whose] cultivation is unrestrained, and therefore every thing is prosperous and flourishing”(15). In Letter III, “What is an American,” James anticipates the movement of Manifest Destiny, and what Kolodny calls the “central mythic movement of American history and literature,”(66) as he maps a growing nation engaged in the labor of transforming resources into commodities for sale from the East Coast to the interior frontier past the borders of Pennsylvania and Ohio, “near the great woods, near the last inhabited districts”(Crevecoeur 46). From the coast to the frontier there is a “decent competence that appears throughout our habitations” (41). On the frontier where the lands turn to undeveloped wilderness, however, live the “mongrel-breed, half civilized, half savage . . . new-made Indians” who “have degenerated altogether into the hunting state”(52, 53); living by hunting is particularly distasteful to James (50-53). These Europeans who have ‘gone wild’ so to speak are, like Rowlandson’s Natives as wolves, compared to “carnivorous animals;” they lack the industry and desire to transform the wilderness into cultivated space.

In choosing to inhabit the frontier, these “back-settlers” enact a reversal of what James sees – and the Puritans saw – as the moral progress of Americans in a movement from east to west transforming “hitherto barbarous country into a fine, fertile, well-regulated, district”(47). For James, these wilderness-dwellers are both like Indians and worse than them because they “adopt the moroseness and ferocity of a native, without his mildness, or even his industry at home” (53). James’s peculiar contradictory characterization of Native peoples which becomes, as I will show, more demonstrable by the final letter, is not very different than Rowlandson’s whose continuous allusions to wild beasts and demons are undercut by the numerous kindnesses and ethical standards she herself recounts on behalf of the Indians, a fact I comment more upon below. What remains explicit for both authors, however, is their characterization of Indian inhabitation inside wilderness and of wilderness itself as inherently negative and in need of separation from civilization and cultivated lands.

As I have just mentioned, James’s characterization of Natives becomes more contradictory by the end, and his construction of the inherently “barbarous” wilderness becomes troubled as well. My introductory paragraphs communicate that by Letter XII, “Distresses of a Frontier Man,” the wilderness that begins as a “harbour”[sic] (188) for the “ruffians,” those Revolutionary War fighters from both the American and British camps that threaten James’s settlement, becomes a “great forest of nature” where James will take his family for safety from these invaders. The Revolutionary War and being forced to choose allegiance to the great nation of his – and America’s – birth or the breakaway nation that, in the adolescent throws of its new, energetic spirit, would thoughtlessly reject the paternal relationship with its European founder, provokes for James a crisis of both conscience and identity. In this moment when James feels both physically threatened and psychologically harassed by his torn loyalties,

wilderness becomes a refuge, and the Indian inhabitants become the noble hosts of the forests who can offer him and his family asylum.

James, “a feller of trees, a cultivator of lands, the most honorable title an American can have,” along with his family must “become members of a new and strange community” (200). James describes this new community in the most glowing of terms, speaking of the Indians’ “social bond” that must be something “singularly captivating, and far superior to any thing to be boasted of among us”(202). He recounts the fact that though “thousands of Europeans are Indians, [ ] we have no examples of even one of those Aborigines having from choice become Europeans!”(202). He comments on what he perceives as their freedoms, their lack of laws and hierarchies, and their close connection with nature (203). For James, the savage-savage the Puritans feared would drive Christians to the life of the “natural man” in wilderness becomes the noble savage, the Ecological Indian, nature’s “immediate child[ren]” and “undefiled offspring”(203). Though clearly James is rewriting the Puritan “devil” as a wilderness angel, the notion that salvation is offered through sacrificing the peace of his domestic tranquility for the trial of living with Indians in the wilderness remains revelatory of its Puritan roots. James plans to head into the wilderness with the hopes of being redeemed from the sins of his countrymen.

Though he praises the constructs of Indian naturalness and freedom, he frets over his children being “caught by that singular charm so dangerous at their tender years”(201) of undisciplined savages and “the danger” of “Indian education”(211). He resolves that even as he will learn to embrace the difficult rigors of a subsistence economy in their community, he will teach his Indian hosts the value of “labour and industry” by keeping track of what they grow and gather and “giv[ing] each of them a regular credit for the amount of it to be paid them, in real property, at the return of peace”(212). James plans to cultivate both Indians and land and enable

the eventual transformation of the wilderness into property when the Revolutionary War is concluded. Wilderness and its Indian inhabitants are the source of James's salvation, and though he will while there, "contemplate Nature in her most wild and ample extent," his redemption and the redemption of his family lies in their return to "cultivation of the land"(214) and the property ethics that inhere in it.

The Protestant ethics to use Weber's term, expressed by *Sovereignty* and *Letters* obscured though they are in 'secular' environmental discourses of conservation and preservation, intimately inform the Wilderness Act and are present in contemporary debates over defining wilderness and its uses. The dominant constant is the notion of wilderness as separate bounded space where humans enter having sacrificed, forcefully or voluntarily the trappings of civilization, and then leave, returning to civilization redeemed. From the preservation perspective, wilderness lands as the Act makes clear are "primitive"(Section 3.(b)) and therefore, cannot be cultivated lands or lands where 'civilization' takes place. People can enter these bounded spaces to experience wilderness, but no one can *live* there; they are lands where "man himself is a visitor who does not remain"(Section 2. (c)). The "Statement of Policy," Section 2.(a) of the Act, establishes the "enduring *resource* of wilderness"(my italics) for current and future generations of Americans' "use and enjoyment," and states this use must occur "in such a manner that will leave them unimpaired for future use and enjoyment of wilderness." In this sense, wilderness is Crevecoeur's "great forest of nature" where as he writes it (and John Muir later also asserts), he can "contemplate nature in her most wild and ample extent"(215).

In addition to the circularity of the Act's language, the ambiguity of its limitations in terms like "unimpaired," "use" and "enjoyment" reflect the larger, persistent debates I have sketched above regarding in what sense wilderness managed or *conserved* as a *resource* "for future use

and enjoyment” is open to market exploitation. By the letter of the law established in 1964, wilderness areas established through the Act remained open to all already existing extraction leases and claims until 1983, and through interpretation and any specific acts of Congress, they remain open to extraction of mineral and timber *resources* perpetually. The separate space of a *preserved* wilderness “untrammeled by man” within a capitalist system (now globalized) is illusory in a manner consistent with the “wilderness of the Puritan mind” wilderness *preserved* through being bounded and defined as separated from civilization remains as it has been since Europeans’ first arrival in America, “a mart for merchants.” The degree to which this “mart” is open for business or available for increasingly mechanized human modes of recreation changes, as I have demonstrated, with the political winds. A *preserved* wilderness is a completely contingent concept.

### **Wilderness as *Native Space***

Lisa Brooks writes that for herself as for her Abenaki ancestors “land” and “nature” are not abstractions. She uses the term “place-worlds” to define “a physical, actual, material relationship to ‘ecosystem(s) present in a definable place’”(xxiv). Brooks quotes Maureen Konkle to add that, “Native peoples connection to the land is not just cultural, as it is usually, and often sentimentally, understood; it is also political – about governments, boundaries, authority over people and territory”(xxvii). The Native wilderness that Rowlandson and Crevecoeur map as a separated uncultivated space where civilization does not occur exists only within the explicit contexts of their textual creations.

Brooks’s *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast* along with Cronon’s landmark *Changes in the Land*, Neal Salisbury’s *Manitou and Providence* and additional proliferating scholarship communicate the complex and intricate relationships among

groups of Natives and non-Natives in North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>26</sup> These texts reveal multiple and diverse alliances that exist even in the context of, in Cronon's words, "differences [between Europeans and American Indians] in political organization, in systems of production and in human relationships to the natural world"(160). Eventually, as we know now, the "two sets of ecological relationships [that] confronted each other, one Indian and one European," so transformed the landscape of New England "that the Indians' earlier way of interacting with their environment became impossible"(14-15). The colonists' fundamental understanding of land as property to be accumulated and nature as commodity to be exploited and marketed required the transformation of earlier relationships into those focused mainly on the conquest and displacement of Indians along with the destruction of ecological relationships Native peoples maintained in their "place-worlds."

Cheyfitz's elaboration of *eloquence* and Fessenden's explanation of Puritan disciplining of thought and its particular type of enactment in the *New England Primer* explain how *Sovereignty* and *Letters*, written during the height of major transformations in these complex Euro-Native relationships, can narrate such a simplistic and complete separation of colonists from Indians; people from *wilderness* and its so-described 'wilderness inhabitants.' The separation of Euro-Americans from spaces defined as wilderness and the simplistic construction of Native peoples as Ecological Indians, survive as dominant narratives in the construction and interpretation of environmental policies like the Wilderness Act and other preservation and conservation laws and policies, that can often keep Indigenous peoples from using the land according to their own

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<sup>26</sup> See also, for example, Jane T. Merritt, *At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700-1763* and *A Strange Likeness: Becoming Red and White in Eighteenth Century North America*.

philosophical orientations to it.<sup>27</sup> But, descriptions by Mary and Farmer James of Native peoples can also be read to communicate an alternative construction of “wilderness” space as social and political spaces where Native peoples live and enact and experience their cultures and socio-political relationships to each other and to non-Natives. These alternatives interrogate the civilization versus wilderness divide and locate Natives not as separated from “civilization” but as centered and living in *Native space*.

Chris Castiglia writes in *Bound and Determined* that Rowlandson’s “wilderness” experience destabilized the rigid hierarchies of Puritan orthodoxy, hierarchies based on firmly held binarisms (white /Indian, society/wilderness, male/female, divine/evil) that Rowlandson clearly articulates at the outset of her narrative”(48). Her construction of devilish Indians is undone by her numerous descriptions of their kindnesses, for example, their giving Mary and her daughter a mount during their march away from Lancaster and the gifting to Mary of a Bible in Third Remove (73-4), and the provision of comfort and extra food when in the Eighth Remove, Mary cries in front of her captors for the first time (82). At the same time, the moral superiority Rowlandson grants her Puritan community over “merciless and cruel Heathens”(108) is belied by her own behavior. When she recounts that food she has received from her captors is “stolen” from her, she implicitly reveals the Indians’ kinship ethic of dividing available food resources for the community. In the Seventh Remove one of two ears of corn is taken from her and half of the horse liver she is roasting, “which much troubled [her]”(81); she did not note that half had also been left to her. In the Eighteenth Remove, on the other hand, she takes more food for herself from the mouth of an *English* child captive, even after she has eaten her share, and notes only

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<sup>27</sup> Nadasdy’s *Hunters and Bureaucrats* is helpful on this point, as is Catton and Keller and Turek; also see Tirso A. Gonzales and Melissa K. Nelson, “Contemporary Native American Responses to Environmental Threats in Indian Country.”

that “savory it was to my taste”(96). In the Fifteenth Remove, Mary identifies *equally* with the wolves who set upon the English lambs in the opening of the narrative as she, herself, becomes “Wolvish” in her “starving condition: for many times when they gave me that which was hot, I was so greedy, that I shou’d burn my mouth”(93). And after she has noted her own “wolvish” behavior, Mary credits Indian restraint in the Twentieth Remove, when a British emissary arrives to negotiate for her release carrying with him many provisions. She notes that even “*when there was such a great number of the Indians together, and so greedy of a little good food; and no English there, but Mr. Hoar and my self: that there they did not knock us on the head, and take what we had*”(103). When some of the provisions are stolen, she notes, “*they seemed to be ashamed of the fact, and said, it were some Matchit [bad] Indian that did it.*”

As the moral hierarchy of Puritan to Indian breaks down, so too does the superiority of cultivated lands to uncultivated. In the Twentieth Remove, Mary notes that the British fail in starving the Indians by cutting down all their corn, indicating obviously that the Algonquian peoples were cultivating land for crops, but more importantly that the “vast and desolate wilderness” provided them with nourishment and was a space of Native cultivation. Rowlandson writes, in the woods “in the midst of winter . . . Strangely did the Lord provide for them; that I did not see (all the time I was among them) one Man, Woman, or child, die with hunger”(105). She continues, “I can but stand in admiration to see the wonderful power of God in providing for such a vast number our Enemies in the *Wilderness*, where there was nothing to be seen from hand to mouth”(106). The *wilderness* yielded up all manner of food on which the Natives and the captives could subsist even as they were avoiding British apprehension, “all sorts of wild Birds which they could catch: also Bear, Venison, Beaver, Tortois[sic], Frogs, Squirrels, Dogs, Skunks, Rattle-snakes; yea the very Bark of Trees”(106). Though Mary, as she has

throughout the narrative, credits God for every positive action or characteristic she attributes to her captors, she is clearly amazed by Indigenous knowledge of the land, where and how the “desolate wilderness” would yield sustenance even in the cold New England March and April, and how the Natives knew what the land could provide. “Many times in a morning,” she writes, “the generality of them would eat up all they had, and yet have some further supply against what they wanted”(106).

As the Indians are reoriented in Rowlandson’s mind as fully human, so too does the wilderness space become Native space. Early in the narrative in the Second Remove, after Rowlandson makes clear that she is forced to turn her back on her town of Lancaster and travel with the Indians “*into the vast and desolate Wilderness,*” they arrive at “an Indian town called Wenimesset” [Menameset](74). The Indian *town* despite its identification as such is at this point still the place where she buries her child in “*this wilderness condition*”(75). By the Fifth Remove, however, Mary who, to this point had refused to eat the Indians’ food, accepts it and begins to sew items for her captors. By the Eighth Remove, she is selling and trading her sewn wares for food and other goods, “*invit[ing] her master and mistress to dinner*”(83), and negotiating with her captors for her release, negotiations with which she would become intimately involved by the Nineteenth Remove. The border drawn at the outset of the narrative between Mary’s home space of domesticity, civility, and social relations and the wilderness space inhabited by savages, though not completely erased, is transgressed in such a way as to irrevocably question its validity. Rowlandson, due to her own desire to survive her ordeal and the openness of her captives to integrating her into the socio-cultural and economic structure of the Native community, is integrated into the wilderness space as well, which becomes then the Native space of which she is a part. When Mary is rescued and returned to her Puritan

community, she writes in what seems an unconscious lament that she “was not before so much hem’d in with the merciless and cruel Heathen, but now as much with pitiful, tender-hearted and compassionate Christians”(108). The captivity narrative is here reversed. Mary’s community *outside* the “wilderness” space from which she has been delivered entraps her by returning her to the constructed and enforced binaries between civilization and wilderness and Puritan and Indian that Mary herself can no longer absolutely maintain—because as her experience demonstrates to her, they did not actually exist in the first place.

Farmer James articulates the same dichotomy of wilderness and cultivated lands, wilderness dwellers and cultivators. Crèvecoeur, like Rowlandson, also implicitly deconstructs the moral hierarchy upon which James defines his place, literally and ideologically, in the American community. Jeff Osborne in “American Antipathy and the Cruelties of Citizenship in Crèvecoeur’s *Letters from an American Farmer*,” traces the ambivalences in what he calls the “liberalist utopianism” of author/character Farmer James and concludes that Crèvecoeur seems to critique James’s discursive sentimentalism (531). Osborne quotes Julia Stern in arguing that, “sympathy [in the Federalist period] [is] a hegemonic mechanism of ‘foreclosing’ on the futures of a vast number of civically excluded people”(533). Stern’s analysis, he continues, “draw[s] attention to the ways in which sentimentalism ‘enable[s] the presence of violence to be disclaimed and covered over by an outpouring of feeling that carries only positive valence.’”

James’s narrative of prosperity amid the domestic tranquility and cohesion of rural American communities is ruptured throughout by Crèvecoeur’s insistence upon “analyzing the darker side of human sentiment” that reveals “how the imaginary investment of sympathy works to mask historical and political violence”(534). By the final letter, “Distresses of a Frontier Man,” the construction of the happy farmer and the cultivated land which he owns and which

produces his identity as free and self-made comes apart. As Osborne writes, the “sympathy [that] informs the self-identifications of white, male ‘Americans’ as free, prosperous, and happy citizens” and I would add, that describes “the precious soil” of the cultivated “*property*” of their “own land” as inseparable from their citizenship (Crevecoeur 27 my italics) becomes the “embodied misery”(Osborne 547) and de-landed displacement of the once contented farmer.

The superiority of white cultivators that James determinedly maintains (though implicitly critiques as Osborne indicates) is eroded in the final letter when the violence masked by constructions of sentimentality is made explicit. As the title to the letter, “Distresses of a Frontier Man” makes clear, James names himself as a *frontier-man* rather than *cultivator* and is thus “cast in the role he had previously only been spectator to” (Osborne 546). James laments, “what are *we* in the great scale of events, we poor defenceless [sic] frontier-inhabitants”(193). Rather than the progenitors and directors of the American project, he and his neighbor farmers become its victims. What seems to play out for James then is an interior philosophical battle waged through a kind of Hobbesian versus Rousseauian conflict. As his settlement is enmeshed in the violence of the Revolution and “the existence of his *property* depend[s] on a single spark, blown by the breath of an enemy”(193 my emphasis), James’s investment in a uniquely *American* community of cultivated property owners disintegrates along with his faith in the English crown. He wonders whether the British king could empathize with their suffering (197) as he simultaneously realizes he must “bid farewell[sic] to Britain, to that renowned country . . . That great nation, which now convulses the world”(197). With the loss of control by the sovereign and the loss of faith in the promise of pastoral America, he concludes, “self-preservation, therefore, the rule of nature, seems to be the best rule of conduct”(193).

Yet, he resists deterioration into individual preservation and so seeks community in another

form. The landscape of civil disorder and human upon human violence is now the ‘civilized’ and cultivated settlements where the British and Americans fight for control. The space of *civilization* rather than the space of *wilderness* becomes, in essence, lawless space—Hobbes’ state of nature. James, therefore, “willingly descend[s] into an inferior state . . . a state nearer to that of [Rousseauian] nature”(199), that is to say a life in the wilderness. But, living in wilderness as an “inferior state” as it had been constructed in earlier letters, in this context loses any pejorative meaning since the superiority of civilized cultivated space has already been deconstructed. Though he knows it will be “new and strange”(200), James seeks to take his family to join a Native community, “becoming truly inhabitants of their village”(208).

Anticipating his removal past the borders of his farm settlement into uncultivated lands, James, like Rowlandson, transgresses the liminal space between frontier and wilderness and is then compelled to confront “wilderness” as a space where Native culture is lived. As I argued earlier, James most explicitly enacts a Muirian escape from civilization, and he vigorously romanticizes the Native peoples who live there as, for example, “inhabitants of the woods” who are “governed by no laws”(203), yet due to their “uncontaminated simple manners” can “live with more ease, decency, and peace” than Europeans (199). At the same time, James’s simplistic assessments give way to a more complex picture of Native life. James alludes to the political decisions of Indigenous groups regarding their resistance – or not – to becoming enmeshed in the conflicts of the Revolution, drawing a distinction between the internecine battle of Europeans and Euro-Americans and the cohesiveness of tribal communities, and at the same time indicating that tribal communities were engaged in autonomous political calculations (206). He claims Natives peoples are “without temples, without priests, without kings, and without laws,” yet they are not just living a purely ‘natural’ existence, since he argues that their “system”

makes them “social beings”(199) in a “social partnership” into which he hopes he can integrate his family (209). He continues, as Mary Rowlandson does, asserting his cultural superiority to his Native hosts and asserting they will be better people if they learn from him the methods of cultivation (214), while at the same time insisting that he is a “fellow hunter and labourer,” who can make a home albeit a cross-cultural home in this Native community. James closes the letter begging of God, the “Father of nature” that he and his family be “restored to [their] ancient tranquility”(216), but he knows full well “all that hath befallen our native country”(217). Even as he wishes to be restored to his former relationship to the space of America, like Rowlandson, he knows he cannot be. The binaries—the hierarchies—between wilderness and cultivated lands and Europeans and Indians that constructed that space are false and do not hold.<sup>28</sup>

The difference, however, between Rowlandson and James is to quote Cheyfitz, that “Rowlandson’s descriptions of Wampanoag/Narragansett life-on-the run are realistically ethnographic when she steps outside her ideology;” James “seems to never get outside his ideology of the Indian . . . whether utopian or dystopian,”<sup>29</sup> though as I have pointed out his descriptions of the Native community he inhabits contest his own idealized constructions. But, where Rowlandson’s “ethnographic” communiques unsentimentally (though unintentionally)

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<sup>28</sup> Kolodny notes that in Crèvecoeur’s later narratives, *Eighteenth Century Travels in Pennsylvania and New York* and *Sketches of Eighteenth Century America*, his antipathy towards a moral superiority of cultivated lands over wilderness lands begins to become more explicit. She writes, “creeping into their paragraphs, even when he is not apparently trying to make such a statement, is the bitter awareness that the same ‘brotherly harmony’ that converts ‘the most dismal forests, [and] the driest deserts’ into areas ‘covered with flowers, with fruits, with harvests,’ is also guilty of ‘the distressing habit of looking at the trees only as enemies, as ‘intruders’ who occupy the soil one needs’ . . . Even worse, he notes, the commitment to cultivation often prevents the farmer from properly, ‘venerating these gigantic pines, which no amount of human skill and cultivation can every replace’”(64).

<sup>29</sup> Quoted from a personal conversation on June 6, 2011. The formation of the entire final paragraph of this section is based on this conversation with Professor Cheyfitz. I thank him for his thoughts that helped to form the basis of my own in this final comparison of Rowlandson to James.

depict Wampanoag/Narragansett life integrated with the lands they inhabit, James maintains a sentimental view of the Indians and their wilderness lands that can be easily located in the historical trajectory of romanticized wilderness and the Ecological Indians who inhabit it. Rowlandson's and James' Puritanism and sentimentality respectively are imbricated in the Wilderness Act, with its romantic separation between people and an "untrammelled" wilderness in which "man himself is a visitor who does not remain," but which still allows for commercial exploitation. As I have argued though, Rowlandson's and James's texts, specifically through their engagement with Native peoples, leave space for alternative readings. These readings point to a different set of ecological ethics than those that inform a Wilderness Act that was from its inception never what it claimed itself to be.

### **Re-inhabiting Home**

Lisa Brooks uses the metaphor of the "common pot" to define networks of relationships in the Native space of New England as "deeply situated social and ecological environments" in which the emphasis was on the kin, community, and inter-community relations that supported the health of whole (3-8). Brooks points out that the *whole* interweaves human with "animal, plant, and rock beings,"(3). The common pot—Native space—is not nature or wilderness as separate space, but the land and all its life forms as a social space, a living space from which people live and in which people take part.

Max Oelschlaeger writes in, *The Idea of Wilderness* "the theoretical spectrum" of philosophical orientations to wilderness, "from resourcism through deep ecology and ecofeminism—remains entangled with that cultural project that is the West," where the inherent separation between nature and culture is deeply ingrained. Indigenous perspectives of, in Tirso Gonzales and Melissa Nelson's words, "eco-cultural wholeness" in which "people and place,

matter and spirit, nature and culture are interrelated in a dynamic process” (496) express an alternative perspective to the separation dynamic pervasive in these Western cultural approaches to lands called “wilderness”—both those that promote its exploitation and those that promote its preservation.

Even as our preserved wildernesses lock people out, in a capitalist culture, they will never be truly preserved, and they will never truly be ‘safe.’ I am, of course, not advocating a dismembering of wilderness protections such as the 1964 Wilderness Act enumerates them, because for now they are all that stands between millions of acres of undamaged, uncultivated lands and their important ecosystems and those who see these lands only as a “mart for merchants.” But—and I return again to the words of Louis Owens to draw to a close—I am arguing that wilderness imagined and then constructed as a separate and bounded space “untrammelled by man” can only ever be contingently *preserved*. Owens writes:

Unless Americans, and all human beings, can learn to imagine themselves as intimately and inextricably related to every aspect of the world they inhabit, with the extraordinary responsibilities such relationship entails—unless they can learn what the indigenous peoples of the Americas knew and often still know—the earth simply will not survive. A few square miles of something called wilderness will become the sign of failure everywhere (8).

I would only offer as a clarification to Owens’ powerful words, that the earth *will* survive whatever we throw at it; *we*, however, may not be a part of what’s left after the damage we do.

### Chapter Three: Gardens, Lakes, and Travel Tales: Leslie Silko, Margaret Fuller, and the Possibility of Cosmopolitan Ecology

*Dear Secretary Salazar,*

*We are writing to urge you to reconsider moving forward with a proposed 20-year withdrawal of approximately 1 million acres of federal mineral estate in northern Arizona. We predict such a decision, if finalized, would kill hundreds of potential jobs in our states and erode the trust needed for diverse stakeholders to reach agreement on how to protect and manage public lands in the future.*

*Grand Canyon National Park is an Arizona icon and a natural wonder that attracts visitors around the world. The Colorado River that flows through the park is the lifeblood of the West, providing drinking water for millions in seven states. We share your desire to protect Grand Canyon National Park and the region's water supplies from adverse environmental effects that may be associated with hardrock mineral exploration and development. We disagree that the proposed withdrawal is necessary to achieve that objective. In our view, the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the proposed withdrawal actually demonstrates that uranium mineral development would pose little, if any, threat to the park or water quality in the region. Thus we are concerned that this proposed withdrawal is more about social agendas and political pressure than about the best available science.*

*. . . The proposed withdrawal is a "defacto wilderness" designation; it will unravel decades of responsible resource development on the Arizona Strip in a misguided effort to 'save' the Grand Canyon from the same form of uranium mining the environmental groups once agreed to . . . From an **October 12, 2011 letter written by Republican Senators to Department of Interior Secretary, Ken Salazar, regarding the Obama Administration's decision to ban uranium mining on one million acres of the Arizona Strip.**<sup>1</sup>*

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Mary Rowlandson and Hector St. John de Crevecoeur along with other American writers construct a wilderness separate from European and Euro-American culture, a realm where only wild animals and Indians, also characterized as

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Bureau of Land Management, the Arizona Strip is "nearly 2 million acres in northwestern Arizona, which includes the Vermilion Cliffs National Monument" and "five wilderness areas, including the internationally known Paria Canyon/Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness Area, the Old Spanish National Historic Trail, nine Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, and two river segments suitable for Wild & Scenic River designation." According to the BLM, "the Grand Canyon isolates the Arizona Strip from the rest of Arizona, making it among the most remote and rugged public land in the lower 48 states. There are approximately 4,000 miles of unpaved roads leading to spectacular scenic vistas, remoteness and solitude among rough scenic canyons and ponderosa pine forests." The BLM field office website on the Strip contains the link for the FEIS (Federal Environmental Impact Study) arguing for the withdrawal of Strip lands from their current status under the 1872 Mining Law, which would close these lands to new mining claims and development, while honoring existing legitimate claims. The Strip is historically home to the Paiute, Ute, and Navajo peoples who were, of course, forcibly impinged upon by white settlers and clustered on reservations.

wild, reside. Once constructed as a space where humans enter but do not stay, ‘wilderness’ is transformed through the nineteenth-century into frontier space that needs to be conquered and developed to serve the expanding American nation, *and at the same time*, into a space to seek refuge from the very growth that was being so ardently pursued. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this rampant growth of Euro-American settlement across the nation gives rise to fears that “wilderness” – vast tracts of land not yet developed in the Euro-American sense of the word into farms, railroads, towns, cities, and so on – might be mowed down and lost forever.

In the first half of the nineteenth-century, as Annette Kolodny articulates so well, Farmer James’s ambivalence toward understanding “wilderness” space as a place where people live, use, and interact with the land is communicated by a significant number of American writers, for example James Fennimore Cooper and John James Audubon, who struggle with their need to both preserve wilderness as a pastoral utopia and acknowledge that the growth of the nation in which they themselves are participating would inevitably exploit what they perceive as wilderness spaces.<sup>2</sup> Kolodny defines the contradiction as the “pastoral impulse dangerously confused with the myth of progress”(67). By the second half of the nineteenth-century, this ambivalence transforms into a movement, most famously promoted by John Muir, to set aside spaces defined as “wilderness,” as those which are, to use the words of the 1964 Wilderness Act, “untrammelled by man” and where “man is a visitor who does not remain”(Section 2. (c)).<sup>3</sup> But preservation as Muir envisioned it was never possible to begin with in a country immersed in the contradiction Kolodny defines and driven by an industrial capitalism that requires the usurpation

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<sup>2</sup> See Kolodny, *Lay of the Land*, Chapter Four, “Singing Her Past and Singing Her Praises: The Nineteenth Century.”

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Mark David Spence, *Dispossession by Degrees* and Lee Clark Mitchell, *Witness to a Vanishing America: The Nineteenth Century Response*

of more and more resources. As I make clear below, in Muir’s famous turn-of-the-nineteenth-twentieth-century battle with Gifford Pinchot over damming Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park, preservation is subsumed within Pinchotian ethics of conservation, which promote the wise and sustainable use of ‘nature’ defined as “resources” for the benefit of people in the present and in the future. Thus, the twentieth-century contradiction in the 1964 Wilderness Act that defines wilderness as “untrammelled by man” yet allows for prospecting, mining, and timbering<sup>4</sup>—a contradiction that remains evident in the current debate communicated by the Republican senators’ letter to Interior Secretary Ken Salazar regarding the senators’ belief that uranium could very well be mined—and should be—within the Arizona *Wilderness Strip*. Even as the letter’s authors bemoan the loss of available acreage for uranium mining in the new “de facto *wilderness*,” the Department of Interior maintains that, “the withdrawal does not prohibit previously approved uranium mining, new projects that could be approved on claims, and sites with valid existing rights”(US Dept. of the Interior Press Release).

As I have been arguing at different points in my previous chapters, both conservation and preservation as they are defined separately and as they have become amalgamated in American environmental policy are invested in an ethos of *saving* nature constructed as space or resources *separated* from humans. In this chapter, I explore an alternative, what I call a “cosmopolitan” ecological approach, which addresses this separation by embracing *connections* between diverse human cultural communities *and* among human communities and the rest of the living earth. First, I flesh out more specifically how I am defining the term “cosmopolitan ecology.” Then I briefly explore the contradiction as Kolodny frames it, between the desire to save the land and to exploit it that is becoming more evident through the nineteenth and early twentieth century

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<sup>4</sup> See Section 4 (d) (2), the “Special Provisions” of the Act in its entirety for the restrictions and allowances with regard to prospecting, mining, and timbering.

United States, by briefly examining the Hetch-Hetchy Dam debate.<sup>5</sup> Finally, I interpret two texts, *Summer on the Lakes*, Margaret Fuller's travel memoir of her journey West in the summer of 1843, and *Gardens in the Dunes*, Leslie Marmon Silko's story of the late nineteenth-early twentieth century travels of Euro-American couple, Edward and Hattie Palmer, who have adopted a young Indian girl who has run away from a boarding school. As Silko herself explains, Hattie and the struggles she faces are modeled on Margaret Fuller (Arnold 179; *Gardens* 101).

In my reading of *Summer on the Lakes (Summer)*, I follow my premise in Chapter Two that *The Sovereignty and Goodness of God* and *Letters from an American Farmer*, while embracing dominant imperial narratives, also leave space for alternate interpretations that actually interrogate those narratives. Linda C. Forbes and John M. Jermier, describe *Summer* as a “‘conventionally eclectic’ travel book”(324) that does not “escape completely from cultural inscriptions” but is clearly an “early ecofeminist” tract. Following Forbes and Jermier, I argue Fuller is indeed invested in the imperial ethos of her historical moment, which frames her relationship to the American landscape within a contradictory discourse of human degradation and ‘saving nature’—a discourse that underlies the eventual constructions of conservation and preservation in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.<sup>6</sup> However, *Summer* also creates the

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<sup>5</sup> I emphasize that I am not arguing that this *contradiction* as Kolodny frames it, and as I am articulating it in the context of preservation and conservation, just ‘appears’ in the nineteenth century. It is within the historical trajectory that I name beginning with the seventeenth century Puritan construction of wilderness as both a dangerous place that needs to be feared and conquered and simultaneously the space where Puritans could seek redemption and God’s grace. In the eighteenth century, Crèvecoeur’s Farmer James’ constructions of wilderness continue to demonstrate this essential contradiction, though it begins to morph with rampant westward expansion into both a desire to preserve wilderness and to exploit it.

<sup>6</sup> I base the phrase “discourse of degradation” on Karl Jacoby’s premise of “degradation discourse” (15). In *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation*, Jacoby critiques George Perkins Marsh’s *Man and Nature* as

space for the exploration of alternative epistemologies like ecofeminism and Indigenous ecological perspectives that are based in “unity in diversity” and “reciprocity,” tenets as I will explain here, of a cosmopolitan ecology. By modeling Hattie directly on Fuller, Silko explores in *Gardens* the openings Fuller’s writing creates to critique the separation of people and nature embedded in the “pastoral impulse dangerously confused with the myth of progress” and narrate an alternative relationship that resituates humans within the living earth systems of which they are a part.

### **The Possibilities of Cosmopolitan Ecology**

Within the debate over uranium mining in the Arizona Strip, the irony that seems to escape both the Democratic Department of Interior and the Republican dissenters from current Interior policy is that preserving/conserving land in Arizona while extracting uranium (even if it could be done without further damage *within* the region<sup>7</sup>) used in other places for environmentally destructive projects like nuclear power and nuclear weapons is like fixing a hole

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advocating conservation based on the human propensity toward destruction of the environment. In a parallel argument to Mark David Spence’s in *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of National Parks*, Jacoby argues that nineteenth century anxiety over the destruction of lands being settled and developed in the name of progress propelled a competing desire to save lands by removing Indians from access to the resources upon which they traditionally lived; I elaborate further on both Jacoby and Spence later in this essay. For further reading on how conservation based on an ethic of human degradation negatively impacts Indigenous peoples globally into the twentieth and twenty first centuries, see Dan Brockington’s *Fortress Conservation: The Preservation of the Mkomazi Game Reserve Tanzania*, Mark Dowie’s *Conservation Refuges: The Hundred-Year Conflict Between Global Conservation and Native Peoples*, and Paul Nadasdy’s *Hunters and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge, and Aboriginal State Relations in the Southwest Yukon*.

<sup>7</sup> Even the relatively mild 2007 report on mining and its activities produced by the Grand Canyon Trust for the Arizona Fish and Game Commission communicates the damage mining has caused and will continue to cause the land and people, especially the workers, around the mines. See “Uranium Mining and Activities, Past and Present: Update for the Arizona Game and Fish Department and Commission” at [http://www.grandcanyontrust.org/documents/gc\\_agfUraniumUpdate.pdf](http://www.grandcanyontrust.org/documents/gc_agfUraniumUpdate.pdf). Also see Andrea Smith, “Ecofeminism through an Anticolonial Framework” for a general overview of uranium damage in Indian Country.

in the back tire of a car with rubber slashed from the tires in the front. Within a paradigm of the earth envisioned as parcels of property to exploit for economic exploitation and the maintenance of political power, environmental protections subject to politics and global markets, as I have been trying to demonstrate throughout my dissertation, will not ultimately work to protect the health of lands, waters, and species; they only incrementally stall the destruction of biological life that is currently taking place.

Cultural orientations diversify societies' orientations toward the rest of the living earth, but cannot change humans' biological status as a species that lives and dies based on the realities of food, water, shelter, and physical health. We are together despite our differences, joined by a common fate in terms of the ability of the living earth to support healthy human existence. A cosmopolitan ecology introduces the possibility of human relationships to the rest of the biosphere contextualized by a belief that humans as biological beings are part of the earth, not separate or above it. I borrow the term *cosmopolitan* from literary critic, Arnold Krupat, and environmental historian, Aaron Sachs. In their use of the term "cosmopolitan," both Krupat and Sachs articulate the existence of defined autonomous spaces, places, and cultures along with possibilities for education and understanding inherent in shared borders, or to borrow Mary Louise Pratt's now canonical term, the *contact zones*, that connect them. Krupat uses the term "cosmopolitanism" to define a particular critical perspective engaged in literary readings of American Indian literatures that is comparative without being appropriative and that can – with due caution – explore "how 'seeing with a the native eye' might relativize Western perspectives and whether or how that [type of critical vision] might alter aspects of Western epistemology and ethics"(23).<sup>8</sup> Cosmopolitan criticism insists upon rigorous knowledge of the particularity of

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<sup>8</sup> In his first chapter of *Red Matters*, "Nationalism, Indigenism, and Cosmopolitanism," Krupat

cultures and the attendant emphasis on political autonomy and self-determination in the face of imperial hegemony.

Krupat's literary cosmopolitanism parallels Sachs's environmental vision articulated through Sachs' study of 19<sup>th</sup>-century naturalist and explorer, Alexander Von Humboldt. Sachs explains that Humboldt had started thinking 'ecologically' and in terms of connections or "relations" as early as 1799 (12, 48-51).<sup>9</sup> In analyzing Humboldt's explorations, Sachs emphasizes the irreversibly cosmopolitan nature of the planet in terms of the human-centric priorities of economics, politics, and technology *along with* the biological reality that make humans part of the biosphere. Human behaviors and their consequences cannot be separated from the interconnectedness of ecological realities. Cosmopolitan ecology recognizes – and here I borrow Sachs's Humboldtian term, "unity in diversity" – and understands that the relationships between human communities and among human communities and the rest of the living earth are intimately and irrevocably intertwined.<sup>10</sup>

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elaborates the nationalist, indigenist, and cosmopolitan modes of analysis and articulates their differences as well as their relationship to and reliance upon each other in assuring comprehensive and non-appropriative readings of American Indian literatures. The caution exists in assuring that critical analyses sufficiently engage nationalist perspectives centered in Indigenous conceptions of political sovereignty and indigenist perceptions of the centrality and priority of local knowledges based in specific geographic lands and experiences.

<sup>9</sup> Sachs writes of Humboldt that, "the comparisons, the connections, the free associations that pop up everywhere in [Humboldt's] *Personal Narrative* represent the development of a truly ecological vision. Humboldt recognized difference, even exulted in it sometimes, but he also saw 'relations' where other explorers and scientists saw only bizarre, isolated phenomena, or inhuman wildernesses, or incomprehensible savagery" (50).

<sup>10</sup> Sachs makes clear that Humboldt's ecology analyzes social power dynamics as inherently connected to society's interactions with its environment (13). Throughout Sachs' analysis of Humboldt and those influenced by Humboldt's work, he emphasizes the theme of "unity in diversity," with variations on the phrase being used from an early review of Humboldt's *Cosmos* by James Davenport Welpley in 1834 (90-91) to 20<sup>th</sup> century American philosopher Murray Bookchin, whom Sachs calls a "Humboldtian cosmopolite" who argues that, "from an ecological viewpoint, balance and harmony in nature, in society, and, by inference, in behavior, are achieved not by mechanical standardization but by its opposite organic differentiation" (342).

The idea of cosmopolitan ecology specifically defined by the reality of connectedness among humans as part of the living earth is necessarily invested in the premise of *reciprocity*, as it is understood by numerous Indigenous cultures.<sup>11</sup> Potawatomi botanist and writer, Robin Kimmerer, defines reciprocity as “a moral and material imperative, especially among people who live close to the land and know its waves of plenty and scarcity”(142). Within the concept of reciprocity, “the well-being of one,” writes Kimmerer, “is linked to the well-being of all.” The concept of reciprocity is complementary to Indigenous *kinship* relationships with the land that conceptualize the earth in total as a social sphere defined by social connections among humans and other living beings. As Winona LaDuke explains, “cyclical thinking and reciprocal relations *and* responsibilities to the Earth (sic) and creation” are essential tenets of an Indigenous ecological paradigm (79 my emphasis). These relations and responsibilities, as the Onondaga and Navajo creation stories I explore in Chapter One articulate, focus on human abilities to understand, respect, use, and be responsible to the earth from which they come, which provides for them, and to which they are related. As ecotheology seeks to do from a Christian perspective, a cosmopolitan ecology seeks complimentary modes of relating with the rest of the biosphere, not necessarily situated within the belief in a divine Creator, across cultural borders from an understanding that humans, while culturally diverse, are ultimately one species tied to a common ecological fate.

### **Preservation and Conservation: Contradictions and Opportunities Lost**

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Sachs also uses a variation on the phrase to describe Humboldt’s literary strategy that reflects his ecological vision: “If Humboldt’s travels provide the unity,” Sachs writes, “his science provides the diversity”(49).

<sup>11</sup> Nadasdy points out reciprocity can be implemented in “highly unequal and exploitative social relations” (private correspondence, 9 September 2012). My focus here is on Indigenous conceptualizations of reciprocity that integrate people into the natural systems of the living earth, rather than perceiving them as dominant to and separate from the earth.

In *Summer*, Margaret Fuller promoting the progress of ‘civilization,’ advocates throughout the text for some way for Americans to know the past glories of vanishing American Indians. For example, she writes:

Yet ere they depart, I wish there might be some masterly attempt to reproduce, in art or literature, what is proper to them . . . We hope, too, there will be a national institute, containing all the remains of the Indians,—all that has been preserved by official intercourse at Washington, Catlin’s collection, and a picture gallery as complete as can be made, with a collection of skulls from all parts of the country. To this should be joined the scanty library that exists on the subject. (189, 211)

Here Fuller embraces the inevitability of Indigenous decline and completely and unselfconsciously erases the violence and genocide that leads to the decimation of Indigenous populations. The narrative of vanishing Native peoples resulting in the desire for their preservation in museum-like spaces parallels desires for preservation—the *saving* of wilderness in ‘museums’ “where man is himself a visitor who does not remain”— arising around lands inevitably vanishing before clear cutting and other forms of man-made decimation in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1864, only twenty years after Fuller published *Summer*, Abraham Lincoln signed the Act of Congress that set aside the lands that would become Yosemite National Park in 1890, the site of the battle between Muir and Pinchot over Hetch-Hetchy Dam. Around the same time Congress “provided for ‘the preservation of Yellowstone in its ‘natural condition.’” (Spence 39). Yellowstone officially became the United States’ first national park in 1872. In *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of National Parks*, Mark David Spence argues that “the [nineteenth century] growth of Western tourism, and the widespread sentimentalism for a ‘vanishing’ frontier” generated “a sort of patriotic transubstantiation” in

which specific or Western landscapes that had been set aside became “American Canterburys . . . where summer pilgrims could go to share their national identity and an appreciation for natural beauty”(4). At the same time Indigenous peoples previously assigned to “wilderness” regions that would become the parks were reassigned to reservations, “isolated patches of land [that] came to represent the final refuge of the American Indian”(4). “By the late 1860’s and early 1870’s,” Spence writes, “Americans regarded reservations, rather than the ‘wilderness,’ as the appropriate place for all Indians to live.” Indians were welcome in vast preserved “wildernesses” only as living museum pieces that affirmed stereotypical images of noble savages being simultaneously promoted in actual museum spaces.<sup>12</sup>

Indian removal happened across the continent and started much earlier than the nineteenth century, of course, dating back to, as just one example, the seventeenth century and King Phillip’s War, the New England war provoked by the increasingly provocative incursions of settlers into Indigenous space, during which Mary Rowlandson was kidnapped. In the earlier part of the nineteenth century, the Marshall trilogy of cases involving Indians and their rights to and residence on the lands where they lived prior to European settlement codified removal in the foundation of federal Indian law, based, as Eric Cheyfitz explains, on a particular notion of land as property that could be owned, accumulated, and exploited as resources for material economic gain. Cheyfitz writes that the decision in the first of the three Marshall cases, Johnson and Graham’s Lessee v. McIntosh, is especially notable because it “translated Indian notions of native peoples’ relation to their lands into the language of Anglo-American property law—that language where title is the supreme term—not so that Indians could be empowered in that

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<sup>12</sup> See for example, “Indian Field Days” in Spence (116). See also *American Indian Intellectuals of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*, Ed. Margot Liberty, especially Liberty’s introduction and chapter one for commentary on the incorporation of American Indians into museums.

language, but so the ultimate power over their lands, the historical inalienability of which constituted their cultures, could be ‘legally’ transferred to the federal government”(110). Indigenous kinship relationships with the land like those expressed in the Iroquois and Navajo creation myths that conceptualize land, or more accurately, the biosphere in total, as a social sphere defined by specific connections among humans and other than human beings requiring reciprocity are, as Cheyfitz makes clear, unseen within “universal Anglo-American thinking” (111). This thinking perceives Indigenous kinship relationships as “common *property* in the soil” (112 author italics) in which individuals acting as a corporation with a representative or representatives could sell the land.<sup>13</sup> In many Native cultures that are kinship based, Cheyfitz points out, “there are persons, but no ‘individuals’” so “no person or persons can act for the whole . . . it is only the whole that can act in the name of the whole.” Cheyfitz continues:

And because there is no notion of individuality in these cultures (a notion we should not confuse with autonomy), there, traditionally, is no notion of property. For the idea of property depends on the possibility of an individual relation to the land (as the basis of wealth) either in the name of a single person or a group, such as a corporation acting as a single person, in which this person, precisely because he or she or it is an ‘individual,’ is ‘free’ to alienate this land in a market economy. Or we could reverse the proposition and say: there is no individuality without property, so inseparable are the two terms in the mixed material and metaphysical traditions of the West. Locke’s formulation of primal

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<sup>13</sup> See Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats*, Chapter Six, “Just like Whitemen:” Property and Land Claims in Klane Country” for an analysis of the diversity of anthropological interpretations of “property relations” within Indigenous communities and the tensions created by analyzing these relations within a framework of Western notions of legal property. Like Cheyfitz in *Poetics of Imperialism*, Nadasdy makes clear that Western understandings of Indigenous property relations is often a problem of translation between two incommensurate frameworks.

individuality—“every man has a property in his own person’—succinctly states this inseparability, which is alien to Native American cultures.”(112)

This metaphysical distinction is important to note because it describes and predicts the historical angst in the American psyche elaborated by Kolodny and presages the ineffectiveness of environmental policy based on the ethics of conservation and preservation, which are historically rooted in a desire to both save and exploit ‘nature’ as a thing that is fundamentally separated from people. The property ethic, as a fundamental ethic of Western capitalism, metaphysically and primarily separates people from the biosphere that sustains them. It makes us masters and destroyers who, in the most current incarnation of this paradox, believe we must “save the planet” that belongs to us and which we continue to ravage.

The battle over Hetch Hetchy, which begins in earnest right at the start of the twentieth century, is revelatory within this frame because Muir’s public feud with his once good friend, Gifford Pinchot, over Hetch-Hetchy put into stark relief how seemingly opposing perspectives of preservation and conservation were actually on an intersecting course and embedded in the same paradigm of a nature-culture dichotomy. As Robert W. Righter frames it, the battle for Hetch Hetchy “signaled the opening salvo of a century-long conflict over the ‘highest and best use’ of natural areas” (3). Righter, who refers here to the coming conflicts over preservation and conservation in the twentieth century, also makes clear that the conflict that would eventually be located in Hetch Hetchy started much earlier. In the early nineteenth century, Righter writes, Spain had viewed water as “crucial to [its] successful colonization of California . . . as a means of imperial expansion, and later, “the gold rush culture that emerged by 1850, dominated by Americans and built on a ‘pyramid of mining’ [that] overwhelmed the indigenous peoples as well as Spanish and Mexican residents” began the real push for reliable sources of water such as

those that could come from the “snow-fed streams of the distant Sierra Nevada mountains”(29). Though, as Righter points out, Indigenous peoples in the area had at times diverted water, unlike the Europeans and Euro-Americans who came into the area using water for expansion or exploitation, “most chose to live near water sources, rather than divert or store them”(30). The battle for Hetch Hetchy then is both a culmination of the rampant expansion that writers like Cooper, Audubon, and as I will detail below, Fuller, embrace *and* fear – the epitome of Kolodny’s paradox, “the pastoral impulse dangerously confused with the myth of progress” underpinning what eventually will be called the environmental concepts of preservation and conservation.

John Muir saw the biological life of Hetch Hetchy as all connected and saw humans as destructive to this integration rather than part of it. Pinchot, the first chief of the United States Forest Service, was an advocate of conserving resources through wise use to assure their availability and commercial profitability into the future. Muir’s preservationism, spoke to “the pure beauty of a theoretically untouched wilderness” (Sachs 313). Muir defined Hetch-Hetchy as “one of Nature’s rarest and most precious mountain temples” and compared those determined to flood the valley to “temple destroyers, devotees of ravaging commercialism [who] seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and, instead of lifting their eyes to the god of the mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar”(Muir 813, 817). In Pinchot’s testimony to Congress on the bill that would approve creation of the dam, he framed the Hetch Hetchy debate in conservationist terms: “We come straight to the question of whether the advantage of leaving this valley in a state of nature is greater than the advantage of using it for the benefit of the city of San Francisco” (“Hetch-Hetchy Grant to San Francisco” 26).

Initially the debate appeared to be about the preservationist push to save nature, perceived

of as a pristine church to which people could go for a religious or sublime experience, against a conservation ethic that promoted the wise-use of nature as ‘natural resources’ for the benefit of humans. The apparent dichotomy eventually collapses. Christine Oravec argues that, “the preservationist’s position, once the only voice against the unregulated development of the wilderness, became a voice of dissent *within* the conservation movement, which was endorsed by both business and government”(445 my italics). Oravec writes that the battle between the Muir and Pinchot camps over Hetch Hetchy played out in the context of the turn of the century battle between the sociopolitical philosophies of nationalism and progressivism. Nationalism viewed America “as an organic nation, the whole greater than its parts,” and progressivism saw America as a “collective population of individual units any one of which could, under special conditions, represent the interests of the whole”(444). Within the discourse of nationalism, American “wilderness,” in this case Hetch-Hetchy Valley, became a “symbolic representation of the nation itself, inspiring national feeling through its very existence as an organic whole”(445)—like the “American Canterburys” that Spence describes. From a progressive perspective, American individuals and communities of individuals that represented the whole could and should make use of ‘wilderness’ and its resources in ways that best addressed human ability to prosper in America.

Oravec frames the debate over Hetch-Hetchy between competing notions of the American “public” and of the “public good.” Progressivism as a sociopolitical philosophy was gaining momentum. Therefore, the preservationists, defined as elitists who cared more about nature, or ‘wilderness’ lands “untrammelled by man” than people, lost Hetch Hetchy to the conservationists who defined nature as resources subject to a “public interest” based in physical

and social need.<sup>14</sup> But, the terms of *both* the preservation and conservation arguments and their results are uniformly invested in the idea of people separate from nature envisioned within Anglo-Saxon notions of “property,” whether owned by an individual or a collective of individuals defined as the public.

Sachs argues that in the Hetch Hetchy debate though “conservationism won a clear victory [because] it seemed more obviously compatible with economic growth and the general ethos of capitalism,” preservationism would still become “the dominant force in U.S. environmentalism”(331). I would emphasize not their differences, however, but their sameness. As Sachs also makes clear, “the Muir of the Sierra Club rarely talked about *living in nature*, about remaking our overall relationship with the land; human beings, for him, were merely tourists in the wilderness”(313). Contemporary environmental preservationism and conservationism subject to a capitalist ethos can only comprehend land—nature—as property, public or private, from which people are separated and upon which people act, whether to save it *from* people, to have a ‘nature experience,’ to manipulate for residential water supplies, or to mine for uranium. The 1964 Wilderness Act, the current battle over the Arizona Strip, and the continual battle over who gets to extract what and how much from “wilderness” and when, demonstrates that the contradictory *save-forever/use-now* paradox is still with us and still destructive. It is significant in the context of this contradiction to note that the Sierra Club, a wilderness preservation organization recently criticized for promoting natural gas development as an “alternative” fossil fuel while taking large sums of money from natural gas corporations,<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Preservationists, Oravec argues, forced toward a utilitarian argument that manipulated their espoused ethic of the intrinsic value of nature, began fighting conservationists in terms of tourism value, an argument easily hijacked by conservationists who could add tourism to their catalogue of *uses* of land for the public good (450-2).

<sup>15</sup> See “Exclusive: How The Sierra Club Took Millions from the Natural Gas Industry and Why

calls *preservationist*, John Muir, a *conservationist* in their electronic exhibit in honor of their founder.<sup>16</sup>

I do not have the space for it here, but the argument I am asserting I believe could be productively applied to a wide spectrum of American environmental groups beyond the Sierra Club. For example, while the self-perceived ‘radical’ group Earth First! characterizes itself as opposed to “overpaid corporate environmentalists who suck up to bureaucrats and industry” and to “the approach of environmental professionals and scientists,” it still promotes the fundamental separation of people from “wilderness” or the “earth” which it perceives, in a reversal of the Christian hierarchy I have been explicating in my dissertation, as being above or better than people.<sup>17</sup> Reminiscent of the cult-like groups that have formed around ‘wilderness’ icon Christopher McCandliss, the subject of Jon Krakauer’s book and film, *Into the Wild*, whom I site in Chapter Two, the Earth First! website states that “many EF!ers experience both the joy of the wild and the anguish of losing it so acutely that they feel isolated and alone before coming together as a group.” Their “direct actions” are “in defense of the last wild places,” and they see themselves “tied to Deep Ecology” or “the spiritual and visceral recognition of the intrinsic, sacred value of every living thing”—except perhaps members of the Sierra Club. I do not mean to pick on Earth First! or the Sierra Club, but rather to point out that two environmental groups with vastly different agendas are both located within the same paradigm of hierarchy and separation, which I am arguing is ultimately ineffective for slowing our fast-growing

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They Stopped” at *Time Ecocentric*; <http://ecocentric.blogs.time.com/2012/02/02/exclusive-how-the-sierra-club-took-millions-from-the-natural-gas-industry-and-why-they-stopped/>; see also the Sierra Club’s own statement amalgamating conservation and preservation through its interpretation of the 1964 Wilderness Act at <http://www.sierraclub.org/policy/conservation/wilderness.aspx>.

<sup>16</sup> See “The John Muir Exhibit” where John Muir is described as America’s most famous and influential naturalist and conservationist, and founder of the Sierra Club.”

<sup>17</sup> See <http://www.earthfirst.org/about.htm>

environmental crises. A new paradigm suggested by actually learning *from*—not *about*—Indigenous epistemologies is the direction I am espousing. In turning now to *Summer and Gardens*, I hope to show that Margaret Fuller and Hattie Palmer are subversive women who resist notions of separation from and dominance over the earth precipitated by a patriarchal system invested, as I have discussed in my previous two chapters, in, to borrow the apt description of Weber’s book title, “Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism,” and the exploitation of the earth they authorize. In doing so, they critique the hubris of an environmental ethic that makes humans both the earth’s savior and its destroyer and offer instead an ethic of connection among diverse peoples and between people and the rest of the living earth.

### **Margaret Fuller and/as Hattie Palmer: Cosmopolitan Ecologists**

Sachs makes clear that though Muir ends his life in the “role of wilderness propagandist” (331), at certain times in his career, especially those of extended stays with Native peoples, Muir seemed to reach toward an understanding of humans’ place in the world that “integrat[ed] nature and culture”(328). Sachs makes the case that explorer and scientist, Humboldt whom Muir read extensively (27), was invested in an environmental ethic much closer to “reciprocity” than the utilitarian preservation ethic Muir espoused at the end of his life. Humboldt focused on a “chain of connection by which all natural forces are linked together, and made mutually dependent on each other”(12). Sachs characterizes Humboldt as an original ecologist (12) and argues that “ecology,” in the contemporary scientific sense of the word as the study of relationships between organisms and their environments “would have been unthinkable outside the context of nineteenth century exploration”(346). Though exploration was the vehicle through which colonialism took route in the Americas and around the world, the manner of travel and exploration in which Humboldt was engaged “actually revealed the social and ecological damage

wrought by colonialism”(13). Sachs highlights what he calls the “social edge” of “Humboldt’s ecology” that by “its very nature, its inclusiveness, its analysis of social power dynamics as inherently connected to a society’s interactions with its environment” was not “simple preservationist environmentalism” or “ecological science . . .but a powerful alternative, an intellectual torrent that swept through the Western world—the United States in particular—for about a century, before it evaporated in the desert heat of social Darwinism, which endorsed both human and environmental exploitation”(13). Sachs explores the “cosmopolitan possibilities” (350) in Humboldt’s narratives of exploration in which he finds Humboldt’s “deep feeling of awe and appreciation for the great variety of landscapes and cultures that his obsessive traveling enabled him to experience”(13).

Though Humboldt, like Margaret Fuller, was enmeshed in the notion of “human progress” through the inevitable development of “wild lands,” he believed “with proto-environmentalist logic that development ought to be undertaken with the greatest care, so valuable lands were not wasted”(5). Fuller, like Humboldt, embraced what might be called a form of environmental justice that insisted, in Sachs’s words, that, “the benefits of such development be shared equally among all people”(5-6). Fuller was not a natural scientist as Humboldt was. But her travels in *Summer* seem to reveal, as Humboldt’s explorations do, a desire to understand, more than to conquer; a form of encounter that led to “questioning the values of [her] home civilization”(Sachs 7).

Fuller, while explicitly articulating the paradox of pastoral longing within the inevitability of progress, becomes in Michaela Bruckner Cooper’s words, a “cultural critic”(172). As she moves west in her journey, following literally and symbolically the path of manifest destiny, her travels are a “trope for physical and textual wandering” in which she “expands the

margin of her discourse, while at the same time foregrounding the limitations of traditional male narratives of westward expansion”(Cooper 173, 174). Fuller’s position was unique. As Cooper points out, she was socially connected within the predominantly male coterie of transcendentalist writers and simultaneously an outsider who needed special permission to access the “private club” of Harvard University Library (172). But, it was precisely her ‘outsider-ness’ that provoked Fuller to question the accepted order of things within a patriarchal paradigm that elevates men above women, nature, and non-Western peoples and to do so from within the tenuousness of an anxiety produced by her own contingent position (172, 171). This critical process can be explicated through the theoretical premise of ecofeminism, which seeks to make visible the interconnections between subjugation of women, people of color, and the poor and the exploitation of the biosphere within a paradigm of *mastering*. Fuller’s ability to embody her own anxieties by simultaneously advocating *and* questioning dominant patriarchal narratives compels readers onto the shifting sands of her critique. Her tenuous position interrogates the idea of mastery or control, so even as she advocates the story of manifest destiny, she undermines it and makes space for competing narratives.

The opening account of Fuller’s journey, which takes place at Niagara Falls in 1843, demonstrates this process. Immediately apparent is Fuller’s immersion in nineteenth century cultural narrative that makes nature separate from humans and accessible through sublime experience into which humans must enter. As Muir does later in the century with Hetch-Hetchy, Fuller compares the falls and their environs to a “temple which nature has erected to its God” (76); “the Being who was the architect of this and all”(77), and into which she feels, as a human, a sense of “unworthiness to enter” (76). Though she does not use the word, the falls seem to Fuller a *wilderness* like the one Mary Rowlandson perceives beyond the boundaries of her

farming village; Fuller writes that the falls “inspire an undefined dread” and force her to “start and look behind [her] for a foe,” embodied as she conjures it in her imagination by “naked savages stealing behind [her] with uplifted tomahawks”(72). The Indians like the falls, she writes, are the essence of a “mood of nature” responsible for both the “absorbing force” of the water and “for that on which the Indian was shaped on the same soil.” Like Rowlandson and Farmer James, Fuller perceives “nature” or “wilderness” as a place beyond the borders of her civilized world and inhabited by beings shaped by its raw power rather than cultivated in civilization.

But Fuller seems as unsettled by the embeddedness of the image of dangerous Indians as she is by the image itself, which comes “unsought and unwelcome . . . even after [she] had thought it over, and tried to shake it off“(72).<sup>18</sup> As Fuller proceeds in tales of her journey, she does not consistently find Indians dangerous, but rather the settlers and soldiers who decimate them. She sees the removal of Indians literally from the landscape as “inevitable, fatal,” and asserts, “we must not complain but look forward to a good result”(96). However, she does herself “complain” and often couples the destruction of Native peoples with the impending destruction of conquered lands.

Fuller receives her “first feeling that [she] really approached the West” when she “[sees] Indians for the first time” looking toward the shore from her boat on the St. Claire River (80). “It was twilight and their blanketed forms, in listless groups or stealing along the bank, with a lounge and a stride [were] so different in its wildness from the rudeness of the white settler.” The twilight and shrouded figures on the riverbank configure ‘real’ Indians analogously to

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<sup>18</sup> Susan Gilmore writes that “Fuller’s emphasis on the appearance of ‘naked savages’ at the Falls as an ‘illusion’ characterizes the American landscape as one haunted not by Indians but by colonial fantasies”(207).

Fuller's imagined Indians at Niagara, but her ambivalence at Niagara toward unwanted images is also expressed here as an inability to see clearly for herself past dominant narratives that seek to define Indians within a patriarchal and imperial paradigm. The review of books about Indians that Fuller elaborates shortly after seeing "real" Indians for the first time includes references to writers like George Catlin, Henry Schoolcraft, Sir Charles Augustus Murray, and James Fennimore Cooper and is filled with equivocal language. She, for example, describes Catlin's book as "not to be depended on for the accuracy of his facts," though he is truest to the "*spirit* of the scene," claims that only "*hints*" can be drawn from Murray's images, and calls Cooper's Uncas a "white man's view of a savage hero, who would be far finer in his natural proportions; still, though a *masquerade figure*, it *implies* the truth" (87-88 my italics). Susan Gilmore writes that Fuller's emphasis on inexact terms "admits her own narrative's reliance on the inexact and irretrievable, as it pursues its elusive subject through a fragmentary clutter of prior outlines or scripts" and while she "fails to dismantle the manifest destiny plot—the nation's favorite fable—it nonetheless succeeds in exposing the already inscribed and overwritten condition of the West and its subjects"(204-5). Though Fuller concludes that these books "aided [her] in what [she] afterwards saw and heard of the Indians"(Fuller 89), she also makes clear that what is needed is "a completely faithful version of some among them" (89, 88). Even while she participates in a rationalized Indian removal, she asserts that Indians have their own story to tell.

In articulating the "rudeness of the white settler," (80) on the other hand, Fuller draws more definitive outlines and more explicitly condemns the narrative she also embraces. The New Englanders on the boat from which she sees blanketed Indians, she explains, were to be the "fathers of a new race." They were headed west, "seeking their fortunes," but "from the old man down to the little girl," they were speaking "not of what they should *do*, but of what they should

*get* in the new scene. It was to them a prospect, not of the unfolding nobler energies, but of more ease, and larger accumulation” (80 my italics). Fuller moves from this critique of wealth and resource accumulation to an articulation of a different relationship to the land and water around her than she had at Niagara just a few days earlier when her boat arrives at the Manitou Islands, “where the boat stops to wood”(85). After “a daily and careless familiarity” she concludes nature “refuses to be seen by being stared at. Like Bonaparte,” she writes, “[nature] discharges her face of all expression when she catches the eye of impertinent curiosity fixed on her. But he who has gone to sleep in childish ease on her lap, or leaned an aching brow upon her breast, seeking there comfort with full trust as from a mother, will see all a mother’s beauty in the look she bends upon him.” Here Fuller, in ecofeminist Karen J. Warren’s words, “opposes the logic of domination which keeps conceptual frameworks in place” (Warren in Smith 3). The hierarchical position of the sublime where nature is a masterful temple to be entered by humans who can only be unworthy gives way to nature as nurturer who can be as commanding as Bonaparte if treated with disrespect, but approachable as a loving mother if a paradigm of mastery is exchanged for one of humility and dependence.

Fuller then explains how for the European immigrants to Manitou Island, humility and respect are clearly not the order of the day. She observes that the only people now living on the once fully forested island are woodcutters who cut wood for the steamboats. Noting the clear cutting, Fuller characterizes the inevitable march of progress west in ominous tones: “The march of the peaceful is scarce less wanton than that of warlike invasion. The only landmarks are broken down, and the land, for a season, bears none, except of the rudeness of conquest and the needs of the day, whose bivouac fires blacken the sweetest forest glade”(86). Though she is determined to rationalize her “distaste at the mushroom growth” of the West with hope “for new

intellectual growths” rising from the decimation of the land, she knows fully “that centuries cannot again adorn the land with such” like the “noble trees [that] are gone already from this island to feed this caldron.”

Fuller implicates herself in this destruction as she, “like other emigrants, went not to give, but to get, to rifle the wood of flowers for the service of the fire-ship”(87). At the same time, she envisions a paradigm of reciprocity that critiques the rampant resource exploitation of the West and bespeaks a more balanced relationship between people and the lands from which they live. At “times of slower growth” she writes, people who worked on the land like the woodcutter or shepherd had the opportunity to draw from it, “if not to the poetical extent, at least, in some proportion, its moral and its meaning. The wood cutter did not cut down so many trees a day, that the hamadryads had not time to make their complaints heard”(85). Fuller’s expression here is not the Pinchotean conservation ethic of human-centric resource preservation focused on a capitalist economic viability. Rather she speaks to the responsibility of achieving a moral vision of the whole living earth and peoples’ engagement with it, in which the trees themselves might have a voice in their fate.

She draws the episode toward a close with a reference to the “old Manitou,” the Aniishinabe creator, who was pleased with even the most modest offerings from “his children,” the Ojibwe, and who was “daunted like his children by the approach of the fire-ships which he probably considered demons of a new dynasty”(86). The Manitou, Fuller writes, “had suffered his woods to be felled to feed [settler] pride” though their “encroachment . . . did not seem to him so authorized by the law of the strongest.” This anecdote draws together the strands of patriarchy that ecofeminism defines as an integrated structure built upon a vision of seeing God and then, in this case, European men as masters to whose control women, cultural others, and all

other than human life in the biosphere are subject. As Susan Griffin writes, “the social construction of ‘race,’ which is also justified by an idea of nature, cannot be separated from ideas of gender”(220). Indians who are constructed as racially inferior are slated to vanish before the march of progress, which also decimates the land and makes Fuller, through her own lack of agency as a woman within Euroamerican culture, complicit in the destruction. But, articulating her complicity also opens the door to resisting it and to resisting the power structure that assigns her this inferior role. Fuller, through inhabiting the voice of the Manitou, questions the hierarchy imposed on her and articulates an alternative social vision that, to borrow Winona LaDuke’s words describing the Ojibwe relationship with the earth, is based on “cyclical thinking” and “reciprocal relations”(79). Fuller’s Manitou creates a contrast between the modest offerings of the island’s Indians to the Manitou who would in turn assure them abundant resources for living and the clear cutters fueling the “fire-ships” and burning up the island, and eventually, the whole American West.

Fuller heads inland and further west to Rock Island, ancestral home of the Sauk and Fox, and site of what Fuller refers to as the “ scene of some of the latest romance of Indian warfare”(94). These lands, Fuller asserts, are the “beautiful regions Black Hawk returned to with his band ‘to pass the summer,’ when he drew upon himself the warfare in which he was finally vanquished.” Though Fuller blames Black Hawk for the American aggression that displaced him and his people, she empathizes with Black Hawk’s attachment to the land, writing, “no wonder he could not resist the longing, unwise though its indulgence might be, to return in summer to this home of beauty”(94). “How could they let themselves be conquered,” she asks, “with such a country to fight for?”(98). On the one hand, Fuller’s question performs the same violent rhetorical erasure and demonstrates the lack of accurate historical knowledge that her reflections

about Indians in museums (which I quoted in the previous section) do. On the other hand, she opens the possibility to consider the battle in terms of Sauk investment in *their* land.

As Black Hawk's autobiography published in 1833, a decade before *Summer on the Lakes*, communicates, clearly the Sauk did not let themselves be conquered, but rather were driven from their homelands by an insatiable American appetite for land and the determination to remove Indians to acquire it. "Why," Black Hawk asks, "did the Great Spirit ever send the whites to this island, to drive us from our homes, and introduce among us poisonous liquors, disease and death? They should have remained on the island where the Great Spirit first placed them" (61). Black Hawk states somewhat more gently later in the text, "that wherever the Great Spirit places his people, they ought to be satisfied to remain, and thankful for what He has given them; and not drive others from the country He has given them, because it happens to be better than theirs!"(145). In what Krupat calls the autobiography's "one sustained account of the 'manners and customs' of [Black Hawk's] people,"(530) the Sauk, cultural details of food gathering, daily life, ceremony, wars and tribal relations, and so on are obviously defined by the geography, topography, and ecology of Sauk home lands, which generate Sauk customs and provide the resources that made the Sauk people in the words of Black Hawk's autobiography, "as happy as buffalo on the plains"(89). The Sauk's intimate relationship with the land and the construction of their cultural community around that relationship stands in contrast to Fuller's role as the "explorer" and to the "settlers" Fuller so often critiques. She is the traveler and stranger wandering through Sauk lands appreciating them aesthetically but without real knowledge of what those lands provide and how to be in a reciprocal relationship with them, and the settlers she describes "come not to give but to get."

Though Fuller, in her role as imperial apologist, sees Black Hawk's fate as inevitable

before a superior culture and even blames the Sauk for their own defeat, she calls the Indians “the rightful lords of a beauty they forbore to deform,” a beauty to which the settlers are blind as “they had no thought beyond satisfying the grossest material wants”(96). Fuller’s depiction of the habits and dwellings of Black Hawk and his people as “not break[ing] in on that aspect of nature under which they were born” contrasts the image of wild Indians she conjures at Niagara Falls, where wild savages haunt a mysterious and overpowering wilderness. Like the picture of the woodcutter and sheep herder that precedes her description of the Manitou, Fuller’s reflections on Black Hawk and his people as living in harmony with the land that is their home are also preceded by a picture of an integrated harmony of culture and nature among a few exemplary European immigrants she describes. Fuller writes for example the “woods rich in moccasin flower and lupine” near the banks of the Fox River leading to the Euro-American village of Geneva filled with settlers who knew “true values” and who seemed like “points of light among the swarms of settlers, whose aims are sordid, whose habits thoughtless and slovenly”(91). And she describes the habitation of an English gentleman a day’s journey from Geneva as indicating, “human care harmonized with what was natural. The tall trees bent and whispered all around, as if to hail with sheltering love the men who had come to dwell among them”(92). In her depictions of such park or garden-like settings where people “dwell among” elements of the natural world, and there are several such in the text, Fuller may seem to be in Susan Gilmore’s words, legitimizing both Euro-American domestication of the wilderness and attempts at assimilating Indians away from their land-based cultures (Gilmore 200).

There is however another way to read this. Gilmore’s critique, though it clearly has legitimacy, maintains a nature/culture, wilderness/domesticity dichotomy that Fuller – and Black Hawk – break down. In Fuller’s description and Black Hawk’s, the land itself becomes home or

part of what makes home, rather than just resources for building homes in which culture then takes place. When the land is home, the social lives of people take place within the living earth; they live from it, appreciate its autonomy and are responsible to it, and therefore, reciprocity rather than exploitation is the ecological model. From an ecofeminist perspective, Fuller subverts the patriarchal paradigm that assigns women the domestic sphere of the home, that enclosure removed from the male occupations of hunting, war making or making money, a space closed off from both the worlds of cultural and natural power. When she sees the land itself as an important part of 'home,' she critiques its exploitation and the patriarchal culture that advocates it. She also, albeit unwittingly, critiques the idea of 'wilderness' as the separate preserved space where wild Indians live or from which they are ejected to make space for white tourists. As Black Hawk's description of Sauk culture makes clear, we live on, with, and from the earth; we are part of it and making it "home" means perhaps that we will behave with more respect for what it provides us.

Leslie Silko's novel, *Gardens in the Dunes (Gardens)*, as the title indicates, also highlights the idea of gardens as part of a home space where humans interact with the earth from which they are living and from which their cultural existence is derived. The novel's various gardens around the world and their human caretakers and inhabitants comment on the form of interaction that define people either as attempting mastery of the whole living earth or understanding with humility that they are part of it. The novel takes place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in settings around the world. The Margaret Fuller character, Hattie, and her husband Edward Palmer, have adopted the Native child, Indigo, who was separated from her mother and sister when the Ghost Dance in which they were participating in Needles, California was raided by government troops. Hattie is in the process of writing a thesis for

Harvard. Like Fuller who historically lived a half-century before the Hattie character, she is struggling with the condescension of male scholars who belittle her research. The particular subject of Hattie's thesis is significant because it focuses on the possibility of female apostles and the suppressed gospels of Mary Magdalene (*Gardens* 77; 93-102)—a subject that threatens Christianity's patriarchal order and links early Christianity with pre-Christian pagan cultures that elevated women as powerful progenitors of creativity and life.<sup>19</sup>

Edward, also a researcher, studies rare plants and the possibilities of hybridization. As a character, Edward is the imperialist embodied. Silko writes of Edward that he “traveled to places so remote and collected plants so rare, so subtle, few white men ever saw them before. He added these rare treasures to his growing collections of roots, stalks, leaves, and most important, when possible, seeds. His ambition was to discover a new plant species that would bear his name, and he spent twenty years of his life in this pursuit before [his and Hattie's] marriage”(78). Caught up by the pressures of needing to succeed in a system where success is defined by money and power, Edward uses his knowledge of plants to steal rare plants from Indigenous lands around the world and attempt hybridizations that will bring him money and fame. Edward's laboratory-study is also “filled with artifacts—bows and spears and arrows that bristled out of pottery jars painted with serpents and birds,” as well as “mineral specimens [that] filled the shelves”(76). Edward's “collections” recall Fuller's catalogue of books on the subject of ‘collecting’ knowledge of Indian peoples before they vanish and raises the specter of her warning regarding the necessity of a museum to house the artifacts of disappearing Indigenous

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<sup>19</sup> A. La Vonne Brown Ruoff explains that one of *Gardens* continuing themes is the “clergy's endless wars against the old religions. [Silko] links the suppression of the Ghost Dance religion with earlier persecutions of non-Christians” (14). For a detailed analysis of Silko's references to women in religion, matriarchy, and the power of women in pre-Christian religions, see Mary Magoulick's “Landscapes of Miracles and Matriarchy in Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes*.”

cultures.

Through Edward, *Gardens* communicates the ethics of Western science as it developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the heels of Cartesian mechanization of other-than-human species and Darwinian evolutionary theory, both of which were engaged to situate racism and the superiority of an inevitably progressive white civilization within an ‘objective’ scientific paradigm. Edward’s categorization of plants, minerals, and artifacts also references Linnaean taxonomy and its division of biological life into orders and hierarchal classes. More specifically relevant to my argument, Edward’s behavior evidences what Karl Jacoby refers to as the growing attempts to define “nature” conceptually within this Western scientific paradigm. The questions, “what is nature” and “how does it shape human affairs” were at the center of American cultural angst as evidenced by the transcendentalists (12) in the first part of the nineteenth century and the rising preservation and conservation movements that culminated in the representative battle over Hetch-Hetchy in the second. The questions of conserving and preserving ‘nature’ in relationship to the social rationalizations facilitated by the science of Linnaeus, Descartes, and Darwin were perfectly communicated by the preservation/conservation perspectives of George Perkins Marsh whose *Man and Nature* published in 1864, and which Bill McKibben identifies as “the first major work of scientific environmentalism,” (McKibben 71) advocated an extensive state role in the conservation and preservation of ‘natural’ lands and a removal of “backwoods” inhabitants who did not have the knowledge to properly care for them (Jacoby 13-14). Marsh, who calls humans earth’s “noblest inhabitants”(Marsh 79), like Fuller is immersed in the nineteenth century imperial ethos that elevates and separates humans, particularly European humans, from the rest of the earth (Marsh 71). He advocates what Jacoby calls a “degradation discourse” (15), reflected also by Muir that

speaks to human destruction of the environment and the need to save or preserve ‘nature’ apart from humans whose “profligate waste” (Marsh 71-2) is destroying it. At the same time, again like Fuller, though Marsh embraces the narrative of a progressively advancing Euro-American civilization, he sees value in an Indigenous cultural orientation to the living earth that “recognizes a community of nature between man, brute animals, and even plants”(75).

The Indian child Indigo’s epistemological orientation to life reflects Indigenous values of a more integrated connection between people and the rest of the living earth that Marsh seems to see. Indigo does not draw the same boundaries between human and other-than-human life that Edward does. In a particular subversion of these boundaries, Indigo, against Edward’s demands to the contrary, adopts the monkey Edward has brought home from his travels, keeps in a cage, and names (significantly) Linnaeus, and makes him her kin in her own travels with Edward and Hattie. Indigo’s people are the Sand Lizard people whose gardens are in the desert dunes on the border of California and Arizona. Indigo’s grandmother describes the gardens as always having been there, planted originally by the Sand Lizard, “a relative of Grandfather Snake”(14). The garden creation story admonishes humans not to be greedy and to recognize their connection with and dependence upon the land from which they are living. Grandmother explains, “the first ripe fruit of each harvest belongs to the spirits of our beloved ancestors, who come to us as rain; the second ripe fruit should go to the birds and wild animals, in gratitude for their restraint in sparing the seeds and sprouts earlier in the season. Give the third ripe fruit to the bees, ants, mantises, and others who cared for the plants”(15). The story and the nature of the desert garden advise the people to plant, eat, and live within the natural cycles of the whole earth – to take only just enough and always reseed.

Indigo’s grandmother, Grandma Fleet also collects seeds and is, like Edward, a plant

scientist in terms of her abundant botanical knowledge. In the early part of the novel, Indigo and her sister, Sister Salt bring home baby rabbits for a stew, which they steal from a pack of coyotes. Grandma Fleet compliments their resourcefulness on remembering how to steal food from coyotes. Over the stew they make from the rabbits, she tells her granddaughters the story of an eagle that grabbed a rabbit that Grandma and the eagle had been competing for in an all day hunt. The eagle returned it to Grandma by dropping it at her feet as it flew away, after Grandma offered the eagle her compliments on being a good hunter. These hunting stories communicate that the Sand Lizard people are enmeshed in the ecosystems of their home space and integrated in reciprocal relations with the other than human beings with which they share the space (47-52). These stories communicate Silko's perspective that these ecosystems are understood by Grandma to include competition for food, life, and death. In other words, the Sand Lizard people are not living the romantically harmonious lives of the Ecological Indian. Rather, they are part of natural systems of a living earth they respect because of their participation in and dependence upon what the living earth provides.

Immediately after these stories, Silko reveals that Grandma is a seed collector with tremendous plant knowledge and the ability to grow food in the desert (51-52). Grandma's knowledge is juxtaposed to Edward's mainly through the way she employs it. Grandma Fleet possesses "Traditional Ecological Knowledge"<sup>20</sup> or an understanding of the plants of her own land and what specifically has to be done to nurture them and the soil in which they are planted in order for them to provide enough food for her family and community. Though both Edward and Grandma Fleet are seed collectors, Grandma's search for seeds and an understanding of their biology is invested in an ethic of reciprocity in a living system of give and take in contrast to

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<sup>20</sup> I elaborate Traditional Ecological Knowledge or TEK in the following chapter.

Edward's ethic of exploitation for economic gain.

Metaphorically, Edward, who engages in get rich quick schemes through stealing from both the earth and Indigenous peoples, becomes the embodiment for the exploitive system in which he participates, and thus, he physically deteriorates through the novel. His first injury occurs on a "disastrous expedition to collect rare orchids on the Para River in Brazil" where the plants are lost in storms at sea and after which "there were allegations certain plant materials were exported without proper government permits"(77). This injury prohibits him from ever consummating his marriage with Hattie. Another journey to Venezuela to collect from Natives "medicinal plants with commercial potential or a new variety of citrus or a new source of rubber" also ends in a storm and a headache so severe for Edward that he asks the ship's steward to "put him out of his misery with an overdose"(90). Edward's increasing frailty and inability to procreate is symbolic of an imperial system in its death throes. A paradigm that relies on ever-increasing exploitation of the earth and its peoples to achieve commercial success in capitalistic terms of accumulation is cannibalistic.<sup>21</sup> Edward's schemes end with his life in an attempt to acquire valuable meteor rock from an Indian ceremonial ground in Arizona. His death results

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<sup>21</sup> In his article, "What is a Just Society," Cheyfitz defines Karl Marx's concept of "commodity fetishism" in terms of how it would be understood through an Indigenous kinship ethic in which the entire living earth participates in a kinship social system. He writes, "From an Indigenous perspective, we can understand commodity fetishism as the displacement of kinship relations by object relations, particularly in the severance of kinship ties between consumer and producer, the latter being assimilated into the object consumed. Commodity fetishism, the heart of capitalism, is cannibalism. What, then, is the West's historic imputation of cannibalism to the Indigenous (archetypal rationalization for the category "savage") but a projection of its own exploitative socioeconomic relations" (13). Also see Cheyfitz's reading of Montaigne's "Of Cannibals" in the *Poetics of Imperialism*, where he reads Montaigne as interpreting cannibalism as kinship. My construction of capitalism as cannibalism is also influenced by my interpretation of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, in which actual cannibals in a post-apocalyptic world devoid of most food sources other than humans themselves, replicate the power structures that probably brought the end in the first place in order to accumulate all remaining 'food' for themselves. However, it is tragically obvious that as people are eaten, the cannibals will eventually be forced to feed on each other until the last man is standing and forced to eat himself.

from incremental poisoning from medication, administered ironically by the doctor who was supposed to be healing him and who was his partner in the scheme and wished to steal from him. An African-Mayan woman from whom he attempts to buy meteor irons during his earlier scheme in Venezuela predicts Edward's painful death. She exclaims, "Go away! You cannot buy them but you will pay!"(88). That short sentence summarizes an entire paradigmatic critique of a system in which exploitation is necessitated. The earth itself cannot be bought and sold for profit by the few at the expense of the many and of the biosphere itself, and attempts to do so are eventually and necessarily self-destructive.

In the Venezuela episode, Silko builds on the characterization of the Black Indian woman as an archetypal figure. She represents a "mystical woman like the Virgin of Guadalupe, a Mayan blue woman, and European pagan images of the Great Mother"(Magoulick 21). The sailors on Edward's boat believe she causes storms when she is angered and forces the men to lighten their boats of all booty, "gold and other valuables," in order to stay afloat. They believe the reasons for her storms are so she might scavenge the riches from the shipwrecks for herself (89). Money, however, is clearly not the woman's interest as she had refused Edward's generous offer to buy all her stones. With her refusal, Edward "got a sudden impression the blue-face woman knew him and she had hated him for a long time"(88). From an ecofeminist perspective the power of Mayan-African woman to conjure storms to force men to give up both money and power communicates the power of ancient or long-existent matrifocal earth-based philosophies against a destructive and exploitive patriarchal system, a power Hattie uncovers as she researches her thesis and then travels to Europe and the home of her own ancestors with Edward and Indigo.

In contrast to Edward, Hattie as the woman who is like the earth, persistently damaged by a system that devalues and exploits her, begins the novel suffering from headaches and

depression. Where Edward's schemes to mine the earth for profit moves him toward his eventual death, Hattie moves closer to understanding Indigo's land-based philosophies and grows increasingly stronger. Hattie's malaise is the result of her rejection by a male-dominated scholarly community and an increasingly severe pattern of sexual abuse from powerful males that initially debilitates her, but which she survives and overcomes as she finds her strength through her relationship with Indigo. Hattie and Indigo embark on a journey of shared self-discovery, which, like Fuller's, is literal as well as figurative. Their travels together and growing regard for each other demonstrate cross-cultural understanding and emphasize points of connection or understanding based in human relationships to the biosphere as opposed to irreconcilable differences between American Indian and European-American communities. Krupat argues that Silko's novels, like those of other American Indian writers, "forcefully present non-Western worldviews"(23). At the same time though, Krupat characterizes Silko's approach in her novels as "broadly cosmopolitan"(113); an approach that bespeaks transnationalism focused on Indigenous values that may be lived by a universal, or cosmopolitan community of people, those committed to—in [Gerald] Vizenor's terms,—continuance and survivance rather than progress and domination"(114).<sup>22</sup> Hattie and Indigo's journeys together and their individual development as women in their respective communities and as women in

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<sup>22</sup> Krupat explains Gerald Vizenor's terms "survivance" and "continuance" in the following context: "In one place or another Vizenor has written that the tribes are dead; Indians are inventions, or simulations; Indians are *indians*, or post-Indians; and so on. Such remarks might be read as rejections of an "Indian" identity in favor of some 'emergent hybridity.' But the identity Vizenor has elaborately been defining and redefining has at base the deep and unmistakable roots of 'tribal' values—which can and indeed must be taken along wherever one may go—to the cities, to Europe, to China, anywhere. These values wish to substitute for Western ideologies of 'progress' and 'dominance,' ideologies of what Vizenor has called 'continuance' and 'survivance.' In these regards, Vizenor may well have provided *Indian* versions of cosmopolitan patriotism seeking to avoid what [Franz] Fanon called 'the pitfalls of national consciousness'(112).

relationship to the earth embody cosmopolitan ecology because their well being is directly connected to the health of their relationships within their individual cultures, with each other across cultural borders, *and* with the biosphere.

Hattie hails from Oyster Bay, Long Island, where the perception of a garden is quite different from the Sand Lizard view. Hattie's parents' blue garden is designed with blue blooms of every type displayed among the white marble and artificial pools of their home. The highlight of the summer season is the opulent dance party called the "Masque of the Blue Garden"(78). The garden in this case is used to make a statement about wealth, and its owners never touch or tend it themselves. They understand it only as a possession and marker of their status. It is in this garden where Hattie meets Edward and believes at first, he is a "remarkable man" who "traveled a great deal to the most distant and fascinating destinations" and who, in tales about his journeys, "portrayed himself humorously, as the innocent tourist hell-bent on disaster," in order to "confuse the customs officers" of "foreign governments [who] were quite unpleasant about the export of valuable root stock and seeds"(79).

Edward takes Hattie and Indigo, whom Edward intended to train as a servant, on a trip to England and Corsica to acquire rare citrus cuttings. In England, Hattie's Aunt Bronwyn with whom the Palmers and Indigo visit is the conduit for Hattie's exploration into the spiritual connection she feels to European lands. Though Aunt Bronwyn does *own* her lands in the Western sense of that term because this is the system in which she is forced to live, she does not perceive the land as separate resource available for her accumulation and exploitation. Rather, Bronwyn demonstrates to Hattie that the land itself is alive with the spirits of her ancestors that live in the gardens and make them grow. She calls her land the "land of stones that dance and walk after midnight"(237), is committed to the idea that "plants have souls,"(240) and that old

Europeans “worshipped . . . incarnations of the primordial Mother”(241). Bronwyn’s independent life in which she lives on her own subsisting from the land that she, like Grandma Fleet, knows so well, is a subversion of the Western property ethic and of all elements of mastery to which Hattie is subject by Edward and by the scholars who do not legitimate her work or intelligence. When Hattie reads aloud to Bronwyn from her thesis, Bronwyn proudly asserts, “that was the old family spirit!” that stood up for the “old ones” when the “clergy made war on [their] ways” (261). During her stay at Bronwyn’s, Hattie sleepwalks in the ancient gardens of an old church on Bronwyn’s property. When she wakes among the willow and roses she sees a strange light, “luminous and white, moving through the foliage of Aunt Bronwyn’s corn plants and sunflowers”(249). In a moment of epiphany caused by her presence in the old gardens, Hattie weeps “with the joy she felt with all her being.” Silko writes, “suddenly [Hattie] realized they must help the Indian child return to her sister and mother! This was all wrong. How foolish she had been.”

In Bronwyn’s ancient garden, Hattie recognizes an inviolable connection between the earth and a cultural understanding of who she is, that has been long forgotten. In reflecting on the work of her thesis, she connects the repression by the church of ancient European peoples who honored an earth goddess to the repression by the male scholars who would silence her own work and to the desire of her husband to make Indigo an American servant girl. In coming to realize her own deeper identity invested in her ancestral lands Hattie understands how wrong it is to rob Indigo of hers.

With this realization, her journey to comprehend and then transcend the structures of power that have oppressed her becomes much more difficult, dangerous, and ultimately liberating. In the course of the novel, Hattie is sexually molested three times. The molestations Hattie suffers

are tied directly to a patriarchal paradigm that devalues women, cultural others, and the earth and seeks to exploit all three. At the same time that she is brutalized, Hattie eventually comes away from these attacks more committed to her independence from those people who are enmeshed in a system focused on power, dominance, and wealth accumulation.

Hattie is molested for the first time by a male colleague, an episode that occurs after her thesis focused on the theme of “the female spiritual principle in the early church” (100) is rejected by the Harvard thesis committee and her research called “too minor to merit scholarly attention”(101). Hattie’s rejection quickly becomes fodder for gossip and her focus on the feminine is “linked to Margaret Fuller, notorious advocate of free love.” Hattie’s male student friend, Mr. Hyslop, who interprets Fuller, a woman who embraced and wrote about women’s essential value in American society and fundamental equality with men, as sexually promiscuous, attacks her in his coach as he drives her home from class. Hattie fights him off, but “her confidence in her entire life and her very being were changed forever”(103).

After her thesis rebuff and Hyslop’s molestation, Hattie suffers headaches and fainting spells that make her weak and nauseous. The second rape is perpetrated by the Australian doctor who treats her and with whom Edward partners and who eventually poisons him. But Hattie’s increasing frustration with Edward’s refusal to believe her about the doctor and his determination to go on about “drilling machines to mine the meteor crater in Arizona” (320), along with her increasing determination to return Indigo to her family, convince Hattie to take more concrete steps to free herself from the constraints that are making her physically sick. She makes the decision to leave Edward who himself then deteriorates as he moves closer to realizing his plan to drill for precious stones in the Indian ceremonial site.

Edward’s partnership with the doctor and their subsequent mining of the ceremonial site

is the most blatant and brutal rape of Indigenous lands that Edward has thus far committed. With this scheme, the warning to Edward by the African-Mayan blue woman comes to fruition. Edward and the doctor engage in drilling excavations into the earth, which metaphorically becomes the womb of the mother when they discover a meteor rock ceremonially prepared as though it were a child. Edward and the doctor rip the rock from its resting place and cut from it all the valuable gems and decorative items that adorned it, including a diamond that was its “eye”(403) in order to sell them for profit. The stolen stone literally becomes a baby in a dream Hattie has about Indigo’s sister’s newborn, which serves as a premonition of Edward’s death. In the dream, the rape of the earth and the violence to the baby cause Edward’s death, but leave the baby unharmed. Silko writes: “That night Hattie dreamed Sister Salt’s live baby was in the stone cavity, but Edward and the Australian doctor insisted on using a large steel pick and heavy shovel to excavate the baby. She woke soaked with sweat and shaking; in her dream one of them struck something and Edward yelled. She saw blood spurting everywhere and a tiny severed leg; but the infant in the stone cavity was unharmed, even smiling” (413-4). Hattie’s dream implies that the damage Edward and the doctor do to the stone baby and to the Indian ceremonial grounds with the drilling will ultimately be revisited upon them, and the people and the places they sought to rape and pillage will ultimately survive. Edward’s death after a life of abusing Indigenous lands is realized. Because “enough” can never be defined in a system based in continual accumulation of wealth, the doctor sets about poisoning Edward after Edward uses up Hattie’s money to advance drilling operations in the mine, so that he can keep the full portion of profit for himself.

In an escalation of the sexual molestation she has endured since her rejection at Harvard, Hattie is literally and brutally raped after she retrieves her dead husband’s belongings, which

include two boxes of meteor specimens. The livery driver who had previously taken Hattie and Indigo to the encampment where Indigo was reunited with her sister, rapes Hattie on her return trip to see Indigo, her sister, and the baby. Her attacker beats her in the head with very meteor stones Edward excavated from the site and steals them along with anything Hattie has of monetary value. Hattie refuses to go home and “endure the stares and the expressions of sympathy. She refused to serve as the living example to frighten young girls judged too fond of studies or books” (452). In a rejection of a world that so severely devalued her, Hattie instead returns to Indigo, her sister, the baby, and the Indian women with whom they have been living.

The action of the novel moves full circle with the Indians in the encampment where Hattie is staying with Indigo calling for a Ghost Dance. Where the Ghost Dance causes Indigo to be split from her family in the beginning of the novel, in the end of the novel, it becomes the means by which Hattie fully rejects the life of subservience her role as an American woman demands of her. Hattie’s parents and government troops come during the Ghost Dance to stop the dance and forcibly return Hattie to the world she has chosen to reject. Hattie breaks away from her parents and runs into the stable of the man who raped her and burns it to the ground; the fire takes half the town, though, Silko takes pains to say, no one is hurt. The fire is a cleansing ritual for Hattie who is “amazed and elated by the beauty of the fire against the twilight sky”(473). For Hattie, the fire with its “reds as rich as blood, the blues and whites luminous, and the orange flame as bright as Minerva’s gemstone,” means she has both survived and escaped what would have killed her physically and spiritually. The fire takes no life, but gives Hattie hers as she regains the sense of herself she had been fighting for since she her ideas about the ancient women of the church were rejected, and she was abused the first time.

Hattie is for Silko the Fuller that Fuller herself was becoming just before her untimely

death by drowning in 1850. Silko writes of Fuller, “what a woman! What a hero! Free love, so brave, goes to Italy, has a baby out of wedlock, hangs out with all of the Freedom Fighters in Italy. And then just such a mythical death, within sight of her home with her baby and her husband” (179). Silko contrasts Fuller and Hattie to Alice James, the sister of novelist Henry James, who kept a diary that showed her to be a smart, savvy, and articulate feminist, but James was a “a woman caught between the demands of her own fierce intelligence and the dullness of the domestic sphere occupied by her mothers and aunt” (Strouse and Toibin, preface). Unlike Fuller who found at least some hard won success in a male-dominated intellectual world of writing and publishing, James died from cancer after a life of additions and breakdowns. Silko asserts that while Hattie is like Margaret Fuller, “Alice James is a good example of the kind of destruction that was set up to happen to a character like Hattie. And it was an example of the fight that Margaret Fuller would have had to carry on if her boat hadn’t sunk”(179). In *Gardens*, Edward’s actions as the ultimate rapist cause his death; Hattie’s ability to survive rape and fight back against the ethics of separation from and domination over the rest of the living earth that authorize and encourage it is ultimately the source of her liberation and happiness. As Silko explains, it was “her affection and her involvement with Indigo, and the firming of her resistance to the way she was railroaded by the culture and the people” that make Hattie the woman Fuller would have been had she lived into the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The novel ends optimistically with Hattie in the gardens of her ancestors – she has returned to England to live with Bronwyn – and Indigo in the gardens of hers. Though they are separated, Hattie and Indigo are each rejoined to family and community members that live with ethical priorities based in love and support of each other and reciprocity with the rest of the living earth. The closing message of the journeys of Edward, Hattie, and Indigo seems clear and very simple:

Regardless of the apparent strength of the imperial masters who engage knowledge and violence to exploit the living earth and oppress peoples, this system is not sustainable and inevitably self-destructive. Within such a system, attempts to conserve or preserve bits of the earth, well meaning as these attempts may be, have been doomed from the start. A more radical shift is needed, and *Gardens* communicates the possibility – and the imperative necessity – of persevering to achieve it.

## **Chapter Four: The Land is a Way of Life: The Possibilities of Traditional Ecological Knowledge**

*About thirty years ago, I was attending a meeting at the Onondaga longhouse in New York, and the guests at the longhouse were from Hopi country in Arizona. One of them, Thomas Banyacya, who was a translator for some of the Elders who had journeyed to us, had a story from the Elders to tell. His story was that the world had more or less come to an end a few times, but that some native people had survived, and they'd come to be aware that it was an inattention to and a disrespect for nature that had been at the root of their problems. Life on earth had been threatened and certainly civilization had been threatened because people had abandoned a respect for nature. And now this was happening again . . . I believe that what is coming will pose a major challenge to world civilization. A high-tech civilization that depends on running water, electricity, bridges, and so on is far more fragile than we realize. I think the Hopi were right: Western civilization will face the same kind of challenges the ancient civilizations of this continent faced, but we're not ready to deal with them. The Hopi had some important messages for us, but, so far, we're not listening (215, 218). from "Cultural Change, Climate Change, and the Future of Civilization" by John Mohawk*

This chapter of my dissertation explores Traditional Ecological Knowledge or TEK<sup>1</sup> and its relationship with *modern* environmentalism, the period from the early 1960's to the present.<sup>2</sup> I examine some of the many ways TEK has been defined and articulated to highlight both the problems and possibilities for TEK as a means of decolonization for Indigenous peoples and as an invaluable source of knowledge for meeting humanity's pressing and long term environmental challenges. As my previous chapters make clear, the trajectory of environmental ethics in the United States and the policies resulting from them are invested in an ontological and epistemological separation of nature and culture and a hierarchy entrenched within Protestant ethics that makes humans superior to the rest of the living earth, either as its stewards or its dominators. As I have been arguing these policies, because of their investment in this paradigm

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to TEK, acronyms for labeling Indigenous peoples' knowledge systems abound. TEK is in some cases considered *a part of* Indigenous Knowledge or IK, Traditional Indigenous Knowledge or TIK, or Indigenous Knowledge Systems or IKS. As my discussion of TEK I hope makes clear, breaking down Indigenous life-ways into specific systems of particular types of knowledge is difficult if not completely un-doable, and thus finding a completely adequate cross-cultural label for these life-ways is equally challenging.

<sup>2</sup> See Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism*, on the publication in 1962 of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* as the generally agreed upon beginning of "modern environmentalism" (1-2).

of separation and hierarchy and the exploitation of the earth it authorizes, are failing not just in the United States, but globally as well. Western colonization of the last five hundred years has been a *global* phenomenon. Ecological crises, perhaps most obviously but certainly not solely climate change, are not contained by human-made border designations, and free market capitalism with its attendant insatiable need for resources has integrated global economies to unprecedented levels. This final chapter focuses on U.S.'s modern environmental movement, but the context of my exploration of TEK becomes more global in notable ways.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> I must necessarily refer here to Ursula Heise's *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet: The Environmental Imagination of the Global*. Heise critiques American environmentalism's "excessive investment in the local" and urges the development of an "ideal of 'eco-cosmopolitanism,' or environmental world citizenship, building on recuperations of the cosmopolitan project in other areas of cultural theory . . . [Heise] argues that ecologically oriented thinking has yet to come terms with one of the central insights of current theories of globalization: namely, that the increasing connectedness of societies around the globe entails the emergence of new forms of culture that are no longer anchored in place in a process that many theorists have referred to as 'deterritorialization'"(10). Heise acknowledges how deterritorialization "is sometimes accompanied by loss, deprivation, or disenfranchisement," and searches for a definition of deterritorialization that "envison[s] how ecologically based advocacy on behalf of the nonhuman world as well as on behalf of greater socioenvironmental justice might be formulated in terms that are premised no longer primarily on ties to local places but on ties to territories and systems that are understood to encompass the planet as a whole." Heise explicitly refers to Native American societies, or as she refers to them "pre-modern societies" as the models for American local or place-based environmentalism because they are "credited with having—or having had in the past—a closer connection to the land," a contention she argues has been disproven by environmental historians such as Jared Diamond and Shepard Krech (32-3). I will leave to the side an examination of the term "pre-modern" as applied to Native American societies as the evolutionary paradigm the term suggests has been abundantly analyzed and debunked. I will say though, that in addition to major critiques of Krech and Diamond by Native scholars and others (see for example, *Native Americans and the Environment* and *Climate and Culture Change: Inuit and Western Dialogues with a Warming North*), Heise seems to have no awareness of globalized Indigenous movements which could enact precisely the kind of eco-cosmopolitan deterritorialization ethic she espouses. Shari Huhndorf, for example, articulates an Indigenous transnational perspective in *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture*, John Mohawk has framed the concept of being "Indigenous to place" ("The Art of Thriving in Place," 126-136) as a global concept, and *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teachings for a Sustainable Future*, edited by Melissa Nelson is a collection of Bioneers' presentations representing the global community of Indigenous activists and scholars who approach their work from a transnational or global perspective. Heise's short one-page

Indigenous Knowledge or IK is being explored more and more frequently in a global context. Years of Indigenous activism that have resulted in, for example, the U.N. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues which includes issues like climate change and Indigenous Knowledge and global organizations like the Indigenous Environmental Network and Bioneers, demonstrate what John Grim describes as the global “coherence of diverse indigenous discourses about lifeways and ecologies” (xxxiv). This “coherence” does not negate the specificity of diverse cultural practices and belief systems regarding the entire living earth. Rather, it expresses a practical focus on commonalities across Indigenous cultures in terms of common traumas of colonialism and the deligitimization of knowledge systems, along with the recognition of what these knowledge systems have to offer efforts to address Indigenous self-determination and global ecological realities.<sup>4</sup> Vandana Shiva states that “Indigenous knowledge is thus at the heart of the global issues of our times” and “will determine whether

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analysis of Native American literature and perspectives demonstrates how Indigenous literatures and perspectives are too often (with notable exceptions like Joni Adamson and Linda Hogan) relegated to the individual ‘silos’ of ethnic studies and environmental justice *within* the broader field of American ecocritical studies. The abundance of scholarship and community knowledge on Indigenous transnationalisms, decolonialization, and conceptualizations of biospheric consciousness of which Heise seems unaware is imperative to discussions of new types of global consciousness in which Heise is engaged. One of the central underlying tenets of this chapter and in my dissertation as a whole is that Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems and the experiences and consequences of contact between Western and Indigenous cultures are necessarily intimate to any discussions of environmentalism in the United States, and I am asserting here, globally as well.

<sup>4</sup> See “What is a Just Society? Native American Philosophies and the Limits of Capitalism’s Imagination: A Brief Manifesto” by Eric Cheyfitz. Cheyfitz explains that for Indigenous communities, “philosophical convergences [ ] emerge from cultural commonalities” and “political convergences [ ] arise from shared histories. These shared histories are the histories of European and Euramerican colonialisms. While each of these colonialisms has a particular valence, expressed in Western law and other forms of containment and expropriation, as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples witnesses, there is a call across the globe by Indigenous people for a recognition of the commonality of these colonialisms in their subversion of the autonomy of Indigenous communities”(292).

humanity and diverse species survive”(ix).<sup>5</sup> Her move from specifically *Indigenous peoples’* knowledges to *humanity’s* survival is significant. The implication is that the current globally dominant system of colonialism and capitalism and its attendant exploitation of the living earth is killing us – *people* – along with myriads of species and ecosystems, many of which enable human survival. The earth itself will survive these crises and eventually recover from human degradation; humans may not.

In this chapter, I explore some of the major challenges to defining and articulating TEK and some of the possibilities that TEK could help to generate for Indigenous self-determination and the global systemic transformation needed to address current ecological realities. I read these challenges and possibilities through two 1970’s era special July 4th issues of the popular American magazines, *Life* and *National Geographic*. During the period when America’s environmental movement fueled by the response to Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* achieved mainstream prominence, both publications ran special sections that weave together American environmental perspectives and American Indians, and both contain essays by N. Scott Momaday. Both special sections perpetuate the status quo in terms of American attitudes toward solving environmental challenges and toward American Indians. I argue that at the same time they make clear (in some cases more implicitly than explicitly or in weirdly paradoxical ways)

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<sup>5</sup> Shiva makes this statement in the *Foreword* to a book relevantly titled *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of Our World*. Her context is more specifically ‘biopiracy’ and ‘intellectual piracy’ “whereby Western commercial interests claim products and innovations derived from indigenous traditions as their ‘intellectual property’ (through protections such as patents)” (ix). The larger point is that the same profit-centered systems that have devalued Indigenous knowledges now seek to appropriate and manipulate that knowledge – specifically regarding biodiversity and ecosystems – for profit. For Shiva, at the heart of the more specific problem of biopiracy and intellectual property is the more transcendent point regarding competing value systems when considering human relationships to the biosphere: Whereas biodiversity has “intrinsic value” in Indigenous knowledge systems, “for commercial interests, biodiversity itself has no [intrinsic] value; it is merely ‘raw material’ for producing commodities.”

the convergence of American environmental awareness and the need to acknowledge the failure, crimes, and consequences of a colonial-capitalist system that decimated Indigenous peoples and lands. I assert that these special issues indicate the origins of what is now in 2012 a growing realization that the need for systemic transformation is undeniable. I then turn to Leslie Marmon Silko's novel of revolution, *Almanac of the Dead*, to explore how this novel predicts this transformation and articulates its ultimate inevitability.

### **TEK: What It Is; What It Isn't**

*We must now survive together. It is our responsibility to do so, in peace and respect, for all things and for all people on the land (38).* from **"Acoma Coexistence and Continuance"** by **Petuuche Gilbert**

TEK or Traditional Ecological Knowledge, IK or Indigenous Knowledge and TIK or Traditional Indigenous Knowledge are relatively recently accepted acronyms for terms that categorize the bodies of knowledge or knowledge systems of Indigenous peoples.<sup>6</sup> But these acronyms and the terms they specify are slippery and difficult to define. TEK, *Traditional Ecological Knowledge*, is most specifically related to the Western science of *ecology* in the biological sense, defined most generally as study of the systems of relationships between organisms and organisms and their physical environment. Ecology is divided further into disciplinary categories that consider systems in the social or cultural sense, human and cultural ecology respectively. As numerous Indigenous writers and thinkers have made clear, any body of knowledge that is considered TEK, TIK, or IK does not break out as neatly into such identifiable divisions. Melissa Nelson explains that "Indigenous Peoples have millennia-old Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) that are tribally and geographically specific," and that

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<sup>6</sup> See Deborah McGregor, "Coming Full Circle: Indigenous Knowledge, Environment, and Our Future" who references Martha Johnson and Fikret Berkes on the origination of the term TEK, and also discusses the academic origins of the IK, and TIK terms.

TEK, is “*within* these knowledge systems” (12 my italics). Nelson writes that, “this ‘TEK’ or native science holds the memories, observations, stories, understandings, insights, and practices for how to follow the natural laws of a particular place.” Winona LaDuke defines TEK as the “culturally and spiritually based way in which indigenous peoples relate to their ecosystems” (78). She characterizes this knowledge as “empirically based,” present from “time-immemorial,” based on “generations of careful observance within an ecosystem of continuous residence,” and “surpass[ing] the scientific and social knowledge of the dominant society in its ability to provide information and a management style for environmental planning.” Though she uses the Western phrase of “management style for environmental planning,” her context is “indigenous thinking” (86) or “the well spring of teachings that would guide a culture”(173) centered in proper relationships between humans and the rest of the living earth.

Enrique Salmon describes these relationships as centered in “cultural translations of specific ecosystems” that are informed by the notion of a “moral landscape” or a landscape made meaningful through an oral tradition that connects people in reciprocal relationships with the specific lands that sustain them (101,100). Humans are in kin relationships—“kincentric” relationships, to use Denis Martinez’s term—with all the ethical obligations kinship relations imply to the other than human beings within the living earth(89). Eric Cheyfitz makes clear that the Western formulation of land as *property* or “a commodity, marketable, or alienable, by an individual or an entity acting as an individual, such as a corporation” is inherently incompatible with the “traditional Native American conception of land as the *inalienable ground of the communal*, defined exclusively in terms of extended kinship relations” or a “set of reciprocal family relations extended throughout the universe”(298 author italics). “Hence,” Cheyfitz writes, “the fundamental Western opposition of *nature/culture* is not a category of Native

thinking because extended kinship incorporates the universe into the social and thus conserves it with the same care that one practices with all one's relatives" (297 author italics).<sup>7</sup>

This mode of kinship does not preclude empirical understanding and observation as LaDuke characterizes it; it does, however, constitute this relationship differently than the observer-observed relationship of Western science. For example, in *Hunter and Bureaucrats: Power, Knowledge, and Aboriginal-State Relations in the Southwest Yukon*, Paul Nadasdy elaborates the frustrating meetings between Western wildlife managers and Kluane First Nations people regarding mountain sheep populations. "Kluane people attending these meetings expressed frustration at the tendency of scientists to treat animals as numbers" (128). To Kluane hunters, "sheep are not numbers. They are sentient beings with their own social structure whose lives are quite independent from the mathematical manipulations of biologists." Potawatomi botanist and writer, Robin Kimmerer, in her book *Gathering Mosses*, writes that "plant science pushed [her] traditional knowledge of plants to the margins" (vii). She explains that "often times traditional knowledge is put into opposition to science," because Western science insists "on separating the observer from the observed" where the former is sentient and the latter is rarely acknowledged to be, in any way, equally so"(Interview 7/29/11). Daniel Wildcat and Raymond Pierotti share the conceptualization of TEK as empirically based on "patient observation" over long periods of time," but this observation is centered on an understanding that other than human beings "have their own reasons for existence, independent of human existence"(1335).

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<sup>7</sup> Following William Bevis, Cheyfitz explains that "'Native American nature is urban. The connotation to us of 'urban,' suggesting a dense complex of human variety, is closer to Native American 'nature' than is our word 'natural.' The woods, birds, animals, and humans are all 'downtown,' meaning at the center of action and power, in complex and unpredictable and various relationships . . . Nature is part of the tribe'"(297). Also see Cheyfitz, *Poetics of Imperialism* and "*The (Post)Colonial Construction of Indian Country: U.S. American Indian Literatures and Federal Indian Law*" for a full discussion of the Western conceptions of land as property in comparison to Indigenous kinship formulations.

Pierotti and Wildcat also raise the issue of TEK as “inherently multidisciplinary,” because “it links the human and the non-human, and is not only the basis for indigenous concepts of nature but also for concepts of politics and ethics. There are therefore no clearly defined boundaries between philosophy, history, sociology, biology, and anthropology in indigenous thought”(1335). Gregory Cajete calls TEK, “Native science,” in his book of the same title. Cajete states that “Native science is most akin to what Western science calls environmental science or ecology” (4). But, he qualifies, “while Native people don’t have a particular word for either of those Western terms, they certainly have an understanding of the practice of those disciplines of Western science at the individual and communal levels”(4). For Cajete, ecology and environmental science are serviceable as defining terms for Native science because their meanings have to do with connections and integrations of systems and the relationship of humans to the rest of the earth. I quote him at length to demonstrate that no such simple definition can encompass the totality of *types* of knowledge in the Western sense that TEK includes:

Native science is a broad term that can include metaphysics and philosophy; art and architecture; practical technologies and agriculture; and ritual and ceremony practiced by Indigenous peoples both past and present. More specifically, Native science encompasses such areas as astronomy, farming, plant domestication, plant medicine, animal husbandry, hunting, fishing, metallurgy, and geology—in brief, studies related to plants, animals, and natural phenomena. Yet, Native science extends to include spirituality, community, creativity, and technologies that sustain environments and support essential aspects of human life. It may even include exploration of questions such as the nature of language, thought, and perception; the movement of time and space;

the nature of human knowing and feeling; the nature of human relationship to the cosmos; and all questions related to natural reality. (2-3)

As a further example of the interdisciplinarity—the most serviceable term available here—of TEK, Harvard Divinity School’s massive volume *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: The Interbeing of Cosmology and Community* investigates how diverse Indigenous *religious* traditions interpret human relationships to the rest of the living earth, specifically “in light of the current environmental crisis”(xvi). The Harvard volume illustrates the point about integrated knowledge systems raised by the scholars I have been citing, because it uses a methodological and disciplinary approach that seeks to understand TEK within the philosophical and ethical frameworks produced by religious beliefs and practices that apply to human relationships to the rest of the living earth. Because “religion” is not a separate and specific category of thought in many Indigenous traditions and because humans and their behaviors, physical *and* cultural (to define the separation of behaviors in the Western sense), are integrated with and in the rest of living earth, the essays cover the broad range of disciplines beyond ‘religion’ that Cajete elaborates. These disciplines, however, and the names for them are still defined in Western terms, so we are still immersed in the difficult process of translation within a system of unequal power relations, a point about which I will say more in a moment. Perhaps Paul Nadasdy best captures the essence of attempting to define TEK in a short anecdote in *Hunters and Bureaucrats*: “At a conference on traditional knowledge, I once heard a wildlife biologist ask a member of the Kluane First Nations, ‘What exactly is ‘traditional knowledge?’ She responded, ‘Well, it’s not really ‘knowledge’ at all; it’s more a way of life’(63).

Isolating and extracting, to again borrow terms from Nadasdy (63), *ecological* knowledge from Indigenous knowledge as a whole and categorizing Indigenous Knowledge as ‘knowledge’

in the first place, are dubious tasks at best. This does not mean every effort should not be made to find cross-cultural understanding. Martinez asserts that “by working the two systems of knowledge together, even though we can’t translate cosmologies across the board, . . .we can create better ecological science”(94). Kimmerer makes clear that Indigenous peoples have valuable information to bring to the table regarding our severe and systemic environmental challenges, and deep and sincere efforts should be made by “the folks who are always controlling the agenda” to comprehend that information on its own terms (Interview 7/29/12). In *Gathering Moss*, Kimmerer uses the metaphor and the reality of intertwining cords of her medicine bag and her magnifying glass meant for examining plants hung together around her neck to explain that both approaches are needed. In approaching mosses as a botanist, Kimmerer resituates what she calls the observer/observed *hierarchy* of Western science. She relates her understandings of mosses in a way that is “also about relationship,” in which scientists understand that “the perspectives of species other than our own . . . need to be heard” or at least openly listened for (Interview, *Gathering Moss* vii). In other words, scientists need to be open to learning *from* the other than human world, not just *about* it.

In order to generate a sustained and healthy relationship between Western science and TEK, some of the major challenges confronting translation between the two need to be addressed.<sup>8</sup> As Catherine Laudine points out in her Australia-based study, *Aboriginal Environmental Knowledge*, because Indigenous or Aboriginal peoples are often romanticized as living harmonious lives in balance with a beautiful and cooperative natural world, their knowledge systems are seen through that same lens as ways for stressed Westerners to arrive at

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<sup>8</sup> See McGregor and Leanne Simpson, “Anticolonial Strategies for the Recovery and Maintenance of Indigenous Knowledge” for additional discussions that define TEK and articulate its challenges.

some “supposed lost wholeness” through living closer to the earth (134). In this context, Indigenous knowledge systems are ‘anti-modern’ and the answer to the travails of a fast-paced and competitive industrial and technological culture. On the other hand, Western empirical scientists, biologists, ecologists, and environmental scientists, often see TEK, in Leanne Simpson’s words, “as an untapped resource for the world’s ecologists to tap into in their search for solutions to modern environmental and ecological problems”(375). Simpson goes on to point out that the “vast majority of these problems stem . . . from the worldview of the dominant society, a worldview that exists in direct opposition to many of the foundations of Indigenous Knowledge.” Without grasping the fundamental differences in the ontological and epistemological foundations of those systems, any possibilities for integration will remain elusive.<sup>9</sup>

Simpson, like Nelson, Laudine, Nadasdy, and others who have done excellent analyses of TEK, communicates the important point that TEK is defined *against* the implicitly normalized standard of what Michael Doxtater labels the “Euro-Master Narrative” (620). This “Narrative” tells the Foucauldian story of “colonial-power-knowledge,” which “communicates particular cultural presuppositions that elevate Western knowledge as real knowledge” against which other knowledges can be compared and then accepted on terms understood through Western cultural paradigms or ignored (Doxtater 619). In *Native Pragmatism: Rethinking the Roots of American Philosophy*, Scott L. Pratt writes that since European settlement in America in the seventeenth century, “Native American thought contributed on its own terms to European American philosophy at key moments in its development”(272). It was, however, subsumed by what Pratt calls “the colonial attitude,” or the European-American “way of understanding and acting in the

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<sup>9</sup> See Nadasdy, *Hunters and Bureaucrats*, especially chapters 2 and 3; also see Nadasdy’s “The Gift in the Animal: The Ontology of Hunting and Human-Animal Sociality.”

world, empowered by its logic of technometry [that] saw America as part of a story of human progress defined by a single conception of human nature and purpose.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, the problem *has always been* what the writers and scholars I have cited here define as the challenge *now*:

Interpretation and transference of knowledge between colonizer and colonized take place within unequal power relations that have meant that a kind of “ontological violence,” to borrow a term from Polly Walker (527), is enacted upon Indigenous Knowledge, which has been—and is—often simultaneously appropriated, mistranslated, and denigrated.

I do not want to concede that we are ultimately ‘trapped’ inside power structures that can be resisted but not fundamentally altered. The earth itself is the great equalizer here, and we can never fully understand what the earth will demand in terms of human survival as a part of it. The optimistic perspective is that the growing engagement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in conversations regarding TEK demonstrates an increasing potential for real understanding and *systemic* action in resistance to those power structures that is in a word, revolutionary. And that understanding and action must have at its base a decolonization framework that precipitates decolonization of Indigenous peoples and—simultaneously—of the too many humans of all economic classes and ethnic backgrounds colonized by a fundamentalist-capitalist system that then oppresses them.

### **America’s Environmental Movement and the Origins of Transformation**

*I had never encountered a more highly developed sense of place. I was left with impression that this individual was exactly where he belonged: he could never be lost, for he knew precisely where he was in relation to this rock, that tree, the range of mountains in the distance, the sun and moon and stars. He stood at the very center of creation. . . .The land, the earth is the foundation of all belief, all wonder, all meaning in the story of human existence. Foreword to Earth is My Mother, Sky is My Father*<sup>11</sup> by N. Scott Momaday

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<sup>10</sup> Also see Cheyfitz, “Poetics of Imperialism,” especially chapter 4.

<sup>11</sup> In this excerpt, Momaday refers to a young Navajo man who was hitchhiking and whom Momaday picked up on his way to the Four Corners area (in *N. Scott Momaday: Remembering*

In July 1962, Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, a book that effectively raised public consciousness about serious environmental degradation. The cover of the 2002 reprint edition calls *Silent Spring* “the classic that launched the environmental movement.” So strong was that societal outcry galvanized by Carson’s book, that in 1970, Richard Nixon, a man Bill McKibben described in a recent lecture as not having “an environmental bone in his body,” established the Environmental Protection Agency (Iscol Lecture 4/22/11). A slew of popular landmark legislation like the Clean Air and Water Acts followed. That same year, 1970, the first Earth Day was celebrated. Simultaneous to the rise of this vigorous environmental movement, were the Civil Rights movement of African Americans and the activism of American Indians for tribal sovereignty and the addressing of historical crimes and genocide. Alcatraz was occupied from 1969 to 1971, followed by the BIA and Wounded Knee occupations in 1972 and 1973 respectively. While African Americans protested for their rights to fully participate in America’s social, political, and economic spheres, American Indian protests centered, as they always had, on Indian lands and Indians’ rights to determine for themselves how they would live on them.

In a 1999 article for *Native People’s Magazine*, Adam Fortunate Eagle, principal organizer of the Alcatraz occupation, states the motivation for the action as follows: "Indian lands were being drained. Indians were marked for destruction so that the government could take over the lands and the coal, oil, uranium, timber and water on them" (Winton). He points to his wife's own reservation, where the government took 26,000 acres of Paiute-Shoshone land without reparation in order to transform the sage-ridden desert into irrigated farmland (Winton). Indian concerns about the theft and mistreatment of their lands as characterized by Fortunate Eagle suggest the possibility of a natural partnership between tribal nations and a rapidly

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*Ancestors, Earth, and Traditions: An Annotated Bio-Bibliography* 32).

strengthening environmental movement. Indeed, in 1971 and 1976, the July 4<sup>th</sup> issues of two iconic American magazines, *Life* and *National Geographic* respectively, published multi-page article and picture layouts that make connections between Native Americans and land use in America. Both magazines contain essays by N. Scott Momaday, “A Vision Beyond Time and Place” in *Life* and “A First American Views His Land” in *National Geographic*.

During the same period, Momaday’s essays, “An American Land Ethic” in 1970 and “Native American Attitudes to the Environment” in 1976 were published in *Sierra Club Bulletin* and *Seeing with a Native Eye: Essays on Native American Religion* respectively. In the latter anthology, editor Walter Holden Capps writes that “more and more, nonnative Americans are attracted to native [sic] American cultural and religious traditions. They look to these as sources of insight, assistance, sustenance, and transformation”(3). The reasons for this Capps argues are “crises in nonnative American social and cultural life” embodied by fouled air and water and ecology “out of balance” to the point that “the artifacts of civilization threaten to destroy both man and civilization . . .” Capps’s words invoke the specter of an imperial and nostalgic desire for the imagined harmony of the ecologically noble Indian and recall Leanne Simpson’s admonition that Indigenous Knowledge not be interpreted as a utopian solution to the ecological and environmental problems generated by industrial capitalist societies. On the other hand, Capps also makes clear his understanding that “whereas the white man formerly took the Indian’s lands and goods, now we take their ideas—when it suits us or when we have need of them. In all such transactions,” he writes, “there is no true medium of exchange”(4-5). Though ingrained stereotypes like the Ecological Indian are substantial hurdles to understanding, what begins here with the birth of the contemporary environmental movement and a proactive Indigenous rights movement is a nascent awareness that the dominant system is not sustainable

and that Indigenous Knowledge offers legitimate alternative perspectives worth exploring *within* the context of acknowledging and understanding power relations.

*Life* and *National Geographic* present American Indians within paradigmatic Western frames that envision Indian victims and noble ecological savages who actually *belong* figuratively *to*, or more accurately, *in* the land that is now defined as the American nation. Each magazine's layout ties Indians to the land with multiple pictures of beautiful – unused and unpeopled – landscapes; landscapes from which Indian peoples were, in actuality, displaced or removed in the face of aggressive and more often than not, violent, colonial settlement and genocide. The title tagline for both magazines contains the word “our.” The *Life* cover is labeled with the title, “*Our* Indian Heritage” (my italics) in block letters set above juxtaposed photos of two head and shoulder shots of Indian men, one from ‘the past’ in black and white and one contemporary, in color. Both men wear regalia and gaze, as it were, into the distance. The start of the special section within *Life* uses “our” again in the same phrase: “A Life Special: *Our* Indian Heritage” (38 my italics), indicating the un-self-consciously ironic claims of Euro-America to a noble Indian ancestry and American Indian identity.<sup>12</sup> The cover of *National Geographic* pictures a perched and imposing eagle beside the tagline “This Land of *Ours*” (my italics); ‘our land’ is defined in editor Gilbert Grosvenor’s introductory comment as follows: “This land of endless diversity, of city, forest, field, plain, river and mountain, of complex ethnic differences, of goals and purposes as various as our people, is as the Founding Fathers had hoped *E pluribus unum*—out of many, one” (1 author italics). The sentiment of this statement along with Grosvenor’s assertion that “the unifying theme for the issue, as it is for the country, is the

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<sup>12</sup> Two good studies of Americans Indians in America’s cultural imagination are Philip Deloria’s *Playing Indian* and Shari Huhndorf’s *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination*.

realization that the system, somehow, works, that great things are possible when men are free and determined to make them so” simultaneously ignore and affirm—again unselfconsciously—the violent assimilation and cultural and actual genocide forced upon Indigenous peoples whose desire to sustain their own self-determined lifeways stood in the path of the voracious colonial hunger for the space and resources that resulted in “this land of ours.”

Yet, even as both publications engage in Indigenous appropriation and removal, there are ruptures or holes in the fabric of their dominant narratives that suggest the need for and possibility of a systemic critique of the colonial and capitalist system that constructs the living earth as resource, then exploits and destroys both lands and people to accomplish the goal of perpetual accumulation of resources that lead to material wealth. Momaday’s essays, though they can be read as in some ways engaging in the same master narratives that preclude sincere *systemic* analysis, simultaneously carve a space for the more serious considerations of Traditional Indigenous Knowledge that are now pushing their way into mainstream consciousness. In what follows, I look at each magazine’s layout and Momaday’s essay to examine how they engage in destructive stereotypical myths regarding Indigenous peoples and the land *and at the same time* suggest that radical changes are needed to a system invested in perpetuating those myths.

In *Life*, the focus of the first photographic layout of the special section is American Indian sacred sites including the Guardian Pillars of the Grand Canyon, the Black Hills, the mound at Miamisburg, and the San Francisco Peaks. These panoramic and picturesque landscape shots invoke Western notions of the sublime; the otherworldly or beyond human spaces where the transcendent beauty of the land provokes an ecstatic response. The human presence in these photographs is otherworldly as well. The very first of four photographs is the elderly face of

Hopi Chief Dan Katchongva, described as “one of the oldest members of his village in Arizona”(38), “merged” as the caption describes, “with a photograph of tree-bark . . . symboliz[ing] the Hopi legend of the aged leader who, near Mesa Verde in Colorado, turned himself into a spruce, the sacred tree whose power draws water from the sky.” The second human photo is a disembodied hand, brown-skinned and deeply furrowed reaching toward the sky, placed next to the panorama of the “furrowed walls of the Grand Canyon [that] bear witness to cataclysmic events before the memory of man,” which “Hopi legends bring alive”(40, 41). The third is a photograph of the Miamisburg Mound covered by the superimposed image of a full human skeleton. The final line of the caption reads, “The Miamisburg mound and the skeleton superimposed on it . . . are the relics of the Adena culture which flourished 2, 000 years ago”(44-45). The last is another elderly face of a Hopi man superimposed over giant white cumulus clouds in a bright blue sky placed above a picture of the San Francisco Peaks, “the home of the kachinas, the spirit forces of the universe” (46).

The photographs I describe picture Indians as ancient or long dead and integrated, literally as bark, sky, caverns, or mound remains, into the land. But the opening caption of the photo layout introduces a more realistic perspective. It communicates the frustration of Chief Katchongva pictured in the first photograph and explains how he has “witnessed the erosion of his people, their customs and their lands under the relentless tide of white American civilization”(38). The caption goes on to assert that America (at the time of the magazine’s publication in 1971) is “only now beginning to learn” the validity of the “Indian way” of living as a “partner of nature, not a destroyer of it,” and just in time, “for the white man’s actions which brought the Indian close to extinction today seem destined to curse the whole environment.” The caption acknowledges damage to people and the environment as systemic and communicates

a historically lacking sense of responsibility toward the destruction of peoples and lands, while simultaneously asserting that Indigenous cultures have a different, less environmentally destructive ‘way’ to live with the land.

Significantly, the picture and caption layout are followed by Alvin M. Josephy Jr.’s sensitively written historical article titled, “The Custer Myth” (49). As much as the preceding photographs romanticize Indians and remove them to the seemingly un-peopled landscapes where they live as a literal part of the trees and sky, the photos accompanying the Josephy article tell a different story. The frozen body of Big Foot killed in the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890 is placed above a line of text lifted from the article that reads, “it was ‘civilization or death to all savages” (55). The undignified mass grave into which Wounded Knee’s Indian victims were thrown is juxtaposed with an engraving of the “elaborate funeral services held at Fort Leavenworth for Custer’s officers who died at Little Big Horn”(52). The juxtaposition augments Josephy’s narrative of the ugly history of land theft and removal that takes place simultaneous to a rewriting of history that casts Indians as the savage aggressors against noble and civilized white settlers. Photos of the consequent and persistent poverty imposed on Indigenous peoples through wars and colonization are juxtaposed with living Indians past and present actively engaged in activities that promote the survival of their cultures (50-1). From the article’s opening which details the discomfort of a group of Cheyenne, Sioux, and Yakima people listening to the inaccurate and bigoted presentation of National Park Service historians at Custer Battlefield, to its closing catalogue of battles for land, dignity, and self-determination that Indians continue to wage (49-50, 59), Josephy’s forthright account and the accompanying photos reinsert actual Native peoples into the land, history, and contemporary realities of America.

Josephy’s article is followed by a four-page photo and caption layout subtitled, “The

Surprising Riches of Indian Art” (60-1). This layout continues to communicate tension between entrenched American Indian stereotypes and a nascent awareness of the destructiveness caused by the intersection of colonialism and capitalism. The first caption acknowledges the appropriation of Indigenous artworks by “institutions and private collectors” and then proclaims “the craftsmanship that brought these objects [the photographed pieces of Native art that surround the caption] into being is now stagnant or dead, a victim—like Indians themselves—of the white man’s culture.” Like the first caption of the opening picture layout, the artwork caption lays the blame for Indian decimation squarely at the feet of “the white man’s culture,” a powerful admission that affirms the illegitimate erasure of accurate history Josephy asserts in the previous article. At the same time, the caption labels Indians as “stagnant,” “dead” or “victimized,” a particularly ironic assertion in the face of the engaged Indian activism of the early 1970’s. The following dual-page layout of photos of pieces of Indian craftsmanship with its headline, “a magical world of animals and spirits” returns thematically to the otherworldliness of the opening landscape layout focusing once again on the old age or ancient-ness of the artworks and their origins in a mystical space and time attainable only as myths that seemingly have no place in a contemporary technological and industrialized culture. The living and active Indians of Josephy’s article once again become the subjects of nostalgic longing who have no actual power in real time.

Momaday’s essay, which follows the Indian artworks layout, engages in the same rhetorical removal with its title, “A Vision Beyond Time and Place” (67). The title and essay are set across from a full-page Joseph Dixon photograph<sup>13</sup> of an Oglala Sioux gazing across a

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<sup>13</sup> Three of Dixon’s photos are also contained in the opening pages of this *Life* issue in the “Gallery” along with a short description of Dixon’s life as photographer and filmmaker of “Indians in the West” in the first decade of the twentieth century. Dixon published many of his

seemingly endless expanse of rocky and un-peopled ridges, with a caption that explains he is “survey[ing] weathered bluffs on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota”(66). The photo, caption, and title (inked in large black letters on the opposing page) puts readers in same space of the ancient, magical, and sublime that mark the landscape and artwork layouts. But like those layouts, the essay communicates complex tensions. Prior to the opening of the essay is an epigraph, an excerpt from Momaday’s *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969), which references an old man named Cheney who, Momaday’s father told him, would “pray aloud to the rising sun”(67). In the excerpt from *Rainy Mountain*, Momaday imagines Cheney’s prayer ritual. In the actual essay, Momaday returns to Cheney and his “daily devotion to the sun.”

In the first paragraph, Momaday imagines Cheney, a man who died before he was born, as “a man who saw very deeply into the distance . . . one whose vision extended far beyond the physical boundaries of his time and place”(67). In the photo layout, title, and opening description, Momaday, to borrow Arnold Krupat’s words, seems to engage in a kind of “museum-ification, esthetically monumentalizing [Cheney] as an object for rapt but distanced attention,”<sup>14</sup> the same kind of attention embodied in the photograph of the Oglala man on the

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images in a book titled, *The Vanishing Indian* (10-11). In another of the magazine’s ironic juxtapositions which I do not have time to fully explore here, the “Gallery” is followed by a “Life Comment” section written in this issue by Senator George McGovern who was running for president at the time. McGovern is writing of his childhood in Dakota country through a celebration of Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House on the Prairie* series, the ninth book of which had only been recently found in Wilder’s effects after her death at the age of 90. Ironically, the first line of McGovern’s remembrance is “Dakota is a word that rings with history” (12). Dakota people are not mentioned at all in the article.

<sup>14</sup> I am quoting Krupat’s chapter on *The Way to Rainy Mountain* in his forthcoming volume on Native American elegy. Krupat writes that Momaday believes that “the cultural materiality and historical richness of Kiowa lifeways are gone along with his grandmother, Aho,” but in Krupat’s analysis, Momaday does not mourn this loss because for Momaday, they are essentially preserved in literary imagination and expression. As I have argued here, Momaday opens his *Life* essay with the same “monumentalizing” language, but he also asserts an ethic of what he calls in this essay “being and becoming.” Cheney does not only live as a literary artifact; he is

opposite page. Momaday, like the previous layouts that place Indians in some mythical space inside ancient lands out of reach of any but a kind of nostalgic consideration, pictures a man long dead in a “vision” that is “beyond” both “time and place” available only in his—the writer’s—imagination.

At the same time, in describing Cheney’s daily devotion as a repeated act of ceremony in a particular place at a particular time, Momaday redefines the notion of “beyond time and place” to an integration of “all the realities and illusions of the earth and sky” into a “profoundly intelligible whole.” For Momaday who remembers a time when he stood where Cheney did and watched the sunrise, Cheney’s time is not linear. Nor are “earth and sky” separate realms upon which humans impose their lives. Cheney’s vision is “beyond time and place” because it “extends far beyond the physical boundaries of *his* time and place” as they have been defined for him by a cultural paradigm that is not his own. In his repeated ceremony, Cheney sees into the “wonder and meaning of creation itself.” Therefore Cheney, Momaday asserts, is integrally connected to the earth around him and knows intimately “his place in the scheme of things.”

Momaday claims as he does in other places that this view, which is “peculiarly native and distinct” has “something of genetic significance . . . an element of being which resides in the blood, and which is, after all, the very nucleus of the self.” But, this seemingly racial<sup>15</sup>—and

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also the embodiment of specific and alive American Indian cultural vision.

<sup>15</sup> Momaday repeats the assertion of an American Indian “racial” or “genetic” understanding of relationship to the environment in other places. In “Native American Attitudes to the Environment,” for example, Momaday writes that the Native American “understanding of the relationship between man and the landscape or man and the physical world, man and nature, proceeds from a racial or cultural experience”(80). In this instance, as in the *Life* essay, the terms “racial” and “cultural” are seemingly analogous. Momaday explains by saying that the Native “attitude toward the landscape has been formulated over a long period of time, and the length of time itself suggests an evolutionary process perhaps instead of a purely rational and decisive experience.” In other words, the relationship is *learned* and *developed* over a long period of time and has become ingrained culturally in American Indian cultural relationships

thus highly troubling—construction is immediately contradicted when Momaday asserts that “most of us in this society are afflicted with a kind of *cultural* nearsightedness” (my italics) because “our eyes . . . have been trained too long upon the superficial and *artificial* aspects of our environment” (author italics) embodied in “the buildings and billboards that seem at times to be the monuments of our civilization.” “We” in Western society, and Momaday includes himself, are not misled by our racial orientation but rather by a capitalistic culture of accumulation which blinds us to the “nature and meaning of our own humanity.”

Momaday suggests, referring back to Cheney’s vision in which the old man is “wholly in possession of himself and of the world around him,” that “we” in Western society, “might do well to enter upon a vision quest of our own, that is, a quest after vision itself” or as I am interpreting his context here, a way of understanding our place in the world that comprehends our integral connection to it. And in this quest, Momaday asserts, “the Indian stands to lead by his example.” “The Indian,” he writes, far from being a tragic victim and subject of nostalgic

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with the biosphere; it is not an attitude that can just be decided upon and then practiced. It must be learned over time from experience. In his 1989 conversation with Charles Woodard recorded in *Ancestral Voice: Conversations with N. Scott Momaday*, Momaday contradicts this notion of the learned and experiential and much more explicitly refers to racial memory as a “genetic imprint” or a “recollection of the past” that “each of us bears in his genes or in his blood”(20).

In *The Voice in the Margin: Native American Literature and the Canon*, Krupat points to Momaday’s use of this terminology as well. In *The Voice in the Margin*, Krupat writes,

Quoting Momaday’s use of the phrase ‘racial memory,’ H. David Brumble acknowledges that the ‘phrasing is unfortunate’ but suggests that ‘for Momaday . . . ‘race’ and ‘blood’ are evocative synonyms for ‘culture.’ This conclusion, I think, is based only on Brumble’s charitably decent inability to believe that someone as talented and intelligent as Momaday actually means the absurdly racist things he says. I don’t know what Momaday actually means: the evidence of his writing, however, is overwhelmingly if unfortunately racist in its statement. Schubnell and others, it should be noted, do not so much as blink at regular statements of this kind. (13-14)

By 1989, the year that both *Ancestral Voice* and *Voice in the Margin* were published, it seems to me that there had been an unhealthy *evolution*, to borrow Momaday’s word, in Momaday’s own perception of the terms “racial” and “cultural,” with “racial memory” coming to mean, as Krupat argues, literally that. However, I think, in his environmental essays of the seventies, he was still using the notions of race and culture interchangeably.

longing, “is perhaps the most culturally secure of all Americans.”

Momaday’s essay in *National Geographic’s* (NG) July 4<sup>th</sup> Bi-centennial issue is situated in a context analogous to the *Life* issue’s, a context that both perpetuates stereotypes *and simultaneously* if implicitly raises the need for radical systemic transformation. Momaday’s NG essay title, “A First American Views *His* Land” stands against the cover subtitle, “This Land of *Ours*” and generates as the *Life* issue’s subtitle, “*Our* Indian Heritage” (all italics mine) does, a tension over the concept of ownership—of lands and resources in the Western sense of real property, of responsibility in terms of historical colonialism and settler violence against American Indian lands and people, and of what ontological and epistemological orientations humans beings embrace in their relationship with the rest of the living earth. Like the *Life* essay, the NG essay follows a picture portfolio of hauntingly beautiful American natural landscapes. Each of these dual page photographs is headed at the top with a line from the chorus of Woodie Guthrie’s famous anthem, “This Land is Your Land.” The song, often sung as an expression of nationalism and patriotism, was originally written after Guthrie’s trek through Depression-era America, and included two often omitted verses critiquing the notion of private property and excesses of capitalism and extolling the rights of workers to share in the common bounty the lands of America should offer equally to all. Later, folksinger and songwriter Pete Seeger added two verses, one that closely models Guthrie’s critique of private property and capitalism and one that explicitly offers an alternative version to the perception of American lands as exploitable natural resource: “Woodland and grassland and river shoreline; To everything living, even little microbes, Fin, fur, and feather, we’re all here together; This land was made for you and me.”<sup>16</sup> Seeger also sings the song with a third additional verse representing the voice of Native America

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<sup>16</sup> See [WoodieGuthrie.org](http://WoodieGuthrie.org).

that asserts, “You pushed our nations to the reservations; This land was stole by you from me.” Though the *National Geographic* photo layout employs the lyrics in the context of a tribute to beautiful national parks and wildernesses set apart from human occupation and use, Seeger’s later lyrics express the Indigenous perspective of kinship with other than human beings with whom humans share the land and raise as Josephy’s article in *Life* does as well, the notion of historical responsibility for the theft of Indian lands and of particular ways of life.

As in *Life*, Momaday’s *NG* essay is accentuated by graphic depictions of American Indians existing within a romantic past where humans and nature were in a harmonious and peaceful relationship. The essay itself is printed on old-fashioned sepia newsprint as opposed to the high gloss paper of the rest of the magazine so it seems ‘old’ or ‘antique’ in look and texture and is punctuated with photographs of Indian artwork (previously, as the captions reveal, appropriated into private collections) that express in the caption writers’ estimation, human “homage to earth’s plenty” (14). The close of the essay on page 18 is followed on page 19 by an aerial photograph of a large human and animal figures scraped onto the desert near Blythe, California. The reductive premise describing the photos states that “Indian art vividly celebrates nature’s beneficence” (18). Momaday’s essay is followed by an article by Peter White titled, “This Land of Ours, How Are We Using It?” White raises the essential conflict of a rampantly capitalist culture: “Which has priority, a healthy economy or a healthy environment” (20). White’s question indicates that in “this land of ours,” the two states of health are mutually exclusive.

White’s article opens with the contrasting image of the Italian immigrant whose “greatest satisfaction” is his vegetable garden in the backyard of his row house in Jersey City, an image immediately set against the financial aspirations of a wealthy LA actor who invests in real estate

and is “big on natural gas” (20). White makes the point that “uses of land are so varied—and give rise to such powerful and conflicting feelings, laws, plans, and regulation . . . [that they are] consistently prone to controversy.” His article, composed from his travels throughout the country to investigate land use explores how Americans have been using land and “what people feel should or shouldn’t be done with it, and why” (22-3). An inlay of graphic maps, which makes no allusion to Native peoples in North America, shows the evolution of settler development, population dispersion, and modes of transportation since 1776. A caption on the first map reads, “where virgin land once stretched from coast to coast, today only some 6 percent of the 48 contiguous states can be considered ‘wild’” (28). This one sentence summarizes the historical constructions of empty lands in terms of American Indian presence and constructions of ‘wilderness’ that I have addressed in chapter two, and the article’s maps contextualize rampant and often tragically careless and aggressive settler culture in exceptionalist terms. But, another caption on the opening map also states that “the interrelatedness of ourselves and the land has become a guiding principle to a new generation of ecology-minded citizens”(27), expressing a growing awareness since the publication of *Silent Spring* that humans are in fact part of the biosphere rather than masters of it, and that capitalism’s priorities will destroy the very environment humans need to live.<sup>17</sup> Photographs accompanying the article document the battles of fair housing advocates with preservationists, biologists with farming abuses, developers and off-road recreationists with environmentalists, and so on; one particular grouping of photos of rampant development is headed by the caption, “In this land of plenty, is there such a thing as too much?” These photographs and the question that labels them interrogate the notion of unmitigated accumulation; they make the question of the *use* of land a question of

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<sup>17</sup> Carson, of course, was focused specifically on the chemical industry from which she faced a fierce backlash after the publication of her book.

*overuse* or overtly dangerous exploitation made to seem rational by a capitalist system whose central concern is profit.

As his travels take him to Hetch Hetchy dam, White raises the distinction between Gifford Pinchot's conservation ethic that places a human-centric premium on conserving lands so they will be healthy and available for future use by people especially in terms of economic prosperity and John Muir's preservation paradigm focused on the intrinsic value of nature in its own right and as a place of solace and renewal for the human spirit (54-5). However, as I detailed in my previous chapter, the distinction upon which White reflects here does not actually exist. What he is seeing in the pictures of exploitation during his travels is the failure of the conservation/preservation amalgamation that is centered mainly in a philosophical belief in nature separated from people who are beginning to see in more explicit terms the damage their system has wrought.

White quickly raises and drops the question of American Indian land use as he discusses energy exploitation in Western states. He mentions the Navajo power plant and the Crow battle with Shell Oil, which wants to mine for coal on Crow land. Inside a trailer at the Crow annual powwow, he writes, "the Shell Oil company shows a movie—how Earth Mother put down coal for her children, who can now benefit with income and jobs"(53). A young Crow complains to White that the Crow should be getting much more money from Shell; the tribal chairman responds a bit differently: "'Once we mess up our land,' he says, 'we have no more. We're not like white people who just move on. We want to work out something reasonable, but we must first set up a land-use zoning code, and a strip mining and reclamation code.'"

This short summary glosses over the extreme complexities of resource exploitation on Indian lands. Tribal responses to energy production are diverse, and the cynical efforts of Shell

notwithstanding, traditional cultural approaches often conflict with those tribal approaches that are partially or fully invested in the capitalist ethics of wealth accumulation.<sup>18</sup> The words of the Crow tribal chairman express a Pinchot-oriented conservation ethic, which speaks to exploiting the economic value of the land in a way that's careful to conserve its value for the future. But, as the definitions of TEK I elaborated earlier in this essay reveal, traditional Indigenous relationships with the rest of the living earth are based in a kinship framework that is different from the Western notion of conservation, which sees the living earth solely in terms of resources to be protected for use now (whether that be for economics or recreation) and by future generations of humans.

Yet, a conservation ethic is exactly what Momaday defines as the ethic of "first Americans" in his *NG* essay. Writing in evolutionary terms, Momaday explains that paleo-hunters who were "preeminently predator[s]" had not yet developed a relationship with the land that was a "moral equation"(14).<sup>19</sup> But their successors do. "This latter day man" living on

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<sup>18</sup> A recent example of this type of conflict is the arrest of Blood Tribe First Nations Women in Canada for resisting the construction of fracking sites on their land. Fracking is a relatively new technique for retrieving oil and natural gas from deep shale formations and is stoking controversy throughout North America due to its potential harmful effects on ground water and air quality. In this particular case, the Blood Tribal Chief and Council members signed an agreement with U.S. based Murphy Oil and Gas and other energy companies, in what many tribal members call a non-transparent process. Tribal resisters to the fracking agreement cite traditional values with regard to relationships with the earth as well as their rights to health and safety on the lands where they live. See "Blood Nation women arrested during blockade of fracking" by Brenda Norrell.

<sup>19</sup> Later in the essay, Momaday speaks in even more literally evolutionary terms when he writes, "this comprehension of the earth and air is surely a matter of morality, for it brings into account not only man's instinctive reaction to his environment but the full realization of his humanity as well, the achievement of his intellectual and spiritual development as an individual and as a race" (16). In one sense, Momaday is referencing as he does in the beginning of the article, human's growing understanding of his place in the biosphere and his relationship to more than human life as a result of learning and experiences. In another sense, however, Momaday may be interpreted here as speaking in terms of a progressive development that makes "modern man" more evolved ethically and morally than his predecessors, a dangerous and debunked imperialistic perception.

American lands “by the time Columbus begins his first voyage to the New World . . . has fitted himself more precisely into the patterns of the wilderness than did his ancient predecessor. He lives on the land; he takes his living from it; but he does not destroy it.” Momaday asserts that, “this distinction supports the fundamental ethic that we call *conservation* today. In principle, if not in name, this man is a *conservationist*” (14 my italics).

Momaday seems to contradict the “conservationist” characterization, at least as it would be defined in Pinchotean terms, by adding the dimension of the land as sacred and as kin. He writes that in the “interim” between paleo-hunters and latter day Indians, “grew up in the mind of man an idea of the land as sacred” and a “concept of nature” that holds that the “earth is our mother. The sky is our father.” Pinchot’s conservation ethic has a dramatically different framework. In the chapter, “Prosperity,” from his book *The Fight for Conservation*, Pinchot connects the wealth of America as a nation with the health of its resources and asserts that how we “handle our natural resources” will determine the “prosperous growth of the future”(173). Pinchot vehemently criticizes corporations and large landholders for greedy exploitation of lands and resources and supports a “public land system” focused on the “making and maintenance of prosperous homes” for people who would settle and cultivate wild lands in an organized and managed way (176). “Of all forms of conservation,” he writes, “there is none more important than that of holding the public lands for the actual home maker.” Pinchot’s conservation ethic is anthropocentric and centered in a notion of land as property meant to be owned and managed properly by humans for their own benefit and the benefit of future generations of people.

From a different perspective, Pinchot’s idea of land *use* opens the space for human beings to live *within* nature because it focuses on carefully considered human interactions with the rest of the living earth. This is perhaps a healthier notion than that of purely preservationist ethic that

would separate nature from humans as space to be saved, as though that separation were actually literally possible. Momaday's interpretation of a "conservationist" places humans within the environment, using it to live as all other species do. His interpretation communicates the transformation the idea of "conservation" begins to undergo in the seventies, captured in the caption from White's article I mention above: "the interrelatedness of ourselves and the land has become a guiding principle to a new generation of ecology-minded citizens"(27). It demonstrates, as both magazines do, that Americans have a sense that Native peoples have important perspectives to contribute on this issue. Momaday writes, "very old in the Native American world view is the conviction that the earth is vital, that there is a spiritual dimension to it, *a dimension in which man rightly exists* . . . In the natural order man invests himself in the landscape and at the same time incorporates the landscape into his own most fundamental experience. This trust is sacred" (18 my italics). The idea that humans rightly exist in the living earth is crucial for consideration by an environmental movement heavily invested in the notion of separating people from pristine natural areas in order to *preserve* them.<sup>20</sup> The crucial component here is a "sacred trust" between humans and the rest of the living earth that infers a reciprocal responsibility rather than the central tenet of Pinchot's conservation ethic, that the earth's resources exist *for*, one could even say without hyperbole in a Pinchotean context, *solely* for, humans.

Momaday specifically refers to land use by critiquing the idea of land as property: "In our society as a whole we conceive of the land in terms of ownership and use. It is a lifeless

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<sup>20</sup> This is particularly important from an environmental justice perspective globally as Western—American and European— notions of preservation are often forced upon populations living from lands and resources considered valuable from a preservation standpoint. See for example, *Fortress Conservation: The Preservation of the Mkomazi Game Reserve*, Tanzania by Dan Brockington and *The Hungry Tide*, an intelligently written novel by Amitov Ghosh exploring the conflicts between humans and preservation created by attempts to save Bengal tiger habitat.

medium of exchange; it has for most of us, I suspect, no more spirituality than has an automobile, say, or a refrigerator. And our laws confirm us in this view, for we can buy and sell the land, we can exclude each other from it, and in the context of ownership we can use it as we will. Ownership implies use, and use implies consumption”(18). For Momaday, “the Indian does use, and has always used, the land and the available resources in it. The point is that *use* does not indicate in any real way his idea of the land” (author italics).

Momaday, however, reduces the impact of this critique in elaborating the Indian’s idea of use. He writes that “*use* does not indicate in any real way [the Indian’s] idea of the land . . . [use for the Indian] is not the first truth. The first truth is that I [as an Indian] *love* the land, I see that it is beautiful, I delight in it; I am alive in it”(18). This declaration of love and delight in the land is a romantic aesthetic that I would argue contributes to the notion of the ecologically noble Indian that both *Life* and *National Geographic* communicate. Momaday reinforces this stereotype earlier in the essay as well when he returns again to *The Way to Rainy Mountain* and another story from his grandfather Mammedaty “that belongs to the oral tradition of [his family],” about a woman wearing a beautiful buckskin dress buried in an unmarked grave in the plain stretching out in front of Mammedaty’s house. Momaday writes “the woman, the dress, and this plain . . . become one reality, one expression of the beautiful in nature” (16). Momaday explains that the “general landscape, the simple, almost abstract nature of the burial, above all the beautiful dress . . . is especially Indian in character.” The woman herself, her name, the location of her grave, “are things that matter least in the special view of the storyteller. What matters here is the translation of the woman into the landscape, a translation particularly signified by means of the beautiful and distinctive dress, an *Indian* dress” (author italics). Momaday’s particularly Western focus on the abstract nature of beauty and beauty of nature

departs sharply from the notion of reciprocity achieved from humans fundamentally investing themselves in the lands in which they live and places his characterization of “the Indian” in the realm of the noble savage who lives in nature but apart from it as a part of the imagined portrait of nature’s beauty.<sup>21</sup>

Immediately after this story, however, Momaday relates another of his own experiences as a boy joining a community of Pueblo people from Jemez who were planting fields for their cacique. This, Momaday learned, was an ancient tradition, one that invested the practicalities of survival (the hunters also gave the cacique a portion of the meat they hunted in the winter) with the idea of a sacred respect for the earth that provides for this survival. “It was a spirit of communion, of the life of each man in relation to the life of the planet and of the infinite distance and silence in which it moves” (17), writes Momaday, a demonstration both of honor and humility. Momaday also reiterates in this essay the troubling idea of Native peoples’ “racial and cultural experience” that culminates in a “racial memory,” which is then employed in an act of “imagination that is especially ethical in kind”(18). At the same time, he contradicts the idea of a genetically imprinted imagination with the argument that the Indian, “by virtue of his *experience* . . . comprehends his relationship to the land . . . with a deep ethical regard for the earth and sky, a reverence for the natural world that is antipodal to that strange tenet of modern civilization that seemingly has it that man must destroy environment” (my italics).

I see in Momaday’s inconsistencies the same spirit of struggle I see in the layouts of *Life*

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<sup>21</sup> Relevant to my argument here is Krupat’s analysis of *The Way to Rainy Mountain* as Native American elegy in which he concludes that Momaday’s emphasis on imagination and memory of Kiowa culture precludes any sense of loss regarding *actual* Kiowa culture. Krupat writes, “*WRM*, in its ‘monumentalizing’ use of the oral tradition in writing, engages in the production of a ‘salvage literature’ parallel to the work of turn-of-the-twentieth century ‘salvage anthropology.’ Unable to envision any socio-historical present (or future) for the ‘vanished’ culture of his ancestors, Momaday, like the salvage anthropologists, preserves it by a sort of museum-ification, esthetically monumentalizing it as an object for rapt but distanced attention.”

and *National Geographic* magazines themselves. There is at once recognition of deeply embedded crises for the living earth arising from a capitalist system that sees the earth as a bundle of inanimate resources endlessly available for human exploitation and an understanding of alternative ways of being in the world communicated through Indigenous perspectives regarding human relationships to the land. Standing in the way of a fuller comprehension of this Traditional Ecological Knowledge are entrenched and simplistic stereotypes of Indigenous peoples as ecologically noble Indians tied to American environmental concepts of conservation and preservation that are invested in colonial and capitalist ethics. In the present these problems regarding TEK and understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities regarding this knowledge remain. At the same time, movements to more legitimately, effectively, and fairly engage Indigenous knowledge have become more powerful, and the influence of this knowledge on notions of conservation and preservation increases. The implications of the *Life* and *National Geographic* layouts have been transformed into explicit and persistent systemic critiques of capitalism and colonialism and a growing need to embrace a different understanding of the human species' place in the world. The forces arrayed against this understanding are strong, of course, and grow stronger in proportion to the push back against them. But, those forces are not sustainable. The question is are there enough human beings who will recognize, acknowledge, and fight for this truth.

### ***Almanac of the Dead* and the Call for Systemic Revolution**

*Old Yoeme had always said the earth would go on, the earth would outlast anything man did to it, including the atomic bomb (718). from *Almanac of the Dead* by Leslie Silko*

In Leslie Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*, the sinister and self-described "sangre pura"<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> "Sangre pura" refers to what "the English called [ ] blue blood"(534) or those of racially pure aristocratic European ancestry.

eugenicist, Serlo, builds what he calls “Alternative Earth units”(534-5, 541-3). These units are self-sustaining habitats for the elite humans of the earth—those most wealthy and most white—who need to survive revolutions by the poor and people of color as they rebel against governments and fight each other over the earth’s wealth and shrinking resources (541-3). The world Silko has created in this novel, the one Serlo is determined to first exploit and then escape, is a world that Silko names the “Reign of the Death-Eye Dog,” where violence caused by the material greed and blood lust of a 500-year European-colonial- system-gone-global, invades or permeates every place and every people on earth. Serlo’s “self-sufficient, closed systems” contain freeze-dried food, tanks of water, wine, groups of animals, and, significantly, caches of weapons (542). Then, in the end when “the earth [becomes] uninhabitable,” these units would be loaded with “the last of the earth’s uncontaminated soil, water, and oxygen and would be launched by immense rockets into high orbits around the earth.” The “sangre pura” aboard could then “orbit together in colonies, and the select few would continue as they always had, gliding in luxury and ease across polished decks of steel and glass islands where they looked down on earth as they had once gazed down at Rome or Mexico City from luxury penthouses, still sipping cocktails.”

To leap for a moment from fiction to nonfiction with this vision in mind, Paul Gilding, formerly director of Greenpeace International now on the faculty of Cambridge University’s Program for Sustainable Leadership, in his recently published book, *The Great Disruption: Why Climate Change Will Bring on the End of Shopping and the Birth of a New World*, writes that “our human society and economy are now so large we have passed the limits of our planet’s capacity to support us and it is overflowing . . . Billions of people are living desperate lives in appalling poverty and need their personal ‘economy’ to rapidly grow to alleviate their suffering.

But there is no room left” (1). Gilding makes clear that the economic ‘growth’ model is not tenable; this is not a philosophical reality but a physical one “rooted in the rules of physics, chemistry, and biology”(1-2).<sup>23</sup> While humans have controlled nature “around our houses, villages, and farms for thousands of years,” Gilding writes, “the scale of our impact . . . now change[s] the game” (3). “Our” refers to humans in general, but as his book makes clear, some humans—notably those with more abundant material wealth individually and by nation—have more impact than others.

Gilding joins other notable environmental critics of unmitigated global capitalism, like Bill McKibben and Jeremy Rifkin who have also published recent books, *Eaarth* and *The Empathic Civilization* respectively. Both Rifkin and McKibben cite the diminishing capacity of the earth’s ability to support humanity within a paradigm of economic growth. These writers advocate systemic transformation away from the hegemonic model of economic growth as the structural answer to global poverty and global development toward a more communal system that integrates what Rifkin, calls “biosphere consciousness.” Rifkin describes “biosphere consciousness” as an existence that comprehends integration psychologically, socially, economically, and culturally in the biosphere that affords human beings our existence (612-16). Rifkin, like Gilding and McKibben, embraces the Western linear perception of human evolution moving *forward* to the next stage of development where our current ecological folly will give way—if we make the right decisions and survive our own ecological damage in time for these decisions to matter—to a new consciousness that will recognize human integration into the

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<sup>23</sup> Gilding writes, “If you cut down more trees than you grow, you run out of trees. If you put additional nitrogen into a water system, you change the type and quantity of life that water can support. If you thicken the earth’s CO2 blanket, the earth gets warmer. If you do all these and many more things at once, you change the way the whole system of the planet Earth behaves, with social, economic, and life support impacts. This is not speculation, this is high school science”(2).

biosphere as Rifkin explains it, and the inherent limits to our current system that is based on insatiable consumption.

Gilding, McKibben, and Rifkin receive significant attention from the environmental community, and productively so I believe, since the systemic transformation they advocate is imperative to human survival in a more peaceful and ecologically healthy world.<sup>24</sup> The caveat here is that the ecological devastation of global capitalism is inseparably woven into colonialism and exploitation of Indigenous peoples globally for hundreds of years. None of these well-known authors make that point explicit. In fact as I relate in Chapter One, in a recent lecture on climate change at the National Museum of the American Indian, Rifkin, the keynote speaker, was specifically asked by Indigenous speakers Greg Cajete and Melissa Nelson how Indigenous peoples and knowledge systems fit into the systemic transformation he was advocating (Symposium 7/23/11). Though he referenced the often cited “for seven generations” construction of the Iroquois Confederacy, his plan as he explained it did not make clear how actual Indigenous peoples and knowledge systems contribute to or are part of the transformation. I am not implying here that Indigenous knowledge systems are some utopian fix; they are not. But, they are complex philosophical and scientific systems that offer possibilities for alternative ways of being in the world that could help to heal an ecologically degraded biosphere.

Addressing the political and cultural consequences of historic suppression, appropriation, and

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<sup>24</sup> I re-emphasize here that I respect the work of Gilding, Rivkin, and McKibben; McKibben especially so because of his personal sacrifices and leadership in the uphill battle against raising awareness and provoking action regarding climate change. His most recent organization of the Tar Sands Action protests in Washington DC, during which he regularly sited impacts of the Tar Sands to Indigenous peoples and acknowledged the leadership efforts of Tom Goldtooth and the Indigenous Environmental Network on the tar sands is worthy of tremendous admiration. Still, I feel it necessary to make the point though I do not have the space to analyze or discuss it fully, that along with a dearth of people of color, there seem to be no women leaders or writers getting the amount of press that these white men achieve. Within the colonial-capitalist system that I am critiquing in this essay, this is par for the course.

denigration of these systems must play an intimate part in any engagement regarding these systems between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

In order to integrate TEK into the transformation Rifkin and others advocate, Kimmerer suggests rather than a linear movement forward, the need for a kind of “circling *back*”(NAISA Presentation 5/20/11). She does not refer to going *backwards* to less complexity or toward some illusionary and romantic bygone era of ecological harmony such as is embodied in the stereotype of the Ecological Indian. Instead she means a “reclamation” of values and ethics integrated in TEK and preserved and passed through generations by still surviving oral traditions and particular practices that integrate humans in the biosphere precisely as Rifkin describes. Kimmerer states that “circling back” means to actively pursue understanding of traditional Indigenous values and ethics with regard to human relationships to the land and to other than human beings and to “use these traditional values as we think about new ways to live, with new technologies, new economic systems, new landscapes, new languages”(Interview). This is neither a linear evolution nor a linear devolving, Kimmerer explains, this is going full circle to *reclaim* ancestral teachings regarding “reciprocity, gratitude, and enough-ness” that have been forcefully subjugated or repressed by a dominant system that did not or could not value them (Interview).

The conditions of degradation resulting from exploitation of people and the earth in *Almanac* prophetically make clear the consequences of this devaluation and of not acknowledging how the realities of the past are intimate to the realities of the present.<sup>25</sup>

*Almanac* depicts how the demand for and shortage of resources and land brought on by a 500-

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<sup>25</sup> See Joni Adamson’s *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place*, Chapter 6 for an analysis of the novel as prophetic in terms of the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas in 1994 and Cheyfitz’s, “What is a Just Society” for an analysis of the novel and Marxism in terms of Zapatistas and Indigenous uprising in Bolivia.

year system of conspicuous consumption and unnecessary accumulation of wealth have resulted in eco-crises that spawn a world of refugees, violence, and starvation. In light of this “death-eye dog” reality, Serlo’s “Alternative Earth units,” even if clearly monstrous in their ethics, might be seen at first as prudent. But, the system of accumulation and hoarding upon which these units are based, the system that Serlo and his cronies represent, perpetuate, and then seek to escape, is innately unsustainable and self-destructive. Who could look at our world as it is now—globally enmeshed in severe economic class stratification and resource exploitation—and still believe that Serlo’s floating colonies with their caches of weapons would not inevitably be at war with one another over power and resources? Alternative Earth units would take with them into orbit the very culture of death and destruction that necessitates their existence in the first place.

American environmental policies as they are now principally conceived have proven to be a finger in the leaking dam of a world that looks increasingly like the world Serlo’s Alternative Earth units are meant to escape. Because America’s current environmental policies and legislation are imbricated ontologically and epistemologically within a colonial-capitalist system, they can only ever be as effective as the system allows. Policies of protecting public lands and landmark legislation like the Clean Air and Water Acts continually fight for existence in a political culture increasingly dominated by corporate agendas. As free market capitalism and the economic growth system demand more and more resources, notably the shrinking resources of fossil fuels upon which the global economy is based, any policy barriers protecting water, air, land, and biodiversity will be continually eroded. As I hope I have demonstrated in my previous chapters, the environmental ethics upon which contemporary American environmental policy and legislation have been built are enmeshed in a centuries long co-evolution and mutual reinforcement of Christianity, modernity, and capitalism (O’Meara 66) that

rely on exploitation of humans and the rest of the living earth for achieving continual economic growth on a physically finite planet. I will borrow Bridget O'Meara's words at length here because she states the case eloquently:

There is nothing to suggest that, as the process of globalization intensifies . . . , we will soon usher in a postindustrial, democratic, global village built on neoliberal, free-market ideals of equal access to goods, services, and information. While such an image of the world is enthusiastically proliferated by politicians and capitalists alike in overdeveloped countries, the material, social, and ecological lives of many Third and Fourth world communities is [sic] increasingly threatened. This is of course because globalization, following its own historical trajectory, has proceeded unevenly along the lines of race, gender, and class. Indeed, the history of globalization is inextricable from the histories of colonialism and attendant discourses of power and (sexualized, racialized, gendered) difference, which naturalize the violent exploitation and commodification of land, labor, and the body of the 'Other.' (64)

*Almanac* demonstrates that the increasing threat to what O'Meara describes as the "material, social, and ecological lives of many Third and Fourth world communities" is not contained in the 'developing' world or restricted to the "Other." As *Almanac* winds toward its conclusion, Silko writes, "Already in Tucson and southern Arizona military and government vehicles patrolled the streets, ostensibly to seize illegal immigrants; but now they stopped everyone with brown skin and demanded identification. Any white people in Tucson who were not riding in health-spa limousines with bodyguards were also routinely stopped and questioned by Tucson police, who 'advised' the homeless to leave town" (737). Silko's fiction illustrates the fact that global capitalist economics propel more and more wealth into the hands of fewer and fewer people and

poverty and ecological degradation become more and more, in a word, *inclusive*.

The map at the opening of *Almanac* is multi-dimensional and routed in collapsing the categories of time and space and the consequential reorienting of geographic borders and of history.<sup>26</sup> Tucson, Arizona becomes the center of “the Americas,” a location that dissolves the borders of the United States and reaches from the equatorial South to the Arctic North. Two of the four corner text boxes on the map explain that, “*Through the decipherment of ancient tribal texts of the Americas the Almanac of the Dead foretells the future of all the Americas. The future is encoded in arcane symbols and old narratives . . . Ancient prophecies foretold the arrival of Europeans in the Americas. The ancient prophecies also foretell the disappearance of all things European*” (Silko italics, my emphasis). “All *the Americas*” clearly can be read as more than just Central, South, and North. Rather, “all,” as in the phrase, “all *things European*” implies a *system* of capitalism and colonialism that has stolen Indigenous lands and exploited all peoples and the biosphere globally.

As the Americas on *Almanac*'s map are engulfed in violence and revolution, all manner of resistors and revolutionaries are converging at the “International Holistic Healers Convention,” in Tucson (709). Wacah and El Feo, twin Mayan leaders walking north leading armies of peaceful Indigenous peoples, send a message to the convention, that “all were welcome . . . One must be able to let go of a great many comforts and *all things European* but the reward would be peace and harmony with *all living things*” (710 my italics). Later, an African American character, Clinton, reiterates the global message when he ponders the fact “that many of the African spirits also inhabit the Americas, too. . . Nothing could be black only or brown only or white only anymore. The ancient prophecies had foretold a time when the destruction by

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<sup>26</sup> See Shari Huhndorf, *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture*, Chapter 4.

man had left the earth desolate, and the *human race was itself* endangered. This was the last chance the people had against the Destroyers, and they would never prevail if they did not work together as a common force”(747 my italics). As T.V. Reed points out, “while the novel depicts the white-dominated world as deeply disturbed and deprived, Anglo allies form part of the resistance forces” (31). At the same time, Indigenous peoples are equally subject to the exploitive influences of a colonial-capitalist system. Reed writes:

There is nothing remotely sentimental in *Almanac*'s vision of indigenous people leading a multi-ethnic alliance to resist and reverse this ecological, economic, and social devastation. These are not Indians as ultimate ecologists, or New Age Natives closer to 'Nature' by virtue of their uncorrupted 'spirits.' Healthy communities can constrain, if not wholly contain, evil. But healthy communities are few and far between in the postmodern world, even in its Native portions. The colonized in the novel as well as the colonizers (and those who are both) are subject to the distortions bred of oppression. (31)

In *Almanac*, the evil of “Destroyers” is not “reductively racialized” (Reed 31), but attributed to a degenerative system in which anyone can participate or which anyone can legitimately resist. Significantly, Wakah and El Feo join any human “with all living things” (Silko 710) and resistance against the dominant system becomes a systemic reintegration of all humans *with* and *within* the entirety of the living earth.

Reed, following the trajectory of Joni Adamson's analysis, writes that *Almanac* is “a paradigm for a much needed body of work at the intersection of post- or decolonial theory and practice and transnational movements for environment justice” (25). He argues that, “*Almanac of the Dead* was already doing global decolonial environmental justice cultural criticism, many years before the field was named, and critics still need to catch up with Silko.” Reed asserts that,

“in the context of these global movements for justice, the lines between environmental movements and other movements have grown increasingly and appropriately blurred both in the overdeveloped global North and in the global South”(26). The recovery from the integrated challenges of global poverty and global ecological crises requires acknowledgment that a five hundred year system of ever escalating exploitation of people and the earth systems of which people are a part is collapsing. In this context as Reed communicates, “*Almanac* makes clear that only a thoroughgoing economic decolonization process can undo the social and environmental impact of the European imprint on the Americas; restoration of Native traditions and homelands are keys to the interwoven sustainability of humans and the other-than-human environment (though that distinction is itself a dangerous part of colonized thinking)” (29).

I want to emphasize, as Reed does later in his article (37), and as Arnold Krupat states in his analysis of the novel, that *Almanac* is “committed to healing, to continuance and survivance” (Krupat 55). It is at the point of the breakdown of an unsustainable system that the revolution of a multi-ethnic group of economically oppressed peoples in *Almanac* offers a new vision. As the revolutionaries move from south to north, Angelita La Escapia, the warrior protector of Makah and El Feo, reflects on the failures of prior revolutionary thinkers, Engels and Marx: “They had been on the right track with their readings on Native American communal economies and cultures . . . but they still didn’t get it quite right. They had not understood that the earth was mother to all beings, and they had not understood anything about the spirit beings” (749). For Angelita and her fellow revolutionaries, human understanding of the earth as sacred in a spiritual sense is necessary to making a radical break from the current system of death and engendering the resuscitation of a global system centered in life and creativity. “Now,” Angelita thinks, “it was up to the poorest tribal people and survivors of European genocide to show the remaining

humans how all could share and live together on earth,” though “all hell was going to break loose. The best was yet to come” (749).

### **The Beginning is the End is the Beginning . . .**

In its “Contents” section, *Almanac* is divided into six “Parts.” All but the final, “Part Six,” include multiple “Books.” The books list the happenings of particular moments and places during the growing revolution illustrated by the “Five Hundred Year Map,” which follows the “Contents.” “Part Six,” titled “One World, Many Tribes” has but one “Book” titled, “Prophecy.” The implication of having only a “Book One” named “Prophecy” is that the next book is yet to be written. Even so, because *Almanac* is a circular story that reaches to the past to reveal the future, the “Prophecy’s” second book, though it is not named, has already been foretold. Silko enacts, to borrow Kimmerer’s words, a circling back in *Almanac of the Dead* to ancient traditions that suggest both probabilities and possibilities for our future. Clearly, possibility does not lie in Serlo’s Alternative Earth units that are meant to escape an earth people are destroying. As John Mohawk has explained, we have one earth to which we are all Indigenous, and Indigenous knowledge systems that assert our kinship with it are where we could productively look for transformative possibilities.

*Almanac* closes with the return home of Sterling, a Laguna Pueblo man who had been banished from his community for accidentally allowing a Hollywood movie crew to get near the shrine of the great stone snake to film it (31). The snake – a sandstone outcropping – appeared when the federal government began to mine for uranium “near to the holy place of the emergence” (34), where the Pueblo people had climbed up into the fifth world. Upon his banishment, Sterling had left home and through chance and coincidence found himself in Tucson working for the revolutionary holders of the Five Hundred Year Map, Mayan sisters, Lecha and

Zeta. Lecha brings him home, as the revolution led by Makah and El Feo strengthens. Sterling's mistake in letting the Hollywood people get too close to the snake had come from his nonchalance toward "talk about religion or spirits" by the elders of his community; "back then Sterling used to say he only believed in beer and big women bouncing in water beds"(761).

When he returns home after being enmeshed in the violence of the growing revolution, Sterling intuits that to find his own inner peace, he must visit the shrine and face the stone snake. When he arrives near the snake, Sterling thinks of the rumors he had heard about what the snake's message might be: Because it was situated to appear as though it might be fleeing the uranium tailings, the snake was indicating that the mine and the culture of death and exploitation it represented had won (762). "But," Sterling remembers, "the following year uranium prices had plunged, and the mine had closed before it could devour the basalt mesa the snake had pointed at." Sterling realizes as he sits for a long time near the snake that the "snake didn't care if people were believers or not; the work of the spirits and prophecies went on regardless. Spirit beings might appear anywhere, even near open pit mines. The snake didn't care about the uranium tailings; humans had desecrated only themselves with the mine, not the earth. Burned and radioactive, with all humans dead, the earth would still be sacred. Man was too insignificant to desecrate her"(762).

Sterling's formulation of the snake disempowers those humans invested in a system that attempts to maintain dominance by using war, destruction, and exploitation of the biosphere. What ostensibly is the greatest power humans have harnessed, nuclear power, is not more powerful than the earth, which will outlast whatever humans throw at it, though humans themselves might be destroyed in the process. People who believe in their own superiority over the rest of the living earth and believe in their right to destroy are, in Sterling's description,

significantly “insignificant.” The “power” *Almanac* prioritizes here can only be sought in a humility that engenders a connection to an earth that is respected as sacred.

Silko closes her story with an end that is, like the Navajo and Onondaga creation stories with which I began my dissertation, a beginning. She writes, “Sterling knew why the giant snake had returned now; he knew what the snake’s message was to the people. The snake was looking south, in the direction from which the twin brothers and the people would come (763). The certainty of the coming revolution is not here a threat. Rather, El Feo and Makah march with a determination to deconstruct the death culture of the “Reign of the Death-Eye Dog” and circle back to sanity and toward a global system of connection among peoples and to the earth that sustains us. What that journey might look like may be unnerving to contemplate, but, as *Almanac* implies, it is both inevitable and promising.

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