

MAKING CONSERVATION PUBLIC: RHETORICAL ENVIRONMENTALITY AND THE
CONTESTED FUTURE(S) OF AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS

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ABSTRACT

CINDY MICHELLE SPURLOCK: Making Conservation Public: Rhetorical
Environmentality and the Contested Future(s) of America's National Parks
(Under the direction of Carole Blair)

National parks have long played an important role in American culture as sites and sights of national nature. As tourist destinations, these places are imbued with rhetorical and cultural significance. At the same time, these public lands are often contested places where conservation and environmental issues are defined and presented to the visiting public. Following a critical-rhetorical methodological orientation, this dissertation explores how three park system units (Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and Cape Hatteras National Seashore) "make conservation public" in ways that are particular to each unit's historical, environmental, and political contexts. This research extends the theoretical analytic of environmentality by suggesting that its rhetorical and performative elements are significantly important to understanding how power, discourse, public memory, and the rhetoric of place (re)produce environmental subjects. Drawing from fieldwork, interviews, and discursive analysis, this dissertation proposes the notion of "conservation civics" as a critical interpretive framework for understanding how "nature," "culture," and "nation" are articulated in official public discourses.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLESx

LIST OF FIGURESxi

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONSxiii

Chapter

I. NATIONAL PARKS AS RHETORICAL PUBLIC PLACES 14

 Why National Parks (Still) Matter 19

 Rhetoric, Interpretation, and the NPS38

 Rhetoric, Place, and Method41

 Rhetoric and Environmentality: Locating “Conservation Civics”51

II. RHETORIC, NATION, NATURE, AND CULTURE68

 Why the Banal Deserves Our Attention77

 Performing the Nation83

 Conserving for America87

III. STAGING THE NATION IN THE SMOKIES104

 Looking for Conservation in the Shadow of Dollywood114

 Conserving Heritage at the Mountain Farm Museum119

 A Potential Critical Interruption on the Oconaluftee River Trail125

	Drive-Through Nature	131
	Disciplining the Present in Cades Cove	138
	Conservation at the Campground	144
	Framing Expectations	149
IV.	CHILDREN, CONSERVATION, AND THE FUTURE	169
	Getting to (Know) Ocracoke	174
	Last Child at the Beach	184
	Barrier Island Nature	194
	Soundside Seining	197
	Explore the Shore	201
	On Strategic Silences and Playing Citizens.....	204
V.	EXPERIENTIAL LANDSCAPES	214
	“LEED”ing the Way?	219
	Learning How to Conserve, er, Consume the Parkway	224
	Drive-In Nature	238
	Lessons from the Road	249
VI.	TOWARD A RHETORICAL THEORY OF ENVIRONMENTALITY ..	252
	Conservation Civics Revisited	256
	The Possibilities for Environmental Public Memory	265
	REFERENCES	272

LIST OF TABLES

Table

- 4.1. Interpretive Programming offered by the NPS on Ocracoke Island192
- 5.1 Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Destination Center Kiosk Themes224

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure

1.1	Front Cover of the 2007 Centennial Initiative Report	22
1.2	Screenshot from the Centennial Initiative Website	27
3.1	Interpretive wayside exhibit at the top of Clingmans Dome	104
3.2	Visitors attending a ranger program at the base of Clingman's Dome	113
3.3	Wayside exhibit atop Newfound Gap	114
3.4	Davis House at Oconaluftee	119
3.5	Mountain Farm Museum Guidebook	119
3.6	Another View of the Davis House at the Mountain Farm Museum	119
3.7	"Going to Water" Wayside Exhibit Along the Oconaluftee River Trail ...	126
3.8	Area Map of Great Smoky Mountain National Park	131
3.9	Wayside Exhibit atop Clingman's Dome	134
3.10	Clingman's Dome Observatory	134
3.11	Air Quality Exhibit at Sugarlands	134
3.12	Conservation Bulletin Board at Cades Cove Campground	148
3.13	Shared Exhibit at Cades Cove Campground	148
3.14	Nature Exhibit Inside the Sugarlands Visitor Center	150
4.1	Map of Cape Hatteras National Seashore	172
4.2	Aerial View of Ocracoke Island	178
4.3	Interior of the Ocracoke Visitor Center and its Informational Exhibits ...	190

4.4	Interior of the Ocracoke Visitor Center and its Informational Exhibits ...	190
4.5	Exterior front view of the Ocracoke Visitor Center	191
4.6	Roadside Signs Along Highway 12 in Buxton	209
4.7	Roadside Signs Along Highway 12 in Buxton	209
5.1	Layout of the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Destination Center	223
5.2	Exterior of Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Destination Center (BRPVDC)	225
5.3	Parkway “Rules of the Open Road” Sign	225
5.4	Exterior of the BRPVDC and Green Roof	227
5.5	Inside BRPVDC Foyer	227
5.6	The American Chestnut and Contemporary Conservation Efforts	230
5.7	“Richness Revealed” (Kiosk A1)	233
5.8	“The Hey Day of Auto Touring” (Kiosk 3B)	233
5.9	Distance and Close-Up Views of the I-wall at the BRPVDC	235
5.10	Interactive Kiosk at the BRPVDC	235

ABBREVIATIONS

BLRI	Blue Ridge Parkway
BRPVDC	Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Destination Center
CAHA	Cape Hatteras National Seashore
CI	Centennial Initiative
FOS	Friends of the Smokies
GRSM	Great Smoky Mountains National Park
NPCA	National Parks Conservation Association
NPF	National Park Foundation
NPS	National Park Service
PEER	Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility

CHAPTER 1

NATIONAL PARKS AS RHETORICAL PUBLIC PLACES

"That the concept of place also gestures in at least three directions at once -- toward environmental materiality, toward social perception or construction, and toward individual affect or bond -- makes it an additionally rich and tangled arena for environmental criticism." -- Lawrence Buell¹

"A national park is, in more cases than not, a wildly ambivalent act of collective purpose: dreamy yet provident, selfish yet sacrificial, local yet global in significance. Unlike a national anthem or a national flag, a national park exists in the concrete dimensions of geography, biology, and economics -- and in the dimension of symbolism as well. It has living denizens and physical boundaries. It has benefits and costs. It has friends, and sometimes it has enemies. It has an aura of sacred permanence as a place that society has chosen to set aside and protect forevermore." -- David Quammen²

When the morning fog lifts to reveal the verdant beauty of the Great Smoky Mountains, or the salty breezes at Cape Hatteras invite visitors to imagine that the sea oats are dancing on the dunes, one can hardly be faulted for believing that this is how these places have always been. For many visitors, it is not always evident that these places now designated for relaxation, recreation, contemplation, and conservation have ever been anything other than how they appear -- wild, natural, pristine, and timeless. Despite such appearances, these places are curated, narrated, and cultivated: they are rhetorical and performative sites/sights where particular ways of understanding "nature" and "culture" are presented to the public as part of its national heritage. Places like national parks matter because they are "made public" through images, stories, and experiences. Such rhetorics

may be called forth to justify present pasts and inscribe future possibilities -- deployed in the hope of preserving a particular way of being and doing in the world or called upon to intervene against the same. As claims of a different stripe, rhetorics of place produce contingent geographies of everyday life that regularly defy the epistemological fixity of cartographic expression. In this way, rhetorics of place are significant because of the ways in which they are often tasked with articulating materiality and affect. Some places, especially those that are public and iconic, are especially significant because they are frequently tasked with performing certain kinds of rhetorical labor.

As overwhelmingly popular domestic tourist attractions, America's national parks are highly visible public places where the tensions between the National Park Service's (NPS) conflicting missions of conserving natural resources and of promoting recreation and tourism are on constant display. Despite these conflicts, NPS employees, visitor centers, exhibits, and promotional materials are deemed responsible by the NPS for educating the public about the environment. The NPS also holds itself responsible for explaining why the federal government set land aside to be shared, preserved, and protected for future generations. Thus, places like national parks matter because they are “made public” through images, stories, and experiences that are interpreted by the NPS. In the parks, the NPS has the most powerful, visible, authoritative, and trusted voice in its role as the official U.S. interpreter of nature and culture. Given the unique position of the NPS in American culture as an institutionally legitimized *and* publicly legitimate voice, this dissertation focuses on the ways in which the NPS defines conservation as a particular set of attitudes and practices toward nature and culture.³ My research examines how a range of NPS rhetorics -- from visitor

orientation films, and ranger-led interpretive programming, to guidebooks, wayside exhibits, and visitor center displays -- situate visitors in relationship to the environment and to the nation. These rhetorics -- these stories, images, experiences, and exhibits about exceptional places and, by extension, exceptional people -- matter because they come from a source that is invested with a significant degree of authority and ethos, even in a culture marked by skepticism toward official versions of “the truth.” Thus, this dissertation examines how conservation is “made public” through material and discursive rhetorical performances of place that are circulated and enacted by the National Park Service (NPS) at three of its most popular units.⁴

Using the analytics of public memory, critical tourism studies, and visual rhetoric, I argue that NPS discourses are performing the rhetorical labor of what Arun Agrawal and others have termed “environmentality.” In this way, park discourses situate visitors as environmental subjects who learn how to “value” particular articulations of nation, nature, and culture through a paradigm that I term “conservation civics.” While there are many institutions, social movements, and individuals that produce and circulate public messages that aim to define and influence how Americans relate to the environment, the NPS is uniquely situated as a governmental agency that is explicitly tasked with the job of interpreting the nation’s “nature” and “culture” on an annual basis to millions of people as “their heritage.” In this way, my dissertation argues toward an explicitly rhetorical understanding of environmentality that attends to the communicative and cultural processes through which environmental discourses and performances work to position audiences in particular relations of power and knowledge. Furthermore, my case studies suggest that

banal nationalism, public memory, performative witnessing, and prosthetic memory are generative elements of environmentality's rhetorical nature.

In light of the recent call by J. Robert Cox to consider the uses of environmental rhetorical criticism and public engagement as a strategic response to environmental crises, I believe that we are compelled to ask what kinds of cultural, political, and environmental “work” NPS discourses do.⁵ Empirically and critically, they matter.⁶ In the case of the NPS, what is conveyed to the visiting public today is arguably of greater importance than perhaps at any other time during the past century. Given the increasing relevance of environmental controversies (such as climate change, sustainable agriculture, and toxic bioaccumulation) to everyday life regardless of where one lives, if or how one worships, and how one chooses to vote, the stakes for conveying accurate information and influencing how visitors understand conservation are tremendously high.⁷ My fieldwork, and subsequent critical-interpretive analysis of NPS public messages, suggests that conservation does not always translate into a recognizable ethic of environmental protection, stewardship, or sustainability. Instead, conservation is presented as a flexible concept that can mean vastly different things in different places. Although the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and Cape Hatteras National Seashore are all located within the southeastern U.S., share common historical, cultural, and political threads, and report to the same administrative unit within the NPS, each of these places defines and performs conservation in ways that are locally particular. These situated rhetorics are often marked by strategic silences that elide the local by downplaying or ignoring environmental controversies and the effects of tourist practices and presences at each park.

Chapter 1 makes the case that national parks are rhetorical public places and offers a preliminary framework for locating environmentality as a rhetorical and performative process. I begin by discussing the history of the “park idea” and the history of the NPS itself. Next, I establish the historical and contemporary importance of interpretation to the NPS. I then reflect on the relationships between rhetoric, place, and method in order to situate a critical-interpretive approach to environmentality. As my case studies and conclusions suggest, such an approach informs the study of environmental communication in three ways that I discuss at length in Chapter 6. First, it provides a renewed justification for attending to official discourses that address publics through informal yet popular vectors like tourism. Second, it makes a case for the consideration of environmental public memory as a relatively new area of inquiry that shares the intellectual and political commitments of critical rhetoric, cultural studies, and environmental communication. Third, it identifies and situates conservation civics as an expression of environmentality. While Agrawal’s fieldwork suggests that environmentality in Kumaon is likely to effect a positive change in how citizens view “the environment as a domain that requires regulation and protection,” my fieldwork suggests that environmentality at these three parks encourages the adoption of a *laissez-faire* perspective toward the environment that does *not* require regulation and protection.⁸ Ultimately, I argue that this articulation of conservation civics is rather irresponsible of the NPS because the future(s) of the parks are in a state of ecological, as well as economic, crisis. Until and unless NPS discourses redefine conservation civics as an explicit call for regulation of public and private practices that are inherently unsustainable, most visitors will remain blissfully ignorant of the multiple “tipping points” looming in our immediate future.⁹

Why National Parks (Still) Matter

As the first decade of the new millennium comes to a close, the importance of America's National Parks may become more evident to the public than at any previous moment in NPS history. As consumers and citizens find themselves absorbing the social and economic costs associated with irreparable environmental degradation brought on by unsustainable levels of production and consumption, the ecological costs of what De Graff et al. term "affluenza" have reentered public discussion and popular culture with renewed legitimacy and urgency.¹⁰ From the popularity of Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* to a marked increase in media attention and public interest toward organic foods, slow growth, biofuels, ecotourism, renewable resources, and recycling, environmental issues are no longer fringe topics of concern to advocates and activists. Nor are these concerns restricted to the technical or bureaucratic domains of government and the private sector. Arguably, environmental concerns have gradually become mainstream concerns during the past two decades due to the tireless efforts of advocates to raise ecological literacy and to demonstrate the consequences of ignoring the interdependence of nature and culture.¹¹

In this context, national parks are tasked with fulfilling an impossible set of expectations. As undeveloped (and often rural) lands, parks must fulfill the public's (often romantic) expectation that these places are (and will remain) examples of "pristine" wilderness. Others take an equally unrealistic view of the parks as resource reserves that should be used in times of present and future scarcity. Despite the fiscal and logistical impossibilities of such expectations, these places are often misrepresented in popular culture as ecological preserves where natural processes flourish, unimpeded by human intervention.

To further complicate the issue, many visitors to national parks have historically demanded recreational opportunities and amenities on par with private resorts and amusement parks. And, for much of the Park Service's history, it has willingly obliged.¹² The NPS must constantly negotiate a tangle of deeply ideological and highly publicized claims made upon the park lands by property-rights activists, Wise Use advocates, and others who view any noise, transportation, or weapons restrictions by the government as an illegal infringement upon their private rights to enjoy public lands as they deem fit.¹³ The NPS must also fend off political and economic interests that have set their sights on exploiting the parks' natural resources for private gain.

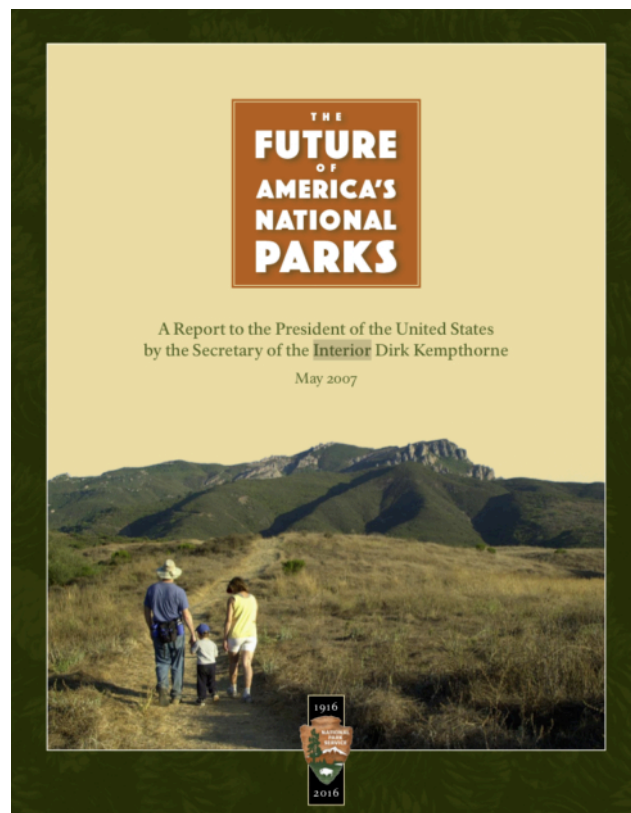
Each year, nearly 300 million visitors experience the Park Service's 391 units, and these figures show little sign of subsiding. According to NPS visitor data dating back to 1979, visitation has fluctuated slightly from year to year, but the overall trend is upward.¹⁴ In a February 2008 press release, Park Service Director Mary Bomar noted that "With all the recreation choices available, national parks still draw more visits than Major League Baseball, the National Football League, professional basketball, soccer and NASCAR combined."¹⁵ National parks attract a diverse subsection of the general public, and their potential for educating the public about environmental issues is significant. As the current economic crisis shows few signs of immediate recovery, some observers have suggested that visitation to the parks will increase like it did in the late 1980s and early 1990s when Americans sought less expensive recreational alternatives to international travel or package vacations to popular destinations like Walt Disney World.¹⁶ If the Centennial Initiative is successful in its efforts to amplify the environmental and cultural importance of the parks,

then NPS discourses may wield greater influence with a broader, more diverse audience than in recent years. This matters, as NPS is one of the most trusted branches of the federal government by the general public: its ability to influence the ways in which visitors understand, value, and relate to the environment should not be underestimated. From Stephen Mather's early commitments to the NPS' role in public education and interpretation to the range and scale of today's interpretive offerings, national parks have come to play an increasingly complicated supporting role that influences how many Americans think about and experience nature and nation.

As an institution deeply marked by charismatic leadership, public support, and employees who viewed (or still view) the NPS more as a way of life than as a career, the first 56 years of the NPS are now noted, somewhat nostalgically, as the best of times by many park historians and former employees.¹⁷ It should be noted that the NPS has, in the words of current and former employees, become deeply politicized in recent years in ways that have negatively influenced morale and fundamentally constrained NPS employees' abilities to communicate effectively with the public. As Arrandale, Shnayerson, and Mitchell each observed in 2006, the Clinton administration offered a brief respite from the onslaught of conservative political appointees from 1980 forward who deliberately worked to undermine and rewrite NPS guidelines in ways that opened the parks to private exploitation and unsustainable recreational uses while gutting “the legal and regulatory fabric that has effectively held the National Park System together for 90 years.”¹⁸ As John Mitchell notes, “the most unsettling danger over the past five years . . . has been an atmosphere of veiled hostility created by political appointees at the highest levels of both [NPS and Department of

the Interior] agencies.”¹⁹ “Visitors to the parks,” he continues,” are unaware of these tensions. For all the erosion of agency morale, the wear and tear, the backlog of uncompleted maintenance repair projects, the widespread reduction of interpretive programs, national parks can still deliver a memorable experience.”²⁰ As these critics note, the NPS must constantly negotiate and argue for not only its own legitimacy, but also walk a careful line in terms of not alarming the very public that it seeks to cultivate as a political and economic ally.

Figure 1.1: Front Cover of the 2007 Centennial Initiative Report, “The Future of America’s National Parks”



While many parks were established during the early and middle years of the 20th century, the lands that comprise them were placed into the public domain because they were viewed by the U.S. government as economically “worthless” at the time.²¹ Recent

developments in resource exploration and extraction technologies (i.e. gas, oil, and mineral), lobbying efforts by those industries that attempt to persuade the U.S. government that assessments of “worthlessness” should be revisited, and neoconservative arguments that equate energy independence and national security with unrestricted drilling, mining, and logging in the parks present significant and well-documented threats to the parks' future(s). As a result, public debates about mining for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and drilling for coal bed methane on the outskirts of Glacier National Park have developed traction far outside of the localities where the immediate environmental effects and aesthetic consequences of such policy outcomes would be felt. Indeed, some commentators have suggested that the future of America’s national parks could be in jeopardy, as parks “exist in the dimensions of politics and time. What has been done, however noble and farsighted, can be undone,” especially under the banner of national security, the war on terror, or energy independence.²² Although park lands account for less than 3% of the total landmass of the United States and its territories, those 84 million acres are home to a variety of ecosystems and endangered or threatened plant and animal species.²³ They are some of the largest remaining and ecologically diverse open public spaces in the world.

Yet simply setting the lands aside for conservation and recreation offers no guarantee that they will remain unimpeded by development, overuse, and/or privatization. Indeed, the unresolved debates between Stephen Mather, the first director of the National Park Service, and Gifford Pinchot, the first director of the U.S. Forest Service, over what counts as good or decorous use of public lands continue to haunt today's debates regarding what distinguishes conservation and preservation. These disagreements are just as inflammatory and divisive as

they were nearly 100 years ago, but with entirely different stakes.²⁴ Pinchot's reputation as the "father" of American forestry and his emphasis on the "wise use" of natural resources to further the goals of industrial capitalism were not welcomed by Mather. One of Pinchot's most well-known positions, noted below, is clearly antithetical to the stated goals of the NPS:

Conservation advocates the use of foresight, prudence, thrift, and intelligence in dealing with public matters, for the same reasons and in the same way that we each use foresight, prudence, thrift, and intelligence in dealing with our own private affairs. It proclaims the right and duty of the people to act for the benefit of the people. Conservation demands the application of common-sense to the common problems for the common good . . . ²⁵

In response to these and other points of disagreement between key stakeholders in the early part of the 20th century, Mather left the Park Service after three years. He founded the first independent, private advocacy organization devoted to preserving the parks and lobbying on behalf of future generations of park visitors in 1919. This organization, the National Parks Association, would later become the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA). In the words of current NPCA president, Tom Kiernan, "America's national parks are the touchstones of our shared history and culture. In some ways, they represent the soul of the nation. They represent our hopes, our dreams, our struggles. They are our absolute best places."²⁶ Kiernan's rhetoric offers a useful yet representative example of the ways in which national parks are often situated as unique emblems of national pride and public memory. This is a point that has often been exploited by the NPCA's corporate counterpart, the National Park Foundation (NPF), as a way of articulating corporate agendas to park needs in its role as the congressionally-authorized, national charitable partner of the NPS. One recent example is the Ford Motor Company's "transportation interpreter program" that provided paid summer internships for 40 college and high school students in 2005 to attend training at

Ford's Dearborn, Michigan campus and then spend the summer offering advice about alternative transportation options in 21 national parks.²⁷

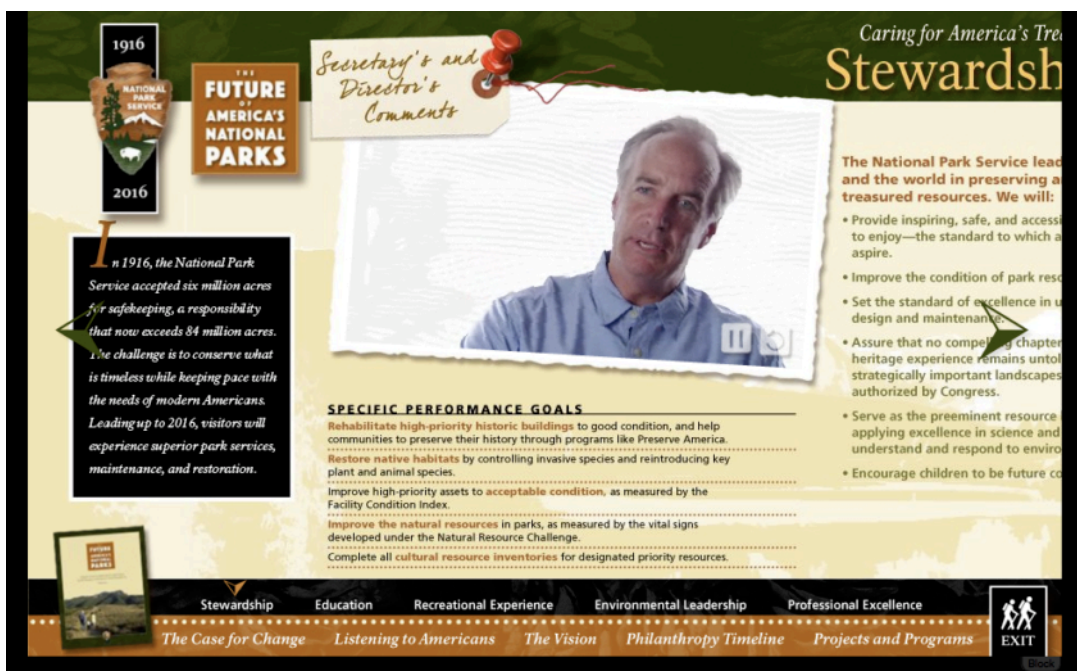
As demand for park access increases, and as popular notions of what constitutes the public good are shaped by changing cultural and political currents, national parks will likely continue to be endangered and influential icons -- overdetermined yet powerfully suggestive places tasked with conflicting missions and beleaguered by chronic underfunding.

Rhetorically, these places are frequently invoked as symbolic and material battlegrounds by the NPS, park advocates, and park counterpublics who seek to define, affix, and defend static meaning to what the parks should mean to the American public. Here, the hearts and minds of visitors are at stake. Despite the high degree of visibility of America's national parks in popular culture during the past 60 years, the average visitor is generally un(der)informed about the environmental and economic crises affecting them, let alone the situated political, historical, and cultural circumstances under which each park was developed and/or the lingering effects of historical controversies in the present.

As a strategic response to (some of) these aporias and in anticipation of the 100th anniversary or centennial of the NPS, the organization and its supporters have developed a new public-private partnership approach to park funding and park promotion called the Centennial Initiative (CI). Leading up to 2016, the NPS plans to capitalize on the increased visibility of the parks (including several of the most popular sites, such as the Smokies and the Parkway that have recently or will soon celebrate their 75th anniversaries) as a strategic opportunity for raising public awareness about the parks, as well as cultivating financial and political support for the "park idea."²⁸ As it stands, many Americans indicate a high level of

approval and support for the NPS and its mission: a recent survey conducted by the NPS in order to set priorities in anticipation of its 100th anniversary found that many people view the parks as “what is right with the United States.” Other comments, such as “I hope that if and when aliens ever land on this planet, they do not say, “Take us to your leader.” Rather, they say, “Take us to your national parks,” provide some insight into the ways in which parks are viewed as a fundamental and unique element of national identity in the contemporary United States. Despite their enthusiasm, these comments cannot adequately speak to the particular pressures that the NPS faces as a bureaucratic institution that has historically, politically, culturally, and economically found itself in a subservient position to the broader interests of the Department of the Interior and its often diametrically-opposed divisions (such as the Bureau of Land Management and the Minerals Management Service) that often embrace pro-corporate, anti-environment interests. As Foresta and others have noted time and again, the NPS faces a host of internal and external pressures that offer their own set of constraints.

Figure 1.2: Screenshot from the Centennial Initiative Website



Between now and then, for example, the NPS and its partners will be engaged in a variety of programs, media events, and marketing campaigns in an effort to reconnect Americans with their parks. In coordination with the CI, Ken Burns and PBS have partnered to release a much-anticipated, 12-hour high definition documentary in October 2009. “America’s Best Idea” explores the people, places, and experiences that define the national parks: the film takes as its subject “the story of an idea as uniquely American as the Declaration of Independence and just as radical: that the most special places in the nation should be preserved, not for royalty or the rich, but for everyone.”²⁹ In March 2009, Burns was named an honorary park ranger in celebration of his forthcoming documentary and its perceived importance to the CI kickoff later this year.³⁰

The CI is worth mentioning because the NPS has an unusual history of reinventing itself in conjunction with the celebration of its milestone anniversaries and in response to public and political demands. As a result of chronic underfunding and its conflicting

mission, the NPS has existed in a near state of emergency and crisis since its inception. It should come as little surprise, then, that as the National Park Service approaches its 100th year anniversary in 2016, it has embraced a new initiative that aims to increase its presence in American public culture as "the world leader" in conservation, environmental education, recreation, and stewardship.³¹ The aptly-named Centennial Initiative proposes system-wide modernization that bears a strong resemblance to Mission 66, a 10-year program enacted during the Eisenhower administration to expand the parks' visitor amenities and infrastructure system-wide. Despite the 50 years that separate them, these two initiatives were developed, rationalized, and implemented in response to decreased funding, increased demand, and the desire to fulfill the NPS' promise to maintain the parks' relevance to and resonance with contemporary American life in each era. In order to understand these initiatives and the problems which they attempt to address, it is helpful to understand the origins of the National Park Service and to briefly trace its development and transformation into one of the most prominent providers of public environmental education in the world.

A Brief History of the NPS

"National Parks provide an experience in conservation education for the young people of the country; they can enrich our literary and artistic consciousness; they can help create social values; contribute to our civic consciousness; remind us of our debt to the land of our fathers." -- Stuart Udall³²

As the first national park system in the world and as a national-improvement (development) project bearing palimpsestic imprints of the Progressive, New Deal, Postwar, Modernist, Reagan, and post-9/11 eras, the 391 sites that comprise the U.S. National Park Service are not simply forests, rivers, historic monuments and battlefields, seashores, scenic

drives, and trails. Instead, they are places “made” for the production and cultivation of citizenship and the transmission of cultural values. As the National Park Service mission states,

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.

On one hand, this mission statement suggests that the places managed and cared for by the NPS can and should articulate the values of American culture and are emblematic, symbolic, and practiced places. Here, the ability of these places to foreground and uphold the role of the nation-state in its struggle to model, legitimize, and define particular discourses and practices of conservation is presumed. On the other hand, however, the mission explicitly tasks the NPS with the challenge of preserving these sites, unimpaired, for future enjoyment. This ambiguous turn of phrase obscures the tensions which lie at the heart of most policy debates surrounding the ‘public good’ of national park sites.³³ And, while the National Park system is often viewed by outsiders and critics alike as a homogeneous, top-down organization, such descriptions and histories greatly oversimplify and/or erase the peculiar and important ways in which each place (individual National Park Service unit) is created, cultivated, and contested in the cross hairs of local, state, regional, and national tensions. In this way, NPS rhetorics are situated and therefore significant from a critical perspective, argue Brown and Herndl because they simultaneously “represent the world” . . . and “position us in relation to the rest of the world.”³⁴

Although it is perhaps futile to ascribe intent to those members of Congress who authorized the creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, their decision to “set apart as a

public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people" (Yellowstone Act 1872) would nevertheless have far-reaching consequences for American public culture. According to NPS lore, the parks represent the wisdom of a great nation working to preserve its natural heritage. Perhaps not surprisingly, the "national park idea" developed a powerful rhetoric of its own. In an early, official history of the NPS, James Kieley tells a tale of the Washburn-Doane Expedition's altruistic motivations:

But Cornelius Hedges had looked deeply into American character and was not disappointed. He counted upon the altruism which marked that character, and planted in it the ideal which instantly took root and has since flowered as one of America's greatest treasures: the national park system. Thus was a new social concept born to a Nation itself reborn.³⁵

As retold by Dwight Rettie, a longtime NPS employee, "the first national park did not, however, come about because of any organized movement or articulate national objective. It came into being because a small group of men experienced it first hand and agreed among themselves that it ought to be set aside as a public park."³⁶ While there is some kernel of truth to this version of the story, "the element of monopolistic business enterprise is notably absent from the traditional campfire story -- the profit motive obscured by the altruistic proposal for a public park."³⁷ As Sellars observes, "the 1872 Yellowstone legislation stands as a resounding declaration that tourism was to be important in the economy of the American West . . . the collaboration between private business and the federal government fostered a new kind of public land use in the drive to open the West."³⁸

Several historians have extended this argument to suggest that the creation of the first national park had little to do with conservation, stewardship, or environmental ethics.³⁹ Instead, the national park idea was deployed as a unique response to the nascent nation's

dearth of cultural capital.⁴⁰ Referencing Nash's historical accounts, Runte argues that "America's incentive for the national park idea lay in the persistence of a painfully felt desire for time-honored traditions . . . the absence of reminders of the human past, including castles, ancient ruins, and cathedrals on the landscape, further alienated American intellectuals from a cultural identity" (ibid). From these perspectives, the creation of Yellowstone was a politically and economically motivated response to a post-Civil War need for national unity or identity, the desire for westward expansion, and the growing influence of the railroad magnates of the late 19th century.

During the 44-year period between the enactment of Yellowstone in 1872 and 1916, the year in which the National Park Service was created, "there was no rush to create additional parks."⁴¹ Between the years of 1872 and 1899, four additional parks were created. Arguably, the influence of Theodore Roosevelt and early conservation advocates like John Muir and the Sierra Club bolstered the importance of the parks as a worthwhile cause during the Progressive Era. According to Foresta's history of the NPS, many of the first generation parks were administered via different branches of the federal government (ranging from the Army to the Forest Service and the Department of Agriculture).⁴² And, "while the acreage of the National Park System increased in the early 1900s, enlightenment toward wildlife did not. Few, if any, natural resource policies changed when the National Park Service was born. Management practices, adopted from the military, remained the same."⁴³ However, the nascent wilderness conservation movement founded by John Muir and others was beginning to exert pressure on the federal government in order to prevent a utilitarian land ethic from becoming the status quo. Such views assessed open spaces and wilderness as a natural

resource to be managed (or exploited) for future use and profit.

Efforts to view the parks in this capacity by Gifford Pinchot, noted utilitarian and Director of the U.S. Forest Service during the early decades of the 20th century, spurred the Sierra Club to advocate for an alternative and served as an early indicator of its prominent ability to influence public policy. They "[took] up the cause of a bureau to run the national parks . . . [and] national parks conferences were convened by an alliance of public groups [that] recommended a parks bureau within the Interior Department, where there would be organizational distance between it and the Forest Service."⁴⁴ While the creation of the NPS as an independent bureau was a strategically important victory for the Sierra Club and other Progressive-era conservationists, the NPS would not reorient its land ethic toward conservation and the principles of ecology for at least another 50 years. Instead of setting land and threatened or unique ecosystems aside for their inherent value, "the Park Service developed national parks as if they were theme parks for recreation, not storehouses of genetic diversity."⁴⁵ Thus, tourism and recreation interests would continue to dominate public conversations about the national park idea and exert influence upon NPS policies well into the 1960s.

While the story of a gathering of men encamped in the wilderness who spontaneously gave birth to the national park idea held sway long into the 20th century before it was widely debunked as apocryphal, its lasting rhetorical power may find its source in the NPS's conflicting missions of preserving wilderness and promoting tourism.⁴⁶ As Barringer, Neumann, Carr, and others have argued, the success and sustainability of the national park idea depended upon the ability of the land to be viewed, paradoxically, as simultaneously

worthless and priceless.⁴⁷ Quoting Nash, Foresta observes that “the American invention of the national park depended on four things: our unique experience with nature in North America, our democratic ideals, the vastness of our public domain, and the affluence of our society.”⁴⁸ However, Foresta makes the case that “the system inherited by Mather and Albright [the first two directors of the NPS] was too disparate in origins to have been invented; it accumulated.”⁴⁹ Such accumulation, however accidental, was definitely not unintentional.

Despite the fact that the Yellowstone Act provided the impetus and conditions of possibility that would produce the National Park Service four decades later, these lands were not immediately viewed as “expression[s] of public investment.”⁵⁰ Indeed, “a sense of urgency pervaded” the actions of the Washburn-Doane expedition members to translate the need for preservation into understandable public policy.⁵¹ And, while “each [member of the expedition] harbored deep concerns about how America expressed her patriotism and the direction industry was taking her, and what she might lose along the way, the national park idea would indeed become yoked to its opposite, as conservation is to development and parks are to railroads.”⁵² Clearly, the trade off invoked in the establishment of Yellowstone as a public park was the balance to be struck between the public good and the profit motive of Northern Pacific Railroad.⁵³ As the advice of George Perkins Marsh to “let the land be” was largely ignored, “the national park concept would become a child of democracy and its more aggressive cousin, capitalism,” as concessions were granted to hoteliers and others seeking to profit from this new tourist destination.⁵⁴ Quoting Sellars, Heacox notes that “from the first, then, the national parks served corporate motives.”⁵⁵

Although they have often shared common influences, the relationships between American environmental advocates and the National Park Service have often been strained by deep philosophical differences over the value of nature. And yet, the NPS and the American environmental movement have evolved along parallel trajectories in a somewhat antagonistic relationship, and in response to some of the same cultural, political, and ecological challenges. As Nash, Heacox, and Foresta have observed, the "national park idea" was influenced as much by the aesthetic contributions of Catlin, Cole, and Cooper as it was by the existential perspectives of Thoreau and Emerson and the profit motivations of western expansionists, railroad magnates, and speculators. The fundamental divisions between early environmental advocates like John Muir -- who held an unwavering belief in the intrinsic value of wilderness and the importance of preserving wild spaces in perpetuity -- and resource managers like Gifford Pinchot -- whose instrumentalist vision positioned nature as a resource to be managed in order to harness its power and ensure the nation's economic dominance on the global stage -- took on public dimensions that soon outlived them both.

During the first few years of the 20th century, Theodore Roosevelt and his gospel of the "strenuous life" occupied middle ground between Muir and Pinchot, and with more visible public consequences. Roosevelt accompanied Muir into the wilderness and found "his influences immediate and profound."⁵⁶ As a hunter and outdoorsman, Roosevelt's public persona conveyed the rugged individualism that he endorsed within the paradigm of Progressive public policy. In 1906, he authorized the Antiquities Act and used its sweeping power to protect Mesa Verde and significantly increase the number of acres in the public domain. As Heacox observes, these actions and others signified the extent to which

Roosevelt and others increasingly viewed "civilization as an arena of struggle between the wishes of the individual and the requirements of society."⁵⁷ In his analysis, Roosevelt's actions were clearly less altruistic than Muir would have preferred, and certainly more so than Pinchot would have supported: "scenic nationalism was not alone in the new family of American patriotism for her natural wonders. It had a sibling: cultural nationalism."⁵⁸ As Nash concludes, such actions made the fledgling nation's desire to "justify its newly-won freedom" legitimate by creating a "distinctive culture" where wilderness figured as a "cultural and moral resource and a basis for national self esteem" material through its articulation of wilderness to national character.⁵⁹ While provocative, Nash's summary assessment of the nation's desire is perhaps problematic today because it suggests a unified totality without acknowledging the complexity of cultural change. What Nash seems to miss or overlook is the cultural or rhetorical element -- the (often messy) interpretive communicative processes that people use to translate meaning and value, convey experiences and emotions, foster identification, and circulate symbols.

Like many other facets of American public culture, the institutional history of the NPS bears the marks of controversy. And, like many of its sister bureaus in the federal government, the NPS is no stranger to unfunded mandates, political pressure, or public outrage. Throughout its history, the NPS has been shaped to a greater or lesser degree by competing private pressures and public expectations that aim to alter its institutional contours and influence its image.⁶⁰ Since its inception in 1916, the NPS has negotiated the competing (and often contrasting) demands of recreation and conservation, as its policies have frequently been the subject of ongoing critique and observation by disparate social

movements, from preservation-oriented environmental advocates to proponents of "Wise Use" philosophies like those participating in the Sagebrush Rebellion. Some of these relationships have deep roots. The Sierra Club, for example, was instrumental in the nascent American environmental awakening of the late 19th and early 20th century that provided the philosophical and political foundation for the preservation of public lands as a legitimate, progressive governmental practice. It continues to exert influence upon the NPS today, alongside newer colleagues like the Southern Environmental Law Center and the Audubon Society, in order to ensure that the NPS is meeting and enforcing the environmental regulations to which it is subject. In light of the Centennial Initiative and the long-standing efforts of several high-ranking NPS political appointees to systematically underfund the parks, increase their reliance upon public-private partnerships and, through "fee demo" programs, transform the parks into self-sustaining, revenue-generating tourist destinations, the NPS and the parks are likely to encounter significant rhetorical and political challenges during the next decade.⁶¹

Despite these often public challenges, NPS discourses have continued to remain powerful and attract new audiences for more than 90 years. From visitor centers to orientation films, NPS discourses make claims upon the public that explicitly aim to influence how visitors experience and make sense of nature and culture. Furthermore, these discourses also situate the nation-state as the legitimate and appropriate steward and protector of public lands and, by extension, public culture. These practices may be understood, as I argue in Chapter 6, as "conservation civics." Through the place-making practices of interpretation, commemoration, and experiential education, park discourses define

conservation within the constraints of their particular rhetorical situations. This seeming contradiction or paradox is one of the compelling aspects that make NPS rhetorics ripe for for critical inquiry. As a federal entity, the NPS is somewhat constrained in its ability to address contemporary environmental issues in detail through its various forms of public engagement. On several occasions and at different sites, my informants in the field told me that NPS employees are explicitly discouraged from engaging in any public communication that could be interpreted as partisan or subjective while on the job. During the Bush administration's tenure (2001-2009), those constraints were unprecedented, according to Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), an advocacy group that lobbies on behalf of federal employees. Furthermore, these constraints fundamentally impeded the NPS's ability to inform the public about a range of environmental issues that impact the parks. Despite these challenges, however, interpretation remains one of the most visible and influential ways in which the NPS articulates nature and culture. In the following section, I briefly explore the history and institutional importance of the interpretive process to the NPS and its educational or pedagogical mission. As noted in later chapters, interpretation takes many forms and formats; as a communicative act, interpretation is deeply rhetorical, despite the ways in which the NPS enacts a public stance of objectivity. Perhaps not surprisingly, NPS training materials (such as Freeman Tilden's interpretive "bible") and internal or off-stage discussions suggest that the NPS's objective posture is also a rhetorical act.

Rhetoric, Interpretation, and the NPS

Of the millions of visitors who spend time at America's national parks each year, how many will spend time with an interpreter? How many will experience an interpretive program or encounter a wayside exhibit? It's difficult to say, as the NPS does not officially collect this data. However, millions of visitor experiences are shaped by such interactions. Since the early days of the Park Service, interpretation has functioned as one of the primary mediators between nature and culture. Interpretation is, arguably, one of the most important and unique aspects of the park experience because visitors are invited into a participative, personalized pedagogical performance space that is deeply rhetorical and steeped in civic pageantry. As noted in Freeman Tilden's canonical guidebook, one of the most widely distributed and influential of NPS materials produced for interpreters, interpretation is a form of mass communication that "exposes the visitor, if he chooses, to a kind of elective education" that "aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media."⁶²

Tilden's foundational text, and the seven revisions that have followed during the past 50 years, aimed to teach new and seasoned NPS employees alike about the art and craft of oral interpretation. Although sensitive to the rhetorical nature of interpretation, Tilden instructs his readers to view interpretation as the "revelation of a larger truth that is behind any statement of fact" and as a practice capable of "capitaliz[ing] mere curiosity for the enrichment of the human mind and spirit."⁶³ Tilden openly suggests that the NPS has a specific role to play in the "making of citizens" and exhorts readers to consult the King James Bible when developing interpretive programming because it "is a storehouse . . . whose blade

burns with the runes of truth.”⁶⁴ Given his frequently-stated belief in the importance of the interpreter’s authority and his/her national duty to position the parks as national treasures in the hearts and minds of visitors, it’s perhaps not surprising that Tilden refers to interpretation as Interpretation throughout the text. The influence of this text, while impossible to measure empirically, should not be underestimated: even today, *Interpreting Our Heritage* is recommended to new employees and volunteers, and it is often referenced in contemporary interpretive training materials produced by the NPS. Tilden encourages his readers to "send visitors away with something more than a fact" and, instead, to cultivate their "inspiration" through spiritual uplift.⁶⁵ Here, Tilden explicitly instructs interpreters to cultivate authenticity of experience, as "the ideal interpretation implies recreation of the past and kinship with it.”⁶⁶

While the value of interpretive practices grounded in research was foregrounded by NPS administrators in the early 1930s as an inseparable and implicit component of the NPS's public duty, interpreters themselves are often subject to shifting constraints placed upon their professional judgment and expertise. The stakes are even greater when it comes to communicating about politically-sensitive issues like climate change, air quality, and endangered or extinct species. Furthermore, interpreters and other park employees have increasingly found themselves under pressure from politicians and certain influential donors to communicate scripted talking points to the public about issues ranging from crumbling park infrastructure to global warming.⁶⁷ In response, organizations like the Coalition of Concerned National Park Service Retirees and PEER have organized public information campaigns in order to draw attention to the subtle (and not so subtle) ways in which NPS

cultural traditions of interpreter freedom and responsibility have been restricted, monitored, or significantly curtailed.

Then as now, NPS interpreters are trained to make connections between their audiences and the message points conveyed in their programs. Interpreters have varying degrees of control over the content of their programs; even when materials are shared between interpreters, no two programs are identical. Even when interpreters share materials and talking points, the interactive character of most interpretive programs prevents the interpreter from adhering to a script. As Machlis and Field observe, "most visitor experiences in the NPS have surprising stability."⁶⁸ Park interpreters often work together at the park, regional, and national levels to ensure some degree of consistency across interpretive programs through peer assessment and internal monitoring/review programs. Such relationships work as a "way to standardize tourism, to hold it to a national idea of visitor services and maintain, whenever possible, existing relationships."⁶⁹ Internal assessment programs, such as the NPS Interpretive Development Program, are designed to help park interpreters convey core messages and display core competencies regardless of where and when the interpretation will take place. It should be noted, however, that interpretation is not limited to experiential education opportunities and ranger-led programming. Indeed, most of the visitor center exhibits, brochures, park newspapers, wayside exhibits, and visitor orientation films are produced by or in collaboration with park interpretive staff. In some parks, interpretive themes are developed by senior members of the interpretive staff that, in essence, function like a park curriculum. In the Smokies, for instance, junior members of the interpretive staff are "highly encouraged" to incorporate the

designated themes into their programs.⁷⁰ In this way, the NPS executes a significant degree of control over what is interpreted and how.

Rhetoric, Place, and Method

As noted above and elsewhere, the NPS and mainstream American environmentalism share similar trajectories, political pressures, influences, stakeholders, and institutional actors. In this dissertation, however, my aim is not to make the case that NPS discourses are significantly influenced or dominated by mainstream environmentalism. Instead, it is to highlight the important shifts (both recent and historical) in how nature and culture have been rhetorically conjoined by the NPS to produce particularly-situated ways of understanding ‘the nation’ and its publicly-articulated values. These relationships matter, I argue in Chapter 2, because of the ways in which they contribute to what Doreen Massey has described as a "progressive sense of place," and the rhetorical re-visioning of "the nation" as a legitimate site of environmental antagonism that positions the NPS as an arbiter of cultural values.⁷¹ In this way, a rhetorical and performative approach to the NPS and its enactments of place makes sense as a theoretical and methodological framework. The rhetorical study of place has steadily gained acceptance during the past twenty five years, particularly as the discipline's knowledge claims have expanded beyond its earlier focus on oratory to a broader concern for publics, politics, power, and the popular. Today, it is no longer unusual for rhetoricians to study film, performance, social movements, or commemorative public art. Nor, following the work of Michael Calvin McGee and others, must critics focus on a singular text. To wit, contemporary rhetoricians are just beginning to experience the

intellectual and political freedom that emerged as a result of the hard-fought, contested battles over tradition and methodology in the 1970s and 1980s that overturned previous disciplinary constraints, blurring boundaries and calling for reflexivity in its wake. One palpable result of these struggles is that it is no longer heretical, in most circles, to adopt a rhetorical perspective that counts cultural studies and performance studies as its allies.

As it were, the rhetorical study of place may be the most recognizable beneficiary of such outcomes, as performative and cultural lenses have lent a complementary level of complexity that has pushed this scholarship in extraordinarily provocative directions. Nevertheless, this is an exciting moment in rhetorical studies. Rhetorical theory and criticism struggle, productively, to locate the particularities of cultural and social phenomena, to navigate the public, private and in-between, to better understand the relationships that emerge between the material and the symbolic, and to complicate the roles that rhetoric is perceived to play in the formation of self and other. Instead of thinking about place (and space) simply as the scene or backdrop where meaning is made, action is taken, and audiences are located, a generation of rhetoricians influenced by critical theory has refigured the notion of rhetorical perspective in such a way that it has expanded the purview of the discipline, augmenting theory and practice, and infusing both with a renewed critical capacity that values the classical and the contemporary.

As place has been articulated to rhetoric, so rhetoric has been articulated to place, and each is bound in a tangled knot with memory, history, and culture. Recent scholarship that focuses on national memorials, sites of trauma, museums, tours, and material rhetorics of trauma or controversy highlights these links, contributing much to a yet-unnamed genre that

could best be termed a rhetorical-critical geography of nationalist cultural memory.⁷² This intersection has generated rich and fertile ground for the application of a rhetorical perspective to the built, the lived-in, the toured, the performed, the ceremonial, the everyday, the threatened or polluted, and the memorial, articulating the work of Frederic Nietzsche and Walter Benjamin to Kenneth Burke, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Dwight Conquergood. It has generated a body of literature that answers Robert Ivie's call for rhetorical scholarship that is “productive” or

commensurate with the rhetorical invention of social knowledge [because] it reveals and evaluates the symbols that organize our lives within particular situations and that constitute the civic substance motivating political action. It is a form of advocacy grounded in the language of a particular rhetorical situation, its critique guided by the language of and about rhetorical theory.⁷³

After more than thirty years of sustained intellectual inquiry and vigorous debate, the question of whether rhetorical studies has something important to say about place has overwhelmingly been answered in the affirmative. Rhetoricians have brought their critical expertise to bear on public forms of commemorative art (i.e. memorials and monuments), commercial and domestic architecture, tourist destinations (i.e. theme parks, gardens, heritage or historic sites, and museums), and the spaces of everyday life in order to understand how and why places generate meaning through human interaction. From a rhetorical perspective, places do not "simply" mean something: meanings are rarely neutral or value-free representations of what is, what was, and what will be. Instead, meanings are like cultural capital, and the value of that symbolic currency is the result of contested and changing negotiations between publics, counter-publics, individuals, and other interested parties (i.e. politicians, corporations, social movements and non-governmental organizations)

who participate in these discursive struggles. In particular, rhetorical studies offers a rich and unique approach to the study of place because of its classical grounding in philosophy, ethics and aesthetics, its long-standing commitment to democratic theory, and its relevance to both historic and contemporary social controversy. Together, these intellectual trajectories have enabled the rhetorical study of place to yield scholarship that is nuanced and interdisciplinary, both conversant with and relevant to ongoing academic conversations in literature, art, anthropology, urban planning, history, political science, economics, and sociology.

While the rhetorical study of place examines the mediated representations, the physical materiality, and the discourses that enable the meaning of place to be created and sustained, rhetoric's place within critical theory is still debated, and its interdisciplinary citational practices are not always reciprocated. Emerging from the post-Wingspread declarations of what rhetorical studies should be and do, the dual questions of "the place of rhetoric" and "the rhetoric of place" are perhaps best understood as the product of that moment. However, this is not to suggest that these questions have been fully answered or that they are mere artifacts of an earlier era. On the contrary, these issues bear upon some of the discipline's most contentious and contemporary debates about epistemology, politics, and humanism. Indeed, these questions articulate to the paradigm of critical-cultural studies in ways that remain painfully under-theorized, but full of possibility. Using a critical, charitable, and contextual approach, even a preliminary reading of much of the existing scholarship that takes up the study of place from a rhetorical perspective yields an uneasy tension between the idea of place, the representation(s) of place, and the materiality of place.

Questions of temporality, historicity, performativity, coloniality, political identity, and modernity haunt these discourses. And yet, much of the extant literature seems to take the idea of place as a concept in stasis as first principle, as already settled. As such, it makes sense to engage in a critical pause and reflect on the rhetoric of the rhetoric of place in order to map out the terrain.

Although the question of origin is tricky for a multitude of reasons, one must still begin *somewhere*. In 1975, one of the first attempts to explicitly link rhetorical theory and criticism to built environments was made by Charlotte Stuart in “Architecture in Nazi Germany: A Rhetorical Perspective.” Going well beyond the classical notion of commonplace, Stuart made the case that Nazi architecture should be conceived of as “stone documents” specifically because of the ways in which both Nazi buildings and the plans for unbuilt buildings were explicitly based on propaganda techniques.⁷⁴ Stuart's piece exhibited a tentative yet critical sensibility, as her work represented, at that time, a radically new and controversial application of rhetorical criticism to something other than a text or speech. Unfortunately, the work was relatively marginalized, and it would take another decade before a handful of scholars would publish work about non-traditional rhetorical “media” like architecture and monuments. In 1984, Darryl Hattenhauer claimed a link between architecture and semiotics, offering five significant claims that provided a foothold for future rhetorical studies of place. Importantly, he argued that “the symbolic meaning is sometimes more important than the actual use,” and that “for architecture to function, it must communicate what its function is.”⁷⁵ While not terribly radical from a contemporary vantage point, these arguments expanded the purview of rhetorical criticism by linking the built

environment with textuality and rhetoric's classical concern with publics or audiences. By demonstrating that "architecture is structured for maximum rhetorical effectiveness: to communicate the denotation clearly and the connotation agreeably," Hattenhauer could also claim that "the structures arranged by humans into communicative forms become rhetorical when their signifieds influence behavior."⁷⁶ While later critics would eventually distance themselves from the structuralism of semiotics, Hattenhauer's wager that "if rhetorical criticism can be used to criticize not only the form but also the ideology of communications, then rhetorical criticism can be used to criticize not only architecture, but the rest of the arts" would be repaid with interest.⁷⁷

In the mid to late 1980s, a diverse group of rhetoricians would take up the question of public monuments and the ways in which the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington, D.C. troubled past, present, and future by calling forth and encouraging specific responses.⁷⁸ Interestingly, each of these critics offered a different argument regarding the rhetorical nature of the monument, ranging from a discussion of its perceived ambiguity to its unstructured guidance and the rhetorical function of its silences to its Burkeain strategies of mortification and redemption that elicit therapeutic responses and the ways in which its postmodern architecture invokes a rhetorically powerful set of contradictory responses. However, the most important claim to emerge from this debate had little to do with the actual memorial itself; instead, it had everything to do with problematizing "traditional views of textuality, authorship, and the politics of discourse" and the ways in which rhetorical critics had previously been constrained by the discipline's rigid, traditional view of what was legitimate or decorous rhetorical scholarship.⁷⁹ Blair et al. poignantly argue that "to accept the

traditional assumptions (that the work is a given, that authorship constitutes interpretive authority, and that a genre matrix contains politics within a single category of discourse) is to refuse important elements of critical practice.”⁸⁰ Here, a direct challenge to the textual determinism of previous eras repositioned the critic as an “interventionist rather than a deferential, if expert, spectator.”⁸¹ In rhetorical studies, these debates centered around the extent to which rhetoric was epistemic or doxastic, if it was possible (let alone desirable) to engage in critical rhetoric, and the extent to which the oratorical tradition's conception of audience(s) and the relation of the speaking subject to the spoken were as obvious as they had once seemed. What would follow over the next fifteen years would be a veritable explosion of study that took seriously the rhetoric of place in all of its myriad forms. From Dwight Conquergood's gentle prodding for performance to acknowledge its rhetorical nature (and for rhetoric to acknowledge its performativity) to the critical demands brought forward from cultural studies, feminist scholarship and queer theory during the 1990s, rhetorical methodology experienced a series of productive ruptures that enabled critics to account for ethnography and co-performative, experiential forms of criticism, and to pay attention to the ways in which symbols flow and circulate, constitute and challenge ideologies, and are always already political.⁸²

Since the late 1980s, rhetorical studies of place have often imported and applied key concepts from Foucauldian theory to question the imbrication of space and power that attempt to normalize nationalist discourses in place, and to seriously interrogate the ways in which places perform and inscribe public memory on the material. Tim Cresswell's arguments for an understanding of place that demands critical interpretation and intervention

have been rather influential in this regard. In *In Place, Out of Place*, Cresswell argues that “place combines the spatial with the social – it is social space.”⁸³ Here, following Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu and Henri Lefebvre, he argues that such an approach “continue[s] a tradition in geography . . . that [emphasizes] subjectivity.”⁸⁴ Cresswell notes that “because places are meaningful and because we always exist and act in places, we are constantly engaged in acts of interpretation.”⁸⁵ Although not a rhetorician by training, his insights into the ways in which the meaning-making of place is subject to constant negotiation resonate with a rhetorical perspective that, according to Robert Ivie, examines the “prevailing assumptions about the symbolic transactions of social reality and the discursive formation of political privilege; symbols form the communicable contents that organize our lives and thus require close inspection in each instance to determine who we are and what we might become.”⁸⁶ Cresswell's work understands places as “centers of meaning” that can be challenged, transgressed, reinvented, appropriated, and resisted and that are always about the interplay between power and ideology that themselves are both material and symbolic.⁸⁷ For Cresswell, “places are duplicitous in that they cannot be reduced to the concrete or the “merely ideological”; rather they display an uneasy and fluid tension between them.”⁸⁸ As such, they must be discursively and materially rehearsed, performed, and produced in everyday life, and in national discourses.

Equally important to this body of literature has been Edward Casey's work, which moves easily from Aristotle to Heidegger to advance the thesis that place has been “actively suppressed” during the “past three centuries in the West – the period of “modernity.”⁸⁹ For him, “place is the phenomenal particularization of “being-in-the-world” and that its study is

“complementary in character” with “imagination, memory, and place.”⁹⁰ Casey's most significant contribution is his argument that place is “a first among equals” with time and space: “place provides the absolute edge of everything, including itself . . . at the same time [that it] serves as the condition of all existing things. This means that, far from being merely locatory or situational, place belongs to the very concept of existence. To be is to be bounded by place, limited by it.”⁹¹ Casey's conception of place also acknowledges the ways in which places determine the “where,” “how,” and “who.” In other words, “to be somewhere is to be in a place and therefore to be subject to its power, to be part of its action, acting on its scene.”⁹²

Communicative practices mediate and inform human experience(s). From narrative to metaphor and storytelling to argumentation, they are an important part of those reciprocal relationalities that vary contextually, but shape and contour the conditions of possibility that enable and constrain how power and subjectivity are produced in everyday life. As noted earlier in this chapter, this dissertation explores the possibility of a rhetorical theory of environmentality by considering the ways in which national sights/sites of conservation are made public, and by engaging critically the ways in which they define conservation as a certain kind of relationship to the environment, the economy, and to one another. This dissertation is, first and foremost, influenced by the methodological predilections of contemporary, critical rhetorical scholarship. As such, its orientation is broadly textual, deeply contextual, and indelibly marked by a hermeneutic of suspicion. Its modes of inquiry are not predetermined or instrumentalized but, rather, are highly dependent upon the contextual demands placed upon the critic *in situ*. In recent years, rhetorical theory and

criticism have developed a complementary codependency that foregrounds the importance of complexity, contingency, and contextuality in their analysis of public, popular, and political communicative processes. Here, the fragmentary nature of discourses and practices, as well as their varied circulations, are understood and situated in relationship to the productive aspects of power/knowledge, the rhetorical nature of social imaginaries, and the ability of rhetoric to move the social, thus influencing and (re)inscribing the domains of political, economic, and cultural experiences in everyday life.

Indeed, many contemporary rhetoricians focus not so much on what rhetoric *is* but on what it *does* and under what conditions. In this way, my fieldwork proceeded from the position that there could be no predetermined certainty that would indicate which texts, artifacts, and experiences would ultimately play a dominant role in my final analysis. As this dissertation is also influenced, albeit in a secondary register, by the interdisciplinary problematics of performance studies, cultural studies, and critical-cultural anthropology, I draw from a rich set of problematics that foreground the importance of lived experience and the constant struggles for power and resources in everyday life. Beginning at this nexus of rhetoric, cultural studies, performance, and critical-cultural anthropology invites a nuanced, multi-perspectival orientation that foregrounds a critical-interpretive agility that is capable of being attentive to the particularities at play when multiple and contradictory processes are entangled in the production of highly-visible public discourses. It engenders a careful and generous approach toward fieldwork that seeks specificity and contextuality while drawing from multiple registers and theoretical approaches while privileging none over the other. And, it places the researcher in the field and in the archive, blurring traditional distinctions

between “text” and “site” while remaining faithful to the complex interdependency of each in everyday discourse and practice. With this in mind, I have selected those particular experiences, artifacts, and performances -- those material and discursive rhetorics -- that are both frequently encountered by visitors as conservation civics. In this way, my research demonstrates how environmentality “works” rhetorically and performatively to produce particular ways of relating to the nation, nature, and culture.

Rhetoric and Environmentality: Locating “Conservation Civics”

As “the environment” has become an increasingly important concept in private and public life, it has figured prominently as the subject and object of knowledge in the contemporary academy. Indeed, since the mid-1970s, scientists, humanists, and critical scholars alike have explored and debated human relationships with the natural world, spawning a range of new approaches and methodologies, as well as sub-disciplines like conservation biology, political ecology, and environmental communication, that share a commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship. While there is clearly a need for problem-oriented approaches that consider the ways in which environmental issues are (re)produced by a range of social, political, economic, cultural, and ecological influences and interdependencies, technocratic and bureaucratic solutions that resonate with the status quo and the logics of the market have often taken precedence in the public sphere over critical-cultural perspectives that interrogate the articulations, performances, and discourses of nature and culture.⁹³ Nevertheless, these critiques have established trajectories that produce

alternative paradigms which aim to challenge, destabilize, and reconfigure the discourses of political life and everyday experience.

In this dissertation, I present one such critique that has exerted a significant degree of influence as a useful theoretical heuristic for understanding and explaining how individuals come to understand themselves in relation to the environment and to the nation-state. Known as eco-governmentality or environmentality, this paradigm draws significantly from the work of Michel Foucault in order to think through the enactments of power that ascribe legitimacy and normativity to particular ways of being in nature and culture at a particular moment in history. As a deeply contextual theory of subjectivity, it aims to trace the ways in which official discourses enable and constrain practices, relations, and beliefs by

1) attend[ing] carefully to the formation of new expert knowledges; 2) the nature of power, which is at the root of efforts to regulate social practice; 3) the type of institutions and regulatory practices that exist in a mutually productive relationship with social and ecological practices and can be seen as the historical expressions of contingent political relationships; 4) and the behaviors that regulations seek to change, which go hand in hand with the processes of self-formation and struggles between expert- or authority-based regulation and situated practices.⁹⁴

Here, as Arun Agrawal explains, environmentality is an “optic [for examining] the long process of changes in environmental politics, institutions, and subjectivities” that “encourages attention to the processes through which these concepts are consolidated and naturalized.”⁹⁵ Following a trajectory of thought opened by the work of Eric Darier, Paul Rutherford, Robyn Eckersley, Jim Cheney, and Timothy Luke, Agrawal’s study of Kumaon blends ethnographic field research with statistical, archival evidence to explain how “changes in individual behavior” are produced as “governmental strategies” that solve particular social problems.⁹⁶ While, as Agrawal notes, “environmentality . . . refers to the knowledges,

politics, institutions, and subjectivities that come to be linked together with the emergence of the environment as a domain that requires regulation and protection,” what’s missing, however, is a sense of *how these* discourses work to move the social.⁹⁷ Environmentality, as I note below, offers a useful yet partial framework that does not adequately attend to the particular, situated ways in which environmental subjectivities are made, contested, and remade through rhetorical and performative processes. Specifically, the “optic” of environmentality does not address everyday or banal forms of publicity that are enacted by the nation-state as it constitutes publics and writes its narrative upon the terrain of everyday, political life. As noted earlier, this dissertation performs an important intervention by offering a more nuanced understanding of environmentality as a communicative practice. Environmentality makes the critical move from governmentality toward a more specific and situated understanding of how power and subjectivity are produced under the sign of nature. Here, as Darier, Luke, and others have suggested, environmentality specifically acknowledges the material *and* discursive characteristics of “the environment” as both socially produced, governed, and regulated while also a material reality that exists (as “nature”) without human intervention.

If, as Foucault argues, we are “thinking beings” that “do these things not only on the ground of universal rules of behavior but also on the specific ground of a historical rationality” that he terms the “reason of state,” then the rhetorical work that NPS discourses do to cultivate this environmental subject is aimed at reinforcing “the state itself” and “its own rationality.”⁹⁸ In this way, the parks function as crucibles of experience where the state is positioned as a benevolent and rational actor. What makes environmentality different and,

arguably, specifically applicable to environmental communication and political ecology is its distinctiveness from other Foucauldian optics, such as biopower, and its flexibility as a concept that can account for the fluidity of power and the multiple and diverse opportunities that arise, often contextually, for resistance and intervention against the state's discursive regime. Furthermore, as Lemke observes,

when Foucault speaks of the governmentalization of the state, he does not assume that government is a technique that could be applied or used by state authorities or apparatuses; instead, he comprehends the state itself as a tactics of government, as a dynamic form and historic stabilization of societal power relations. Thus, governmentality is "at once internal and external to the state, since it is the tactics of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private and so on, thus, the state can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality."⁹⁹

As the case studies offered in Chapters 3-5 suggest, this theme is articulated through various rhetorical experiences that position visitors as recipients of the gift of conservation and environmental stewardship. The parks, then, may be understood as technologies for expressing the environmental reason of the state -- the subtle (and not so subtle) regulation of discourses and practices that govern both people and place in ways that seem commonsensical or reasonable but are nevertheless represented and situated as such through rhetoric. Thus, as Richard Grusin argues, national parks function as public "technologies for reproducing nature according to the scientific, cultural, and aesthetic practices of a particular historical moment."¹⁰⁰ However, he cautions, critics must be aware of the fact that "national parks always reproduce 'nature as': that is, they reproduce nature not as anterior to discourse, but in terms of a particular place, location, or environment."¹⁰¹ Reading Grusin in conversation with Ronald Walter Greene's work on materialist rhetoric suggests that national

parks are not only technologies for producing nature, but they are also technologies for producing environmental subjects. As Greene observes,

One way to conceptualize a governing apparatus is to suggest that it exists as an ensemble of human technologies dedicated to improving the welfare of a population. While Foucault's perspective allows us to conceptualize rhetoric as a technology of signs, we should approach these "signs" less as a discourse to be interpreted, than as a technique that makes meaning possible. Rhetorical practices stabilize meaning by distributing populations, discourses, and institutions onto the terrain of a governing apparatus so that a series of judgments might be made about the art of government.¹⁰²

Here, Greene makes an explicit case for thinking about governmentality as a rhetorical technology that enables the invention and circulation of discursive fragments. In this way, Greene's work offers a productive foundation for locating environmentality as rhetorical and performative. Drawing from this approach, my case studies suggest that NPS discourses project a rather unsustainable way of understanding and filtering one's relationships with wilderness, natural resources, and consumer goods by articulating conservation and civics.

Although far from all-encompassing, NPS discourses position visitors as citizen-consumers and define what is and is not 'the environment' in ways that suggest how the public should imagine appropriate ways of regulating the self and others. Here, the future(s) of particular places and of conservation are not necessarily determined through public policy and political debate, but through deeply personal ways of relating to and interpreting what it means to be a 'good' (environmental) citizen. Similarly, Timothy Luke's observation that "enviro-discipline . . . must methodically mobilize particular assumptions, codes and procedures to enforce specific understandings of the economy and society [that] generate eco-knowledges, like those embedded in notions of sustainability or development, . . . [because] they simultaneously frame the emergence of collective subjectivities" suggests that

environmentality is clearly a discursive process that normalizes the “ordinary practices of governance.”¹⁰³ In this regard, NPS discourses are engaged in different rhetorical work (and with significantly differing constraints) than those produced by contemporary social movements or elected public officials that aim to intervene against the status quo by shifting the political terrain in explicit terms.

While these discourses are equally public, they engage, constitute, and address publics in fundamentally different ways. By attending to the rhetorical features of environmentality, critics may be better positioned to tease out the specific ways in which nature and culture are articulated by the nation-state as its discourses work to produce knowledges, experiences, and memories of *place* that conjure, inform, and cultivate identification. Moreover, a rhetorical orientation toward environmentality requires critics to attend to the contingent nature of power and to the strategic enactments of the visual, material, and embodied ways in which official discourses about the environment are made public. In other words, it demands that critics attend to the *publicity* of discourses and practices that make environmentality possible and, largely, invisible, as common sense. To return to Greene, publicity matters because “the ability of rhetoric to generate a ‘publicity-effect’ implicates that materiality of rhetoric in a process of surveillance.”¹⁰⁴ By identifying, interpreting, analyzing, and assessing how power/knowledge is invoked, displayed, circulated, and reproduced as a precursor to certain forms of environmental citizenship, critics may be better positioned to strategically intervene against (and call attention to) the tactics and strategies of the state that aim to cultivate and sustain particular relationships between self, other, state, and nature that may be interpreted by critically-oriented scholars as

problematic and/or unsustainable. Indeed, bringing rhetoric to bear on environmentalism provides critics with a way into conceptualizing both its political and affective dimensions in ways that are sensitive to questions of agency, contextuality, contingency, ambiguity, and polysemy.¹⁰⁵

In this capacity, a rhetorical theory of environmentalism enables critics to situate the ways in which discourses make claims upon and attempt to constitute particular subject positions *as public* in ways that are perhaps always already negotiated, contested, resisted, appropriated, and rejected to some degree. In the following pages, I offer a brief overview of the literature on governmentality, environmentalism, and contemporary rhetorical theory in order to arrive at these conclusions. The ways in which NPS discourses define nature and culture matter because the NPS is a trusted source of information that wields influence and authority. NPS discourses provide interpretive frameworks that foreground and entrench particular ways of knowing and doing that persuasively suggest a citizen-consumer orientation toward conservation as the embodiment of the ideal environmental subject. Thus, I suggest that a rhetorical theory of environmentalism productively and complementarily augments contemporary approaches to environmental criticism that operate under the paradigm of critical rhetoric in ways that address Cox's call for environmental communication to consider its potential as a "crisis discipline."¹⁰⁶ In this way, environmental communication can attend to both Cox's call for scholarship that engages publics and has the potential for intervening into the public sphere while also taking Steve Schwarze's critiques seriously. Schwarze endorses Cox's position, but he cautions that such a paradigm shift must also be able to influence how scholars approach and conceptualize their research in ways that

critically and robustly engage other disciplines that may “view [our] constitutive assumptions with skepticism.”¹⁰⁷ As he notes, “Cox’s configuration of environmental communication as a crisis discipline should be taken up not simply as a means to highlight the urgency and significance of our work, but primarily as a way to fundamentally reorient our modes of inquiry.”¹⁰⁸ Similarly, a rhetorical approach to environmentality foregrounds the dialogic complexity of the communicative relationships through which power/knowledge is mediated under the signs of nation and environment. It enables critics to ask why national park rhetorics, as discourses of the state, present conservation through the lenses of consumerism and as a civic practice that has little to do with environmental sustainability.

As my case studies demonstrate, the NPS is engaged in particular ways of place-making that rhetorically and performatively enact a way of relating to the nation, nature, and culture that positions visitors as environmental subjects. I term these discourses and practices “conservation civics” because they enable critics to consider the kinds of political work that literally *takes place* as visitors come to the parks in search of particular experiences. From rhetorical silences that elide local controversies to Junior Ranger programs that position children as future neoliberal subjects, I argue that conservation civics deserve additional critical attention because of the political, cultural, and rhetorical work that they do. Conservation civics tend to center around several key themes. They are discourses that elide conflict, focus on conservation *as* commemoration, position the relationships between nature and culture as national and free of local complexity or nuance, encourage visitors to value these particular places as scenic, as abundant natural resources, and as inherently representative of the nation’s moral character as just, wholesome, and pure.

Conservation civics do not generally deploy scientific evidence to make their claims, relying instead on experiential ways of knowing that are often deeply affective, embodied, and pleasurable. Perhaps predictably, these official discourses aim to make conservation public by *not* interrupting, challenging, or contesting the status quo. As conservation civics are performed, crisis is rendered invisible, but the future of the parks is still contested in the sense that these discourses publicly appeal to visitors as patrons: to support the parks is to support the nation, and vice versa. Comparatively, conservation civics emerge in somewhat different ways at each park, but there are definite similarities in terms of how they engage visitors and position them within particular historical and ecological narratives.

Within the discourses of conservation civics, the ecological futures of the parks themselves are simply not discussed. Instead of engaging the public by presenting the precarious nature of the parks' ecological situations as a fundamental element of how we should value (and revalue) the relationships that shape how people negotiate nature and culture in everyday life, the question is simply not raised. "What crisis?" seems to be the dominant refrain of the day, despite the mountains of evidence -- scientific, as well as anecdotal reports from NPS employees -- that the parks are in danger due to overuse, underfunding, abusive forms of recreation that irreparably damage the terrain, and off-site pollution that undermines air and water quality, as well as other aesthetic considerations. And, while there are clearly different registers of resistance, appropriation, and rejection taking place that undermine and challenge these ways of presenting nature and culture to the visiting public, the rhetorics and performances of conservation civics aim to produce an environmental subject who is generally un(der)informed about environmental issues and

whose affective relationship with place is rooted in patriotic identification with the nation. Nevertheless, s/he is figured as a park supporter and a good citizen: s/he is rewarded for embracing a definition of conservation that has little to do with its material, political, and ecological realities. Indeed, visitors are encouraged to interpret their patronage of the NPS as visible proof that they are ethical subjects -- good citizens, as it were. Again, no changes are required. Conservation civics, then, encourages business as usual and consumption as usual. It justifies the environmental cost of idling in bumper to bumper traffic for three hours in Cades Cove in order to catch a glimpse of a white tailed deer. It remains silent about the fundamental need to limit, if not ban, beach driving at Hatteras in order to protect endangered and threatened species. It encourages visitors *not* to think about the environmental effects of driving the length of the Parkway and generating almost 700 pounds of CO₂ in the process.¹⁰⁹ Rhetorical and performative, conservation civics enable critics to begin formalizing a theoretical framework for understanding the specific ways in which environmentality is produced as a way of relating to nature and culture. Thus, my research offers a preliminary way of thinking about *how* power is materially and discursively enacted in ways that influence how millions of American tourists come to understand themselves as citizens, consumers, and inheritors of the “park idea.”

While Foucault’s influence in the humanities during the 1980s and early 1990s was significant, the earliest and most prominent references to “environmentality” (a neologism that articulates governmentality to the environment) occurred within an edited collection of essays published in 1999 by Eric Darier and his colleagues in political ecology. Reflecting upon his years as a graduate student, Darier notes that the collection was inspired by the

immense “academic frustration and intellectual loneliness” that he experienced while laboring to develop a Foucauldian framework that enables a “genealogical critique of environmental practices” through engagement with “governmentality,” biopower,” and/or “space.”¹¹⁰ Of these, Darier argues, “the concept of governmentality has potential for an environmental critique because it explicitly deals with issues of (state) ‘security’, techniques of control of the population, and new forms of knowledge.”¹¹¹ In Foucault’s words, governmentality is concerned with the “conduct of conduct.”¹¹² Citing Dean, Darier continues:

contrary to more traditional analyses of ‘public policy,’ which focus narrowly on ‘objectives’, ‘results’ within an instrumental framework of linear causalities and quantifiable data, governmentality focuses on the deeper historical context and on the broader power ‘effects’ of governmental policy.¹¹³

When considered contextually, alongside the development of the NPS at the turn of the 20th century and the emergence of national parks as explicitly *national* places envisioned by their creators as America’s “natural” alternative to Europe’s perceived cultural superiority and promoted as a salve for the ills of modern life, the role of the state becomes increasingly visible and complex. Moreover, the usefulness of governmentality as a theoretical paradigm becomes increasingly appropriate for locating the ways in which “the public” and “the public good” were invoked as appropriate targets for the application of governmental rationality. Indeed, as Paul Rutherford argues, the reason of state that underlies governmentality “no longer focused primarily on the governing of territory, but rather on the governing of things . . . [whereby] the principal concern of the ‘police’ state became productive, involving a continuous and remarkably specific series of ‘positive interventions’ in the behavior of individuals and groups.”¹¹⁴ As Nikolas Rose and Tony Bennett both discuss at length, these

rationalities were manifested through the use of architecture, design, and planning to produce public places that furthered the objectives of the state by increasingly governing at a distance.¹¹⁵ To this point, Rose argues that “the project of responsible citizenship had been fused with individuals’ projects for themselves . . . thus, in a very significant sense, it has become possible to govern without governing society -- to govern through the ‘responsibilized’ and ‘educated’ anxieties and aspirations of individuals and their families.”¹¹⁶ In this way, national parks may be interpreted as places that position visitors as environmental subjects who learn how to successfully navigate, negotiate, and internalize the particular ways in which nature and culture are articulated through a common framework as public national values or conservation civics.

And yet, despite the proliferation of critical-rhetorical scholarship that focuses on the particularities of environmental rhetorics (such as those produced by multinational social movements in the form of image events and those enacted by environmental justice advocates in the form of toxic tours), very few studies explicitly focus on the ways in which rhetorical places, such as national parks, situate publics in relation to the environment as subjects of the state. Without rehearsing the field writ large, many critical scholars in rhetoric and performance studies have generally focused on the discourses produced by various environmental social movements, NGOs, and counterpublics that push back against the state and/or multinational corporations in regard to *environmental policy*. The focus of this scholarship, as exemplified by Danielle Endres, Bill Kinsella, Christine Harold, Kevin DeLuca, and others, tends toward a critical examination of the ways in which those discourses aim to challenge, resist, rewrite, and/or reject technocratic justifications. Another

dominant strain, as exemplified by Phaedra Pezzullo, Julie Schutten, Dylan Wolfe, and Richard Rogers tends toward explicit critiques that address the consequences of particular consumer practices and the argumentative strategies used by advocates and activists as they attempt to persuade voters and consumers alike to consider the environmental effects of their actions. Thus, while the discipline of environmental communication shares similar trajectories with rhetoric and cultural studies, these perspectives are not necessarily dominant within the field in equal measure.

Despite their differences, rhetoric and cultural studies have frequently been conceptualized as meeting at a “crossroads” where shared concerns about publics, popular culture, political discourse, and the practices of everyday life intersect through shared theoretical influences and methodological approaches.¹¹⁷ In particular, Michel Foucault’s influence is often visible at this juncture, having provoked new lines of inquiry and debate that turned scholars’ attention toward the enactments of power and knowledge that shape particular historical and contextual moments. This body of literature is, ostensibly, as deep as it is disparate.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, it opened up new spaces for critical inquiry that positioned embodiment and materiality as significant sites/sights for cultural production and the circulation of power in everyday life and called “the text” into question.¹¹⁹ It also challenged the ways in which some scholars came to see their own truth claims as contingent and contextual by troubling authorship, authority, and the production of knowledge. Arguably, one of the most visible instances of these shared influences and trajectories was the creation of *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* in the wake of the establishment of “critical

rhetoric” as an alternative paradigm for articulating left political and intellectual commitments to the rhetorical tradition.¹²⁰

This is not to suggest, however, a unified program of scholarship and critique within communication studies. Indeed, as Jack Bratich, Jeremy Packer, and Cameron McCarthy observe, the proliferation of Foucauldian ideas within communication studies did not necessarily translate easily into a coherent body of scholarship rooted in shared concerns. Ostensibly, they argue, some concerns were explored more often than others. By positioning culture as “a set of reflections, techniques, and practices that seek to regulate conduct,” they posit a paradigm where governmentality enables critics to conceptualize “culture as the intersection of policy and ethos” as opposed to a “policy issue” in part because “culture is embroiled in modes of political subjectification.”¹²¹ Here, governmentality offers a particularly useful way for theorizing the specific, situated enactments of power that circulate within, are produced by, and abut against a particular cultural and historical moment. And yet, despite the potential for creative and critical possibility therein, they lament the fact that “much of cultural studies has focused on the discipline pole of Foucault’s triangle “discipline-sovereignty-governmentality,” leaving a problematic gap in the literature that does not address the ways in which culture might be conceptualized “in its relation to governing at a distance.”¹²² Despite these important contributions from communication and cultural studies, few book-length works or anthologies have explicitly engaged the problematic of governmentality at length from a rhetorical perspective either, although its emergence as a useful theoretical paradigm has gained traction in recent years in a few corners of the discipline. In this vein, Ken Rufo’s articulation of governmentality to rhetoric

at a meta-level offers a highly distilled yet useful way for thinking about how rhetorical and cultural approaches to governmentality share common ground. Bridging critical rhetoric and governmentality, Rufo argues that “rhetorical instantiations of power are processual; power is always already present in rhetorical acts; and rhetorical power concerns itself first and foremost with the authority of naming.”¹²³ Recent work by Davi Johnson also suggests that a rhetorical approach to governmentality enables critics to more precisely trace how particular popular discursive formations work to reinscribe power in subtle ways.¹²⁴ In her analysis of *Monk*, Johnson argues that

Within the contemporary neoliberal rationality epitomized by an “ethos of self-governing,” identity discourses can function along the lines of what Foucault has described as governmentality, or regulation at a distance (Foucault, 1991; Ong, 2006, p. 9). In this context, appeals to identity frame diverse modes of social and economic participation, including work and consumption, as empowering avenues through which individuals can realize their own personal true selves. When rhetorics of identity do the work of government, they align the perceived desires and interests of individuals with various political and economic interests.¹²⁵

Here, a rhetorical approach toward culture enables both Johnson and Rufo to explain how power works discursively to situate and inscribe particular iterations of subjectivity as an effect of governmentality’s normative power. Indeed, these critical readings offer additional support to Edensor’s observation that “in order to retain their power, performative norms need to be continually enacted, whether these are the spectacular disciplinary performances of national identity or the unreflexive habits of everyday life.”¹²⁶ In this sense, the “effects” of subject formation and the enactment of performative norms rely upon rhetoric to move (power through) the social.

While limited, these preliminary forays toward a rhetorical theory of governmentality signal the renewed importance of Foucault's scholarship to contemporary efforts to understand how various discourses and techniques of governance by state and non-state actors alike work to produce different (yet highly contextualized and mediated) subject positions. Equally limited, as noted above, is the body of literature that extends governmentality into environmental communication as a way of explaining how individuals are rhetorically positioned as environmental subjects. This is a bit perplexing, as the concept of environmentality has been taken up within the field of political ecology with some gusto. Nevertheless, most of these contributions leave much to be desired in terms of how they account for the processes by which subject positions are made, remade, modified, and/or rejected. In other words, these theories skip over the messy processes through which environmental citizenship is produced, suggesting by omission that environmental subjectivity and the transmission of cultural values that govern how citizens "conduct" themselves in relation to the environment simply (or perhaps magically) happens. Thus, my research points toward the critical turn in environmental communication and argues that responsible criticism which aims to understand how state or official discourses locate subjects within particular articulations of nature and culture should draw from these diverse strands. Such a perspective enables critics to rethink how environmentality is, ultimately, produced by and through rhetorical and performative means. Although the parks are tourist destinations, the NPS positions these places as having infinitely more cultural significance than explicitly commercialized, for-profit tourist destinations like Disneyworld. At Hatteras, on the Parkway, and in the Smokies, visitor experiences are imagined as exceptional

elements of a national rite of passage: to experience these places is to experience what it means to be an American. Thus, Chapter 2 provides additional methodological and theoretical foundation for the case studies discussed in Chapters 3-5. Drawing from the works of Michael Billig, Tim Edensor, and Bob Hariman and John Lucaites, I suggest that environmentality is rhetorically productive in the context of the National Parks because it engages banal nationalism and public memory in order to produce experiences of place that are “distinctive.”

CHAPTER 2

RHETORIC, NATION, NATURE, AND CULTURE

“Nature perpetually shifts and re-forms -- in much the same way that human subjectivity is constantly on the move, constantly shifting ground and re-forming.” -- Peter Hay¹²⁷

“In part, due to the success of the issue agenda of the environmental movement, our culture has accepted very limited definitions: wilderness is an environmental issue, but consumerism is not. Nature worthy of protection is the pristine places where people are not. Distant nature is more valued than everyday nature. The most appropriate spheres for protecting nature are the political, legal, and governmental bureaucracies.” -- Julia Corbett¹²⁸

National parks, as discussed in Chapter 1, represent a peculiar and distinctly American engagement with land and nature. The notion that land should be set aside because it serves an aesthetic and moral good beyond the reaches of consumerism and development seems rather contradictory in the American context in which it emerged in the middle of the Industrial Revolution. National parks, however, have only become a part of the American cultural imagination during the last hundred years as public goods that must be legally protected and preserved for future generations. On the surface, they seem simple enough. National parks are lands set aside for recreational use and appreciation by the public. On one hand they are lands in the custody of the nation for the purposes of keeping them out of circulation in the private domain as a commodity. On the other hand, these lands are set aside for the purposes of conserving a limited resource for future generations, for aesthetic enjoyment, and personal enrichment. Additionally, most national parks are located in rural

areas that have only developed in response to tourism directed at that land. Indeed, parks enable otherwise unremarkable rural places to be transformed into tourist destinations and for locals (and others) to create economic opportunities by providing a web of consumer services that might not otherwise be accessible or relevant to local residents.

But what questions can be asked about parks that are not as obvious? To be more clear, why would a nation (and why does a nation) -- especially this one -- get into the national park “business” and to what ends? Is it possible that by experiencing a national park first-hand, a visitor can walk away with a common understanding, a shared (yet personalized) experience or memory that is part of a larger narrative about the nation, the economy, and other issues that collectively establish and reinscribe normative cultural values? When visiting a battleground, monument, or memorial, the historical and cultural importance of those places is sometimes displayed and communicated rhetorically to visitors such that they are invited to identify as one with a shared vision or myth of a common past and, in turn, common presents and futures. But when one visits a national park and wanders down a trail or tours a lighthouse, is the rhetorical effect similar? Is it simply that an additional “environmental” layer is articulated to the expression of culture and history on display and performed in situ, or do “natural” places work differently?

The rub, arguably, is that history and culture are communicated by the NPS in ways that aim to invoke a common or collective sense of public belonging and invite an affective bond or attachment with that which has been deemed worthy of remembrance. As I note below, however, these rhetorics often lack contextual complexity - they conveniently forget how “friction,” contestation, and/or controversy actively shape history and culture.

Nevertheless, many Americans indicate a high level of approval and support for the NPS and its mission. A recent survey conducted by the NPS in order to set priorities in anticipation of its 100th anniversary found that many people view the parks as “what is right with the United States.” Other comments, such as “I hope that if and when aliens ever land on this planet, they do not say, “Take us to your leader.” Rather, they say, “Take us to your national parks,” provide some insight into the ways in which parks are viewed as a fundamental and unique element of national identity in the contemporary United States.¹²⁹ In the case of public lands set aside as national parks, these places are communicated as inherently worthy of protection, and the enactment of that wisdom depends on a carefully managed relationship of trust whereby the public is invited to accept the government’s role as steward. But the stories are not the same. Instead, the landscape is positioned time and again as history in the making, not history made. Here, national parks have histories, but the histories that matter are the ones in the making/doing by those who are present in the moment.

National parks are places that are interpreted by the NPS and presented to the public as simultaneously timeless and vaguely endangered -- in need of national protection and the collective support of present and future generations, but not necessarily threatened by environmental degradation. These places are continually (re)made through engagement with them, through interpretation. In this way, national parks, seashores, and parkways position visitors as recipients of a national gift that may be used as they see fit, but ultimately paid forward to an anonymous recipient in the future. Although parks are not commemorative in a traditional sense, they are active commemorations of an idea and an ideal of Americanness that privileges nature as a unique aspect of national history, culture, and ownership whereby

“the collective” is not rhetorically figured as the communal, but as the public. They are constituted not by a fixed location whereby something special happened, but instead as special locations whereby something that links the personal with the national can happen -- where different people can come and have similar experiences that are part of a shared or common cultural heritage. And, these places matter because they enable visitors to experience a rhetorical encounter whereby *nature is culture*.

What makes national parks interesting from a rhetorical perspective is that such places trouble traditional notions of what counts as legitimate public address. Historically, place was considered a background, scene, or context in which rhetorical action unfolded. From this orientation, the relationships that mattered were the ones struck between a (human) rhetor and his or her audiences, and the desired object of criticism was primarily identified as the rhetor’s oratory. In recent years, a coterie of critical scholars has engaged the theory and practice of rhetorical communication in ways that have questioned the first principles of what it means to address a public and, in doing so, have performed an important interruption that questions the methodological sovereignty that the study of speech had claimed for centuries. As a result, rhetorical inquiry about place was made possible because scholars made the case, following Michel Foucault, that built or planned environments were capable of producing particular interactions that invited preferred responses or ways of understanding the self in relation to power and knowledge. By embracing an epistemological orientation that acknowledges the importance of culture, context, everyday life, and polysemy as fundamental components of the rhetorical encounter, this body of scholarship beckons a new generation to rethink how rhetoric works or, in a different register, how and what it does.

Here, critics are encouraged to begin by contemplating much more than the available means of persuasion, the generic characteristics of the discourse, or the motives of the rhetor. Instead, critical inquiry is guided by a hermeneutic of suspicion that questions the assumption that any one characteristic is responsible for the persuasiveness, salience, or resonance of a discourse. While not dispensing entirely with traditional textual approaches to criticism, such an orientation works to recalibrate -- i.e. expand and complicate -- what constitutes the realm of possible (or legitimate) units of analysis. As McGee observed, the realm is littered with fragments that can neither be isolated within the confines of a bounded temporal-historical context, nor (re)assembled in order to be understood holistically.¹³⁰

Taken together, this new direction in rhetorical scholarship is predicated upon the argument that discourses may be considered as discrete and/or fragmented as they circulate through contemporary culture and may contribute to different discursive formations in different degrees. Furthermore, it holds that critics must focus on understanding the complexity of rhetorical encounters in order to offer contingent analyses and insight into what rhetoric does under different conditions. And, it performs a critical intervention that questions the first principles of traditional public address scholarship by making room for non-traditional voices, forms of rhetorical expression, and popular culture. It invites critics to pose questions about why publics are addressed and for what ends. Thus, it clears a space in which national parks can be considered as rhetorical places. It makes possible the study of how publics are addressed through shared experiences and stories in highly symbolic environments. Perhaps most importantly, it enables a healthy skepticism that breeds a concern for the less-than-obvious ways in which seemingly everyday encounters with official

discourses about the environment work in everyday life. It is at this juncture that I locate Chapter 2 as a theoretical meditation that considers how national parks rhetorically articulate nature to nation.

During the past 25 years, scholars who specialize in environmental issues have significantly benefited from the veritable explosion of research that spans a diverse spectrum of methodologies, artifacts, and disciplinary orientations as “environmental studies” have gained institutional respect and legitimacy in the humanities and social sciences. In communication studies, for example, the careful and sustained examination of environmental discourses and related social controversies has yielded a rich tradition of interdisciplinary scholarship that foregrounds the complementary roles of rhetoric and performance in the articulation of public places, embodied forms of advocacy, and the enactments, refusals, and reinventions of what are perhaps best described as environmental subjectivities. These critiques -- ranging from Christine Oravec's groundbreaking essay on John Muir's preservationism to Kevin DeLuca's critical analysis of environmental advocates' usage of embodied visual rhetorics to enact image events, to Pezzullo's nuanced engagement with toxic tourism and her problematization of key concepts in rhetoric, performance, and cultural studies -- have invited pause and reflection that take seriously the material and discursive effects of environmental irreparability, the fragility of ecological interdependency, and the political stakes that anchor these public dilemmas. As recently demonstrated by the range of topics and methods represented at the 2007 Conference on Communication and the Environment, within the Environmental Communication Division at NCA, and highlighted by the launch of the new journal, *Environmental Communication*, there is both an established

body of literature and a litany of scholarly debates which provide an adequate framework that supports (and is augmented by) the questions raised by this project. However, this project is also resonant with the broader theoretical and critical concerns of contemporary rhetorical studies, and it finds similar trajectories in cultural studies and performance studies, respectively. In the following pages, I briefly trace the multiple strands of inquiry concerning national(izing) rhetorics, the performance(s) of place, and the importance of public memory and tourism in the constitutive practices that inform the (re)negotiation of publics and citizen-subjects.

Although such a move may be obvious to the specialized reader, this project suggests that official discourses are (still) important sites for critical inquiry because of their complicated positionality: although not traditionally considered “public address”, such discourses nevertheless address (and position) publics. Furthermore, as the interdisciplinary resonance and scholarly significance of work that locates itself as the anthropology of the state clearly demonstrates, the state is “an effect of everyday practices, representational discourses, and multiple modalities of power.”¹³¹ Following a line of inquiry that extends from Weber through Gramsci, Foucault, Rose, Bhabha, and Brown, the everyday practices through which the state enacts power through governing, ordering, and subjecting remain important sites for critical intervention, regardless of the proliferating “arts of resistance” that are strategically deployed in the practice(s) of everyday life.¹³² As John Clarke argues, contemporary studies that focus on the relationships between the state and the management of populations increasingly “insist that governing takes place through multiple agencies, relations, and practices” and that, in opposition to studies that read governmentalities as “too

unified and coherent,” one must approach governing “in ways that treat instability and conflict as core issues . . .”¹³³ For Clarke, “state reform – and the remaking of the agencies, relationships, and processes of governing – is a continuing process” and what he terms “public services” are deeply marked by the contingent and contested nature of public policy and, as such, their power must be confronted and situated as a “tendency” and not a certainty¹³⁴. Thus, the banal rhetorics of nationalism proffered by the NPS that articulate “citizenship,” “place,” “memory,” and “environment” should be situated on similar terms.

As competition for renewable resources in the 21st century is heightened by worsening ecological crises around the globe, parklands may take on new importance as symbolic capital. As noted in Chapter 1, national parks were envisioned by several early proponents of the idea as an American answer to Europe’s cultural capital. Nearly 125 years later, those early “investments” may offer a distinctly different rhetorical use or “return” that none could have envisioned. Beyond their aesthetics and use value, they symbolize the diversity and abundance of American natural resources on a scale of immense magnitude. On one hand, this magnitude may be interpreted as modeling excess and exceptionalism as positive American cultural values. Because the raw material or resource in question is nature, conservation (resource management) and public education (perception management) are readily positioned as normative and commonplace discursive practices. And, what is produced is collective experience, or the articulation of tourism and affect. Because the parks are, in effect, “owned” by the American people, held in trust by the federal government, and managed by the Park Service, visitors/citizens are rhetorically positioned as shareholders wherein their direct involvement in the day-to-day affairs of the parks is

removed and mediated. Simply by “being” a citizen and, presumably, paying taxes to the federal government, visitors are invited to participate in a narrative of collective ownership that aims to constitute, direct, and justify feelings of national pride about how “we” value nature. As Bruner observes, articulations of the national and enactments of it (nationalism) are deeply rhetorical processes that must be continuously reinvented and expressed legally, ethnically, culturally, and economically as “malleable fictions.”¹³⁵ While contemporary rhetorical theory is rife with rich textual analyses of presidential speeches, social controversies, and the rhetorics of various social movements, the mundane aspects of everyday life in a bureaucratic state are often (and easily) overlooked as suitable for research.

While this is not to suggest that the spectacular, popular, or hyper-mediated are unworthy of our attention, it is to observe the tendency toward the study of discourses and practices that may seem more important because of their location within cultural and political hierarchies. Due, to some degree, to rhetoric’s long-standing commitments to the practices of democracy, public deliberation, and civic life, disciplinary concerns were largely oriented toward overtly political pronouncements until the early 1980s. As the journals and conference programs of the decade bear witness, the discipline’s sharp focus on decorum, oratory, and obvious examples of public address were doing a serious disservice to its ability to engage the political, popular, and the everyday in ways that were theoretically and methodologically sophisticated. While these interventions have indeed opened new spaces for critical inquiry, there is still much work to be done in order to rethink the multitude of ways in which new texts, contexts, experiences, and encounters work to privilege particular ways of knowing, being, and doing. A useful way of engaging this problematic is to examine

one element of the differing aspects of national discourses and to focus on those that are mediated through mass public education and tourism instead of (or in addition to) mass media. It enables the study of what Michael Billig has referred to as “banal nationalism.”¹³⁶

Why the Banal Deserves Our Attention

The aim of this chapter is to provide the theoretical and methodological foundations for the case studies discussed in Chapters 3-5. As noted above and in Chapter 1, national parks are important sites/sights in contemporary American culture. While each park is uniquely situated as a *distinct* place, a unifying rhetoric of “the national” conjoins and locates these places as representative of, in the words of the NPS itself, “your America.”¹³⁷

Examples of these rhetorics declare that there is, indeed, such a thing as *American* experience. Furthermore, they suggest that visiting a national park is an authentic way of demonstrating, conferring, and confirming patriotism and citizenship, positioning visitors as active collaborators and participants within the imagined community of the nation.¹³⁸

Perhaps most important is how such positioning is articulated not on special occasions or in unique circumstances, but is instead indicative of mundane or everyday NPS discourses. A recent promotional video titled “National Park Panorama” is a useful and relevant example. Featured prominently on the main and Centennial Initiative websites, its recognizable scenes of natural and cultural heritage sites, such as the Lincoln Memorial and the Grand Canyon are overlaid with memorable quotes from a range of notable and influential thinkers and activists such as Gandhi and Aldo Leopold. Most interesting, however, are the anonymous, disembodied voices that weigh in on the role of the NPS in American culture and its legacy

of influence. One male voice remarks that “. . . it is a travesty that the National Park Service ever considers itself a land management agency. It is an agency that manages ideas and ideals." Another weighs in as the sun rises over a mountain: "There is something about wilderness that modern men need." A woman's voice narrates against "Southwestern" scenery to illustrate that, "As far as you can see, this is the homeland of our people." And, against a time-lapsed shot of the evening sky changing over a lit triangular tent in the darkness, another man declares that "Each national park is a story, and the stories have the meaning of the American people. There's not a lot that binds us all together. One of the things that does are these parks." Unclaimed and edited to suggest spontaneous or unprompted responses, these voices also work to suggest a unity of experience that requires no identity in order to invite identification.

Like other examples discussed in later chapters, this video erases what Limerick refers to as the American "legacy of conquest."¹³⁹ It effaces conflict, oppression, and genocide because it must, in order to cultivate identification with ideographic, idealized cultural values of citizenship: equality, justice, freedom. This short video is exemplary of the ways in which NPS rhetorics articulate a people to a place. It is demonstrative of how "the nation-state is ideologically committed to ontological self-perpetuation for all eternity."¹⁴⁰ The video is relevant to this study because of its ability to blur distinctions between site-specific practices and performances of place to enact a national idea(l). It serves, as Teresa Bergman argues in her study of visitor orientation films at Mount Rushmore, "as an introduction and an invitation to learn more about a significant site and its meaning."¹⁴¹ In this case, however, the video orients visitors not to one park, but to the park idea. Its

prominent placement at the main point of entry and visitation to the NPS's *internet* presence ensures that many visitors to specific parks will, to some degree, have their experiences shaped or cultivated by their memories of the video. These places, to echo Hariman and Lucaites, need no caption. While not iconic photographs, they are iconic representations of highly visible, recognizable places in American public culture and are thus a critical component of how the public "sees" itself.¹⁴² Unlike the image of Iwo Jima or the Migrant Mother, however, these images (and indeed, this video) will likely not be (re)circulated, parodied, or reproduced on the same scale. Nevertheless, the "National Parks Panorama" video and other interpretive media and performances made public on a daily basis by the NPS at parks across the U.S. do enjoy a fair degree of public prominence and wide audiences. In some instances, as in the case of the orientation films examined by Bergman, they might be presented to visitors for 5, 10, or 20+ years.¹⁴³ Their repetition and predictability, therefore, matters.

These films, interpretive exhibits, and performances exemplify what Michael Billig observes as a form of banal nationalism or "the ideological means by which nations are produced" that "enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced."¹⁴⁴ Taking his cue from Giddens and Bhabha, Billig suggests that "nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is an endemic condition."¹⁴⁵ Following Anderson, he argues that nations must be imagined, that the act of imagining the nation is rather widespread, and is therefore irreducible to a single instance or moment that exemplifies it.¹⁴⁶ And, contrary to early theoretical explanations that located it as the byproduct of ethnic

friction or weak states, nationalism is exhibited in the everyday cultural practices of established nations.

The ideological habits, by which 'our' nations are reproduced as nations, are unnamed and, thereby, unnoticed. The national flag hanging outside a public building in the United States attracts no special attention. It belongs to no special, sociological genus. Having no name, it cannot be identified as a problem. Nor, by implication, is the daily reproduction of the United States a problem.¹⁴⁷

Banal nationalism, he argues, is not benign. Its manifestations warrant further critical inquiry because they are so often overlooked as part of the everyday cultural landscape. As such, Billig's claim that a necessary understanding of "the gaps in language, which enable banal nationalism to be forgotten, are also gaps in theoretical discourse" that can be interpreted as a justification for rhetorical analysis of these everyday examples. Even in its banal, everyday forms, significant rhetorical labor must be exerted in order to (re)produce and (re)inscribe the nation.¹⁴⁸

While theoretically rich, Billig's application and analysis of banal nationalism "neglects the material, spatial, and performative dimensions of the everyday."¹⁴⁹ Tim Edensor's extension of banal nationalism offers a useful corrective by incorporating a critical-cultural approach to nationalism that foregrounds the importance of place, material culture, and the performance of national identity in its "mundane manifestations."¹⁵⁰ In his discussion of national places and spaces, Edensor notes that certain landscapes are put to work as "selective shorthand" for the nation.¹⁵¹ They are "loaded with symbolic values and stand for national virtues, for the forging of the nation out of adversity, or the shaping of its geography out of nature whether conceived as beneficent, tamed, or harnessed."¹⁵² These

“treasured national attributes” are positioned as having emerged “out of the transformation of raw nature” and are rhetorically deployed as “iconic, privileged landscapes.”¹⁵³

But unlike obviously iconic built sites like the Statue of Liberty or the Empire State Building, national parks complicate Edensor’s claim that “for national space to retain its power, it must be domesticated, replicated in local contexts and be understood as part of everyday life.”¹⁵⁴ National parks are places that are not easily domesticated and whose “wild” characteristics make local replication generally undesirable in late modernity. Arguably, they articulate nature and culture to nation by occupying a space in the national imaginary that is both banal and exceptional. In other words, national parks retain their power of place in a seemingly contradictory way. They are places where visitors can, as Gregory Clark recounts, “feel like an American rather than an inhabitant of the marginal place where I actually lived . . . [where] I could inhabit the national common ground . . . to which all Americans have equal claim. And what they each claim there is not land but landscape, not territory but identity.”¹⁵⁵ National parks are places designed to evoke pride in the nation. They “move people emotionally, not least because [they] provide a sense of location in a large and complex world and an enormous reach of history.”¹⁵⁶ As I demonstrate in my analysis of three different parks and their public messages, domestication is perhaps more of a specific and strategic set of rhetorical performances than Edensor’s analysis suggests, and more deeply imbricated with processes of banal nationalism than appears immediately evident to the casual observer. In the following pages, I trace the frames of this debate by drawing from the relevant literature on nationalism, public memory, and environmentalism with an eye toward their points of intersection and departure. While a

significant body of scholarship in rhetorical studies has addressed questions of nationalism and nationalism's relationships to public memory, work that intersects nationalism and environmental issues is scarce, and inquiry that addresses public memory and environmental issues even more so.

If parks are, as David Jacobson argues, “battlegrounds for defining the very nature of American society” and if Clark’s argument that “the most powerful idiom that Americans share may well be the American landscape that they collectively inhabit” is even partially true, then the ways in which the NPS communicates about the parks to visitors and the ways in which visitors are invited to experience the parks demand critical attention.¹⁵⁷ To that end, I argue for the articulation of these three frameworks in order to better understand how national parks work as rhetorical sites for the performance of banal nationalism and to outline a preliminary framework for situating the complicated cultural and political work that national park discourses do. As my case studies suggest, banal nationalism is at work in the national parks to cultivate a particularly rhetorical form of environmental subjectivity or, what Arun Agrawal refers to as “environmentality.”¹⁵⁸ Through such appeals, the NPS makes conservation public and invites visitors to identify a particular way of experiencing “collective public meaning through the rhetorical power of identification.”¹⁵⁹ Conservation, in these contexts, is claimed as a specific national project and a public good defined, mediated, and practiced form of placemaking by the NPS.

Performing the Nation

Nationalism, as Craig Calhoun and Edensor keenly observe, is discursively produced. Continuously rehearsed and performed, its production takes place on numerous stages simultaneously. As a discursive practice that aims to produce or constitute a public that understands itself in relation to the nation in particular ways, nationalism's banal quality is anything but rhetorically uninteresting. Arguably, it works together with public memory to cultivate common narratives and experiences capable of engendering affective responses to the idea of "the nation" and fulfilling the human need for identification.¹⁶⁰ The intersections of nationalism and public memory are frequent and, as demonstrated by Barbara Biesecker, are deeply rhetorical.¹⁶¹ As Anderson, Billig, Bruner, Calhoun, Edensor, Hobsbawm and others have demonstrated in their discussions of the qualities of nationalism, the idea of the nation must be sustained, remembered, and enacted in the present.¹⁶² Bruner notes that "nations do not have stable or natural identities. Instead, national identity is incessantly negotiated through discourse. What the nation is at any given moment for any given individual depends on the narrative accounts and arguments they bring to bear on the subject."¹⁶³ This matters because, as he argues, "nation-building continually requires the services of advocates offering accounts of national character" and "because different types of collective identities lead to different forms of community."¹⁶⁴ It must remain, paradoxically, contemporary and timeless, but above all, accessible. And, as Robert Hariman and John Lucaites observe,

The civic performance is also an act having political consequences. Any political regime, no matter how arbitrary and brutal, is grounded in society and articulated through culture. The more representative, noncoercive, or sophisticated the regime, the more comprehensive, productive, and reciprocal those

relationships will be. In short, the successful polity must be validated by cultural representations that reflect its embodiment of a common life.¹⁶⁵

To this point, public memory or the collective narrative and symbolic commons that work to constitute “the citizen” and articulate him or her to a rhetorical vision of a nation’s history, present, and future, figures as an important way of knowing and performing nationalism. Public memory arguably provides the nation with a shared (or public domain) archive for rhetorical invention and identification in the name of (re)producing national subjects.

While early scholarship had to carve a niche within the predominantly speech-oriented focus of rhetorical studies in the 1970s and 1980s, its initial emphasis on the architecture and design of public places such as war memorials, national monuments, and museums provided a foundation for inquiry into how memory, national identity, and power become entangled in semi-public places like shopping malls, tourist destinations, and baseball stadiums. As the idea of what “counted” as rhetorical expanded with an eye toward popular and vernacular culture, scholars were free to explore a range of new artifacts and fragments. Within this context, a growing number of rhetoricians have offered variations on this theme by devoting their critical energies toward case studies demonstrative of nationalism, the contexts in which they are (re)produced and (re)circulated, and the cultural and political work that these discursive practices aim to accomplish.¹⁶⁶

Clark’s analysis of rhetorical landscapes, for example, embraces a distinctly Burkean perspective that relies upon the explanatory power of the representative anecdote. Michael Bruner, following Nietzsche’s approach to critical history, focuses on “controversial public speeches” and reactions to them in order to map “strategies of remembrance and their functions.”¹⁶⁷ Hariman and Lucaites’ contributions toward a rhetorical theory of civic

identity have also made a significant impact on how conceptions of “the public,” following Habermas and Warner, also require conceptualization of nation and identification. As they note, “concepts such as “citizenship,” emotions such as civic pride, acts such as public advocacy, and practices such as critical reflection can only be taken up by others if they provide some basis for identification, some grounding in the positive content of lived experience.”¹⁶⁸ Blair and Biesecker, drawing from Foucault and critical-cultural studies, have also made significant contributions to these debates through their critiques of public commemorative practices that also raise the spectre of nationalism. In their analyses of commemorative public art and popularly-circulated rhetorics of World War II, respectively, they identify and call into question the problematic ways in which ideologically conservative discourses are granted normative status to frame historical events for present political gains.¹⁶⁹

As a brief survey of the literature on public memory makes evident, commemoration and nationalism are often articulated to locate the nation’s claims to unity through common experience *of the nation* and to foster identification *with the nation*. “The study of memory,” notes Kendall Phillips, “is largely one of the rhetoric of memories. The ways memories attain meaning, compel others to accept them, and are themselves contested, subverted, and supplanted by other memories are essentially rhetorical.”¹⁷⁰ His discussion of “the memory of publics” and “the publicness of memory” offer a useful framework that builds upon Casey’s claim that public memory must be invoked as it is “subject to continual reassessment and revision.”¹⁷¹ Barbie Zelizer’s comprehensive review of the state of memory studies in

1995 still remains a useful primer, as many of her critical observations continue to influence contemporary scholarship. One of her more compelling arguments suggests that

Memory exists in the world rather than in a person's head and so is embodied in different cultural forms . . . memory studies assume that evidence of the past exists in every mode of public expression in everyday life -- in wedding celebrations, clothes, gestures, household artifacts, reputations, art exhibitions, public memorials, and television retrospectives. These artifacts, made similar by their endurance over time, not only presume that collective memory is unlike individual memory by virtue of the fact that it is external to the human body; they also suggest that it is through such forms that memory is collected, shared, contested, or neutralized.¹⁷²

Drawing upon Halbwachs, Huyssen, Hobsbawm and Ranger, in addition to Bodnar, Kammen, Nora, Schudson, and Schwartz to situate her argument, Zelizer invites scholars to consider the question of “whose memory” works to “determine the texture of public life.”¹⁷³ Writing at about the same time, Stephen Browne's comprehensive review of many of the texts invoked by Zelizer makes an overwhelmingly strong case for the “textuality” of public memory.¹⁷⁴ Following Bodnar, Browne observes that “memory, power, and culture” are interwoven because “public memory is always the source, identity, and product of controversy.”¹⁷⁵ Rhetorically, this is noteworthy because “public memory gets embedded in the available structures of lived experience” and because “the analysis of public memory intersects two important lines of inquiry . . . textual analysis and the interpretation of public sites.”¹⁷⁶

While Edward Casey is clear to maintain distinctions between individual, social, and collective memory that together create the category of public memory, he argues that “it always occurs in some particular place.”¹⁷⁷ As he sees it, public memory thus requires a public place, public presence, public discussion, a common topic, and commemoration in

place.¹⁷⁸ As one of the leading theorists of place and memory in contemporary American culture, Casey's arguments have developed a significant following and have offered a reasonable justification for rhetorical scholars interested in exploring the relationships between experience, performativity, and affect. Casey's phenomenological lenses provide a particular way of thinking about what places do and, in turn, how those rhetorical choices strategically contour how a "we" is called into being in a given context. As noted above, rhetoricians have offered much to the study of nationalist discourses. Deploying a range of theoretical perspectives and methodological orientations, this rich literature offers ample justification for thinking about nationalism from a rhetorical perspective. It also provides ample opportunity for new direction, as it has not yet confronted the problematic of *environmental nationalism* from a critical rhetorical perspective.

Conserving (for) America

In the introduction to *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America*, Carl Herndl and Stuart Brown acknowledge the ways in which "the environment" is an idea about the material world that must be called into being through discourse. In anticipation of the critique of relativism that might be leveled against them, they quickly assure readers that, while pollution exists, "there is no objective environment in the phenomenal world, no environment separate from the words we use to represent it [because] we can define the environment and how it is affected by our actions only through the language we have developed to talk about these issues."¹⁷⁹ Their unease, however, is well-founded. As environmental issues like global warming, endangered species, and peak oil

have become household words, environmental critics and advocates have faced a simultaneous increase in the sheer volume of anti-environmental or greenwashed public messages with which they must contend.¹⁸⁰ While not entirely determinative of the debate, such conditions produce particular rhetorical constraints that complicate how critics are able to talk about the environment *as discursively produced* without oversimplifying the stakes.¹⁸¹ Nevertheless, a growing number of scholars are proceeding carefully and exploring the contours of environmental controversies, as well as everyday and official examples of how nature and culture are brought to bear on each other. From studies that question the means by which extractive industries and agribusiness engage in “consumer education” to explorations of the rhetorical strategies used by Rachel Carson, Al Gore, Greenpeace, and advocates for environmental justice, this growing body of research offers ample opportunity for considering how environmental discourses are imbricated in a web of social, political, economic, and cultural articulations. And, while many of these studies take up environmentally-contested places as sites for inquiry, few directly bring the questions of nationalism and memory to bear.

As the initial critical focus on environmental social movements, counterpublics, and recognizable public figures sought primarily to legitimize the *content* of environmental rhetoric as a recognizable subfield, scholarly engagement with the critical questions posed by cultural studies and allied disciplines about power, place, sexuality, labor, and race (to name but a few) have been recent and welcome additions to the conversation. In *National Identity, Popular Culture, and Everyday Life*, for example, Tim Edensor argues against earlier theories of nationalism advanced by Anderson, Billig, Gellner, Smith, and Hutchinson to make the

case that their reductive orientation cannot account for the ways in which myriad cultural producers are responsible for the "unspectacular, contemporary production of national identity through popular culture and in everyday life."¹⁸² Edensor encourages critics to return to an approach that teases out the elements that contribute to what Raymond Williams calls a "structure of feeling." Edensor defines this as a "a communal way of seeing the world in consistent terms, sharing a host of reference points which provide the basis for everyday discourse and action" that, as Williams notes, express culture via "certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behavior."¹⁸³ As Edensor cautions, "iconic places, objects, rituals, and heroes which are used to establish national(ist) boundaries are liable to be claimed and employed by other groups. Herein lies the power of such cultural symbols -- ideas about their import may be shared, but they can be claimed by a multitude of different identities for different purposes."¹⁸⁴

For endangered, toxic, or threatened places, these articulations are imbued with additional significance because of their ability to highlight the tensions between "nature" and "culture" that produce what Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing has theorized as friction, "the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference."¹⁸⁵ In her critical ethnography of emergent Indonesian forest conservation practices that developed in opposition to globalization, Tsing offers the metaphor of friction as a helpful theoretical lens for understanding how to situate those "engaged Enlightenment universals" such as prosperity, knowledge, and freedom that emerge in the discursive struggles waged over "the environment."¹⁸⁶ Tsing's contributions encourage critics to eschew deriving satisfaction in observing and celebrating particularity for its own sake. Instead, she argues for a

conjunctural approach to studying environmental conflicts by tracing the "logics of power" that lay bare antagonisms, collaborations, and coalition politics in order to better situate and untangle the complex web of relationships between local and national actors who advocate for different rhetorics of place.¹⁸⁷ Tsing argues that

. . . we know and use nature through engaged universals [because] the "environment" spreads around the world through the friction of engagement, both for commercial users, who tap into its divergences for capitalist commodity chains, and for advocates, who find in these same divergences the means to study, enjoy, or preserve it.¹⁸⁸

While Tsing's rich analysis does not directly engage the question of *how* "the environment spreads through the friction of engagement," it does provide a fertile starting point for rethinking *how* the language, symbols, and performances of nature and culture constitute particular rhetorics of place that foreground place-as-environment and that seek to foster identification with certain values.¹⁸⁹ Tsing's findings can be extended to rhetoric to suggest that friction is a rhetorical condition that produces and is produced by antagonisms. It begs the question of how places come to be contested sites of meaning where decorum, narrative, and personal experience work together to influence or shape ways of being, knowing, and doing otherwise.¹⁹⁰ Indeed, as Blair and Michel note, conjunctural analysis also augments rhetorical criticism as a way of tracing and locating the emergence of political discourses in their particularity.¹⁹¹

Despite their different case studies, Anna Tsing, Phaedra Pezzullo, and Jennifer Daryl Slack's critiques share a common thread: no discussion about contemporary environmental issues can comprehensively outline all of the political, social, economic, and cultural influences that have shaped the contours of the present moment.¹⁹² Indeed, an exhaustive

historical analysis that aims to identify the roots of a given environmental controversy may not necessarily yield convincing evidence that explains precisely how and why particular stakeholders act or acted. We cannot identify with certainty why particular discursive practices have seduced, enraged, inspired, or alienated past and present audiences. Nor is it desirable to do so. This is due, in large part, to the fact that rhetorics which aim to make a particular intervention into the discourses and practices of everyday life are often messy, difficult to predict, and offer no guarantees.¹⁹³ However, careful critical inferences can be drawn from even a fragmented subset of historical materials, when considered alongside the discursive practices of the present, in order to forward a critical interpretive analysis that locates a history of the present.

While such analyses are wary to embrace generalities and aim to avoid the epistemological and ontological traps identified by the "critical turn", they are often capable of identifying antagonisms, as well as producing strategies and tactics for generating alternative knowledge practices. If Michel Foucault and David Lowenthal have anything in common, perhaps it is their shared stance that all histories are partial: narratives about the past are invested in upholding a particular way of understanding the present and influencing future outcomes. As such, histories are often deeply rhetorical because they articulate much more than narrative to time: they communicate values, attitudes, practical wisdom, evidence, and justification for the world as we come to know and be known to it.¹⁹⁴ Arguably, rhetorical histories of the present do not simply offer an objective outline of who, what, when, and where: instead, they aim to construct complex webs of meaning that breathe life and consequence into the why and the how. From this perspective, contemporary critical

analyses must engage reports of past events and pivotal moments with a healthy degree of skepticism. As Berland and Slack observe, such an orientation presents unique challenges and complications for "theorizing the context of environmental issues in terms of *particular* communities/environments -- which are, through both unity and difference, variously articulated to relations of solidarity and significance."¹⁹⁵

Lawrence Buell's vision of a future for environmental criticism, which acknowledges the need for scholarship in this vein, is also quick to suggest that "questioning the incongruity between environmental materiality and the imagined territories of cultural nationalism will not spell the end of nation-focused studies."¹⁹⁶ To that end, he adds, "the nation form is not going to wither away anytime soon, nor should it until a solidier system of world governance is in place"¹⁹⁷ Here, as elsewhere, the question of the nation and the enactment of environmental nationalism is glossed over as a taken-for-granted condition of the present that requires little critical engagement. To this point, his discussion of space and place acknowledges the influence of Raymond Williams and Leo Marx on early environmental criticism, suggesting that their critiques of ethnocentric nationalist myths enabled others to consider the concept of bioregions as better able to represent how political geography and ecology do not always overlap.¹⁹⁸ However, as Eric Kaufmann observes in his analysis of U.S. and Canadian land use practices and their attendant discourses, settler nations (like these two) developed during the Enlightenment exhibited a particular tendency toward "naturalizing" the nation. One of the fundamental ways in which this was accomplished was the creation of national parks.

Noting the philosophical influence of Rousseau, Herder, and Fichte, whom he terms “romantic nationalists,” Kaufmann argues that “the American experience illustrates best of all the process referred to here as the nationalization of nature and the primitivist focus that underlies the naturalization of nation.”¹⁹⁹ Kaufmann’s research resonates with observations made by postcolonial theorists and American historians alike. While neither the first nor the last scholar to note the ways in which nature or “wilderness” has been articulated to national identity, Kaufmann’s study examines a range of artifacts, such as the “See American First” campaign, children’s historical fiction, and Hollywood westerns to demonstrate that even in the contemporary moment, “most Americans now considered theirs a natural nation born of regenerative contact with a frontier source.”²⁰⁰ Kaufmann’s argument brings a critical, interpretive edge to Nash’s historiography of the wilderness idea as discussed in Chapter 1, and it provides additional explanatory power for Runte’s arguments that nationalism shaped the birth of the park idea by picking up where Runte leaves off. Runte makes the case, as discussed earlier, that “when national parks were established, protection of the “environment” as now defined was the least of preservationists’ aims. Rather, America’s incentive for the national park idea lay in the persistence of a painfully felt desire for time-honored traditions in the United States.”²⁰¹ However, Runte’s analysis and other histories of the National Park Service, the most widely-circulated of which have been written by NPS employees and administrators (i.e. Mather, Albright, and Rettie), make little mention of how the parks work to fulfill those nationalistic tendencies in the contemporary moment. Moreover, their own pronouncements of NPS history strike a curious balance between nostalgia for the timeless wisdom of their forebears and reverence for the timeliness of

modern management techniques. Taken together, their own deeply rhetorical narratives enact a knowing positionality of expertise and objectivity to suggest that nationalistic impulses, programs, and rhetorics are a relic of the past that bear little similarity to today's parks and visitors' experiences of them.

In his comparative political analysis of Swedish, Danish, and American public culture, Andrew Jamison makes a compelling argument for understanding the competing ideologies at stake in the ongoing processes of making "green" knowledge. As he observes in 2001, American culture is more susceptible to "commercial environmentalism" and knowledge practices that privilege the articulation of frontier capitalism and populism.²⁰² While Jamison's work does not focus on national parks, his findings suggest that critics must pay greater attention to the everyday environmental rhetorics put into circulation by national interests because they often deploy the language of technocratic expertise in order to influence public opinion. These points are further underscored by Douglas Torgerson's claim that "the quest to dominate nature is not a project of humanity in general. It is a historically specific project of modernity. The domination of nature is part of a larger pattern of domination that includes systematic domination by human beings over other human beings and, indeed, over human nature itself."²⁰³ In his work on environmentalism and the public sphere, Torgerson painstakingly outlines the effects of technocratic bureaucracy and its discursive power as a dominant voice of authority in everyday life. The thrust of his argument suggests that "the antagonism between environmentalist and industrialist was attenuated by the emergence of a 'middle ground' of environmental professionals who, though environmentally informed and concerned, came increasingly under the influence of a

concerted corporate attempt to control the focus of the discourse.”²⁰⁴ Torgerson’s research offers a lens for asking questions about how the NPS, as official stewards of the national parks, communicates from that middle position and directs our attention toward Kaufmann’s position. Here, we return to and complicate the questions raised at the beginning of the chapter: Why are parks national? The question, as addressed below, is raised by Thomas in the context of Australian nationalism and his critical-cultural assessment of parks in Australian public culture.

Why do we use the word national to describe a park? This term is so familiar, so ingrained in the ‘national psyche’, that it seems as natural as the environments it describes. This in itself is good reason to subject it to a gentle questioning. We do, after all, inhabit an era where the notion of an environment being entirely ‘natural’ is contested by those who recognise how human activities, dating from the earliest Aboriginal occupation, have affected Australian ecosystems. The setting aside of a tract of land as an example of ‘nature’ is a modern phenomenon and a cultural act.²⁰⁵

Thomas’ questions rightly resurrect the spectre of postcolonial problematics voiced by Meaghan Morris and Elizabeth Povinelli by calling the everyday articulation of the relationships between nature, culture, tourism, and the nation into question.²⁰⁶

As demonstrated above, there is significant justification for thinking through the particularly banal rhetorics of nationalism. National parks are a particularly compelling critical site/sight for such inquiry not simply because they attract several hundred million visitors each year. Indeed, national parks present a unique challenge to the ways in which public memory is conceived of with regard to place and power. National parks are sites of official discourse and interpretative media and places for solitude, reflection, and recreation. While they do not *commemorate* in the traditional sense of memorializing the human drama in familiar ways by focusing on the tides of history, they serve as reminders and placeholders

in public memory in other ways. I explore this claim in detail in later chapters. As both icons and as scenes of common experience, they play a relatively undertheorized role in shaping American civic identity. As I have demonstrated thus far, national parks play a strong supporting role in the promotion of cultural values. Gregory Clark is not alone when he expresses the strong emotional pull that the experience of monumental nature exerts upon visitors. While national parks are no longer a uniquely American cultural phenomenon, their increasing prevalence worldwide (particularly in developing and developed nations) suggests that the existence of parks in a given nation is one indicator of its alignment with a particularly American vision of modernity. While particular ways of using park lands are fiercely debated, the existence of the parks themselves is taken for granted within American culture. As sites of pilgrimage, they invite experiences and encounters that are designed to leave visitors with a deeper appreciation for their country, its exceptional natural wonders, and a more developed sense of civic duty or belonging.

As my case studies suggest, national parks offer a unique challenge to scholarship on public memory because they invoke a different texture of nationalism. Their monumentality is, in many instances, subject to some of the same kinds of aesthetic interventions that shape memorials and other commemorative spaces, but they are fundamentally different genres of “built” or designed places. Furthermore, parks are tasked with engaging in natural and cultural conservation: rhetorically, they commemorate the collective wisdom of previous generations and present conserved places as inherited gifts that can never be fully possessed, but only passed forward to future generations. In this regard, they conscript visitors into a narrative that locates them, pending their successful ability to conserve for (the future of)

America, as the future collective members of a yet-to-be commemorated generation.

Politically, this deployment of public memory seems to have much in common with what Homi Bhabha refers to as nationness.²⁰⁷ In his seminal article on the nation in modernity, he describes it as “the complex strategies of cultural identification and discursive address that function in the name of ‘the people’ or the national and make them the immanent subjects of a range of social and literary narratives.” In this sense, the ways in which temporality and claims to timelessness are invoked by the particular place-based discursive practices at national park sites matters because “national time becomes concrete and visible in the chronotype of the local, particular, graphic, from beginning to end.”²⁰⁸ Here, national parks become “signifying spaces of iteration.”²⁰⁹ Or, to paraphrase Scott, they are made legible through the invocation of the nation as place, and one’s proper place within the nation. And, they often do this by offering what Allison Landsberg terms “prosthetic memory,” a concept I discuss in Chapter 5.

To return to Tsing’s earlier point, this matters because National Parks perform, define, and describe conservation as devoid of friction. While frictionless rhetorics of place are perhaps easier to convey to the public, such positions may ultimately be untenable for the NPS. Indeed, its own planning documents for the Centennial Initiative (CI) suggest that the future of the parks is somewhat dependent upon an educated, mobilized public. And, while it is less visible in CI discourses, mainstream publications like *National Geographic* and *Vanity Fair* have recently suggested that the future ecological health of the parks is dependent upon a public that understands how and why the individual choices that people make as citizens and consumers have consequences.²¹⁰ Although it is perhaps too early to comprehensively

assess the full impact of the CI's recommendations, my research suggests that some elements of the 2007 "Future of America's Parks" CI report are already being put into practice at some parks. These elements, such as a renewed focus on children as future constituents and on parks as a solution to public health crises like obesity, emerge in different degrees at each of the three park sites that form the basis of this study.

Thus, Chapters 3, 4, and 5 engage in critical, performative interpretations of the ways in which banal nationalism and public memory work to produce environmentality and forward a rhetorical vision of "conservation civics" at three different national park sites. Each of these places defines and presents "conservation" in distinctly different ways; despite these differences, however, they share a common rhetorical purpose that positions visitors as environmental citizens or subjects by articulating them to a discourse that I identify as "conservation civics." Although these manifest themselves in different ways at each park, Lester Olson, Cara Finnegan, and Diane Hope suggest that the particularity of such rhetorics can nevertheless shed light on how publics are cultivated and moved: "While individual instances of rhetorical practice might differ to the extent that they are more or less textual, oratorical, or visual, what is common to all rhetorical acts is that they mobilize symbols to influence diverse publics."²¹¹ Thus, I use the term "conservation civics" as nascent concept to describe how publics are figured as environmental citizens. Although NPS discourses are not the only rhetorics that aim to influence how people govern themselves and accept governance about nature and culture, they are significant in their reach and repetition. At the same time, however, conservation civics is not a totalizing discourse; as an "effect" of environmentality, its power is productive, but the capacities for resistance, reinterpretation,

rejection, and reappropriation are perhaps always already present as an important component of everyday life. As the term develops throughout this dissertation and is considered in Chapter 6 in conversation with governmentality and rhetorical theory, conservation civics tend to center around several key themes. They are discourses that elide conflict, focus on conservation *as* commemoration, position the relationships between nature and culture as national and free of local complexity or nuance, encourage visitors to value these particular places as scenic, as abundant natural resources, and as inherently representative of the nation's moral character as just, wholesome, and pure. Conservation civics do not generally deploy scientific evidence to make their claims, relying instead on experiential ways of knowing that are often deeply affective, embodied, and pleasurable. Perhaps predictably, these official discourses aim to make conservation public by *not* interrupting, challenging, or contesting the status quo. If distilled, I would argue that they work to uphold and support common-sense notions about capitalism, private property, and traditionally conservative cultural values that center around the heterosexual family unit. But work they must, as their claims are perhaps always subject to the interpretive lenses that audiences bring to them as situated publics. To echo Stuart Hall, there are 'no guarantees' that conservation civics will always be successful in its enactment of particular iterations of environmental subjectivity.

As conservation civics are performed, crisis is rendered invisible, but the future of the parks is still contested in the sense that these discourses publicly appeal to visitors as patrons: to support the parks is to support the nation, and vice versa. To be clear, I am not suggesting that parks are a poor use of land or national resources: I believe that parks are a fundamental component of long-term sustainability initiatives centered around the idea of the commons

and the importance of regulatory protection. I was rather shocked by the extent to which the NPS is *not* doing an adequate job of fulfilling its mission to educate the public about conservation in terms that made science and public policy accessible to general audiences. The distorted and diffuse ways in which conservation *is* being defined and enacted through NPS rhetorics may put the parks in a rather untenable position in the future as generations of visitors understand these places through a patriotic lens of conflict-free consumerism. In this way, conservation civics in its current iterations presents a challenge to progressive environmental advocates. Thus, we may begin to theorize a rhetorical theory of environmentality and the role played by the discourses of conservation civics in the formation of environmental subjectivity. In this vein, Chapter 3 argues that a range of discourses work to “stage the nation” at the Smokies by hiding environmental degradation in plain sight while emphasizing the triumph of the development of the park as a monumental act of (environmental) commemoration. In this case, the existence of the park itself is celebrated as the ultimate act of conservation. Visitors are positioned as witnesses to history in ways that situate contemporary conservation efforts as less fulfilling and less important than daily acts of conservation by individuals, communities, and corporations. Furthermore, as my fieldwork and analysis of NPS discourses suggest, nearly all of the most pressing environmental threats to the Smokies (such as air, light, and water pollution, climate change, and species loss) are absent from the ways in which conservation is made public in the park. Here, conservation civics defines “good” environmental citizens are those who look (uncritically) to the past to discover timeless truths and who apply them (unproblematically) to present concerns. In this way, the Smokies evoke many of the tropes of banal nationalism

and public memory to forward a definition of conservation civics that, in its celebratory excess, denies both the park's contested history and its contemporary status as a threatened place.

In Chapter 4, similar silences emerge at Cape Hatteras National Seashore. On Ocracoke Island, for example, visitors are invited to celebrate the existence of the park as another instance where national agendas triumphed over local ways of life in order to protect the people from themselves. As at the Smokies, however, these discourses also refrain from acknowledging the contemporary and historic controversies that are often center on whether culture or nature should come first when determining how land and water are used. Here, conservation civics entail learning how to interpret or "read" a beach in ways that are largely incomplete and/or divorced from the complexities of coastal ecology. Most of the public messages on Ocracoke are oriented toward children, so it should perhaps come as little surprise that conservation civics are future-oriented in this context. Here, following the advice of Richard Louv's influential book, *Last Child in the Woods*, the NPS positions children as future conservationists, consumers, and citizens. In this way, they are invited to "play citizen" through the Junior Ranger program in ways that, according to CI documents and confirmed by my experiences in the field, aim to cultivate a sustained affective relationship -- a lifelong interest in the parks. While this is not problematic in and of itself, these programs locate the NPS as an always-already benevolent actor while remaining strategically silent about local environmental controversies, especially those that involve (or have involved) the NPS. A timely example is the Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) "ban" and the question of "beach access" versus the stabilization of piping plover and sea turtle nests.

While the NPS is actively involved in specific conservation-related activities (such as nest protection), these activities *and* the often-exaggerated arguments made against them by pro-ORV advocates are equally absent from park discourses. Here, particular topics are marked as taboo or indecorous by the NPS's strategic use of silence in its public communication. In this way, conservation civics functions to moderate what may be said and reinforces the idea that good citizens (especially children) should not ask for more information about topics deemed too sensitive or controversial for them by figures of authority.

In Chapter 5, I explore the ways in which a particular place -- the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Destination Center (BRPVDC) -- defines conservation by articulating it to specific consumer practices. Like the Smokies, conservation is loosely defined as aesthetic appreciation and local practices of consumption: here, visitors are encouraged to position themselves as stewards of the Parkway by spending money in local communities to ensure its survival. Conservation civics at the BRPVDC also relies rather heavily on what Allison Landsberg terms "prosthetic memory" in ways that invite visitors to identify with the millions of other visitors to the Parkway by means of their shared visual and embodied encounters with the same scenery and local crafts. Like Ocracoke and the Smokies, the Parkway also employs a range of wildlife biologists and botanists who are actively engaged in sustainable conservation activities. And yet, these definitions and practices of conservation do not figure in how it is presented to the public on the Parkway. Here, conservation civics positions "good" citizens as those who use their leisure time to connect with the national past and who view personal, private transportation as a fundamental component of personal freedom. Despite the fact that the BRPVDC is a gold-certified LEED

building that incorporates many of the most sustainable conservation technologies and techniques into its design, this information is not at all part of the discourses that work to make conservation public at the Parkway. In this way, the NPS positions visitors as environmental subjects who need not worry about the consequences of their choices as consumers or citizens. This particular place is uncritically positioned as a triumph of modern values and engineering. Here, conservation is once again positioned as something that the nation and its citizens have always-already excelled at: thus, no further action is needed.

Chapter 6 returns to the issues raised throughout this dissertation to argue toward a rhetorical understanding of environmentality. This chapter offers a renewed justification for attending to official discourses that address publics through informal yet popular vectors like tourism. It also makes a case for the consideration of environmental public memory as a relatively new area of inquiry that shares the intellectual and political commitments of critical rhetoric, cultural studies, and environmental communication. It also identifies and situates conservation civics as an expression of environmentality by revisiting the three case studies comparatively. Thus, this dissertation considers the ways in which a rhetorical understanding of environmentality has implications for public memory, critical tourism studies, and visual rhetoric by considering how they enable and constrain conservation civics. It offers a critical-interpretive framework for rethinking how the rhetorics of place influence how publics relate to particular articulations of nature and culture. It gestures toward a theory of rhetorical environmentality as a critical intervention in environmental communication while also providing a foundation for additional work in environmental public memory.

CHAPTER 3

STAGING THE NATION IN THE SMOKIES

Figure 3.1: Interpretive wayside exhibit at the top of Clingmans Dome



“I would say that, 20 years ago, the park was the primary destination for most folks, and Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge were side trips. Today, it’s the opposite. It just amazes me that, more and more, many of our visitors have no idea that they’re in a national park. They don’t know what that means.” -- Mike Maslona, Supervisory Park Ranger

“Where do you keep the bears?” -- Anonymous, Sugarlands Visitor Center

Straddling the North Carolina and Tennessee state borders, the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GRSM) is one of only a handful of national parks in the eastern United States and one of only two “crown jewel” parks east of the Mississippi. Spread across 521,085 acres, the park receives more than 9 million visits annually -- more than double the number of visits recorded at the Grand Canyon (4.4M) and nearly triple the amount of traffic received at Yosemite (3.3M).²¹² “Since 1940, this park has consistently led all other parks in the number of visits,” yet its proximity to major population centers in the eastern U.S. does not alone account for its attraction.²¹³ Nearby Shenandoah National Park in Virginia, is equally proximate, yet it only attracts 1.1 million visitors each year.²¹⁴ While visitors to the Smokies hail from all parts of the nation and the globe, a significant majority live within a day’s drive (or so): the Gatlinburg Chamber of Commerce, for example, heavily promotes the Smokies as being “within a two-day drive for half of the nation's population.”²¹⁵ As the park’s popularity has increased, so too has commercial and residential development at its borders. From Dollywood and Ripley’s Aquarium on the western edge of the park to Harrah’s Casino and the innumerable Native American-themed gift shops at its eastern borders, thousands of tourist attractions and amenities have crowded into the park’s two primary gateway communities of Gatlinburg, TN, and Cherokee, NC.²¹⁶ But statistics alone cannot account for why the park is a destination of choice for millions of Americans in search of recreation, entertainment, relaxation, and/or education.²¹⁷ Nor can they account for

the complex articulations of nature and culture that invite visitors to experience, understand, and remember the park as an exceptional American place. In this exceptional place, there are no “tourists,” although there are tourists aplenty in Gatlinburg and Cherokee alike. Instead, the National Park Service has adopted the term “visitor” in its most visible, memorable, and mundane forms of public communication at GRSM. In a subtle shift away from the language of consumption and leisure, this term suggests certain (unspoken) visitor expectations regarding behavior and decorum fit more for reverence than revelry.²¹⁸ Yet these visitors are, arguably, tourists: they are engaged in meaningful activities and meaning-making practices that matter, and they do so in a place that has been materially and symbolically “produced” for such purposes.

Visits to national parks can be understood as a form of civic pilgrimage to uniquely-situated public places that are rhetorically positioned as exemplary of American cultural values.²¹⁹ And, as the emergence of “the national park idea” developed coterminously with contemporary patterns of land use, socialization, and privatization, it’s not too surprising that national park rhetorics perform some of the cultural and political work of educating visitors about particular ways of thinking about ownership, stewardship, and citizenship -- of place and nation -- in everyday life. Although national parks are not branded, promoted, and structured like other for-profit destinations (such as amusement or theme parks, aquariums, zoos, etc.), they are some of the most popular tourist sites in the U.S. Nearly as many people visited the Smokies in 2006 as Disney MGM Studios in Florida; the park attracted more visitors than any Seaworld, Busch Gardens, or Six Flags park nationwide.²²⁰ And, while the factors that “motivate” people to visit parks vary and represent a significant gap in the

literature, popular accounts and rangers' first-hand observations suggest that many are attracted by the prospect of experiencing nature and witnessing spectacular landscapes -- of participating in a cultural rite of passage that finds its way into home movie collections, family photo albums, and intergenerational memories. Indeed, returning from a trip to a national park with photos that represent the popular, iconic imagery of particular vistas or wildlife is perhaps just as ubiquitous of a cultural phenomenon (or expectation) as returning from Disney World with one's very own pair of mouse ears. Marita Sturken's recent analysis of public commemorative practices and displays of cultural memory at Ground Zero and Oklahoma City, for example, offers a relevant perspective for understanding how "the American public is encouraged to experience itself as the subject of history through consumerism, media images, souvenirs, popular culture, and museum and architectural reenactments."²²¹ Tracing the early work of Dean MacCannell and echoing John Urry, Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, and Jane Desmond, Sturken rightly notes that "tourism is a central activity in the experience of modernity, in which leisure practices are a crucial counterpart to the world of industrial and postindustrial work."²²² Although people have traveled for a multitude of reasons throughout history, contemporary forms of tourism -- such as the package tour and the family vacation -- must be located in terms of the changing economic and cultural contexts that contributed to their manifestation and the ways in which they continue to articulate consumption, memory, and identity.

As I discuss in this chapter, the material existence of GRSM is repeated across a range of official and sanctioned park discourses and celebrated as a deliberate, *commemorative* act of conservation. Unlike national parks in the western U.S. that were

carved out from public lands, the Smokies were stitched together from more than 6,600 private holdings.²²³ In many ways, the park is rhetorically positioned as a “living” monument to the foresight and sacrifice of the nation. Its existence is used to advance a narrative that, however, ultimately works at cross-purposes to inspire public awareness and acceptance of conservation in the present and future. This matters because the park works, in Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian Ott’s terms, as a “memory place” that “enjoy[s] a significance seemingly unmatched by other material supports of public memory.”²²⁴ As a tourist destination that is marketed and (re)presented to the public as exceptional, GRSM also “invites the performance of traveling to and traversing it” and, as Blair et al. note, “that effort to participate in a memory place’s rhetoric almost certainly predisposes its visitors to respond in certain ways, enthymematically prefiguring the rhetoric of place -- at the very least -- as worth of attention, investment, and effort.”²²⁵ Tim Edensor’s ethnographic study of tourists at the Taj Mahal brilliantly illustrates this point by arguing that “attempts to fix national memory and identity, to ‘map history onto territory’, are integral to the ideological rhetoric of nationalism.”²²⁶ National parks are a fitting example of these claims because they are presented to the public as exceptional places of aesthetic and ecological value that are characteristically representative of American cultural values and ideals. Thus, the stories that they tell -- which evoke the language and symbolism of sacrifice, family, religion, discipline, and determination -- are worthy of critical attention because they claim to represent an objective truth as they educate visitors about their role(s) as fellow participants in the nation-building process. In Tim Edensor’s words, they “stage the nation.”²²⁷

What is said and what is emphasized matters not only because the NPS is consistently ranked by the public as one of the most trusted branches of the federal government, but also because such rhetorics work to invite identification.²²⁸ As Gregory Clark notes in his analysis of rhetorical landscapes and national parks in the United States, these “physical places and material things are ‘made to mean’ something to ‘the people’ when they are rendered publicly symbolic.”²²⁹ Through interpretation, personal experience/encounter, and rhetorics of display, national parks are figured as crucibles of civic identification. As trusted sites/sights, they induct visitors into a “powerful constitutive rhetoric [whose] function is to constitute in those who experience it individual identities of collective affiliation and division” that produces, according to Clark, “public experience.”²³⁰ According to a 2001 report commissioned by the NPS and produced by the NPS Advisory Board, chaired by John Hope Franklin, “A third of all adults of this country have visited a unit of the National Park Service sometime within the past two years. Surveys show visitors give the parks an approval rating of 95 percent for their inspiring sights, useful information, and helpful personnel. The experience is often powerful and sometimes memorable over a lifetime.”²³¹ These levels of public trust translate in ways that ascribe a particular ethos or gravitas to the NPS and work to bolster its presentations of nature and culture as representative --even if interpreted -- truth.

As noted by Michael Hyde, ethos is a fundamental component of rhetorical practice that “takes form as a result of the orator’s abilities to argue and to deliberate and thereby to inspire trust in an audience.”²³² And, in the context of the national parks themselves -- save the designated free speech zones -- it cannot be forgotten that there are few, if any, counter-

discourses available to contest the NPS's version of *what is*. Granted, the occasional visitor (or protester) may interrupt or disrupt in ways that open spaces of inquiry and alternative interpretation, but such acts of contestation are not always successful or sustainable beyond the immediate moment. Indeed, many of the most common visitor experiences at GRSM invite varying degrees of participation, interaction, engagement, or attention. As Edensor notes, "the staging of the nation for education and entertainment is a long-standing feature of national culture . . . [and] stagings of officially sanctioned forms of knowledge demand a particular kind of audience participation."²³³ This is crucial to cultivating a sense of the visitor's personal investment in the authenticity of experience. My fieldwork also suggests that participation has a disciplinary component that cultivates an environment where dissent is considered indecorous: dissenters may likely find themselves publicly chastised or sanctioned, not by NPS employees, but by fellow visitors. Thus, what is *not said* or what remains unspeakable often finds expression outside of the park's borders.

In this way, national parks are similar to other public memory places -- such as memorials and monuments -- because they are rhetorical places that also invite performances which circumscribe how the past is understood in the present. They provide instruction in the care of the self as a constituent of the nation. In the case of parks, however, the crucial distinction is that they also provide instruction in the care of the environment. As park discourses regularly invoke a reified history of the Smokies that avoids complexity and conflict while reinforcing unsustainable environmental practices in the present, this instruction does little to promote an ethic of conservation. Furthermore, these discourses work to strengthen or calcify relationships between nature and nation in ways that work to

cultivate pleasure and inspire pride in “being” an American today by erasing any trace of possible guilt or complicity for past or present actions taken by individuals or in their names.

An excerpt from an official NPS publication, “Discovering Diversity in the Smokies,” exemplifies these tendencies by eliding the complex interplay of nature and culture and instead offering a decontextualized, fragmented description of the park’s diversity that is subsumed under the banner of (timeless) heritage:

Many people come to Great Smoky Mountains National Park to discover how their forebears lived. Punctuating its phenomenal biodiversity is the park’s collection of vernacular and rustic architecture. Here is one of the nation’s largest collections of log structures along with many buildings constructed during the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps work program. You can experience Oconaluftee Cherokee Indian culture and traditions at programs and museums on their reservation, Qualla Boundary, south of the park. Less visible are vestiges of early commercial routes and mining operations. These linked many people to markets abroad and lent diversity to the farm life of most Indians and newcomers. Enjoy the park and discover the heritage of natural and cultural diversity it preserves for all time.²³⁴

From the mandate to enjoy and discover to the subtle othering of Cherokee history and culture that literally directs visitors outside of the park borders, messages like this that simply catalog and decontextualize iconic and memorable park features are commonly encountered throughout the park via wayside exhibits, informational brochures, and guidebooks. With the exception of vague references to contemporary environmental “plagues” like air pollution and the hemlock woolly adelgid infestation, time is frozen *in place* as if the park were a material archive, as if this place enabled visitors to travel backward in time to experience an authentic, wild landscape. Amidst small, oval black and white photos of former park residents and large, colorful, iconic photos of waterfalls, hardwood forest, and a log cabin punctuated by colorful close-ups of three wildflowers common to the park, this same

brochure invites visitors to find unity, inspiration, and symbolic meaning in this unpopulated landscape:

Endlessly attractive, even magical waterfalls inspire reverie amidst the park's greatly diverse tapestry of life. Whether mid-mountain habitat for the native brook trout or motive power to drive lowland mill wheels, falling water reveals new meanings in our Southern Appalachian heritage. You are connected to these resources. Waterfalls symbolize the flow of natural processes we take part in daily. Mill wheels turned by wild mountain streams . . . nature and culture proclaim our unity here.²³⁵

In turn, readers are informed of the beneficence of the federal and state governments, as thoroughly altruistic reasons are given for the park's history (i.e. Congress authorized the park due to "alarm" from "commercial logging threats to the forest"), and the spectre of Manifest Destiny is invoked to subtly erase the complexity of historic relations between settlers and indigenous peoples by suggesting that particular acts of loss, aggression, and trauma simply happened.

The Cherokee described these mountains as shaconage, meaning "blue, like smoke." They farmed the land and built log homes. The Cherokee tried to adapt to the Europeans, but the newcomers took their land. During the 1790s, white settlement began in the lowlands and climbed the hills as eastern farmland and commercial agriculture migrated to the Midwest. The Eastern Band of Cherokee now lives on its reservation next to the national park. Most tribe members are descendants of those not forcibly removed in the 1830s.²³⁶

Curiously, environmental degradation is figured in this same ahistorical, agency-free context as an inevitable consequence or product of modernity without any reference to how visitors can prevent further deterioration. "Air pollution from outside the park plagues its views, visitors, forests, wildlife, and waters. Since 1948, haze from air pollution has reduced average visibility 40 percent in winter and 80 percent in summer."²³⁷ In nearly the same breath, visitors are informed that, "from your car, you can see much of what the Smokies

offer, including wildflowers, flowering trees, colorful fall foliage, mountain vistas, and historic buildings. Newfound Gap Road (U.S. 441), the main road across the mountains, is a famous scenic drive.” And, while visitors are not discouraged from learning more about environmental issues on their own time, rarely are they encouraged to reflect upon the extent to which their own presence has an impact upon this particular place. Nowhere is the commonplace of the “carbon footprint” introduced, and discussions about environmental devastation are relegated to pre-park era extractive industries. This matters because these experiences --these rhetorical encounters -- have the potential to complicate (if not foreclose) how visitors come to understand the conditions of possibility for meaningful, sustainable environmental conservation in the past, present, and future alike.

Figure 3.2: Visitors attending a ranger program at the base of Clingman’s Dome



Figure 3.3: Wayside exhibit atop Newfound Gap



Looking for Conservation in the Shadow of Dollywood²³⁸

Although I had visited the Blue Ridge mountains many times during the years that I spent living in North Carolina, I had only seen the Smokies through the windshield of my car from I-40 during two road trips to Tennessee. What I knew of them -- and of the park -- I had learned from the post-vacation stories and photos of friends and colleagues and, of course, from media advertisements touting Cherokee, Gatlinburg, and Pigeon Forge as affordable, family-oriented vacation destinations that were akin to a high-altitude version of Myrtle Beach. These are places that have long carried particular connotations about class, race, and taste in the contemporary South.²³⁹ I was also vaguely acquainted with the long-standing air quality issues that plagued the TN-NC border, but I had never experienced them first-hand. So, as a first-time visitor to the park, my fieldwork was guided by the ebb and flow of foot

and vehicle traffic, by the recommendations of park rangers with whom I had spoken, and by the information provided on the park's website.

By all accounts, the park is simply too vast to cover in its entirety. Indeed, with the exception of backcountry hikers and campers, most visitors to GRSM spend an average of 4 hours in the park and “stick to the asphalt” without venturing too far from the car, parking lot, visitor center, or well-worn trail.²⁴⁰ Thus, my goal was to capture those aspects of the park that are experienced by the majority of its visitors. As funding constraints prevented me from engaging in on-site archival research at this stage of my research, I was able to retrieve and analyze nearly all of the brochures, handouts, flyers, and guidebooks that are currently available for sale at park visitor centers, at select destinations throughout the park, and via the park's online store. In all, I accumulated 43 brochures, pamphlets, flyers, and booklets. While several of these documents were produced during the past two years, most bear copyright dates between 1998 and 2004.²⁴¹ I also attended two screenings of the visitor center welcome film, and I obtained a copy for off-site analysis. Two audio tours of the Newfound Gap Road, produced by the Great Smoky Mountains Association and accessible only online as podcasts, are also referenced as source materials for my research. While the film is screened at no charge to visitors, nearly all of the printed materials must be purchased at a cost of \$1 to \$4.50 each. The Smokies Guide park newspaper, published twice each year, is one of the few free publications available throughout the park and is also the most widely circulated.

During the course of my fieldwork, I spent fifty hours engaged in co-performative observation at several of the most popular destinations in the park: the Oconaluftee Visitor

Center, Clingman's Dome, the Newfound Gap Overlook/memorial, the Sugarlands Visitor Center, the Cades Cove Campground, and the Cades Cove Loop Road and Visitor Center. Although costly, I arranged to complete my fieldwork during the height of the fall leaf/visitation season in early October in order to experience its peak offerings. During an eight-day period, I spent ten hours interviewing and observing NPS employees and attending six different ranger-led public interpretation programs, including two unadvertised programs designed explicitly for local school children that are part of the Parks in the Classrooms initiative. Although interviews were not the primary source materials for this project, I spoke with rangers, seasonal employees, park volunteers, and visitors throughout my fieldwork experiences. I also spent ten hours traveling, observing, documenting, and stopping to explore trails and interpretive exhibits along the main (and only) road that runs through the park: U.S. 441/Newfound Gap Road, and another 10 hours exploring the three primary gateway communities that border the park: Cherokee, NC; Townsend, TN; and Gatlinburg/Pigeon Forge, TN. Collectively, these texts, experiences, and performances offer a representative and deeply contextual "archive of the present" that I draw upon to address the questions raised in earlier chapters.²⁴² As a critical-interpretive project, my choices are guided by both strategic and pragmatic concerns. Thus, I draw my examples rather selectively from those particular places and artifacts -- interpretive exhibits and programming, visitor centers and major destinations, printed materials, and the park's welcome center film -- that are on the beaten path and are encountered by most park's visitors -- with one important exception: the Oconaluftee River Trail exhibits, which are not quite on the beaten path. Since it offers a useful counter to the Mountain Farm Museum and,

as a new addition, has not yet been the subject of widespread promotion by the NPS, I include it in my analysis.²⁴³

In the weeks preceding my fieldwork in GRSM, western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee, along with Atlanta and upstate South Carolina, were faced with significant gasoline shortages accompanied by exorbitant increases in cost.²⁴⁴ In early September, Hurricane Ike struck the Gulf of Mexico. The hurricane allegedly disrupted petroleum production and distribution in the Southeast. Toward the end of the month, the Raleigh News and Observer reported that

In Asheville, city offices, community colleges, the civic center and all parks and recreation centers were closed as the situation got worse, and some of those facilities may stay closed into next week. In Charlotte, some stations rationed gas, and drivers waited hours for fuel. Fights broke out as drivers accused others of cutting in line.²⁴⁵

By the end of September, gasoline prices in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee had risen from an average of \$3.59 for a gallon of regular to upwards of \$4.49. Well into the second week of October, many service stations were still unable to obtain a steady supply of premium grade gas, and those that did were often limiting consumers from purchasing more than 10 gallons at a time. And, while visitation in the park had decreased by approximately 5% in 2008, there was still plenty of bumper-to-bumper traffic on the main park roads, and the 11-mile trip around the Cades Cove Loop Road still took more than 3 hours to complete on a Wednesday afternoon.²⁴⁶ I encountered more than one freshly-plastered “Drill Here, Drill Now” sticker on various bumpers in and around the park.

For the duration of my fieldwork, I was based in Bryson City, NC just outside of Cherokee and within walking distance of the Deep Creek entrance to the park. Bryson City,

in Swain County, is considered a secondary gateway community and is home to approximately 1400 year-round residents; Swain County's population, as of 2007, was just over 12,000.²⁴⁷ From Bryson City, it takes 25 minutes to reach the Oconaluftee Visitor Center. Along the way, the road follows the river through Ela past shuttered businesses and old campgrounds that have been converted to year-round use. As the two-lane highway approaches Cherokee, numerous billboards announce the proximity of attractions like Santa's Land amusement park and petting zoo, and *Unto These Hills*, the long-running production that recounts the story of the Eastern Cherokee's survival. Throughout the Qualla Boundary, street signs are marked in English and Cherokee typeface. Past the pancake houses and souvenir shops that line both sides of the road, the formal entrance to GRSM looms large. Just beyond it lies the terminus of the Blue Ridge Parkway and the Oconaluftee Visitor Center at the base of the two lane Newfound Gap Road -- the backbone of the park that connects Cherokee to Gatlinburg. In the following pages, I offer a critical analysis of the ways in which this place privileges and reinscribes traditional white settler notions about nature and culture, and how a new addition to the site performs a welcome interruption.

Conserving Heritage at the Mountain Farm Museum

Figure 3.4: Davis House at Oconaluftee²⁴⁸



Figure 3.5: MFM Guidebook



Figure 3.6: Another View of the Davis House at the Mountain Farm Museum²⁴⁹



On any given summer or fall morning during tourist season, the Oconaluftee Visitor Center parking lot and overflow lot are both brimming with cars, trucks, motorcycles, and commercial buses as traffic hums by en route to other destinations in and beyond the park.

Inside, a bank of 4 to 6 seasonal and full-time interpretive staff, along with a few volunteers, answer visitors' questions: "How far is it to Gatlinburg?" "Where can I go to see the best fall color?" "How do I get to Cades Cove?" "Can you recommend a nearby hotel?" "Where can I get a park map?" "Where is the bathroom?" Of the two visitor centers that bookend either side of 441, Oconaluftee is significantly smaller than Sugarlands and lacks its exhibit spaces and theater. Its bookstore also offers a smaller sampling of the full range of products available at Sugarlands. It is home, however, to the Mountain Farm Museum -- a sprawling campus of turn-of-the-century wooden structures that had been relocated and, in some cases, refurbished, to this site in order to recreate "a glimpse into the past and, hopefully, a greater appreciation of the rural heritage of this country."²⁵⁰ Although the NPS offers occasional demonstrations and interpretive programming here, most visitors experience the site unaided or with assistance from the self-guided tour book offered for sale at the entrance to the museum.

On the two days that I visited, there were no costumed re-enactors. None of the buildings were open to the public, but that didn't deter visitors from milling around the grounds. They moved from building to building on their schedules, peering in through gaps in the wood or through long-warped glazed windows to view old farming implements. Throughout the campus, small, carved wooden signs indicated each building's purpose. Backing up to the main house was a woodshed, a chicken coop, a smokehouse, a cane mill and molasses shed, an apple house, a barn, a gear shed, a corn crib, livestock pens, a blacksmith shop, a springhouse, crops, and family gardens. While there were few formal, interpretive cues to direct visitors toward particular ways of understanding the site (save the

guidebook), the rugged simplicity of the site worked to invoke nostalgic longing in several visitors who imagined, out loud, if this place was similar to the homesteads of their ancestors. Others noted similarities between this place and the remembered family places of their past -- grandparents' homes in the rural south and properties long lost to development. "Grandma Barnes' place looked just like that. I remember how her front porch used to creak, too." Some marveled at the labor required to run a family farm, while others made connections between contemporary sustainability concerns and the seemingly minor environmental impact of "living off the land."

It is this last observation that most resonates with my critical interpretation of how this imagined place works to cultivate a nostalgia for a conservative agrarian ideal of citizenship, stewardship, and family life in ways that powerfully erases the painful truths of racism and sexism. Here, the rhetoric of place produces an imagined future sutured to an imagined past in ways that seem to foreclose the conditions of possibility that could produce, instead, alternative modes of conservation. At first glance, it might seem as if the Mountain Farm Museum makes no direct, explicit claims on the present. Its rhetorical and performative invocations of heritage, however, are significant because "heritage is a highly political process, malleable to the needs of power and often subject to contestation" that is often manifested in the articulation of place and memory.²⁵¹ Heritage tourism, as Benjamin Porter argues, "result[s] in a particular type of travel aimed not at exploring the unknown or the exotic, but learning, celebrating, and displaying one's relationship with the past."²⁵² In this way, he continues, it becomes "one of modernity's most powerful cultural forces."²⁵³ And, while the Mountain Farm Museum pales in comparison to the spectacle and scale of

Colonial Williamsburg, its mundane features mark it as a site/sight of everyday life. As David Atkinson suggests, experiencing the mundane or quotidian “permit[s] the emergence of a collective “re-memory” of shared cultural tradition, prompted by a scent, sight, or sound . . . through routine spaces and their practices therein.”²⁵⁴ As I discuss below, the Mountain Farm Museum invites visitors to embrace rather simplified celebratory version of past practices (heritage) and attitudes toward conservation that privileges “tradition” as the answer to contemporary environmental and social problems.

Although visitors are able to traverse the outdoor museum in any direction, there is a well-worn dirt path that begins just behind the main Davis House and works its way, counterclockwise, from building to building and ends steps from its front door. In the guidebook, we learn that the house “may seem small by today’s standards, but farm families spent a great deal of time outside.”²⁵⁵ As there are no large interpretive displays interrupting the visual coherence of this imagined place as a unified whole, the guidebook -- with its declarative, authoritative voice -- becomes the primary source for learning about rural life and the labor required to produce food and other materials needed for everyday life. Indeed, even the online visual tour of the site borrows its narrative script almost verbatim from the guidebook, repeating entire paragraphs and emphasizing its key points without offering any updates or correctives.²⁵⁶ And, for those without the guidebook, understanding the site becomes an exercise in creative re-imagination, remembering, and repurposing. The only photos of “actual” occupants of these buildings (and others like them), for example, are not present on-site, but are published in the guidebook. And as the material evidence of the labor required to maintain this imagined place is wholly absent, the temptation to imagine that the

‘simpler’ times represented in this unpeopled landscape offer the answer to today’s environmental woes is compelling to many. On more than one occasion, I overheard visitors discussing how wonderful it would be to grow their own food (without any acknowledgement of the specific skills and knowledge needed to grow and sustain organic crops). Others imagined a greater sense of control over their own destinies: “Wouldn’t it be cool if we could just go out the back door to go to work . . . take breaks when we wanted . . .and not have to drive everywhere?” “Wow -- they really recycled *everything!*”

Time and again, I overheard visitors express a desire to return to this state of being. Perhaps not surprisingly, these utterances were devoid and anesthetized of animal odors and animal slaughter, of gendered divisions of labor and patriarchal “family” values, of rural isolation and the varying roles of religion, superstition, and conformity in shaping community. What was surprising was the absence of hybridity and invention -- of adopting those ways of being that, arguably, *are* more sustainable than others (i.e. small-scale, organic agriculture as opposed to bioengineered monoculture or the abolition of concentrated animal farming operations that generate tremendous amounts of waste) and combining them with those aspects of contemporary life that are the result of progressive political and cultural shifts (such as family planning, recycling, and compulsory public education). In this imagined place, conservation simply happens -- naturally, by default -- as a given outcome of processes of production and consumption that are (re)presented as clean, sustainable (anti)technologies. Furthermore, the Mountain Farm Museum’s (re)presentation of a (healthy) place outside of time dangerously renders invisible the contemporary environmental crises that are very much a part of the southern Appalachian bioregion in

which this imagined place is (really) located. It reinforces a perspective held by many early Euro-American settlers in the area, summarized by John Nolt as a way of thinking about the environment as a resource to be disciplined, developed, and discarded at will. Here, “the landscape, its living inhabitants, soils, minerals, waters, even its air were to be used and manipulated to suit the needs, wishes, and seemingly insatiable desires of the new owner-inhabitants.”²⁵⁷ In light of recent environmental disasters and the rapidly deteriorating environmental health of the region, such perspectives are neither sustainable nor responsible.²⁵⁸ Both literally and metaphorically, the Mountain Farm Museum is fenced off from the complexities of the region’s social and economic history. Here, conservation is defined as a set of pre-modern beliefs and practices about the environment that, despite the incredible investment of labor and natural resources required to survive in such a manner, are positioned as inherently more sustainable than contemporary ways of life in the presumably modern era. This is a rather problematic, decontextualized and dehistoricized rhetoric of conservation; indeed, the Mountain Farm Museum does not offer visitors enough information to make reasonably informed judgments about the past and the kinds of relationships that early settlers in the southern Appalachians had with the environment. Clearly, the Mountain Farm Museum presents nature as a resource to be managed and controlled for the benefit of one’s family and one’s future. While not surprising, these discourses may make it increasingly difficult for contemporary environmental advocates and educators to undo or productively challenge the ways in which “heritage” is remembered as always already sustainable. Indeed, these discourses define conservation as something that cannot be achieved unless contemporary Americans choose (or are forced) to return to this way of life.

A (Potential) Critical Interruption on the Oconaluftee River Trail

In stark contrast to the Mountain Farm Museum -- and located immediately behind the property at the edge of the woods -- is a new and welcome addition, the Oconaluftee River Trail's new wayside exhibits. The Oconaluftee River Trail is not promoted as prominently as other destinations in the park, and it does not (yet) have its own printed guidebook. As one of the few places in the entire park where Cherokee culture is explicitly highlighted and made visible, I was disappointed to see so few visitors venturing beyond the Mountain Farm Museum to explore the dirt trail leading through the woods and along the river. This 1.5 mile trail, which connects the Oconaluftee Visitor Center with the town of Cherokee, NC was outfitted with bilingual interpretive wayside exhibits in 2006 as a result of a 3-year partnership between the NPS and the Cherokee people.²⁵⁹ These exhibits offer a significantly different articulation of nature and culture. During my time in the park, 6 or 7 visitors made their way past the Mountain Farm Museum to the trail, and fewer still continued on past the first or second wayside exhibit sign. Indeed, most of the people using the newly-updated trail were area residents in search of exercise. All seven wayside exhibits along the trail offer a similar mix of contemporary Cherokee art, tribal history, beliefs, and reflections on the intersections of nature and culture. While these wayside exhibits are less visible than those encountered, for example, atop the Newfound Gap Overlook/Memorial, they offer an important rhetorical counterpoint that complicates and interrupts the more commonplace park discourses that define human relationships with the environment in terms of its use value. Although the trail has existed for some time, these new wayside exhibits

interrupt the “wilderness” in ways that give voice to traditions and heritage that are largely absent or muted in many park discourses.

Figure 3.7: “Going to Water” Wayside Exhibit Along the Oconaluftee River Trail



“Cherokees believe that water, when treated with respect and handled with proper traditions, can cleanse the spirit and wash away diseases and problems. “Going to water” and wading into the river is a sacred ritual for some. Cherokees also practice the ritual today prior to playing stickball, a traditional game that is the forerunner of Lacrosse. [The Cherokee] would go down to the water early in the morning every morning, wade out waist deep, take the water of the river and throw it up over his head, and say, “Wash away any thoughts or feelings that may hinder me from being closer to my God. Take away any thoughts or feelings that may hinder me from being closer to all my brothers and sisters on the earth, and the animals of the earth.” And they would wash themselves and cleanse themselves every morning, and they would walk out of the water.

animals of the earth." And they would wash themselves and cleanse themselves every morning, and they would walk out of the water." -- Adapted from Freeman Owle, "Going to Water" from Living Stories of the Cherokee

Within the overall context of the Oconaluftee Visitor Center and the Mountain Farm Museum as a place or destination, the addition of the wayside exhibits to the trail aims to work as

a physical and symbolic bridge between two cultures, linking the Mountain Farm Museum at Oconaluftee with the Cherokee Indian Reservation . . . [and] eventually the project will tie into a proposed recreational greenway and heritage trail and continue along the Oconaluftee River in Cherokee, N.C. Eastern Band Principal Chief Mitchell Hicks, said that "The more projects we have of this nature, the more confident we can be that our authentic Cherokee culture is appropriately represented and that our visitors enjoy the essence of the Cherokee way of life."²⁶⁰

Nestled among the trees, these discourses present a vision of sustainability and conservation that explicitly acknowledges and values the interdependent, interconnected character of healthy attitudes toward the environment. At the same time, however, these discourses teeter rather precariously toward the kinds of reductionist, colonializing logics often perpetuated within popular culture that stereotypes Native Americans as proto-environmentalists or ur-stewards of the land. Citing Stuart Hall's recent work on "The Heritage," Jo Littler's critical insights into the complexities raised when "heritage" and "race" collide in ways that buttress the "liberal myth of seamless progress" in the U.K. are relevant here.²⁶¹ Her observation that "contemporary forms of heritage which imagine the past as white and the present as multicultural often circulate around the re-branding or image management of the nation" suggests that these exhibits may function as a performance of "multicultural tokenism" that

elides historical and contemporary struggles in ways that produce interruptions rather than disruptions.²⁶²

Along the trail and at the Mountain Farm Museum, there is no mention of the forced removal of the Cherokee people, of the historic and contemporary political, social, economic, and cultural relationships and antagonisms cultivated between the Cherokee and the settlers, or a sense of contemporaneity. Similar to the ways in which the Mountain Farm Museum buildings depict a timeless sense of place, the lack of specific references to historic events and the absence of dates in these wayside exhibit rhetorics suggests an ambiguity -- a continuous flow -- between the past and the present moment. Curiously, only the Mountain Farm Museum guidebook offers an explicit sense of time and, despite its passive language, acknowledges that, “For centuries, before the first Europeans set foot on this land, the Smoky Mountains were part of the vast Cherokee homeland. The Cherokees lived in permanent towns, farmed the fertile river valleys, and used a far-ranging network of trails for trade, travel, and warfare.”²⁶³ Yet none of these points are highlighted in the wayside exhibits. This absence does little to address the significant silences present in the Mountain Farm Museum guidebook, such as the following explanation of how Cherokee land came to be settled by whites and its euphemistic treatment of the Trail of Tears as a “move”:

Following the American Revolution, the new United States government began opening more Cherokee land to non-Indian settlers. Some of this was accomplished through treaties and purchase, but in the late 1830s, as part of a national policy, most Cherokees were moved to the Oklahoma Territory.

Although this last point may not seem immediately relevant, it underscores a consistent theme that circulates through disparate park discourses that resonate with several of the issues raised in the previous two chapters regarding American cultural values toward land,

private property, and the politics of public memory.²⁶⁴ Taken together, the Mountain Farm Museum, its guidebook, and the Oconaluftee River Trail reinforce a utilitarian view toward nature that values it in terms of what it can produce, for whom, and for how long. Although far from a given, this perspective is reinforced as a basic American ideal that is inherently good. In doing so, it privileges the myth of the self-sustaining agrarian (nuclear) family as the genus of the nation. In this capacity, the discourses of the Oconaluftee River Trail struggle to generate and sustain an affective response (beyond curiosity or acknowledgement of difference, perhaps) that invites further identification beyond the definitions of “heritage” presented at the Mountain Farm Museum because they articulate nature and culture in ways that remain fundamentally “Other.”

Although it may be simply too soon to tell, the fact remains that the trail is literally and metaphorically off the beaten path, located at the margins of the park and the margins of the Mountain Farm Museum’s narrative of settler life and its utilitarian views toward nature. In practice, these two places are enacted as distinct and disconnected instead of multilayered. As Gregory Ashworth argues in an influential handbook for aspiring interpreters,

multilayering . . . allows for a much more volatile, pluralist situation where different senses of place, at different times and for different motives, among which the economic or aesthetic are often as important as the political, may coexist, supplement each other, and even incorporate each other rather than simply conflict, dominate, or displace.²⁶⁵

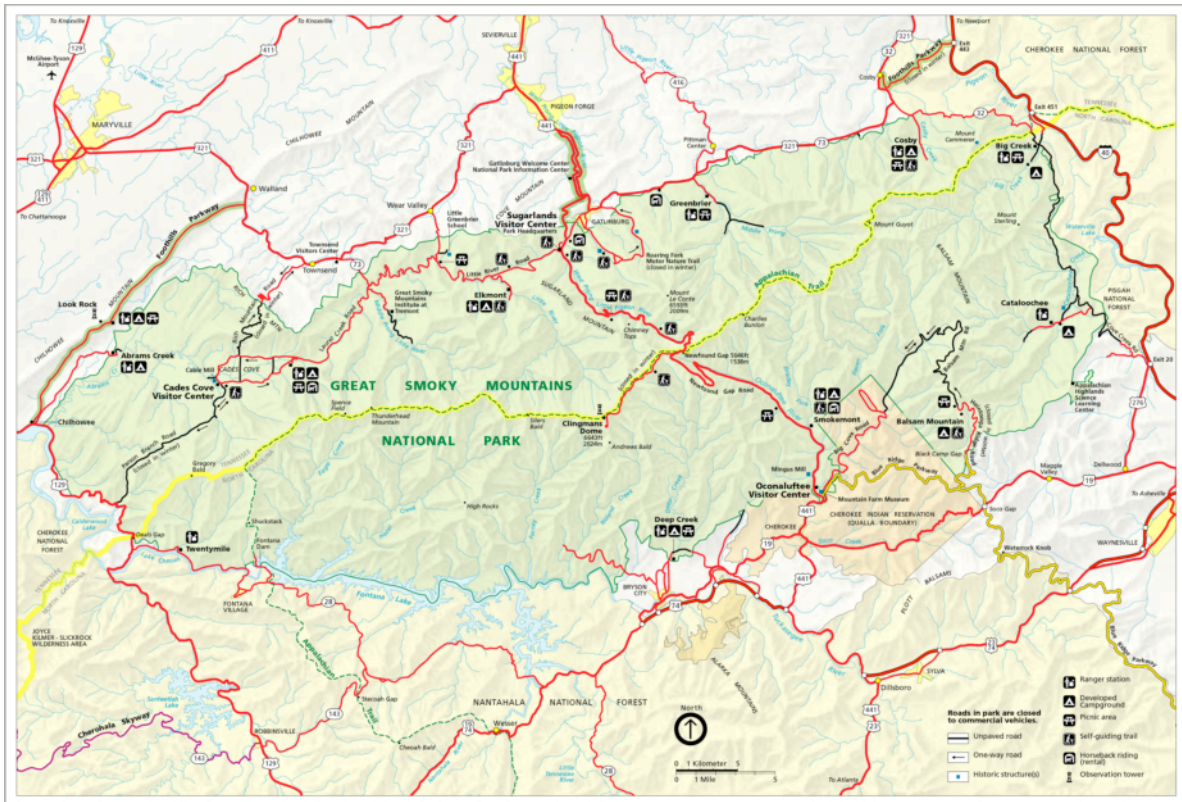
As a result, the rhetorical experience of this place requires one to depart from the “safe/known/visible/light” space of culture (the Mountain Farm Museum) to enter the “dangerous/unknown/invisible/dark” space of nature (the Oconaluftee River Trail). Regrettably, these binaries are (re)produced both through the body and through the landscape. The untold story

about the “unrelenting” environmental pressures from a booming population of “white settlers” in the 19th century and the ways in which they enacted “entirely different designs on the land” does not surface in any meaningful way in park discourses.²⁶⁶ When understood in context with Cades Cove and the visitor center orientation film, these absences are amplified as the story of the white settler families who sold their land to create the park are enshrined as *the* only authorized or legitimate faces of sacrifice in the name of the nation. Without a guidebook, without acknowledgement of the rationale for the addition of the exhibit, without an on-site explanation of the unique collaborative partnership that produced these discourses, and without acknowledgement of the interconnected, multilayered aspects of these places, the wayside exhibits may not (ever) be able to fulfill the goals articulated by Chief Hicks and others who view the trail as an important addition -- if not a corrective -- to the park.

Taken together, the Mountain Farm Museum and the Oconaluftee River Trail wayside exhibits are indeed contradictory in terms of how they define and present conservation to the public. The Mountain Farm Museum positions the white family farm and its relations to the land as distinctly American and, by extension, as common sense. Here, place has boundaries, and the hierarchical relationships between nature and culture are clearly visible; the myth of the yeoman farmer and the pastoral ideal is clearly on display. The Oconaluftee River Trail does not make such distinctions visible because of the ways in which its discourses imbricate nature and culture on equal ground; here, the trees, plants, river, --the entire ecosystem -- is imbued with agency, as the wayside exhibits define nature as an equal, as an actor in culture. In this way, conservation is defined as something that comes naturally to a premodern

worldview and, contra the Mountain Farm Museum, is positioned as excessive when articulated to spirituality.

Figure 3.8: Area Map of Great Smoky Mountain National Park and Surrounding Communities



Drive-through Nature

After leaving the Oconaluftee Visitor Center on a sunny fall morning, traffic is thick on the Newfound Gap Road headed toward Gatlinburg. At 35 miles per hour, a steady stream of cars, motorcycles, RVs, and commercial buses winds its way up, down, over, through, and around the mountains. While some visitors stop at overlooks, pull over to take photos, or leave the car behind for a few minutes or a few hours to take in a short hike or picnic along the main road, most of the traffic moves forward toward the Newfound Gap Overlook/

Memorial, Clingman's Dome, or the Sugarlands Visitor Center (and from there, often onward for another 22 miles to Cades Cove). During my time in the field, I made the trip from Bryson City to the Sugarlands Visitor Center (and points beyond) every day, driving more than 900 miles in just over a week. Without exception, the parking lots at Clingman's Dome, the Newfound Gap Overlook/Memorial, and Sugarlands were very close to capacity (or overflowing) each day that I was in the park. I was not able to keep track of the specific license plates (for obvious reasons), but my observations resonated with the claims made by the Gatlinburg Chamber of Commerce: from Indiana to New York, Florida, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio, Pennsylvania and, of course, many from North Carolina and Tennessee, visitors tended to hail from states located within a day's drive of the park. On several occasions, I drove the length of 441 from Oconaluftee to Sugarlands without stopping (and to my surprise, so did many of those in the vehicles around me).

As David Louter also observes in his study of three national parks in Washington state, the phenomenon of visitors engaging the park through their windshields is both prevalent and problematic. For Louter, the fact that this particular way of experiencing "wilderness" is extraordinarily commonplace is not entirely surprising. What troubles him most is the fact that "we cannot understand parks without recognizing that cars have been central to shaping how people experience and interpret the meaning of national parks, especially how they perceive them as wild places."²⁶⁷ Indeed, the most popular audio podcasts produced by the Great Smoky Mountains Association is the Newfound Gap Road tour, designed for listeners to play while driving along, and the Newfound Gap Road auto tour booklet is one of the few to recently undergo a thorough update and revision (although

both the 1999 and 2008 versions are available for sale at Oconaluftee and Sugarlands). Here, visitors are encouraged to follow along in the booklet by tracking the milepost signs; the updated version offers more precise mileage indicators and replaces outdated photos and illustrations. Visitors are offered one brief, yet explicit conservation message in the entire 33 page booklet: “If you get stuck in a bear jam caused by someone else who didn’t read these suggestions, turn your car off to reduce emissions and enjoy the surroundings.”²⁶⁸ And, in an interesting revision when considered in light of the significant air quality issues in the Smokies, the 2008 booklet no longer notes that, at Clingman’s Dome, “the air is always cool and fresh.”²⁶⁹ Instead, visitors are informed about the loss of foliage due to the woolly adelgid infestation; the revised, 2008 edition of the booklet makes no mention of air quality issues -- one of the most well-known environmental issues affecting the park -- whatsoever.²⁷⁰ Another auto tour brochure, published in 2004 and available for a dollar in the bookstores, offers a full-sized park map, driving tips, and advice about road closures and inclement weather. It boasts of the park’s 270 miles of paved roads and encourages visitors to take one of 5 separate driving excursions in and around the park.

Figure 3.9: Wayside exhibit atop Clingman's Dome refers air quality questions to the Visitor Center

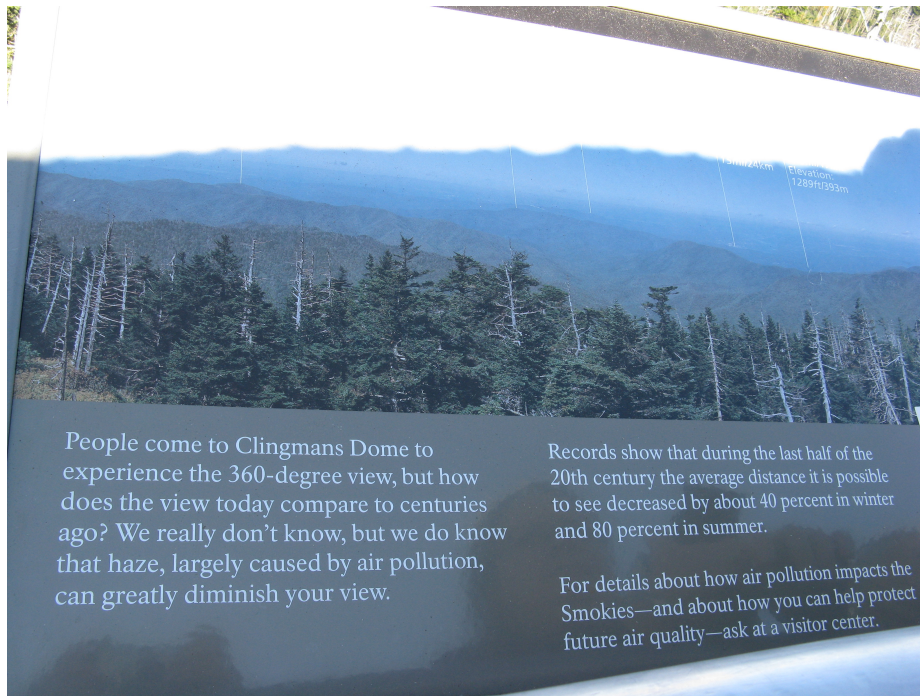


Figure 3.10: Clingman's Dome Observatory

Figure 3.11: Air quality exhibit at Sugarlands



While visitors can learn about air quality measurements and the effects that particulate matter and ozone levels have on human health online through the park website and in person at one small kiosk located in the Sugarlands Visitor Center, there are no public notices regarding air quality posted at any of the most heavily-trafficked high-altitude areas in the park. Visitors who desire to view the Smokies from atop Clingmans Dome, “the highest point in the Smokies, in Tennessee, and of the entire Appalachian Trail,” will likely experience the effects of reduced air quality first-hand if they choose to walk up the steep, “half-mile paved path” that climbs 350 feet from the parking lot to the observation tower base (a 13% grade). I certainly did. As someone who does not suffer the effects of asthma and does reasonably well at higher altitudes, I was quite surprised to find myself gasping for air during the ascent along with fellow visitors of all ages and physical abilities. Fortunately, there are several benches and (unofficial) gathering areas along the path -- many visitors would simply travel incrementally from one to another and rest before continuing upward. While the weather was mild, the air was crisp, and the view was quite clear amidst blue skies and sunshine, the air that we were breathing was definitely not healthful.

Upon reaching the base of the Clingmans Dome observation tower, I joined another 30 or so people who were recovering -- including a visibly-winded park ranger -- before making the final ascent up the circular ramp to the top. Once there, visitors are treated to a 360 degree view that, depending on air quality and visibility, may vary significantly from day to day. And, while the wayside exhibits outline the cardinal directions and explain the features that should be viewable from each direction, air quality issues are addressed in terms of aesthetics, not public and environmental health. As noted in Figure 3.11, visitors in search

of more information are referred back to the (Sugarlands) Visitor Center to learn about how “[they] can protect future air quality.” Here, as elsewhere in the park, the connection between the material conditions experienced by visitors and the ways in which their everyday behaviors and consumption patterns contribute to environmental degradation is either downplayed or entirely absent. Instead of educating visitors about the relationships between the impaired scenery and coal-burning power plants or automobile emissions, for example, the wayside exhibits simply declare that air pollution and reduced visibility *exist*. For 35 cents, however, visitors can purchase a technical brief -- a “park management folio” -- about air quality at either visitor center. For perhaps obvious reasons, this is not one of the bookstore’s top-selling products. And, while more detailed and informative than the wayside exhibits, the Clingmans Dome brochure takes a decidedly passive tone. “To remedy air pollution problems and restore resources at the park, additional reductions of nitrogen and sulfur emissions are necessary,” it explains.²⁷¹ Its recommendations for remedying the “shrinking views and particle pollution” do not offer a single, specific action that visitors can take immediately while in the park or during their vacations/visits. Instead, visitors are instructed to “conserve energy at home and work; use energy-efficient appliances and cleaner forms of transportation and fuels; [and] keep your vehicles in good operating condition and drive less.”²⁷²

These relatively modest proposals indirectly address pollution in the Smokies in ways that dissociate or displace the causes and consequences of the environmental challenges facing the region from very the presence of those who have come to experience and/or witness its “exceptional” character. Rhetorically, they reinforce the idea of conservation

without agency -- of conservation detached from political and personal contexts. Instead of providing enough information for visitors to make informed choices by drawing connections between environmental decline and potentially appropriate forms of redress (such as governmental regulation, intervention, and/or technological innovation, for example), these discourses work to displace the visitor's responsibility and response-ability in ways that may foreclose alternative, more sustainable futures. In these instances -- at some of the most materially evident moments of the effects of unregulated (or under-regulated) production and consumption on public health -- park discourses work to reinforce a rather laissez-faire approach to conservation and environmental education. Brown also noted this rather problematic disconnect and the ways in which "maintaining a myth of the pristine Wild East has been costly to people and the environment."²⁷³ By simply informing visitors about the extent to which the previously "exceptional" views have been despoiled by pollution, these discourses work to produce a nostalgia for a (materially) pristine concept of past wilderness that ignores the crisis of the present moment. As Brown concludes,

the most dramatic changes in the mountain environment -- and the greatest challenges to the long-term ecology of the Smokies -- arrived with industrial forestry, the expansion of tourism, the growth of coal-burning utilities, and unregulated world trade. Whatever may be said about farming, hunting, and trapping, unregulated industrial capitalism is still the greatest threat to the environment.²⁷⁴

Thus, visitors to the Smokies are steeped in a comfortable fiction that celebrates and commemorates a particular vision of sustainability and conservation that is radically decontextualized from the present. Here, these narratives reinforce the idea that ecosystems, public health, and contemporary modes of production and consumption are independent instead of interdependent. As visitors are invited to experience the past as "pure" and the

present as the next best thing, the future is notably absent as a horizon of possibility -- the future is, at best, imagined as a continuation of the present or a rearticulation of the past and present. This phenomenon is perhaps best exemplified by the ways in which Cades Cove is positioned as the heart and soul of the park, as a (mythic) place where nature and culture exist in harmony.

Disciplining the Present in Cades Cove

At the height of the fall tourist season, visitors to Cades Cove -- described by some NPS employees as a park within a park because it attracts more than 2 million visitors each year -- may find themselves stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic. With no alternative ways to leave the valley and return to their previous destinations, visitors must crawl along the one-way, one lane 11-mile loop road for up to four hours. Those who wish to roll down the windows or open the sunroof to take in the aromas of mowed hay, wildflowers, and pine trees may find themselves choking instead, ironically, on cigarette smoke and exhaust. Most visitors to Cades Cove arrive by car, as the valley is only accessible from two major entry points into the park: the 36-mile round trip route via Little River Road from the Sugarlands Visitor Center or the 18-mile round trip route from Townsend, TN onto the Little River Road. At 35 mph, the road twists and turns through new growth forest, following an old railroad road bed left behind by a logging company that operated in the area nearly 100 years ago.²⁷⁵ From Sugarlands, the trip to Cades Cove can take upwards of 90 minutes during the height of tourist season. The Cades Cove Tour guidebook describes the area as “a showcase for some of the most inspiring natural and cultural treasures that the Southern Appalachian Mountains

have to offer. In fact,” it continues, “there are few other places within the entire national park system where both wild nature and human history can be enjoyed in such an idyllic setting.”²⁷⁶ Despite the fact that environmental advocates and NPS employees are acutely aware of the air quality and experiential issues created by the abundance of automobile traffic in the Cove, a broad-based, coalitional effort to introduce mass transportation alternatives and/or reduce the number of cars admitted onto the Cades Cove Loop Road was met with resistance by local residents and visitors alike.²⁷⁷ In 2002-2003, preliminary efforts to move forward with plans for alternative or mass transit was perceived by some as a direct threat to the local tourism industry that depends upon a steady stream of visitors to the park for their economic survival. As explained to me by a Park Service employee who prefers not to be identified in reference to this issue, well-connected local tourism interests in Gatlinburg were concerned that the act of removing people from the comfort of their cars and not allowing them to experience the Cove “on their own terms” would fundamentally alter how visitors think about touring (and spending money) in the surrounding communities.

In many ways, the Cades Cove “experience” restricts visitors to a linear encounter with place that is largely encountered (once again) through the windshield. While some visitors do park their vehicles and get out to walk around, most remain inside the comfort of their cars or exit to use the restroom or purchase a souvenir at the visitor center located at the halfway point along the loop road. As many critical historians have noted, Cades Cove is one of the most fictional or curated (re)presentations of a mythic past in the park, and very little evidence of either its modern past or its contested history as a site of premodern spectacle are present in park discourses or on-site.²⁷⁸ Enshrined in park discourses as a preserved place

that looks much like it did in our nation's recent past, Cades Cove is populated by "salvaged" log structures and churches that were relocated to the loop road to produce a way of experiencing rural life in the Smokies. Williams notes that "only the most sensitive cultural artifacts, the cemeteries and some churches were likely to be given a reprieve from destruction . . . [and] this interpretation was highly selective, preserving an image of the pioneer past, not life as it was lived during the time of the removals."²⁷⁹ Brown offers a complementary discussion of the valley's symbolic importance and of the unwillingness of NPS officials and park boosters to relinquish their interest in the land during the 1930s. Like the Mountain Farm Museum, but on a much broader scale, Cades Cove is presented as an authentic place -- a real rural community -- that is, today, just as it was yesterday.²⁸⁰ Its location, while remote, is described by park personnel at Sugarlands as a worthwhile reward at the end of a beautiful, relaxing, scenic drive. The only effort required to get there is a little patience with fellow drivers and the resources to make the trip. According to the rangers whom I spoke with during the course of my fieldwork, most visitors to Cades Cove are searching for visible glimpses of the park's most iconic wildlife -- bears, turkeys, deer, and groundhogs -- and for encounters with genuine Appalachian culture. While Dollywood and other attractions, such as the Knoxville Zoo and the numerous bear "exhibits" and petting zoos in Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, and Cherokee within driving distance offer other opportunities for encountering wildlife -- where tourists can spend money to visit with caged (or stuffed) specimens -- and experiencing "authentic" Appalachian and southern culture, it is ultimately the park that is rhetorically positioned as *the* place to experience. As Williams argues, the NPS "retain[s] some authority over the interpretation of 'authentic' mountain

culture. The savvy tourists may shop at the outlet stores and ride the amusement rides, but they depend on the park service to give them the real stuff, at least as far as cultural history is concerned.”²⁸¹ To that end, we must also include “nature.”

Amidst a sea of neon lights, dinner theater, rodeo, mini golf, outlet malls, chain and themed restaurants, “hillbilly” memorabilia (as well as the occasional Confederate reference), and a faux-German resort town replete with beer gardens and a ski lift, the park stands out in stark contrast as a natural refuge. But while the border between federally-owned and privately-held lands may be distinct, the boundaries between the park and the larger cultural-geographic context in which it is located are considerably blurred. Despite the fact that some visitors experience the park as sacred space, others may be more inclined to expect a more commercialized, predictable experience similar to that afforded by an amusement park, brandscape, or theme park. In his compelling analysis of Cades Cove, Terence Young makes the case that national parks and contemporary theme parks have much in common, as both “draw on some other widely shared myth or myths to generate a sense of well-being.”²⁸² He goes on to argue that the rigid enclosure and somewhat regimented movement through Cades Cove along the 11-mile loop road bears striking resemblance to the structure and design of an amusement park ride because of the ways in which space and time are deliberately scripted and navigated.²⁸³ As noted previously in this chapter, such encounters matter because they position visitors to Cades Cove as sojourners through history and memory in ways that articulate a sense of common identification that constitutes visitors as participants in a larger story about the nation and those who participated in its foundational moments.

But such encounters are, in the case of Cades Cove, scripted by the Cades Cove Guidebook and other park discourses that elevate this particular place as a shrine to settler perseverance and premodern (or “primitive”) ways of life. As David Lowenthal suggests, “historical knowledge is by its nature consensual . . . [but] no account can recover the past as it was, because the past was not an account; it was a set of events and situations.”²⁸⁴ In the larger context of the park and its surrounding communities, Cades Cove stands out as a heritage theme park where a particular “balance” between private property and community life is on display as a model of rural morality. Even if visitors stop and exit their vehicles as they travel along the loop road, many fields and wooded areas remain off-limits as a result of barbed-wire fencing. Certain kinds of “invited” encounters with the 18 wooden structures located in the Cove are permitted and officially sanctioned in the Guidebook, but wholesale exploration of the area is not suggested or encouraged. Furthermore, specific events and situations that influenced the experience of everyday life in Cades Cove are cast aside in favor of representative anecdotes about past residents that are intended to amuse and entertain in ways that invite visitors to interpret “the past” as idyllic because conflict (and governance) are absent from view. The official Cades Cove Guidebook, for example, discusses social relations in similarly ambiguous terms that invite visitors to imagine life in the community of 685 as ideal:

Neighbors helped each other. They sometimes made social events out of work: cornhuskings, beanstringings, molasses makings. They gathered chestnuts together on autumn weekends. Social occasions also included dinners-on-the-ground at church and spelling bees at school. Courtships often started at such events and often were followed by marriages.²⁸⁵

Here, as elsewhere, visitors are invited to imagine scenes from everyday life that suggest the desirable simplicity of an allegedly premodern rural culture. As numerous historians have noted, Cades Cove had electricity, running water, industry, frame houses, and multiple connections to the outside world when the NPS began its quest to purchase the land in the 1930s.²⁸⁶ But such images are absent from the guidebook and from one of the best-selling photographic histories of the park sold in the bookstores. Instead, residents are shown posing for photographs with abundant families as the men hold their handguns and shotguns: overalls and bare feet rule the roost. Granted, it's simply not possible for the NPS, its guidebooks, or its interpretive staff to give voice to all of the complexity, contradiction, and contestation that lingers just under the surface of a highly-stylized, scripted, and curated place that is presented "as it was" to visitors. At the same time, however, what *is* on display and what is produced for public consumption in Cades Cove matters because these discursive and material rhetorics work to produce a highly reductive (re)vision of premodern rural life where risk, desire, and hierarchy are largely and notably absent from the landscape. In this way, visitors may experience Cades Cove as an ideal future-past where the relationships between humans, nature, God, and nation are simple and pure.²⁸⁷ In the words of one visitor, "as they were intended to be."²⁸⁸ Furthermore, the ways in which nature and culture are articulated in the Cove and official/sanctioned park discourses do little to address the ways in which particular aspects of everyday life (then and now) were dependent upon and/or exploitative of the natural resources that attract visitors to the park. Here, as elsewhere in the park, conservation is absent from the predominant discourses. Visitors come to the Cove looking for wildlife but sit instead in traffic, generating emissions.

Conservation at the Campground

Since its inception, the NPS has struggled to work through its conflicting mission in ways that uphold its role as a provider and protector of natural and cultural heritage, and to do so in significantly different contexts, each with their own unique set of social, historic, economic, political, and environmental constraints. And, as a bureau located within the larger hierarchy of the Department of the Interior, the NPS has organizationally (and politically) found itself at odds during the past 100 years with cultural forces and powerful individuals alike that have privileged a Wise Use philosophy. At the same time, the NPS has long discouraged employees and volunteers from engaging in formal “advocacy” efforts or taking a public stand on issues that pertain to NPS policies. As a result of this tendency toward creating and maintaining a public perception of professional objectivity and technical or bureaucratic expertise, NPS employees who wish to engage in such activities have often channeled their energies toward (or found themselves channeled toward) two particular organizations: the Coalition of National Park Service Retirees, and Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. As I completed my fieldwork in the Smokies, I discovered that NPS rangers and seasonal employees were generally unwilling to speak about the particular constraints that they faced or about the dilemmas that they encounter as interpreters and environmental educators -- even off the record. In light of well-documented political maneuvering during the Bush administration’s tenure that sought to restrict and limit what NPS employees could and could not say about environmental issues (such as global warming, for example), I was not entirely surprised to encounter weary and wary NPS employees who were perhaps a bit suspicious of any outsiders doing research. Indeed, all

research requests, interviews, and archival requests are personally overseen, approved, and managed by the park's public information officer. Meeting with researchers outside of the park (or off the clock) was not perceived as an acceptable option by most of the employees who spoke with me about my research. Nevertheless, there was one senior-level employee (whom I will refer to hereafter as Amy Blue) who was willing to speak with me about the opportunities and challenges that the interpretive staff encounter with regularity.

I met with Amy on a rainy Wednesday afternoon to discuss how interpretive decisions are made in the park, and to get a better sense of how interpreters "make conservation public," if at all. When I entered her office, I had already been working in the park for several days at different locations and I had met with a few staff members based all around the park. After Amy greeted me, she explained that she was aware of whom I had been speaking with and if I had any immediate questions as a result of those conversations. While I certainly did, I was not immediately comfortable with Amy's tactic. Instead, we began by discussing Amy's history with the NPS and how other park experiences were similar to working in the Smokies. Amy noted that the sheer scale and volume of visitors to the park, as well as gradual, significant reductions in resources, had made working conditions difficult and reduced morale. Within the past decade, most parks were ordered to reduce staff and increase the number of VIPs (Volunteers in Parks) engaged in various day-to-day activities necessary to the park's function. According to Amy, both the quantity and quality of interpretive programs offered to the public have suffered, but she assured me that they were doing everything that they could with the resources available to them. Amy steered our interview clear of politics and local controversies, preferring instead to discuss the various

talking points that are well-publicized on the park's website (Parks in Schools, the new hayride program, and the upcoming 75th anniversary park celebration).

Amy's approach to interpretation was both thoughtful and seasoned, echoing some of the points that I had encountered in Freeman Tilden's classic text. When I inquired, she noted that Tilden's text is still useful -- and used -- today. She also took great pains to persuade me that the interpretive staff have significant editorial control over their public offerings, but that it's often easier to share materials because the same programs are offered by different members of the interpretive staff at different times and during different days of the week. Amy invited me to take a look at one of the guiding interpretive documents that her staff uses to develop learning outcomes for public interpretive events, and she shared a copy with me. Although brief, it outlined many of the talking points that I had heard throughout the week about biodiversity, salamanders, bear safety, and mountain culture. As our conversation moved forward, I asked Amy specifically about conservation issues and environmental education in the park. She informed me that, in her experience, the public doesn't really want to know too much -- "they're here to have a good time." At the same time, she expressed regret about the environmental impacts of tourism in the park and its surrounding communities. "I live just down the road from here," she said. "I would love to see a monorail or something like a people mover to reduce the traffic and stress in the Cove, but it's just not gonna happen anytime soon."

After we lamented the traffic together, I explained to Amy that I had attended several interpretive offerings during the week. I returned to an earlier remark that she had made and asked her why she thought that interpretive staff should not make a more concrete link

between environmental issues and conservation. She suggested that it was not a ranger's job to advocate, but instead to provoke audiences into seeing things anew. When I dug a little deeper and asked if conservation and contemporary environmental issues were appropriate topics for a ranger to discuss with the public, she vacillated and instead pointed me toward the one place in the park where visitors are greeted by a conservation-oriented message that makes explicit connections between cause and consequence. In fact, Amy confided that she had personally designed the exhibit and researched its content. When I asked where I could find it, she pointed me toward the information bulletin board at the Cades Cove Campground, located on a back wall behind the commissary, adjacent to the bicycle rental shop, along the walkway that leads to a small amphitheater and the public restrooms. I promised Amy that I would take a look, and she brushed me off. "In the grand scheme of things, it's a bit out of the way. But we do what we can." For Amy, the natural beauty of the park speaks for itself and to explicitly engage visitors about the issues would be akin to ". . . confrontation, and that's just not what we're here to do." As she moved on to her next appointment, she bid me farewell back into the rain.

I ventured over to the Cades Cove Campground, which boasts 159 campsites and is open year-round, to find Amy's bulletin board (see below). In a relatively hidden site, I had (finally) found evidence of an explicit conservation message in the Smokies. While it made clear connections between everyday actions and the ecological health of the park, its production values (and its visibility) were nowhere near on par with other exhibits, destinations, and printed materials available in the park. The conservation messages also

shared space with two other bulletin boards on the wall that educated visitors about taking proper precautions while hiking and how to respect bears in their wild habitats.

Figure 3.12: Conservation bulletin board at Cades Cove Campground

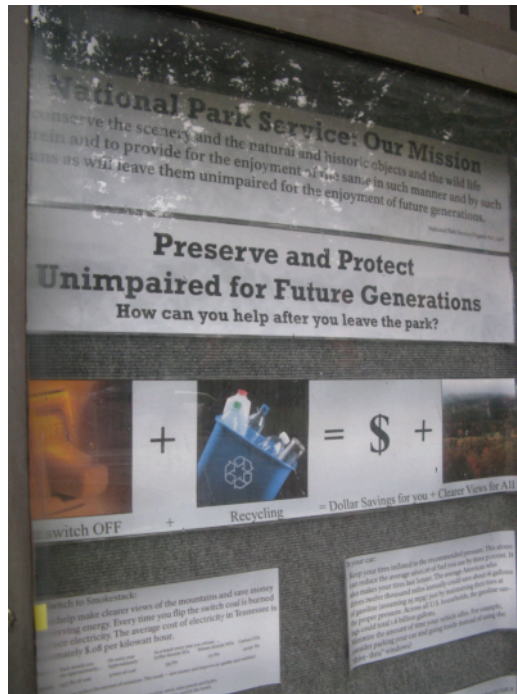


Figure 3.13: Shared exhibit at Cades Cove Campground



Most discouragingly, the conservation bulletin board offered no specific suggestions for visitors who wanted to begin making an immediate difference by embracing a conservation ethic while in the park: all of the suggestions offered instructions for future behavior (choosing paper or plastic bags; keeping tires inflated; recycling bottles and cans).

In this capacity, explicitly conservation-oriented messages are such a minor part of the predominant park discourses that work to establish and reinforce particular ways of thinking about nature and culture that they are rendered incapable of constituting a public that embraces a conservation ethic. Instead, immediate action is always already foreclosed in exchange for the possibility of future action off-site. In the broader context of the park and, as I will discuss below regarding one of the busiest NPS visitor centers in the U.S., such messages are easily lost and forgotten in the shadow of the park's most visible message: its existence alone is a testament to the will and determination of the American people to recreate an eastern wilderness. As a material enactment of conservation, it suggests to visitors that environmental devastation can always be undone, and that nature's abundance will always prevail.

Framing Expectations

At nearly all hours of the day, visitors stream into the Sugarlands Visitor Center; parking spaces are often difficult to come by. Located just a few miles from Gatlinburg, it's often the first stop for many visitors coming from that direction. For others coming up 441 through the mountains from Cherokee, it's often the last stop before venturing off to Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge. For many more, it's a bathroom, information, and/or souvenir

break before heading toward Cades Cove or other destinations on the western perimeter of the park. Larger in size than the Oconaluftee Visitor Center, Sugarlands is home to a natural science exhibit room that features replicas of plant and animal specimens that live in the park, a well-appointed bookstore that includes a section of “authentic” Smoky Mountain food products (like stone-ground grits, honey, and huckleberry jam), and a small theater. I spent many hours here, observing visitor-ranger interactions, documenting the natural science exhibit room and observing its relatively few visitors, and attending a short interpretive walk through the new-growth forest behind the center with a volunteer ranger. Unlike Oconaluftee, the mood here is high-energy and the activity is non-stop.

Figure 3.14: Nature exhibit inside the Sugarlands Visitor Center



As the lights dim in the small, unadorned and unnamed theater located adjacent to the bookstore and gift shop, so too do the voices of those assembled to view one of the park's most visible representations of itself: the park orientation film. This film, "Great Smoky Mountains National Park," which is only 20 minutes long, is screened approximately 15-20 times per day during the height of the tourist season. I'm the only person sitting alone; although there are nearly 80 seats here, most of them are unfilled. Families with children, elderly couples, and several middle-aged couples are spread out throughout the theater fill in about 20 seats. Funded by Friends of the Smokies (FOS) and produced in partnership with the NPS, the film has been in circulation since 1999 and sells "well" at the bookstores. The DVD is one of the few FOS products sold in the bookstores (which are operated by the Great Smoky Mountains Association (GSMA), which produces and/or publishes most of the brochures, guidebooks, and pamphlets available for sale in the bookstore and throughout the park at trailhead kiosks). Almost predictably, the park rangers I spoke with emphasized that the film is no substitution for the level of engagement provided by the interpretive staff's programming or the myriad books and brochures produced and sold by the GMSA in the bookstore. Of course, they were also quick to point out that many visitors experience the park through their windshields or windows, and that the average park visit is approximately 4 hours long. In light of this reality, the orientation film is tasked with fulfilling both rhetorical and pragmatic concerns. On one hand, the film must be accessible and relevant to general audiences who may not give it their full attention -- even though most people remain seated for the duration of the film, it was not uncommon for people to enter and exit the theater at different times throughout the screening. On the other hand, as Teresa Bergman argues in her

discussion of orientation films at Mount Rushmore, the experience must also resonate with and fulfill the characteristics of the ‘welcome film’ genre that many park regulars have come to expect during the past 40 years. When I entered the park for the first time, I also stopped here at Sugarlands -- like most visitors -- to pick up copies of park maps, informational leaflets, and to view the park orientation film first.²⁸⁹

The doors close automatically at the appointed starting time, shutting out the din of a hundred conversations, as the film’s introductory titles appear on the screen in imposing black and white script against a backdrop of silence. From darkness, images of the Smokies set against a fiery red sunrise give way to a montage of images set to rhythmless “new age” music set in a major chord. For 30 seconds, iconic and everyday park imagery dissolves across the seasons and without narration to present a pristine, people-less landscape of sweeping mountain vistas, ice-encrusted trees, bubbling streams, foggy forests, and a lone barn set against an equally fiery sunset. As we fly over the mountaintops looking down at the valleys below, an unidentified male narrator joins us to pronounce the mountains as “among the oldest mountains on the continent, born before the age of the dinosaurs” and the scenes dissolve across a montage of imagery of rocks, water, and the visible traces of erosion. We are told that “their geologic and climatic destiny unfolding over millions of years producing [sic] a diversity of species unequaled in the temperate regions of the world” as close-ups of glistening spider webs, plants, foraging bears, and salamanders give way to a slow-motion sequence through the hardwood forest. Here, audiences are positioned with eyes toward the heavens, gliding seamlessly through a canopy of green punctuated by streaming sunlight, and are informed that the variety of trees present in these mountains are greater than all of those

“found on the entire continent of Europe.” As the natural soundscape of the forest gives way to unidentifiable, yet vaguely familiar strains of a piano, the camera glides slowly across the wood-planked porch of an old log cabin to bring us to a worn, sun-strewn, forked footpath in the woods. The image dissolves once again into a black and white close-up photo of a middle-aged woman smoking from a long, clay pipe. Here, the narrator declares that “this is the front porch of southern Appalachian mountain history, where remnants of a culture remain bound to the land and alive in the imagination.”

While the music crescendos, she remains unnamed and our narrator remains silent as her image dissolves slowly into a panned shot composed of traditional split-log fences and an old-growth tree. The narrator relinquishes his pause to emphatically announce that “*this* is Great Smoky Mountain National Park” and the scene transitions into horizontal movement along the Cades Cove Loop Road. In the moments just before the park’s name appears against a backdrop of cloud-enshrouded mountains, the viewer is positioned as if in a vehicle traveling slowly along the Loop Road. His or her view is unfettered by a windshield or window, yet it remains framed by dark silhouettes of trees in the foreground that give way to unpeopled, structureless golden meadows and verdant valleys in the distance. As the titles fade away, so too does the music, giving way instead to an illustrated example of early Cherokee life accompanied by drums, pan flutes, and the sounds of wind. An uncredited woman, identified in the final credits as Marie Junaluska, recounts a Cherokee origin narrative against the narrator’s declaration that “Perhaps a thousand years ago when the Cherokee people arrived, they looked into the mists and wondered about these mountains, imagining the story of their creation.” Her words, set to aerial shots of the mountains

overlaid with imagery of a bird in flight, offer a different way of thinking about the relationships that exist (and existed) between the land and humans.

The great buzzard flew all over the earth. When he reached the Cherokee country, he was very tired. And his wings began to flap and strike the ground. And wherever they struck the earth, there was a valley. and wherever they turned up again, there was a mountain.

Her situated knowledges, however, are quickly dismissed as a quaint alternative to the hard facts of scientific evidence. The narrator declares that “the rocks in these mountains reveal their own story” and launches instead into a retelling of geologic history that detours through a computer model of Pangaia, continental drift, and models of mountains erupting forcefully through the earth’s surface.

Dispassionately and in sharp contrast to the woman’s performative explication, the narrator utters a series of fragmented observations set against images of water, wind, sunshine, trees, mountains, and clouds, all moving in fast-forward motion: “Sculpted over millions of years by the forces of nature. Wind. water. Fracturing and settling. Creating soft, gentle curves that speak the passage of time.” Time and again, the visuals suggest an unpeopled, “pristine” nature untouched by human hands or ways as the narrator’s tone shifts toward an objective, passive tense to present a vision of the world that implicitly and firmly refutes a Creationist timeline:

Life took hold early in the Smokies, first thriving in the warm moist lower elevations. But it would take another cataclysmic event to create the tremendous diversity of species that have made this an environment unlike any other in the world: the last Ice Age. More than ten thousand years ago, an immense sheet of ice pushed down from the north, stopping short of the Smokies. Over several thousand years, plants and animals migrated south to escape freezing temperatures. In the highest elevations of the Smokies, they flourished within a perfect climate with temperatures comparable to Canada's Nova Scotia today. It meant that northern species like the eastern hemlock inhabited the park's middle and upper

elevations, while species like the flowering dogwood populated the valleys below. A remarkable convergence of species in one small geographic space.

Accompanying this declaration are vivid panoramic shots of breaking ice and close-ups of melting snow to highlight the effects of rapid climate change, as well as visual sequences that suggest progress and evolution. These scenes are accompanied “in the past” by pan flute music and “natural” soundscapes that reprise the piano tune from earlier in the film as viewers are brought back to “the present” and the emergence of hikers walking along a trail. As the narrator offers basic trivia about the park (i.e. how much rainfall it receives and the elevation range within the Smokies), Bluegrass music slowly fades in to foreshadow the next segment of the film.

Once more, viewers are positioned omnipotently -- as we fly through the air, we bear witness to several non-contiguous/non-proxemic landscapes within the park’s boundaries as the narrator tells us that “variations of climate and topography create many different environments within the landscape. from wetlands to grassy balds, streams, meadows, cove hardwood, and spruce fir forests. each with its own unique plant and animal communities.” These landscapes, largely unpopulated by visitors in these scenes, are juxtaposed against close-up shots of tree frogs and salamanders, establishing shots of waterfalls, a telephoto view of a fox, and several examples of wildflowers that are native to the park. The narrator informs us that “there are more than 1500 flowering plants bursting with color each spring and summer . . . [and] an enormous variety of amphibians flourish in these mountains” as the sounds of tree frogs fill the auditorium.” With fewer than 12 minutes remaining at this point in the film, visitors are once again positioned to view the park from the air and to consider nature’s diversity in toto. As we fly over the fall foliage, the narrator informs us that “about

25% of the park is undisturbed old growth forest, with some trees at least 150 years old and some more than 400 years old. This is the largest of old growth left east of the Mississippi River,” he says, but he says nothing more about why the statistic is significant.

Without offering any explicit justification for its transition, the film segues from a skyward appreciation of sunlight streaming through hardwoods to another fiery red sunset. “Tribal” music fades in, accompanied by illustrations depicting Cherokee hunters in winter snows. “Over time,” suggests the narrator, “this environment supported humans as well. Little is known about the first people to live in these mountains, but around one thousand years ago, the Cherokee people began weaving their culture into the land.” Here, his words are accompanied by an evening campfire, a black and white photo of a Native American woman, additional illustrations depicting Cherokee life, and a tightly-focused shot of an elderly Cherokee woman’s hands as she weaves a basket. He continues, “nature sustained their bodies and inspired their souls. They were part of all that surrounded them.” Although historical, documentary photos and oral history archives detailing the Trail of Tears and the effects of Manifest Destiny upon the Cherokee exist, the film foregoes any engagement with those materials. Instead, illustrations that ambiguously depict the tragedy are offered, and the complexity of the situation -- along with its contemporary controversies -- are elided:

Then in 1838, that connection was tragically broken. The US government marched most of the Cherokees west to what later became Oklahoma. Thousands died on the journey known as the Trail of Tears. Today, their presence remains in park names like Cataloochee and Oconaluftee. Their culture lives on in descendants of those who escaped the Trail of Tears and who reclaimed some of their old homeland.

In this sequence, viewers are once again located in the sky, flying over unpeopled landscapes, before pausing to reflect on black and white photos of Cherokee men and women, ending

their journey by transitioning to a color shot of the landmark welcome sign that marks the border of the Cherokee reservation.

As elsewhere in the film, even these contemporary representations of indigenous culture dissolve into imagery of a lone bird flying in the afternoon sky before cutting abruptly and panning across a black and white photograph of a large, white settler family playing instruments on the porch of a log cabin as the first few bars of a Bluegrass tune fade into the foreground of the audio track. Viewers are offered another black and white image as the camera pauses on a pair of white hands suspended mid-air in mid-clap before cutting to a shot that completes the enthymeme, showing those same hands in context and attached to the body of a white-haired, bearded white man. As if he were merely offering an objective history of the region, the narrator declares that “by the early 1800s, the Smokies became a destination for new Americans who established farms and homes. Their lives and culture were shaped by the bounty of the land.” With this transition, the film’s pace and tone shift rapidly toward a nostalgic embrace of white settler culture and emphasizing the park’s sense of place as a compromise between the competing interests of conservation (nature) and development (culture).

Here, the focus of the film hones in upon the life and times of those who occupied the land before it was purchased to create the park. The narrator offers a catalog listing of other places in the park where visitors can expect to find similar scenes of yesteryear. Black and white photos depicting former residents and iconic park structures (such as Mingus Mill and the school house at Little Greenbrier) come to life (and color) as the photos give way to examples of how these places appear today -- some peopled by visitors, and others off-limits

to direct experience. We meet Lucinda Ogle, a former resident now in her later years, dressed in period clothing and a red gingham bonnet as she sits outside of her preserved family homestead. Ogle looks directly into the camera to address the viewer: “We didn't know any other life. We was the happiest people on Earth. Didn't have all the troubles and the worries and the whatchacallit I have nowadays.” As a bell tolls, we see grainy, black and white footage that shows loggers in the process of felling immense trees. The scene cuts to additional images of horses pulling logs down the mountains, of erosion caused by clear-cutting, and of steam-driven machinery used to reshape the land scrolls by, the narrator counters Ogle’s memory of a better time and the camera lingers on black and white photos of settler children and large families: “But that happiness didn't last. In the early 1900s, a growing nation hungered for the pristine forest of the Smokies. Trees that stood for centuries were destroyed in minutes. The rich topsoil in place for eons cascaded off hillsides, robbing the forest of the very building blocks of life.”

As imagery of environmental devastation caused by human greed for natural resources comes to life before visitors’ eyes in the form of widespread flooding and huge trees moving down the mountain in the floodwaters, we are introduced to a re-enactor playing the part of Horace Kephart, one of the park’s early advocates. Kephart is used to move the story forward: we learn of his love for the mountains and, in turn, of the ways in which an individual was able to successfully mobilize others to take part in a cause far greater than themselves: turning the devastated, over-logged, over-grazed landscape into a national park. The complexity and scale of the decades-long, interstate endeavor to create the park, patchwork from several thousand purchases of small and large holdings alike, is

reduced to a few black and white photographs of children collecting pennies, a celebratory image of the Rockefeller family (one of the park's early patrons), and still images of former residents standing in front of their homes. These latter images transition into contemporary, color shots of how they appear today, preserved in the park for visitors to appreciate.

Accompanying this montage, the narrator tells us that "The devastation alarmed a group of citizens who proposed a national park to save the forest. It took decades to win popular support and purchase the land. Money was raised from the states of Tennessee and North Carolina, the federal government, citizens, even local schoolchildren. A 5 million dollar gift came from the Rockefeller family. Timber companies and local citizens sold their lands -- sometimes grudgingly -- to allow creation of the park. It was difficult for the families to leave." We return to Lucinda Ogle, who nods in agreement: "That was terrible, just like death hit the whole country up in through here. Now we thank god every day I do. Thank you, god, for bringing the park so we could have it protected. So I could hear that sound again -- that sweet soft singing of the birds."

Here, Lucinda's image dissolves into imagery of birds, and birds give way to a cemetery located within the park boundaries. Viewers are invited to consider the ways in which the land -- the place -- is a "keeper of stories" and of a "pioneering spirit," as well as a final resting place for "children taken too young" by "war, harsh winters and spring floods," yet exemplifies and gives life to values like "community", "faith", and "love." Images of the churches at Cades Cove, brimming with the offspring and descendants of original residents, are presented within the context of the annual "homecomings each summer [that] keep these stories alive." "Mountain culture," we are told, "lives in songs and faces." As we watch

them, the audio track shifts from Bluegrass music to a Christian Hymn, “I Love to Tell the Story,” apparently being sung by these descendants. The narrative of individual and family sacrifice continues as the camera focuses on people singing through the open windows of the Primitive Baptist Church, located in the Cove. With a nod toward the Depression and the role played by the federal government and the Civilian Conservation Corps, the narration is accompanied by newsreel footage of Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicating the park at Newfound Gap in 1940: “Partly because of family sacrifice, more than half a million acres were preserved as Great Smoky Mountain National Park.”

In the final minutes of the film, the narrative moves away from the multiple creation narratives that have competed for our attention thus far. Here, the focus shifts instead to the present, positioning the viewer as a member of the public. In the final concluding minutes of the film, the emphasis is squarely on the viewer’s responsibility to honor those whose sacrifices have made this place possible, and to acknowledge the ways in which the very aspects of the park that may have attracted visitors in the first place are endangered. Bluegrass music accompanies a sequence of home movies that begin in black and white and transition through the decades into the present era. We see families camping, a young boy and a ranger, men and women posing for photos by various park directional signs, and young children playing on one of the imposing park gateway signs as the narrator informs visitors of their civic responsibilities: “Those who fought for the creation of the park have handed down a never-ending legacy of care for this land. It is a responsibility now in the hands of all who are touched by its gifts of peace, beauty, and recreation.” The music fades away as the narrator’s tone grows serious. As we view aerial images of Clingman’s Dome and cars

driving along the Newfound Gap Road, the soundscape takes on a more ambient flair. Close-up shots of insects, long shots of people fishing in the rivers, deer, and sunsets fill the screen as the narrator continues: “The park is the largest federally protected mountain ecosystem left in the eastern United States -- a fragile environment in need of care and constant protection.”

As the sounds of crickets, bird songs, and roaring streams are replaced by acoustic guitar music, the narrator invokes one of the most iconic representations of the park in order to emphasize his points:

The park may be a sanctuary, but it isn't an island. Its natural treasures are threatened by sprawling human development and non-native pests and diseases. Black bears have lost 80% of their historic range in the southeastern United States. The park offers them sanctuary with the large territories they require. Bears need their space. If they become habituated to people and their food, they have to be removed or killed. Keeping a safe distance and keeping food out of reach will ensure the survival of this symbol of the Smokies.

Action sequences of bears walking, eating, and resting accompany his declaration. Without any transition to bridge the gap, the sequence shifts to images of the mountains enrobed in clouds at various points in the year and the narrator informs us that “the Smokies were named for their natural blue mist.” As the visuals shift from mountains to close-up shots of fish swimming in clear water and plants damaged by acid rain, we are informed that “today, air pollution from vehicles and smoke stacks hundreds of miles away muddies the skies. reducing visibility by 60% or more at times. Ozone damages plants and acid rains alters streams and soils, impacting aquatic life.” Again, the narration and the visuals leave much unsaid regarding the causes, effects, and possible solutions to these issues, let alone what actions visitors might take to reduce their impact on the park. We return to another icon of the park, Clingman’s Dome, to address the issue of invasive species and to preemptively

mitigate visitors' disappointment at the sight of acres of diseased trees from one of the most visually stunning vistas in the park. "Skeletons of Fraser Fir trees haunt Clingman's Dome. The species is found only in the Southern Appalachians. Now, it's under attack from a non-native insect -- the balsam wooly adelgid."

But before we have the opportunity to mourn the loss or address the issue, the music suddenly gains an upbeat tempo as the sounds of birds chattering are joined by a piano solo, mirrored by an upbeat turn in the narrator's tone. As images of clear streams punctuated by sunlight transition to action shots of park rangers working with teenagers to collect specimens, the narrator declares that

Despite the threats, the life force of these mountains beats strong. To protect the wild treasures of the Smokies, scientists from the National Park Service and universities are continually working to understand the complexities of nature in an environment that is home to as many as 100,000 different life forms. Every year they discover fascinating creatures that no one knew existed.

as images of bugs in jars and disembodied hands "doing science" fill the screen. The music continues to crescendo as images of families walking into the woods at sunset cut to water flowing over rocks, and to costumed re-enactors guiding visitors through the Oconaluftee heritage farm site. "But the joy of discovery isn't limited to scientists. It's here for all visitors. Each call to explore and enjoy the park in their own unique way," declares the narrator, almost breathlessly. Once more, images of visitors taking photos of wildlife, of visitors hiking in the woods, and of a family with young children hiking through tall grass alongside a doe and her fawn. To underscore these images, the narrator continues: "here, even the smallest endeavor promises unexpected rewards -- rewards that do not come without a price. Continuing protection requires continuing stewardship from those who work here

and, most importantly, from those who visit here.” With less than a minute left, our view shifts skyward as the camera looks directly up the trunk of an impossibly tall tree before cutting to action shots of people biking, backpacking, and walking alone along the river. Birds, waterfalls, salamanders, and other wildlife dissolve across the screen as the narrator triumphantly declares that “Through the seasons, the centuries, through incomprehensible eons of time, geology, climate and evolution have combined to create this vibrant expression of life unique in all the world. Preserved and protected for all that live here, and for those that come simply to marvel.” As the music continues to crescendo, the final montage takes us for a last look along the Cades Cove Loop Road, up into the sky to view cloudy peaks at sunset, and ends with the silhouette of a couple atop an unidentified peak as the announcer declares, “Welcome to Great Smoky Mountains National Park.”

In less than 30 minutes, this film orients visitors to the park by providing them with particular ways of seeing and thinking about the park as an aesthetic and patriotic experience. Here, conservation is defined and presented to the public as a commemorative act that has preceded them; indeed, conservation is a gift that they have inherited from a greater generation than their own. Conservation is presented as a balancing act entrusted to NPS personnel that requires little to no effort or support by visitors. Instead of defining conservation as a set of personal and political practices that visitors can opt into while on vacation and at home, it is instead defined in terms of honoring the wisdom of the past.

In the preceding pages, I have documented the ways in which several of the most heavily-trafficked destinations within the Great Smoky Mountains National Park are materially and discursively performed as tourist sites/sights. Here, nature and culture are

articulated to place and public memory in ways that invite identification with what Michael Billig has termed banal nationalism. In many ways, park discourses and destinations work synergistically to locate visitors as participants in a narrative that is greater than themselves, but accessible through encounters with “the past” and “the wild” within the park’s borders. National parks exude contradiction, argues Kenneth Olwig, as places of “common nature” that are historically symbolic, representative of raw power, and representative of “both a physical realm and the realm of cultural ideals and norms.”²⁹⁰ Although their reach is not as broad as a prime time television program or blockbuster film, these rhetorics are forms of public discourse that are, following Thomas Farrell, coherent and intentional in that they “offer a way of sharpening current means of articulating practical judgment.”²⁹¹ They are often unchanged for years, if not decades, due to budgetary constraints and Park Service traditions. These situated rhetorics and rhetorical practices, however, offer a unique challenge to critics because of the ways in which they work to articulate place and the politics of everyday life through the vectors of leisurely civic pilgrimage.²⁹² Furthermore, they work to complicate the ways in which publics are constituted by and through discursive and performative means.

The “park idea” has likely become, as Bob O’Brien argues, “the most copied of American institutions, emulated by over one hundred nations today.”²⁹³ As noted in the previous two chapters, national parks are a uniquely American institution that constitute a distinctly modern twist on the historic notion of the public commons.²⁹⁴ Instead of the mundane, however, these public lands are distinctly uncommon in terms of their aesthetic, cultural, historic, and scientific value. Indeed, one of the primary criteria used by the NPS in

its site selection processes is the extent to which, as Campbell notes, they are able to both ‘preserve’ and ‘exhibit’ “something that is fine and distinctive.”²⁹⁵ Citing a dedication speech given by then-Secretary of the Interior, J.A. Krug as evidence of their distinctiveness and cultural value, Campbell locates these places as so extraordinary as to be beyond the scope of human expression and as worthy tributes to the past and future nation. Here, Krug declares that

Important as the national park system is, it derives this importance not from the number or size of the areas it contains, but more from the fact that it contains the supreme examples of each type that are of special concern to the entire nation . . . Let us not forget that part of the great spirit and broad vision of these pioneers came from the grandeur of the continent itself. The very boldness of their spirit was a reflection of the size and greatness of the land they settled. It is little enough to ask that their children, and grandchildren, and generations yet unborn shall be able, through enjoying National Parks such as these, to know something of the pristine glory of their country. Whatever the future may bring, our descendants will rejoice in this great symbol of beauty and glory of America.²⁹⁶

Krug’s epideictic rhetoric, and its attendant invocation of American exceptionalism, underscores the ways in which national parks can be understood as monumental public places that translate and mediate tourists’ experiences of nature, culture, nation, and self in ways that suture the “official” and the “vernacular” to produce and sustain public memory.²⁹⁷ Here, exceptionalism may be understood in Joyce Appleby’s terms, as “America’s peculiar form of Eurocentrism” that works to “project onto a nation . . . qualities that are envied because they represent deliverance from a common lot.”²⁹⁸

More than 60 years after Krug’s speech, rhetorics of American exceptionalism continue to provide the primary interpretive framework in official and sanctioned NPS discourses. While not necessarily surprising, I argue, these narratives work in ways that

counter, discredit, and otherwise disrupt those park discourses that suggest a conservation-based approach toward the environment in everyday life. In many of the most familiar, official park discourses encountered by visitors and highlighted in the preceding pages GRSM is (re)presented as a colossal example of the nation's power to reclaim and redeem itself from itself -- for the land to be reborn -- even after a significant percentage of its natural resources that had been largely decimated by clear-cutting and other extractive practices and technologies. Here, the park is, following Donal Carbaugh, presented as evidence of the ways in which communication is "radically and doubly "placed," as both located in places and as locating particular senses of those places . . . [such that] environmental communication is the every-present and multifaceted shadow of -- natural and cultural -- place in human symbolic action."²⁹⁹ Through interpretation and other forms of public communication, the park is rhetorically positioned as a material form of ecological commemoration -- as a permanent (natural) place. The narrative refrain echoed here is that the park has been saved from the ills of modern life, and it is therefore able to work as a restorative agent capable of salvation for the modern soul. Because most official park discourses do so little to actively advocate for conservation efforts in the present, the triumphant success of the park suggests that future environmental redemption from today's wasteful ways is entirely within reach. Lucinda and her family -- and the Cherokee -- have sacrificed for our families, we are told; thus, we too should sacrifice for the greater good.

As my analysis of these public messages suggests, visitors may be led to believe that conservation is not something that must be actively managed and negotiated or accomplished in their personal lives because the park, as the ultimate example of conservation, is already

there. In other words, the work has already been done and all that is left to do is to enjoy the rewards. God and/or country will take care of the rest. Such interpretations echo the critical observations of Benton and Short, who argue that “there exists perhaps no better example of the artificiality of the nature/culture dualism than national parks.”³⁰⁰ While I agree with their observation that “national parks, people, and nature exist in an intricate arrangement of political, social, legal, intellectual, and sentimental relationships,” Benton and Short’s concluding assessment that “national parks [serve] as a barometer of society’s changing attitudes and perceptions” and “embody part of the national identity” provides a solid foundation for digging deeper and asking what’s at stake when these *national* places are actively engaged in the processes of producing national subjects.³⁰¹ As noted earlier in this chapter, I focus on different discursive fragments within a shared context because they provide a more complex way of understanding the multiple influences and claims circulated within a particular place *about* that place. As Greene reminds us, fragments are overwhelmingly appropriate sources because “they do not seem to stand still due to their mediated form [but] function on the terrain of a governing apparatus to make a whole way of life stand still so that a series of institutions might be able to govern a population.”³⁰² Across these discourses, conservation is written into the landscape as historic, national benevolence.

These fragments -- from Lucinda Ogle’s family homestead reflections to the wayside exhibits located throughout the park, the rhetorics of the Smokies are performing what Allison Landsberg has referred to as “prosthetic memory.”³⁰³ Landsberg defines prosthetic memory as an effect of modernity that should be understood as “a new form of public cultural memory. Here, she argues, prosthetic memory

emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past, at an experiential site such as a movie theater or a museum. In the moment of contact, an experience occurs through which the person sutures himself or herself into a larger history . . . [and] the resulting prosthetic memory has the ability to shape the person's subjectivity and politics.³⁰⁴

Fundamental to the enactment of prosthetic memory, she continues, are the "technologies of mass culture" which facilitates memory as "transportable" and able to "challenge more traditional forms of memory that are premised on claims of authenticity."³⁰⁵ While Landsberg's focus tends toward traumatic memory, its relevance to environmentality is significant from a rhetorical and performative perspective because it offers an embodied, situated framework for thinking about *how* environmental subjectivity takes hold in concrete ways. While she is neither an apologist for consumer culture nor technology, Landsberg follows George Lipsitz to suggest that commodity (and by extension, public) culture offers an accessible mode of identification with broader cultural values. To read a Foucauldian critique back into her work based on the fragments encountered here in the Smokies, the elements of governmentality at work (and play) here complicate oversimplified notions of "suturing" that do not adequately attend to the complex articulations of power and place. By augmenting it with the articulated perspectives of environmentality and rhetorical theory, prosthetic experiences may be read as governed encounters with "conservation." Thus, memories of place that are presented visually and materially -- through the film, for example -- can be taken up and borrowed as if they were "our own," *image-ined* through the nation.

CHAPTER 4

CHILDREN, CONSERVATION, AND THE FUTURE

“I probably shouldn’t linger here for too long. This uniform is like one big target.” -- An NPS interpretive ranger walking across Highway 12 with a group of tourists, joking about the possibility of being intentionally struck by pro-ORV advocates

“Piping Plover Tastes Like Chicken” -- Menu sign at the Froggy Dog Cafe, Highway 12 en route to Ocracoke

“Our thanks to the North Carolina Beach Buggy Association for supporting this program.” -- Cape Hatteras National Seashore Junior Ranger Program Booklet

For many American families of the means and inclination, summertime means vacationing at the beach. Since the early 20th century, but specifically due to postwar real estate speculation and the accompanying building boom, coastal communities up and down the eastern seaboard have been transformed (and created) by visitor demand for modern amenities and amusements by the sea. From Cape Cod to Key West, developers transformed significant swaths of the coast into resort communities during the first half of the century, often draining wetlands, reshaping the shore, and doing harm to coastal ecology in the process. Local economies and cultural practices were equally impacted; for some, the new tourism-based economy was a welcome relief from fishing, hunting, and related industries that held the promise of improved community infrastructure and the possibility of personal prosperity. For others, however, the changes meant reduced access to favorite hunting and fishing grounds, untenable increases in property taxes and the subsequent loss of family

lands, and the gradual disappearance of “the old ways.” Indeed, these narrative tropes are not limited solely to the history of coastal development in the U.S; these discourses tend to emerge as locally valued ways of remembering a place “as it was” through lenses complicated by nostalgia and the (perceived and real) demands of modernization from internal and external forces alike. However, local stories and local controversies do not always take center stage in NPS discourses. Indeed, they often remain powerfully silent. In this role, the NPS does not grant legitimacy to local or regional antagonisms that undermine its positionality as the authoritative arbiter of the rhetorics of place. In some instances, such criticism may be warranted. In the case of the Cape Hatteras National Seashore (CAHA), however, such silences may actually undermine the NPS’s efforts to conserve natural resources. Despite a court order to restrict particular recreational uses of the beach, the NPS downplays its role as both the enforcer of those restrictions and as the agent of conservation.

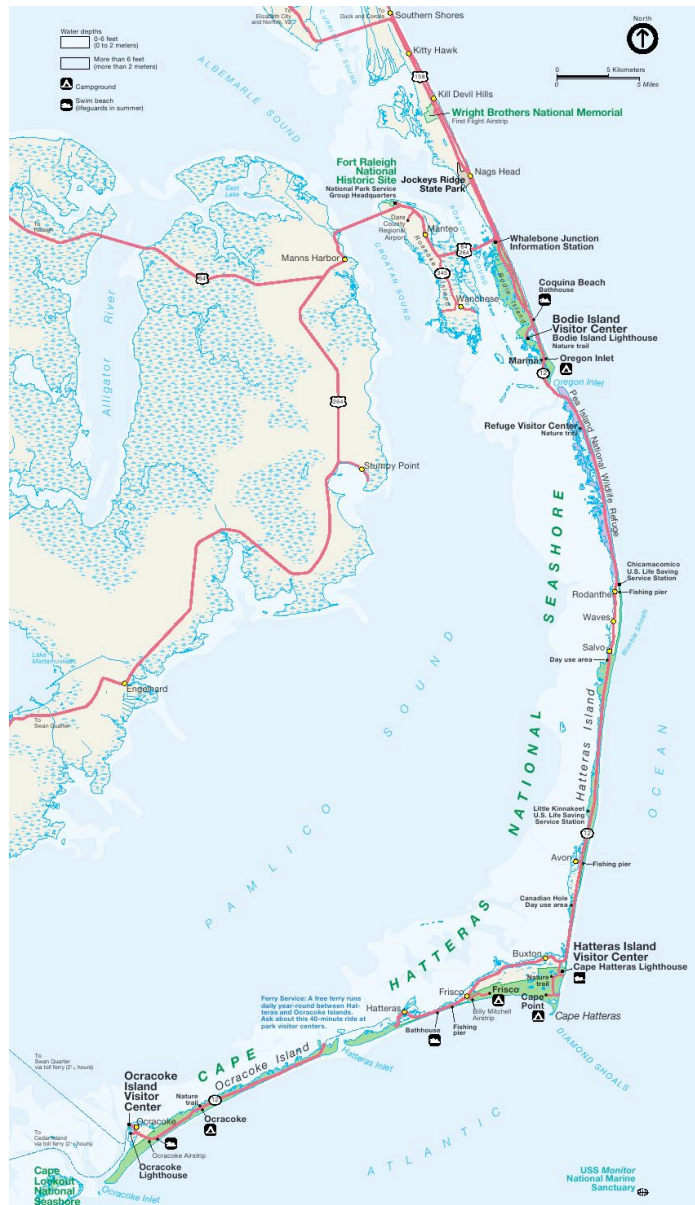
Thus, this chapter focuses on the ways in which NPS discourses work to define conservation and place by maintaining strategic silences about some of the most environmentally endangered coastline in the U.S. today. Specifically, I examine how the Junior Ranger program addresses children as future rhetorical and political subjects by defining conservation as little more than the ability to “read the beach,” and I consider the possibilities through which the Centennial Initiative and the influence of a book promoted by upper levels of NPS management that vows to “leave no child inside.” Addressed primarily through the kinds of experiential environmental education opportunities endorsed by progressives like David Orr, children participating in the Junior Ranger program are nevertheless left out of contemporary environmental controversies that they see and

encounter everyday at CAHA (such as bumper stickers, conversations at the ice cream stand, etc.). These programs, I suggest, define conservation in ways that are nation-washed, for lack of a better term, because they fail to address the local and, as such, oversimplify conservation as a frictionless political ideal. In this way, the NPS may be contributing to the production of a future model of neoliberal citizenship that adopts a sense of “the political” as disconnected from the antagonisms of everyday life. Here, governmental actions do not have to be justified in relation to critics’ challenges and those challenges need not be acknowledged publicly. In this way, governance and dissent are rendered illegible; here, conservation is something that simply happens. By ensuring that no child is left outdoors without the “proper” interpretive framework, nature is rhetorically figured as free of culture.

As noted in earlier chapters, some places have attracted the attention of national interests determined to set some places aside -- outside of the realm of possibility for future development and privatization -- by placing them in the public trust. There was not much of a precedent for such practices on the East Coast; as noted in earlier chapters, the National Park Service and the Department of Interior were initially focused primarily on western parks and lands already held by the federal government.³⁰⁶ In the wake of the Depression and the political and cultural climate established, to a large degree, by New Deal public works projects (as well as the postwar population boom and the rise of mass-produced developments like Levittown, NY and PA, respectively), conservation-minded advocates and others pleaded for the federal government to intervene by taking advantage of an opportune moment. And intervene it did, for multiple reasons and varied constituents alike. Through various public works initiatives (such as the Civilian Conservation Corps) and myriad public-

private partnerships, the federal government made sizable investments in rural and urban communities by creating jobs and purchasing devalued real estate holdings during the 1930s. One notable product of these interventions was the creation of the first National Seashore, Cape Hatteras, authorized in 1937, established in 1953, and dedicated in 1958.³⁰⁷

Figure 4.1: Map of Cape Hatteras National Seashore



As a liminal space, as a dynamic site where wind and water do battle with human designs, and as a highly-managed environment where scientific and aesthetic interventions are not always visible or complementary, CAHA is also a rhetorical place where the environmental effects of policy debates can be experienced first-hand and thus where public interpretation by the NPS is perhaps most explicit in its calls for conservation. The creation of the first national seashore was controversial with several constituencies. Some landowners perceived the creation of a park as an unacceptable encroachment of state power that would unduly trump their property rights and create land use regulations prohibiting them from future profit. Others within the newly-formed administration of the NPS and in other positions of power in the state and national capitals (Raleigh and Washington, respectively), believed that seashores lacked the iconic majesty of the western parks and would ultimately distract the NPS from its founding mission and prove to be a fiscally irresponsible idea. As Cameron Binkley notes in his long-awaited and extensive administrative history of CAHA,

Cape Hatteras embodies the essence of New Deal idealism in several fundamental ways. First, the seashore's origins are tied to President Roosevelt's work-relief programs, the expansion of the National Park Service through involvement in those programs, and the Service's embrace of new parks focused upon history and recreation. Second, the seashore's creation reflects the tradition thrust by progressives to promote both conservation and economic development by establishing parks that preserve wildlife and wilderness while attracting and catering to visitors. Finally, Cape Hatteras is the first national park to recognize that the federal government has a responsibility to maintain public access to the nation's beaches.³⁰⁸

Binkley's study is important because it offers detailed insights into the local, regional, and national interests in conflict and at stake during the 21-year period between the park's

authorization in 1937 and dedication in 1958. Binkley's analysis, which ends in the midst of the Mission 66 building boom, suggests that many of the divisive issues that continue to cultivate and fragment particular interests today have remained prominent issues for concern and debate since the "park idea" for CAHA first surfaced in the 1930s. Since its first operating season and into the present moment, park management at CAHA has struggled to strike a workable balance between the competing demands for recreational and resource-depleting activities desired by some visitors and residents, and the NPS mandate to conserve resources for the future by protecting and preserving natural habitats and ecological processes. Unfortunately, as Binkley observes, those positioning themselves in opposition to the NPS (particularly locals) and to external calls for conservation-based management approaches have had an historical advantage in setting the terms of the public debate by circulating (mis)information, and mobilizing outsiders (visitors and powerful political interests) to their causes through various appeals and campaigns. This has often been accomplished, as Binkley's work suggests and as I have observed first-hand in the field, to the ways in which they have been able to articulate property rights-based discourses to local knowledges and reducing public interest to a secondary effect predicated upon the success of private interests.

Getting to (Know) Ocracoke

In this chapter, I offer a critical interpretation of several key public messages offered by the NPS in one location along CAHA that exemplify the rhetorical and material constraints of place. Here, I focus on the island of Ocracoke, as opposed to multiple sites or

villages along CAHA because of the island's character as a relatively isolated destination and the ways in which it provides a useful counterpoint to the scale and scope of GRSM in Chapter 3. Arguably, Ocracoke offers a microcosmic, intensive, or thick example of how the NPS makes conservation public with fewer available resources at hand and with the added complexity of an impermanent physical environment subject to frequent "revision" by the elements. Additionally, many of the public controversies regarding the commons, beach access, and the environmental effects of contemporary consumer practices are most visible here, yet they remain unaddressed in nearly all NPS discourses. And, in this concentrated place, the symbolic capital of the "bait and tackle crowd" and its framing of "beach access" issues takes on a heightened significance as the lines of antagonism are often palpable in the places of public encounter. In presenting the fragile ecology of CAHA to the visiting public, NPS interpreters invoke a cautious vulnerability to amplify its contingent nature in ways that gently but vividly reinforce a conservation-oriented narrative. They do so by positioning the <health> of this place as indicative or predictive of the health of American culture. In this way, the <health> of Ocracoke can be used as a diagnostic indicator for the <health> of "our" families, environment, communities, and nation. However, the immediate constraints of local politics largely work to displace the immediate impact of the NPS's conservation-oriented rhetorics. On Ocracoke, NPS discourses generally maintain a strategic silence about those issues that have local consequences or that provoke local opposition. Of the topics generally not discussed with the public, beach driving, turtle nests, piping plover populations, and beach renourishment are at the top of the list, despite their overwhelming presence as

topics of conversation between locals and visitors, their prominence in local and regional newspapers, and their visibility on t-shirts, restaurant signs, and bumper stickers.

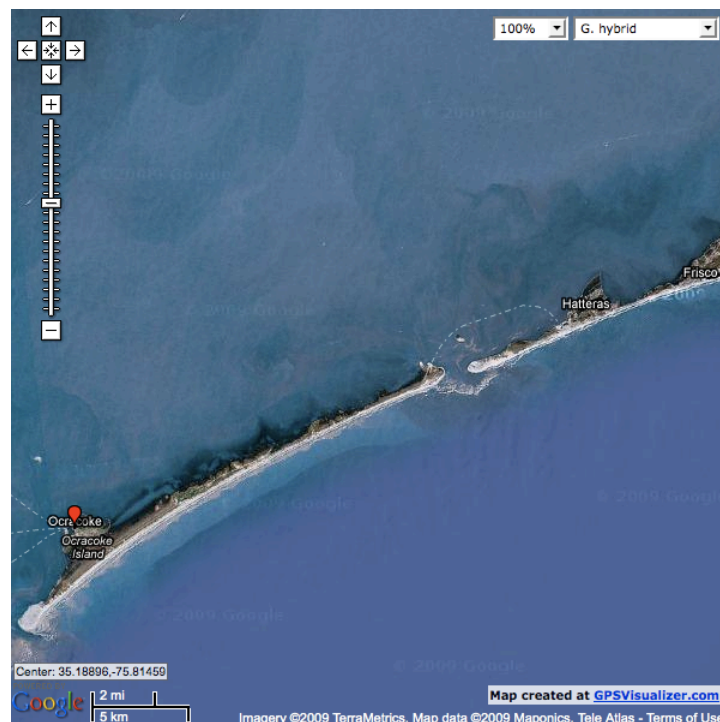
As I have noted here, the isolated, undeveloped characteristics of Ocracoke are emphatically drawn upon by the NPS in ways that provoke and invite deeply contextual experiences of place on a much smaller, condensed, and concentrated scale than other destinations along CAHA. This matters because most of the public communication and rhetorical messages offered on Ocracoke do not take place inside a visitor's center, through a plethora of printed guidebooks and supplemental materials, or via wayside exhibits. Contrary to the ways in which the experience of place is structured and coded in particular ways in the Smokies, visitor experiences at Ocracoke are better understood as more *laissez-faire*, with fewer restraints (and, by extension, fewer opportunities) for engaging the place through national frames. Nevertheless, the fact that there are so few 'amusements' on Ocracoke also influences the number of people who seek out Park Service programming as a way to pass the time. These encounters are shaped primarily through oral interpretation and public events/programming led by rangers. While the NPS does not keep official data regarding the motivations for why individuals seek out park programming at CAHA, my conversations with several members of the interpretive staff and their anecdotal observations suggested that visitor reasons are clearly varied. Some seek entertainment; others are "park families" who intentionally seek out educational experiences from the NPS while on vacation; others discover these events by happenstance, through informal networks on the island, or at the recommendation of an innkeeper or visitor's guide. While many of these programs are open to adults, they are often geared toward an audience comprised of children

and teens accompanied by parents or guardians. As I will discuss later in this chapter, my fieldwork suggests that NPS rhetorics of place on Ocracoke work to cultivate a way of thinking about the relationships between nature and culture through the rhetorical framework of <health> by appealing to the “next generation” of park visitors, taxpayers, and volunteers: American children. Following the success of Richard Louv’s *Last Child in the Woods*, the notion that contemporary children suffer from “nature-deficit disorder” has had a documented influence on NPS programming outcomes and strategic planning in ways that affect how interpretive staff conceptualize and deliver public messages and experiential programming alike.

Ocracoke is a destination that takes a bit of work to reach, and this partly explains why most visitors to the island stay for a week or longer, and why many visitors attend more than one NPS program.³⁰⁹ Unlike other destinations along the Outer Banks that cater primarily to day and overnight visitors, Ocracoke’s remote location -- accessible only by ferry or private plane -- sets the stage for lengthier encounters. As one of the least commercially developed places along the Outer Banks (with the exception of practically inaccessible Cape Lookout National Seashore), Ocracoke is a bit of an anomaly. The entire island is less than 21 miles long, and is approximately 1/2 mile wide -- with little more than sand dunes and grassy marshland protecting the island’s only main road -- N.C. 12/the Irvin Garrish Highway -- from the forces of the sea and the sound. With the exception of the Village of Ocracoke, which is smaller than 9 square miles and home to fewer than 750 year-round residents, the entire island is held and managed by the National Park Service. Like the Smokies, it too was stitched together from several different private holdings: as Binkley

notes, the combined financial contributions of the National Park Service, the state of North Carolina, and the Old Dominion Foundation enabled the purchase of park lands during the 1930s and 1940s. Unlike the Smokies, however, few efforts were made to preserve or recreate elements of pre-park history and culture on NPS-managed land for future visitors. With the exception of the construction of the Ocracoke Pony Pen for the explicit purposes of “saving the wild ponies” from extinction, the NPS largely rewrote the island by reverting formerly occupied land into beachfront and sound side wilderness.

Figure 4.2: Aerial view of Ocracoke Island



Early on, as Binkley and others have noted, the NPS articulated an aesthetic and environmental vision for the island that would highlight its wild character and draw distinct

boundaries between “nature” as the island/public land, and “culture” as the village/private land.³¹⁰

Each week during the summer season, the population of Ocracoke swells to more than 2,500 and the reservation-only campground managed by the NPS is fully booked. And, while thousands of visitors pass through the Ocracoke Visitor Center and interact with interpretive staff during the summer months, the smaller scale of this place enables park staff and visitors to engage in what one interpreter called “more personalized” interactions.³¹¹ As ranger Jennifer Miller observed in one of our interviews, some of the same families return to Ocracoke year after year and attend the same programs. They get to know the rangers by name and are sometimes disappointed when they do not see the same familiar faces from year to year at the park.³¹² And, while many other destinations along the Outer Banks and CAHA are marketed as being both couples and family friendly (and others still are marketed as destinations where singles are clearly welcome), being a “single” tourist on Ocracoke marks one as an outlier. During the course of my fieldwork on Ocracoke, I also became a (temporarily) familiar face at the visitor center and at interpretive programming events, too; on more than one occasion, visitors asked if I was a park service volunteer. The assumption seemed to be, as one married female visitor said to me, “No one comes to Ocracoke alone, so surely you must work with the Park Service.”

As Stick, Ballance, and Shears all note in their analyses of life on the island, Ocracoke is perceived by visitors and residents alike as a place where nature and culture do battle with one another in an eternal struggle. Perhaps not surprisingly, several of these texts are available for purchase from the NPS visitor center bookstores. Despite their different

styles and foci, each author describes Ocracokers as a resilient and resourceful people united by common bonds -- bloodlines, occupations, and hardships. In these texts, and in NPS discourses as well, Ocracoke is coded as a frontier and its "founding families" -- the Howards, Gaskills, Garrishes, Ballances, Wahabs, and O'Neals -- are positioned as actors in our national myth -- as (coastal) pioneers who overcame tremendous odds in order to create something from nothing. In these texts, as well as in the presentations of "Outer Banks" history offered by the NPS in the visitor center exhibits and through its interpretive programming, the lines of entrenchment are simple and frozen in the black and white images of an earlier era. Here, the natural world produces particular challenges (such as hurricanes and the ability to provide food and shelter for one's dependents well beyond the mainland) and the cultural world responds triumphantly with technological innovations, communal struggle, and individual perseverance. Curiously, the more recent chapters in these struggles are visibly absent from the narrative -- from the 1950s forward, which includes those decades when Ocracoke was transformed by tourism and increasingly subject to external environmental regulations. Contemporary clashes between nature and culture are all but invisible. Most problematic is the fact that, when these issues are presented to the public in the form of an informative flyer explaining temporary beach closures due to nesting turtles, they are absolutely devoid of any meaningful historical or political context that takes local politics and compromises into account. And, these pamphlets are frequently only available if visitors know to ask for them. Thus, only the visitors who inquire about "beach closures" are handed a brochure that trades in the language of technocratic expertise and is rhetorically

incapacitated from offering an accessible counter-narrative to those offered by pro-ORV advocates.

Ocracoke -- as a village and an island -- continues to be marketed online and through a plethora of free tourism promotion materials as the most authentic Outer Banks destination because of its historical isolation, due, in large part, to natural or physical constraints, and its overwhelming lack of developed property. Home to Blackbeard the Pirate and his legendary Teach's Cove and devoid of paved roads until the late 1950s, the village of Ocracoke has a distinctive aesthetic that contributes to its sense of place. While "wild" ponies no longer roam the island freely and fishing is no longer the primary occupation of its year-round residents, many elements of "old" Ocracoke remain visible -- and intentionally so, given the influence of the local historic preservation society. Even today, the construction of a bridge or tunnel that would link the island to the mainland remains cost prohibitive, and locals often voice significant opposition to the idea even when tourists raise it nonchalantly in everyday conversation as something that would be most unwelcome anyway. Indeed, the aura of authenticity and the accompanying ethos of "island culture" or "island time" that unfolds during the summer months, where rented bicycles and sandaled feet are the preferred modes of transportation in the village, also influences the general tenor of NPS interpretive programming and how publics respond to it. Unlike programming at Hatteras Lighthouse, programming on Ocracoke usually begins 5-10 minutes behind schedule.

With the exception of some employees who work in service-related industries, Ocracoke is not a "commuter" island; while some visitors come for the day, most are "on island" for several days to a week or more. Indeed, going "up island" to Hatteras or taking

the ferry to the “mainland” can take several hours depending on traffic, ferry demand, weather conditions, and whether one is traveling from Ocracoke to Hatteras or from Ocracoke to Swan Quarter. The former takes 30 minutes each way, while the latter takes up to 2 hours each way. Thus, casual trips to Ocracoke are easily discouraged simply as a result of the effort involved to get to and from the island. In a way, this geographic constraint works to produce a sense of detachment from the mainland, especially for those whose wireless networks do not provide cellular coverage on the island. It’s not uncommon for visitors to run into the same people, such as other visitors, residents, seasonal employees, NPS personnel, and shopkeepers during the course of their stay. This contributes to a temporary sense of shared community, but without the responsibilities and constraints that come along with long-term community involvement. It’s rather difficult, in a place this small, to remain invisible for long. And, since there are no chain restaurants and nearly all businesses on the island are locally owned or managed, practically all consumption is coded or interpreted as “local” (even though consumer goods, from t-shirts to lettuce and beer, must be transported to the island via ferry).

From the recently misleading campaign during the 2007-2008 season about “beach access” waged by the North Carolina Beach Buggy Association and affiliated anti-environmental groups to the long-standing disagreements about the NPS’s changing role as the (fiscally) responsible party for protecting private property against erosion, CAHA has figured as a rhetorical battlefield in the conflicts between various interests staking their claims on its ecological and economic future(s). Indeed, these conflicts are themselves worthy of analysis and long-term engagement. While their complexity is beyond the scope

of this project, they provide a loose contextual, rhetorical frame through which efforts to understand how the NPS addresses the visiting public about conservation may be interpreted.³¹³ Of particular importance to this study are the ways in which NPS rhetorics negotiate the competing claims made by locals versus outsiders (residents, business owners, and “founding families” versus the NPS and environmental experts) during the tourist season by remaining strategically silent about them. As I suggest in this chapter, NPS discourses suggest that this particular place is threatened by practices of consumption and policy that happen far beyond the island of Ocracoke and the rest of CAHA, but that nevertheless have a cumulative effect on these downstream ecosystems. Unlike programming in the Smokies, these discourses take a more direct approach toward educating the visiting public about environmental issues by actually noting, for example, that overfishing is unsustainable. Like the Smokies, however, interpretive programming on Ocracoke does not affix blame or causality to particular actors or economic or social activities. Here, public messages about conservation tend to highlight the small acts that individuals can choose to do; in this regard, the political is made personal but privatized and removed from the public sphere. In this capacity, such discourses may be conceptualized as contributing to a neoliberal ethic of stewardship and conservation that devalues the regulatory role of government and the right of the public to expect government intervention into ecologically unsound practices in its name. Given the degree to which the NPS’s public communication on Ocracoke is geared toward children, positioning them as future stewards, voters, consumers, and citizens, to what extent might these rhetorics offer neoliberalism as the normative political ethos for the next generation?

While most of the NPS's most public messages on Ocracoke target children and their parents, as well as their consumptive practices while on vacation and in the future (i.e. when they return home), local politics, local conflicts, and local people are largely ignored. The semi-official answer to this silence offered to me by several NPS employees is that individual interpreters choose *not* to discuss or focus on local/current issues because they do not want to be viewed as antagonists in an already tense situation. Anecdotally, some rangers discussed instances where they had been subtly (and not-so-subtly) threatened with physical violence. They pointed to instances of vandalism and the intentional disruption of sea turtle nests by off-road vehicles (ORVs) during the 2008 season. On separate occasions, two rangers informed me that other NPS employees based at Hatteras Lighthouse had been refused service in restaurants in Buxton, NC when in uniform.³¹⁴ As I discuss later in this chapter, these tensions are especially palpable when visitors ask NPS employees questions using the rhetorical framework established by local antagonists (“Why are the beaches *closed*?” “What can we do to *save* the beaches?”) because NPS discourses do not deploy a strategic counter-narrative, responding instead (if at all, and often ineffectively or indirectly) with a posture of distanced objectivity.

Last Child at the Beach

One of the most striking aspects of the NPS' public interpretive programming on Ocracoke is its focus on children and rangers' explicit efforts to appeal to their interests. As noted in the 2007 Centennial Initiative report, children are an increasingly important and strategic demographic for the NPS:

As the "greatest university without walls," the National Park Service helps Americans understand their history, culture, and the forces that shape the great outdoors. National parks must embrace education as central to their mission. American will learn about national parks using emerging technologies. Children will be introduced to parks to learn that parks are fun, laying the foundation for them to become conservationists.³¹⁵

Through the widely popular Junior Ranger program, visitors under the age of 13 and their families are strongly encouraged to attend interpretive programs, complete an age-appropriate workbook, and collect one bag of litter in order to earn an official park patch, plastic badge and certificate of completion. Although the Junior Ranger program is also offered at other parks (and its funding is often dependent upon private donations from friends of the park organizations), the range of programs offered and their explicit orientation toward the Junior Ranger program workbooks is rather well-connected at CAHA. Indeed, the isolated and undeveloped nature of Ocracoke contributes to, as one ranger noted, an increased level of participation in the Junior Ranger program as a form of entertainment or something for families to do. There are no boardwalks, miniature golf courses, arcades, or amusements on the island to attract children. Here, as Robert observed, nature is the playground and "kids can play and discover the natural world" in ways that they may not necessarily be able to do in a gated subdivision, at recess, or on a soccer field.

While this may be an accident of circumstances, it's no accident that the NPS has reconsidered its efforts to reach the "next generation" by appealing to childhood curiosity in ways that make nature accessible, fun, and worth conserving. Richard Louv's national bestseller and Audubon award-winning book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* can be found for sale on the shelves in many national park bookstores, and it can also be found dog-eared and referenced in many rangers' offices and,

as I am told, home libraries. Although difficult to empirically verify beyond my case studies at this time, several rangers mentioned this book during the course of my fieldwork on Ocracoke as a new and major influence driving interpretive decisions made at the park level and beyond that was instituted under Fran Mainella's direction of the NPS during the first term of the George W. Bush administration. On Ocracoke, the Junior Ranger program workbooks are sponsored by an organization that is often at odds with the NPS: the North Carolina Beach Buggy Association. This matters because this sponsorship places an additional burden and conflict of interest that may contribute to self-restraint on the part of interpretive rangers and, as I observed, may influence how they address contemporary conservation-oriented controversies in the course of interacting with the visiting public.

As I gathered one warm summer evening with eight families and two couples by a makeshift campfire on the beach, I witnessed the "typical" example often offered anecdotally by rangers when they lament the ways in which the next generation has redefined play as a private, technologically-mediated act. As a ranger told ghost stories and led the group in campfire songs, I could not help but notice a young boy who insisted on playing his hand-held Nintendo while the sun set over the Pamlico Sound. With headphones in his ears and the screen casting a blue-gray glow over his face, the boy was physically present but far removed from the evening's program. Even kind cajoling by the ranger could not persuade the boy's family to "unplug him" for 30 minutes, and the disapproving looks from the other parents cast in his direction were fruitless. As Jennifer and Robert noted the next day, such behaviors are increasingly common and epitomize what some NPS decision-makers believe to be one of the most important crises facing the parks: children who are disengaged from

and disinterested in the natural world. Following Louv's advice, which I have been led to believe is a rather influential discourse for interpreters on Ocracoke (and elsewhere in the park system), NPS programs here are designed to "save" children and the parks by sparking what Louv terms "the nature-child reunion" in ways that "use nature as a moral teacher."³¹⁶ In this regard, as ranger John suggested, the park becomes a "classroom and a playground where kids can experience why this place is special" and where they can "get to know it with their hands, feet, eyes, ears, and noses." Arguably, these embodied ways of knowing can be deeply affective and evoke place-based connections and lifelong memories that transcend rational justifications. At the same time, however, these experiences are often divorced from the particular environmental controversies (such as beach driving or ORV "access") and can lead children and their parents to develop a rather incomplete and contradictory sense of place. As the NPS remains silent about beach driving and the effects that it has on threatened and endangered turtle and bird populations in its interpretive programming while enforcing those regulations in its law enforcement efforts, it sends a rather contradictory message to the visiting public that may likely increase sympathies for the pro-ORV positions.

During the 2008 visitor season, the NPS offered 14 unique interpretive programs per week across 30 different sessions. I attended 11 of these programs (12 sessions) during my time on the island. While visitor interest, park resources, and interpreter interest all play a role in determining what programming is offered when, several of the most popular programs, such as Night Lights, are offered only once a week. Others, such as Barrier Island Nature and Pirates! are offered more frequently; new programs, such as the Maritime Woods Walk, take place once per week on a trial basis during the season. The rationale for limiting

new programming, as explained to me by Robert Brown, a seasonal ranger, provides the NPS with an opportunity to assess the extent to which new programs make a worthwhile contribution while also making the best possible use of limited park resources. It's also worth noting that four full-time seasonal rangers are responsible for staffing the small visitor center and conducting all interpretive programming on the island. And, while the visitor center offers a few informational exhibits about nature, island culture, and naval history, it serves primarily as a gift shop, rest stop, and informational booth for tourists arriving and departing via the ferry.

Compared to visitor center facilities in the Smokies and the Asheville Destination Center on the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Ocracoke visitor center is both cramped and visibly underfunded. Here, there is only one glass-encased exhibit, no multimedia displays, and no orientation films: the wood structure, perhaps 900 square feet at best, is barely large enough to house a bookstore, two small staff offices/storage closets, and eight somewhat dated informational exhibits. These understated displays, fitting of their genre, enact a predictably declarative tone as they work to inform visitors about the distinct nature and culture of Ocracoke Island specifically, and of CAHA generally. On an average weekday during my stay on the island, approximately 100-300 people passed through the center. These exhibits present a vision of Ocracoke as a place far removed from its past, framed here as a distinctively pre-modern era. Nature, too, is also divorced from culture in these exhibits. Images of endangered species, such as the loggerhead turtle and piping plover are on display alongside enlarged black and white photos of the iconic Ocracoke Ponies without any acknowledgment of the particular consumptive and land use patterns -- of the public and

private choices -- that led to the precarious status of these living creatures. In this way, conservation is not actively on display as a much-needed set of proactive actions by citizens, consumers, and regulatory bodies. Instead, the question is always already suspended as if there were no answers (tentative or otherwise) and no research that could yield alternative outcomes. Instead, the prevailing message received by the public is one of false stasis. Thus, when children participate in some ranger-led programs, their experiences of “witnessing” nature while being steeped in somewhat disingenuous discourses regarding “authenticity” and “purity” of the beach wilderness complicate how they understand environmental issues as complex later in life. As one colleague who works as an environmental advocate at the state level lamented to me earlier this year, “what kids get out of their experiences at the beach and in the care of the Park Service matters because it sets expectations for how my messages will resonate down the road when they’re adults.” Thus, she continued, “it matters if they’re greenwashed into believing that nothing is wrong with the Outer Banks except hurricane-induced beach erosion. Later on in life, they either figure out that they’ve been misled and they don’t believe that environmental issues were ever a big deal, or they get angry in ways that aren’t really productive. How can I work with that?”³¹⁷

Figure 4.3 and 4.4: Interior of the Ocracoke Visitor Center and its Informational Exhibits



Given the cramped conditions of the center, guided tours are a logistical impossibility. Instead, visitors are invited to wander at their leisure and to ask questions of whomever may be on duty working at the informational desk. On some occasions, this individual is not a member of the interpretive staff, but instead a local volunteer or seasonal employee of Eastern National, one of the federally approved concessionaires that manages many park gift shops and bookstores. Unlike the Pea Island Wildlife Refuge or Hatteras Lighthouse visitor centers, where there is a site-specific attraction to provide a consistent flow of visitors, there is nothing of note at the Ocracoke visitor center: it sits adjacent to the ferry terminal at the end of Highway 12. Given the physical constraints of the visitor center, most of the interpretive programming offered by the NPS takes place outside. Although there is a small amphitheater with wooden benches capable of accommodating up to 100 visitors, its use for

interpretive programming is somewhat limited: programs shorter than 45 minutes and with a low degree of interactivity take place at the visitor center amphitheater, and visitors can come and go according to interest and/or their ferry reservations.

Figure 4.5: Exterior front view of the Ocracoke Visitor Center



Lengthier, hands-on and experiential programs (see Table 1 for details) take place instead at specific sites along the island. From learning how to use a seine net to explore the sound by catching, identifying, and releasing marine animals that call it home to digging up coquina clams and counting how many are alive and healthy, visitors are treated to a range of programs outside of the visitor center that invite them into a playful space of discovery wherein they are positioned as explorers, taxonomists, and detectives.³¹⁸

Table 4.1: Interpretive Programming offered by the NPS on Ocracoke Island (2008)

Program	# Times Offered /Week	NPS Guidebook Description	Program Length	Location
Barrier Island Nature**	5	Sea turtles, shorebirds, seashells, and shoreline migration. Join a ranger for a talk about the wild side of the Outer Banks. Topics will vary daily.	30-45 minutes	Visitor Center Amphitheater
Especially for Kids*	4	Hands-on activities allow kids to have fun while learning about the seashore. Check at the Visitor Center to learn the program of the day.	30-45 minutes	Visitor Center Amphitheater
Banker Ponies*	3	The Banker Ponies are definitely an Ocracoke must-see! Learn more about their mysterious origins, unique physical attributes, survival skills, and the circumstances that led the Park Service to care for them. Sunscreen is recommended.	30 minutes	Ocracoke Pony Pen
Outer Banks History*	3	Come learn about life along the Outer Banks. Possible topics include shipwrecks, early settlers, German U-Boat activity along the coast during World War II, and hurricanes. Check at the Visitor Center to learn the program of the day.	30 minutes	Visitor Center Amphitheater
Pirates!*	3	The Outer Banks was a popular place for pirates during the early 1700s. Find out why the area was so attractive to pirates and how the golden age of piracy dramatically ended.	30 minutes	Visitor Center Amphitheater
Crabbing with a Ranger	2	Learn all about blue crabs, and try your hand at catching them. Pre-register at the visitor center. Limited to 25 participants. Bring bait (fish or chicken parts), sunscreen, bug repellent, and wading shoes.	1 1/2 hours	Beach
Explore the Shore*	2	Join a ranger for a walk along the beach to explore an ever changing world. Wear sunscreen and wading shoes.	1 hour	Beach
Graveyard of the Atlantic*	2	Countless ships have met their ruin off the Outer Banks. Learn how storms, shoals, currents, war, and commerce have contributed to the wreckage and about those who risked their lives to save victims onboard.	30 minutes	Visitor Center Amphitheater
Evening Campfire*	1	Spend an evening under the stars hearing stories of the Outer Banks. Topics may include shipwrecks, pirates, sea life, and legends. Bring a beach chair, a warm blanket, a flashlight, and insect repellent.	1 hour	Beach
Maritime Woods Walk*	1	Explore one of the oldest sections of the islands as we venture into maritime forest habitat. Discover why the maritime forest is so important to the plants, animals, and people of the islands.	1 hour	Maritime Forest

Program	# Times Offered /Week	NPS Guidebook Description	Program Length	Location
Morning Bird Walk*	1	The Outer Banks is well known for its abundant bird life. Come explore their beach and salt marsh haunts. Beginner and experienced birders welcomed. Binoculars are available if you don't bring your own. Sunscreen is recommended.	1 1/2 hours	Beach
Night Lights***	1	Take back the night! Leave those artificial lights behind and experience the natural lights on the beach after dark. Join a ranger for a short walk to search the tide line for glowing marine plankton and the sky for planets and star constellations. Find out why protecting the dark of night is valuable to both people and wildlife. Insect repellent and foot protection is recommended.	1 hour	Beach
Ocean Safety Demo	1	Ocean swimming can be hazardous. Come to one of the three National Park Service lifeguarded beaches where guards will demonstrate water rescue techniques. You will learn how to protect yourself against rip currents, pounding waves and more.	1 hour	Beach
Soundside Seining*	1	Interested in learning about the Pamlico Sound and the creatures found there? Join a ranger and discover the wonders of the sound with a seining net. Wear wading shoes. Sunscreen and insect repellent are recommended.	1-1/2 hours	Sound

Reproduced from the 2008 In the Parks official park newspaper/park guide available at all visitor centers for free. The newspaper is published by Eastern National and produced by NPS employees.³¹⁹

Through the body and through shared experiences, these programs work to educate visitors about conservation by demonstrating abstract concepts like bioaccumulation, overfishing, and pollution with site-based evidence. Indeed, they seem to incorporate the recent advice of environmental advocate and educator David Orr by offering low stakes, exploratory opportunities where children are invited to engage the natural world.³²⁰ Below, I offer three tales from the field that highlight the ways in which these programs position children as future citizens while also avoiding contemporary local controversies (such as ORV access).

Barrier Island Nature

It's just before noon on a humid, sunny morning in late July, and the seats in the outdoor amphitheater adjacent to the Ocracoke visitor center are filling slowly. Several adult couples, as well as a few with children, are seeking refuge from the heat under the trees. Bottled water is the drink of choice, and the mosquitoes are biting early today. After waiting for a few minutes for folks to get settled, Jennifer introduces herself to this small crowd of 30 people. She is a tall, fit woman in her late 20s, and she is one of the few female NPS employees on the island this summer. Although rangers are permitted to wear shorts in the summertime, she chooses long wool pants and hiking boots as her attire of choice. Jennifer's parents both worked for the Park Service, and she was recently hired as a full-time member of the interpretive staff at GRSM. This was her first summer at Ocracoke, as she had requested a temporary summer assignment in order to expand her skill set. After completing my fieldwork in the Smokies later in the semester, I came to understand (retrospectively) that she was often holding herself to the "higher standards," as she put it, of work at that highly monitored and highly self-monitoring park. At the same time, however, her appearance is noticeable different; as the only interpretive ranger on the island in official dress, she also serves as a perhaps unwitting reminder of symbolic authority and the power invested in the NPS uniform by park employees and the general public alike. Indeed, she rarely removes her ranger hat during programs, despite the fact that other rangers do. This may simply be a personal preference. Jennifer's mannerisms, while friendly, suggest a direct, no-nonsense attitude; many of the side conversations taking place before her arrival trail off into attentive silence, and most of the children gathered are clutching brightly-colored Junior Ranger

program books. Although she is new to Ocracoke for the summer, Jennifer has plenty of experience working with children: she has spent a significant amount of time volunteering through the Student Conservation Association (SCA) and working in GRSM as a seasonal ranger.

Jennifer begins by talking for a few minutes about the dangers of rip currents before launching into the day's nature program and drawing from her bag of props -- within minutes, she will circulate a giant tortoise shell through the crowd and use a series of hand-drawn visual aids to emphasize the water cycle. The topic of today's talk is rather broad, offering an overview of the plants and animals found at Ocracoke so that visitors might identify them later. Jennifer engages the audience with finesse, asking age-appropriate questions that gently lead younger members of the audience to "discover" the correct answers while also providing examples of key terms that appear in the Junior Ranger booklets. At one point, she invites the audience to reflect on the realities of overfishing by linking the environmental health of the sound to the fact that most of the scallops and oysters served at one of the most popular island restaurants, the Jolly Roger, must be imported from elsewhere. Her talk is punctuated by occasional blasts of the ferry's monstrous air horn from several hundred feet away as it announces arrivals and departures, but she never acknowledges it. One family gets up at this point and leaves without a word; a few others have trickled over from cars parked in the ferry line to catch a quick glimpse of the program before departing the island. As she circulates the tortoise shell, Jennifer talks about the importance of reducing light pollution without referencing the ORV night driving controversy. Instead, she asks the children to try and reduce their use of flashlights and other

bright lights when on the beach at night. To illustrate her point, Jennifer passes several tiny plastic turtles around for the audience to consider and explains how far they must travel to get to the ocean in order to survive. The stark contrast between the giant tortoise shell and the tiny plastic figures provokes several children in the audience to ask what they can do to help the turtles. Jennifer uses this moment to invite them to become Junior Rangers and to “help rangers protect the beach so everyone can enjoy it” in the future.

As she explains the concept of interdependence to the audience, Jennifer uses visual aids to emphasize how birds, insects, salt marshes, and water quality “need each other” just like we need access to clean water and food. Her talk does not touch on island history or the ways in which Ocracokers of past and present times attempted to strike a balance between nature and culture. Instead, Jennifer discusses what it means for Ocracoke to be “downstream” from other sources of pollution and the ways in which everyday activities, such as using fertilizers and pesticides on home lawns, can affect the water quality. While she briefly mentions how “using less stuff” makes less waste, the audience is not asked to commit to (or even consider) how “using less stuff” could contribute to the health of the island. Toward the end of the session, Jennifer opens the floor to questions from the audience, and several children use the opportunity to tell the others what they like about Ocracoke, to share what they did yesterday, and to ask what it’s like to be a ranger. Jennifer encourages them and cedes the floor to each without interruption; she offers a final reminder for the children to come forward and have their books initialed in order to demonstrate progress toward completing the booklet. Here, conservation is *laissez-faire*. Throughout the presentation, Jennifer does not reference beach closures, off-road vehicles, or the

increasingly important role played by wildlife biologists on the island. When one middle-aged man inquires about “closed beaches,” Jennifer does not correct him or reframe his language. Instead, she kindly directs him inside to speak with another (male) ranger to obtain a map and handout outlining the temporary closures. Seemingly satisfied with her answer, he does so. With fewer than 30 minutes to spare before her next assignment, Jennifer takes her props into the air-conditioned visitor center where most of the audience has now congregated to escape the heat and humidity, use the restroom, validate NPS passports, turn in completed Junior Ranger booklets, and purchase souvenirs. Several well-intentioned parents corner her to learn more about the evening’s campfire program and the Ocracoke pony adoption program.

Soundside Seining

On another sultry afternoon, several cars full of people are parked and idling. It’s a rare sight, indeed: people holed up in air-conditioned vehicles parked in a beach access lot. With the exception of the daily line-up to board the ferries at either end of the island on Highway 12 -- there are no drive-thrus on Ocracoke -- people rarely seem to want to sit in their vehicles when the cool waters of the ocean and relieving breezes of the beach are so close at hand. Today, however, is an exception. When temperatures in the 90s and high humidity combine with a “slickam” (day without a breeze in local terms), standing on asphalt for any length of time, no matter how exciting the reason may be, isn’t a welcome idea. I’m the lone exception as I stand next to an NPS informational board, waiting for the two rangers to arrive for the Soundside Seining program. A Park Service Jeep rolls in just before 2pm;

Robert and John, two seasonal interpretive rangers, emerge and look around the empty lot. I approach them and introduce myself. Within minutes, a dozen people decamp from their cars and gather around Robert and John: in addition to me, there are 3 families (6 adults and 4 children under the age of 13). After ensuring that everyone has water, bug spray, and water shoes, John and Robert ask for volunteers to carry the net and other gear that we will be using from the parking lot to the sound. John and Robert ask each of us to share our name and hometown as we hike through the marsh grass, and they take stock of the group's experience with using a seine net. Perhaps not surprisingly, none of us had used a large, two-person net before; what was surprising to them, however, was the fact that no one in the group had ventured beyond the highway to the sound side of the island before. When queried by John and Robert, the adults in the group suggested a concern for staying within known boundaries: the sound side was a source of confusion for many, as they were generally unclear as to who was permitted "over there" and for what purposes. The older children in the group also responded, noting that they weren't sure what one could do for fun: it seemed buggy, quiet, and not nearly as fun as the more energetic beachfront. John and Robert nodded silently throughout.

After everyone had spoken, Robert started with a short talk about the dynamic relationship between the sound and the ocean; much of his information, as he would tell me later, came from several of the books offered for sale in the NPS bookstore, including one that explains how to "read a North Carolina beach." In under five minutes, he explained how the Outer Banks are actually moving "backward" and closer to the mainland; he invited the children to imagine how sand from the beach might end up on the sound. Some believed that

it was carried by wind and water, and they were mostly correct. Robert noted how coastal geologists working at East Carolina University and Duke University have developed new theories that explain how sand dunes prevent the beach from taking its “natural shape” and how other human actions can negatively impact the beach. He bent down and asked several children to take a closer look at the grass; using the concept of interdependence, Robert helped the group identify the importance of salt grass and the ways in which wetlands and marsh areas act like “nature’s kidneys”; when we lose them to development, when “the beach looks like it does up at Nags Head . . . it’s harder for nature to do its work.” The sound, Robert explained, was just as accessible to the public as the beach, but less familiar to most visitors who do not have a background or interest in clamming, birding, or hunting. Indeed, no one in the group was able to identify the large wooden structures located off in the distance as duck blinds.

As we reached the edge of the water, John reviewed basic safety tips, and then asked the two largest men in the group to help him unravel the net. While they worked, Robert led the group into the ankle-deep, clear water and confided that this activity was his favorite because he could never predict what we would find. A few weeks ago, he noted, someone in the group observed a stingray in the water. Upon hearing this, most of the children perked up and began asking questions: “What lives here?” “Can anything here hurt me?” “Can we keep and eat what we find?” Robert fielded them with care. The adults had slightly different questions: “Is this how the people who live here used to harvest seafood?” “How does the Park Service prevent people from overfishing?” As John and the two men entered the water with the seine net, Robert explained how dragging the bottom of the sound is a useful way

for determining its health: “We can count what we find today and compare it with what we’ve found on other days. We can look at the diversity of species and their size, as well as whether they appear healthy. These observations can tell us a little bit about the health of the sound and give us an early indication if something is wrong.”

During the next hour, participants took turns dragging the net, asking questions about the sound, looking to see what was found, and asking John and Robert for help in identifying the marine animals caught in the net. Together, we discovered several shrimp and two blue crabs of differing size; Robert invited the children to use a smaller fishing net to remove the animals and to place them into a viewing tank. John used this opportunity to educate us about the gradual disappearance of shellfish and shrimp in the sound from overfishing and pollution, noting that the state had placed significant restrictions on the harvesting of these animals from the sound in recent years. Time and again, the <health> of the water and of the individual organisms were linked to the health of the planet and regional ecosystems alike. At one point, Robert reminded us that runoff from as far away as the North Carolina mountains eventually makes its way to the coast. “What we do at home has effects here on the beach,” Chris observed. And so the activity continued; as individuals became more comfortable and confident in the sound waters, we ventured into knee-deep territory and fanned out in pairs, in family groups, and alone. Every few minutes, someone would find something, announce it to the group, and consult with John or Robert in order to identify it. I found a scallop and nearly dropped it when it clamped its shell and squirted water into my hand, much to the amusement of the group. Indeed, our experiences were quite similar to the description offered in a 2006 press release publicizing seining events at CAHA:

For this program, the participants wade out into the Sound and use a seine net to capture the marine life in the area. Once they pull the net to the shore, its contents are transferred into viewing boxes for all to see. The live creatures caught in the viewing boxes represent a microcosm of the larger Pamlico Sound and can change with every program depending on the area, the tides, the weather, and the season. Once the net is emptied, the ranger identifies and discusses the marine life, which can include shrimp, pipefish, spot, croaker, sea trout, tonguefish, summer flounder, killifish, silver minnows, hermit crabs, comb jellies, stingrays, and blue crabs including soft crabs. The creatures are released unharmed at the end of the program. Throughout the program, the ranger also discusses other parts of the Sound that can not be caught in a seine net such as the life cycle of the blue crab, marsh plants, adaptations, ribbed mussels, eelgrass, periwinkles, and tidal cycles.³²¹

Before long, our adventure had come to a close. Robert and John issued instructions and offered assistance as several of us struggled to fold the net, rinse the smaller nets, and ensure that the viewing boxes were emptied. Together, we walked back to load the gear into the Jeep while Robert and John answered questions about the Junior Ranger program and promoted other ranger-led interpretive events that would take place later in the week. After signing off on several Junior Ranger program booklets, they departed for the Ocracoke visitor center after all of the participants had dispersed. Due to the labor-intensive nature of the seining program and the limited number of interpretive staff, this popular program is only offered once per week on Ocracoke.

Explore the Shore

Just before 9am on a Friday morning, I am once again the lone visitor waiting for a park ranger to arrive for a program. In the parking lot next to the Ocracoke campground, four mothers have gathered with their children for the same reason; I'm viewed with a bit of suspicion, as there are no children with me. Robert arrives and greets me by name, which

seems to soften their glances. Although the weekend is just beginning, there is a particular sense of urgency to the parents' desire to complete this activity and obtain the required signature needed for the Junior Ranger book. Of the 8 children gathered, all are under 9; most are still sleepy, a few are overtly cranky, and the sense of enthusiasm and wonder that marked other ranger-led events is a bit diminished. To be fair, the humidity is stifling and the mosquitoes and green flies have found us, despite the strong odor of Off! emanating from the group. As the only male adult present, Robert makes a particular effort to be sensitive to his perceived authority while also keeping the group together and on task. Although the previous evening's rains have erased many signs of human presence from the beach, Robert makes a beeline for a plastic soda bottle filled with tobacco spit and picnic trash left behind from what appear to have been late night revelers, inviting us to follow along and pick up any trash that we might find, too.

As we walk down the beach with Robert, he pauses to identify the birds flying above the surf and those walking along the beach. He notes the presence of ORV tracks close to the wrack line, and uses this observation as an opportunity to pause and spend a few minutes teaching the group how to "read" the beach. Beginning with the dunes, he explains how some are natural, while others are created by humans in an effort to control erosion. Robert offers good reasons for children and others to stay off the dunes, noting that they are often places where protected animals make their nests. Robert does not mention piping plovers or sea turtles, however. Instead, he explains how sea grasses are fragile and help keep the dunes in place. When everything is in balance, he explains, we have "dynamic equilibrium" and that helps "keep the beaches healthy" for everyone. Robert invites the smaller children to

look carefully at the wrack line to see if they can identify any plants or animals. Seeing none, Robert draws the group closer to the water and digs a small hole at the water's edge. He finds a few coquina clams and demonstrates how they are alive: they burrow themselves back into the sand when the water washes back along the shore. The children are encouraged to give it a try, and most do. A few are unsuccessful at first in locating live clams; meanwhile, Robert takes a moment to address the adults directly to inform them about other interpretive programs offered during the weekend. Before boredom sets in among the group, Robert continues the walk by asking the children to look for traces of life on the beach -- tracks, feathers, and other signs. After briefly explaining how high and low tides work together to "rewrite" the beach every night, we follow our own footsteps back to the parking lot; the morning walk was voluntarily cut short because of the overwhelmingly buggy conditions. Robert signed off on several Junior Ranger books, and fielded a few questions about the ferry schedule before heading back to the visitor center.

Unlike many of the other interpretive events offered during the week, the children and adults in this group asked few questions. As I debriefed with Robert later in the day, he noted that the dynamic and energy level of audiences at events held close to the campground was generally disappointing. Without directly making references to class and educational differences, Robert noted that there seemed to be a noticeable divide in audience interest based on where interpretive events were sited. In passing, he suggested that visitors who were based in the Village of Ocracoke (which costs significantly more than staying in an NPS campground) were generally more inquisitive and preferred programs that were more interactive, where audiences based at the campground preferred to be "talked to." He seemed

genuinely disappointed by the morning walk's tenor, and openly critical of the two children who chased seagulls and attempted to lob shells toward them in his presence while their parent(s) refused to intervene. "What if he is the last child at the beach, you know? We're in trouble..." he sighed. While it may be true that children have perhaps always opted out of organized activities and harassed the wildlife, NPS employee perceptions of the public are sometimes shaped by these interactions and they can, as noted here, contribute to a sense of dismay or alarm that the public simply doesn't care, so why should the employee?

On Strategic Silences and "Playing" Citizens

Contrary to the ways in which many of them have grown accustomed to highly structured and monitored forms of "play" that transpire amidst competition or performance, children participating in the Junior Ranger at Ocracoke program are provided with opportunities for role playing, collaboration, and activities that privilege cooperation and stewardship. Granted, as the above anecdotes suggest, providing an opportunity does not necessarily correlate with a guaranteed or even predictable outcome. Nevertheless, there are several components of the Junior Ranger program that provide a kind of discursive and performative training in "citizenship" that involve several elements of banal nationalism. In this regard, they are rhetorical components of NPS programming that, when paired with the claims invoked regarding the crises of childhood obesity and what Louv and others have referred to as the most pressing crisis facing the future of American parks: the disconnect between American children and nature. Contextually speaking, these claims share resonance with the phenomena observed by Grossberg regarding the ways in which children are

articulated to political maneuvers as both the object and subject of claims made on the future <health> of a nation's moral culture.³²²

While the NPS has not declared a “war” on kids, it has targeted them as a potentially powerful locus for moving the social in the future. Instead of focusing its energies on educating adults about the importance of conservation and the irreparable consequences of particular policies (such as the “tradition” of unrestricted ORV access on CAHA), NPS rhetorics on Ocracoke appeal directly to children. To extend Asen’s argument, understanding citizenship as a discourse and set of practices that are rehearsed and performed within a particular cultural moment -- even by its most junior members -- opens a space of possibility for considering the kinds of rhetorical work that “play” can do.³²³ Note, for example, the language of the Official Junior Ranger Seashore Pledge that junior-rangers-to-be must recite while holding their right hand aloft during the “swearing in” ceremonies held several times a day at each visitor center:

As a Junior Seashore Ranger, I will protect American's National Parks by

1. Becoming a Junior Ranger at other National Parks
2. Helping to keep the Seashore litter free
3. Not feeding wild animals and birds
4. Staying out of protected areas (sea turtle and bird enclosures)
5. Sharing my experience at Cape Hatteras National Seashore with others³²⁴

These simple guidelines take on additional importance when “pledged” in public to a perceived authority figure -- a ranger-- as a symbolic, declarative act. Children are asked to treat the land with respect and abide by federal laws in ways that are clearly appropriate (#2, 3, and 4) to maintaining the place for future visitors, but they are also asked to take a more active role by seeking out future Junior Ranger programs (and, perhaps, by extension,

persuading their parents or guardians to visit National Parks with greater frequency) and to become more active communicators (junior rhetoricians?) by sharing their experiences with others. These requests are commemorated as a uniformed ranger pins a gold plastic badge to each new Junior Ranger's clothing.

Inviting children to take ownership -- to invest themselves in a shared vision and experience -- is an important step, as Louv observes, toward influencing how they may view themselves in relationship to the environment as stewards.³²⁵ Notably, the language of ownership, as opposed to the language of the commons, resonates most strongly in these discourses. Indeed, the premise behind the resurgence of the Junior Ranger program and its newest online component, WebRangers (introduced in 2003), is the notion that the nation is facing a crisis that will have implications for public health and the health of the public. For Louv, however, the crisis must also be solved by addressing the "spiritual necessity of nature" for American youth.³²⁶ While he does not suggest that the NPS fulfill this perceived need, Louv's conclusions invite additional inquiry and scrutiny into the ways in which faith-based arguments may be used to influence NPS policy. Given the overt efforts by evangelical groups to excise references to evolution from scientifically-backed, geological information offered by the NPS to the public at the Grand Canyon and other sites during the past decade, the adoption of this book in recent years by NPS interpreters invites a closer look.³²⁷ Louv's book was referenced regularly in the 2007 and 2008 meeting minutes of the NPS national leadership council, and he recently co-taught a graduate seminar at Clemson University with former Bush administration appointee and former NPS director Fran Mainella titled "Nature Deficit Disorder: Implications on Human Well-Being."³²⁸ Recently,

Louv's arguments have been invoked by former and current affiliates of the Blue Ribbon Coalition to further their agenda. And, while Louv's book frequently appears as a recommended resource for home schooling families and evangelicals alike, there is little evidence to suggest that Louv is directly involved with or affiliated with these groups. Nevertheless, Louv's arguments have been embraced at the highest levels of the NPS's administration and are likely to play in an influential role in how children are courted as a current and future public.

Although the first Junior Ranger programs were believed to have originated in California state parks, the NPS Junior Ranger program has existed in various iterations at multiple NPS sites with similarly varied degrees of financial and administrative support from individual parks during the past 30 years.³²⁹ Today, more than 290 Junior Ranger programs are in effect nationwide; some are funded by the National Parks Foundation, while others, like the CAHA program, are supported by local interest groups. Since 1994, the North Carolina Beach Buggy Association (NCBBA) has provided \$60,000 in financial support to the program.³³⁰ While I cannot claim a causal link between the funding of this program by a decidedly pro-ORV organization and the general absence of public information offered by the NPS in its environmental programming (especially regarding the environmental impact of ORV beach driving and the involvement of the NCBBA as a key proponent of this year's misleading "beach access" campaigns), there are potential conflicts of interest that emerge from this partnership that could influence the NPS' ability to fulfill its mission. Furthermore, as I observed during the course of my fieldwork, the ORV controversy was *not* mentioned in

any of the ranger-led interpretive programming that I attended while on Ocracoke, nor did the rangers mention the role of the ban on beach driving in increasing turtle and bird populations.

As Louv's work continues to gain momentum, and if the programs enacted during the Bush administration that lead up to the NPS Centennial Initiative in 2016 continue to thrive during the Obama administration and via various private funding sources, I suspect that the Junior Ranger program will continue to grow in popularity and scope. The recently-released 2008 Centennial Initiative progress report notes that "the number of children enrolled as Junior Rangers" rose by 22% in 2008, and "parks in the Southeast and Capital Regions reported an increase of more than 42 percent in the number of children served by curriculum-based education programs."³³¹ Furthermore, the report justified these increases by implicitly invoking Louv's book: "national parks restore minds, hearts, and souls. Many Americans, especially children, are increasingly disconnected from the great outdoors. national parks will be part of the solution to reduce obesity, chronic illness, and adult-onset diabetes."³³² Perhaps the ambiguity of Louv's work offers insight into why it has been endorsed or cited by the Sierra Club and by individuals affiliated with the Blue Ribbon Coalition. Although it does not claim a political position explicitly, it nevertheless echoes the discourses of "Conservation Care" endorsed by evangelist Richard Cizek. Although Cape Hatteras National Seashore (CAHA) and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GRSM) are environmentally threatened places that attract millions of visitors on an annual basis, the ways in which their public messages negotiate local history, politics, and culture vary significantly. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, Ocracoke is an extraordinarily *telling* place where rhetorical and material struggles to stake claims to nature and culture are

mediated in ways that mute the salience of ongoing political struggles to define the commons and the environmental effects of contemporary consumer practices on a fragile ecosystem.

Figure 4.6 and 4.7: Roadside Signs Along Highway 12 in Buxton En Route To/From Ocracoke



While the island lacks many of the more traditional means of engaging the visiting public via wayside exhibits, visitor orientation films, and well-equipped visitor center facilities, there is still a tremendous amount of interactive public communication that takes place each summer through the NPS' interpretive programming. Instead of focusing on the particular artifacts that tourists might purchase in order to commemorate or remember their time in the park, I focus instead on the activities that might, arguably, leave more of a lasting impression and perhaps “do” a deeper level of cultural and political work than a t-shirt, bumper sticker, or other souvenir. While earned Junior Ranger badges and patches may also circulate as souvenirs or badges of cultural experience when young visitors return home; they might also

end up, forgotten, in the attic or in the trash can. Nevertheless, these programs reach millions of children and adults on an annual basis; while it is extraordinarily difficult (if not impossible) to note the extent to which exposure to and/or participation in these programs translates into demonstrable shifts in policy, belief, and/or changes in consumer habits, their aim is nevertheless affective and advocative. As I have learned from interviewing interpretive staff at GRSM and CAHA, seasonal and long-time NPS employees have great expectations for the Junior Ranger program as an educational and advocacy-based strategy that will translate into long-term gains and public support for the Park Service in decades to come. If, however, controversial and contemporary issues are explicitly avoided by NPS discourses as visible silences within the Junior Ranger program, how might those absences work against, undo, or complicate the ways in which (future and current) visitors think about conservation, citizenship, and place?

By remaining silent about the immediate contextual issues facing the NPS on Ocracoke from pollution, ORVs, overfishing, and other ecologically harmful practices, the NPS takes on a parental persona whereby children are protected from unpleasant or complicated knowledges. By inviting children to bear witness to the environment and to focus solely on the immediate actions that they can take as consumers in their hometowns, the NPS forwards an understated rhetoric of place that does not attend to the immediate, material crises facing CAHA today. As Kelly Oliver argues in her discussion of visual practices and the ways in which subjectivity is cultivated through practices of looking as knowing, learning how to look is fraught with ethical baggage that pivots on the question of representative truth(s).³³³ In this way, the Junior Ranger Program positions children as

unwitting false witnesses to conservation. Here, conservation is a way of looking at the land and learning how to read, identify, and categorize natural resources. In this regard, the adoption of a neoliberal gaze that causally links economic health to environmental health (in that order) is encouraged. The basic message, for example, of the sound side seining activity informs participants that if the water is healthy, then the animals that live in it are healthy and abundant. If they are healthy and abundant, then we will have plenty to eat. The net used for seining catches much more than scallops, blue crabs, and shrimp: it also catches trash floating in the water, but this is not discussed in detail. Nor do the programs address the historic and contemporary differences in regulatory environmental oversight.

While governmental silences are nothing new, the ways in which conservation civics are enacted on Ocracoke have much in common with their manifestations on the Blue Ridge Parkway as well. In this case, however, children are caught in a rather one-sided “crossfire” wherein ORV advocates get the first and last word due to the NPS’s silence. Furthermore, conservation is defined and made public in ways that are generally infantilized; by ignoring the immediate controversies at hand, the NPS projects a sense of place that is marked by tranquility and unimpeded by competing demands. Despite these silences, pro-ORV bumper stickers, local newspapers, and even restaurant signs are extremely visible voices in a one-sided debate. As Cheryl Glenn argues, rhetorical silences matter. They are enactments of power that are also capable of silencing disagreement and dissent.³³⁴ Rhetorically, this influences how banal nationalism works to shape visitor experiences and perhaps constrains the ways in which the NPS can draw from collective public memory to articulate visitor experiences to, in Michael Kammen’s terms, a useable past. In this capacity, conservation

civics do little to invite identification with “the environment” because visitors are instead positioned to experience the island as an already healthy site/sight that doesn’t really need external assistance.

From ranger-led interpretive programming to the visitor center exhibits, NPS discourses at Ocracoke share two important and related elements. As noted earlier in this chapter, the primary rhetorical objective inherent in nearly all of these discourses aims to position visitors as “literate” subjects who know how to “read” a beach or a sound. Given the extent to which particular subjects and topics (from ORV access and piping plover nest restoration efforts to the effects of climate change and sea level rise on coastal ecosystems) are strategically avoided, visitors who do not seek out additional information from other sources are quite likely to leave the beach without any awareness of the extent to which their hermeneutic abilities to “read the beach” have been abridged. In this way, the NPS forwards a “frictionless” or conflict-free vision of conservation that ignores the complexity of local and national politics by failing to acknowledge the ways in which antagonisms, compromise, debate, and advocacy shape how conservation is defined, codified, and practiced. While the NPS is actively involved in specific conservation-related activities (such as nest protection), these activities *and* the often-exaggerated arguments made against them by pro-ORV advocates are equally absent from park discourses. Here, particular topics are marked as taboo or indecorous by the NPS’s strategic use of silence in its public communication. In this way, conservation civics functions to moderate what may be said and reinforces the idea that good citizens (especially children) should not ask for more information about topics deemed too sensitive or controversial for them by figures of authority.

By offering an abridged hermeneutic lens to children, the Junior Ranger program presents a particular way of thinking about and doing conservation as the received wisdom and, therefore, as common sense. Indeed, without attending to the ways in which particular places like Ocracoke are endangered by greenwashed rhetorics that masquerade as conservation and positioning audiences as critical readers, participants of all ages who encounter NPS rhetorics may assume that conservation is politically, economically, and ecologically easier than it may be in certain contexts. By remaining silent about the specific local controversies on Ocracoke and the entirety of CAHA, the NPS positions these visitors as under-informed “experts.” While this observation is not intended to suggest that visitors are incapable of or unmotivated from seeking out additional information, it is meant to serve as a reminder that most people who attend NPS interpretive programming or who encounter these rhetorics are *on vacation*. These discourses circulate in spaces of leisure; and, given the degree to which the NPS is viewed as one of the most trusted governmental agencies in the U.S., I suspect that its interpretations (including its silences) resonate with visitors. As Edensor suggests, such discourses work as

condensed suggestions [that] familiarise visitors with cultures and spaces -- and as shorthand cues for performance -- such directions inevitably omit infinite other ways of looking at and understanding sites. Thus, there is a discursive and regulatory order in place to sustain practical norms, supporting common-sense understandings about how to behave, what to look at, where to go, and what to hear.³³⁵

In this regard, even silences contribute to the production of a particularly situated rhetorical subject. If, as Tilden suggests “to project such ultimate and vital truths, illustrated by what one can observe in our national parks, is the aim of interpretation,” then the silences of conservation civics contribute an equal amount of labor to the project of environmentality.

CHAPTER 5

EXPERIENTIAL LANDSCAPES

“[T]he eventual structure of feeling is not based only on an idea of the happier past. It is based also on that other and associated idea of innocence: the rural innocence of the pastoral, neo-pastoral, and reflective poems. the key to its analysis is the contrast of the country with the city and the court; here nature, there worldliness.” -- Raymond Williams³³⁶

“All you need to know about American society can be gleaned from an anthropology of its driving behavior. That behavior tells you much more than you could ever learn from its political ideas. Drive ten thousand miles across America and you will know more about the country than all the institutes of sociology and political science put together.” -- Jean Baudrillard³³⁷

Each year, more than 300 million visits are logged throughout all units in the National Park system, and more than 18 million of those take place along the Blue Ridge Parkway (BLRP).³³⁸ These figures, arguably, speak volumes about the role of the automobile in American culture and the popularity of what David Louter has termed “windshield wilderness.”³³⁹ This ribbon of road, known as “America’s Grand Balcony,” “The Scenic,” “America’s Favorite Journey,” and “America’s Favorite Drive,” extends 469 miles from Shenandoah National Park in western Virginia through North Carolina and ends at the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. It winds through 29 counties, has more than 200 scenic overlooks, hosts 117 hiking trails, boasts 15 visitor and comfort centers, and a new, LEED-certified, \$9.8 million dollar Destination Center.³⁴⁰ As Anne Whisnant has meticulously researched and argued in her groundbreaking critical history of the Parkway, its mythologies

are deeply rooted in North Carolina's tourism-based economy and in popular culture. It is a place, however, that many believe "couldn't be built today."³⁴¹ For Whisnant, such a view is "dangerous . . . because it turns the past into an unrepeatable and distant golden age while it robs us of power and choice in the present."³⁴² Rhetorically, the Parkway was and continues to be positioned by the NPS and others as a beneficent public works project that employed thousands of rural workers during the Great Depression in order to infuse the southern Appalachian economy with a self-sustaining source of revenue. Arguably, this narrative has gained significant traction in popular culture, and the image of the Parkway as an overwhelmingly positive public good occupies a strong footing in contemporary public memory at the beginning of the 21st century.

For more than 50 years, American families have ventured to the Parkway in search of "authentic" mountain culture and the allure of its natural wonders. The Parkway also made it possible for tourists to experience the mountains from the safety of their automobiles on a road engineered specifically for drivers who did not necessarily possess expertise in the navigation of difficult terrain. With its gentle curves, open stretches and straightaways, scenic overlooks, panoramic views, and deliberate lack of traffic control devices like traffic lights and stop signs, the Parkway offered a curated driving experience that appeared to seamlessly integrate nature and culture. As early park advocate and "father" of interpretation Tilden Freeman wrote at length in 1951 in an influential, widely circulated book that further entrenched the myth of the Parkway as a road that just happens to traverse a timeless, iconic landscape,

This is not a highway for anyone who wishes to go somewhere in a hurry. It is not like the highways that have been advantageously built as access roads to our great cities. This is a road the holiday-maker will

browse upon, like a booklover among rare and valuable volumes, stopping every little while to loop upon a scene that has no counterpart in America. These are the Southern highlands, and for miles upon miles you pass the fences of split rails, the weathered cabins, the livestock, and the barns of the people who have lived here so long.³⁴³

Aesthetically, the Parkway is often positioned within NPS discourses as symbolizing the triumph of modernity. As more than a road, the Parkway is invoked to exemplify the nation-state's ability to function as a technocratic actor capable of moderating between rationality and sentimentality in the public interest. As a highly-engineered place, the Parkway's incorporation of new road-building techniques enabled urban and suburban drivers to confidently navigate difficult terrain without fear of encountering treacherous switchbacks, or rained out dirt roads. And, as a surveilled place -- a known national place carved into and superimposed upon the unknown, the local -- visitors could be assured that their safety and security were taken seriously. NPS law enforcement officers, not local sheriffs, patrol the Parkway, monitor speed, investigate "suspicious" activities, and assist stranded motorists.

Despite the lack of familiar signs of "civilization," such as chain restaurants and interstate highways, visitors could take emotional and physical comfort in the fact that small visitor centers and concessioners were stationed at 16 locations approximately every 30 miles. Furthermore, many of the free printed Parkway maps and guides outline the amenities accessible at each milepost -- and just beyond -- in the communities that border the Parkway. The primary park visitor guide has long been sponsored by the Blue Ridge Parkway Association, a membership-based cohort of regional businesses, as a way of mitigating the unknown. Together, these elemental and predictable elements of urban life provide visitors with a sense of security and the ability to read, interpret, and navigate without the assistance

of others from the comfort of their private vehicles.³⁴⁴ As Tilden argues, the absence of (visible) signs of modern life and the planned marshaling of natural resources to create a pleasing landscape is one of the most compelling features of the Parkway:

Where the road has been adroitly engineered to offer as much interest and beauty as possible, the cuts and fills have been and are being plated with the native shrubs and trees -- the white pine, azaleas, rhododendrons. This is one road where, because the highway is protected by a buffer strip, the traveler will not be importuned to use any particular shaving cream, dentifrice, or chewing gum. There are no signs suggesting that you come in just as you are and eat at a restaurant that went out of business several years ago. If you wish advice on what pills to take for your special misery, you will have to leave the Blue Ridge Parkway and use one of the older routes.³⁴⁵

These distinguishing characteristics, and their attendant themes of safe, knowable rurality continue to appear in contemporary promotional materials for the Parkway: visitors are invited to understand the landscape as the “natural” state of things and to conceptualize the communities surrounding the Parkway as one place: the Blue Ridge. Perhaps more than anywhere else along the Parkway, these claims are most prominently articulated in public discourses on display and in circulation at the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Destination Centers (BRPVDC). Developed in response to a Congressional act that designated the entire Blue Ridge region as a distinct National Heritage Area in 2003, the BRPVDC is a unique, strategic addition to the Parkway’s visitor services because it is “the only center on the Parkway that interprets the whole length -- the whole 469 miles.”³⁴⁶ One of the most important themes that gets lost along the way, however, is conservation. As I discuss below, this is deeply ironic and rather unfortunate, given that the BRPVDC is a LEED-certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), award-winning facility that exemplifies the cutting edge of green building techniques.³⁴⁷ Despite this, the center focuses instead

almost exclusively on the center's role as a jumping-off point for visitors to the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area. National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are a new framework for organizing diverse stakeholders around shared economic, environmental, and cultural priorities. NHAs are defined by the NPS as

Place(s) designated by the United States Congress where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally-distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography. These areas tell nationally important stories about our nation and are representative of the national experience through both the physical features that remain and the traditions that have evolved within them.³⁴⁸

While funding for the BRPVDC was provided by a coalition of public and private sources, the planning process was marked by significant debate about the purpose and emphases of the center, as several constituencies expressed concern that its geographic proximity to Asheville would tilt its focus more toward Asheville-based attractions and narratives.³⁴⁹ To some extent, these concerns were valid: although the free printed guidebooks available at the Center advertise attractions that span the length of the Parkway, the park orientation film focuses on artisans based almost exclusively in Asheville.

As the newest addition to the Parkway, the BRPVDC serves as the literal and metaphoric interpretive *center* for the Parkway. The center and its most prominent discourses rhetorically positions (contested) relationships between nature and culture as unproblematic. Unlike GRSM, where interpretive rhetorics reach the public through diverse media (ranger-led events, visitor center exhibits, a park orientation film, a plethora of wayside exhibits and more than 40 park-produced (or co-produced) printed brochures available to the public), the Parkway does not offer nearly as many interpretive, ranger-led events, nor does it offer a similar array of printed materials.³⁵⁰ Here, interpretive programs

are also significantly limited in scope and significance; the Parkway does not offer a Junior Ranger program.³⁵¹ The BRPVDC is also, not surprisingly, a place of contradictions and historical elisions despite the fact that its exhibits were curated during the past five years in anticipation of the April 2008 opening and with input from, as I have been told, diverse constituencies.³⁵²

“LEED”ing the Way?

As an informational and interpretive hub that enables the organization and evaluation of experience, the BRPVDC may be understood as a destination *center*. Here, visitors are invited to interpret and remember past, present, or potential personal, private experiences of the Parkway in conversation with how the Parkway is remembered as a public place through the visual and material rhetorics on display. And, as a place tasked with the rhetorical challenge of (re)presenting the *entire* Parkway, the BRPVDC is also a *destination center* where visitors can discover the myriad things to see and do along the Parkway and in surrounding communities. Here, visitors can plan individualized itineraries, make hotel, dinner, and activity reservations and, in many (although clearly not all) instances, have their motivations and desires for visiting the Parkway legitimized and validated before departing. In this regard, the BRPVDC is a deeply rhetorical place that takes as its subject another deeply rhetorical place. This layering works to position visitors within several compelling narratives that situate the Parkway as an iconic, significant, and fundamentally American place that, despite its historic isolation, is a place welcoming of and desirable by everyone. And, while the BRPVDC is not a museum, it presents 16 curated exhibits that define and frame the Parkway through the preferred lenses of the NPS. Unlike interpretive

programming that can and does change often in response to new information, visitor and/or staff preferences, etc., these exhibits are rhetorically frozen in time. While this is due, in part, to the constraints of the medium, it is also a strategic choice that locates these discourses as somewhat fixed, certain, representative of “the true” and thus significantly insulated from revision.

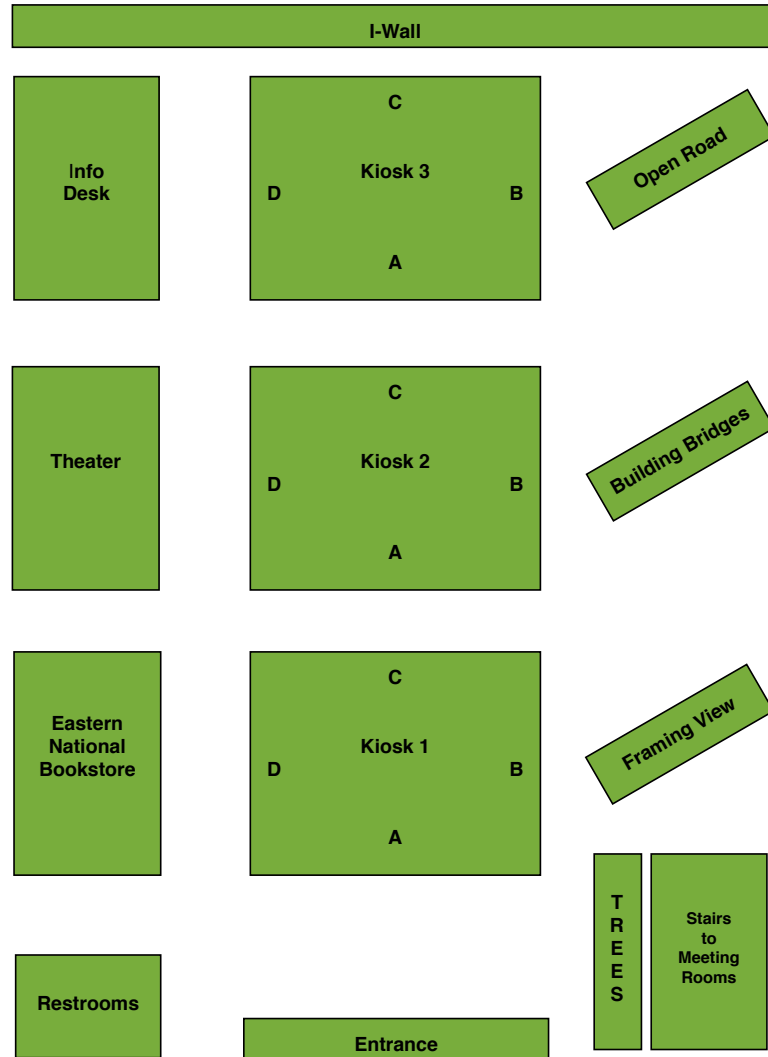
When considered contextually with the visitor center orientation film, the 22-foot interactive I-wall that pairs a moveable computer screen with a Parkway map, and several interactive, personal kiosks (see Fig. 5.9 and 5.10), these discourses grant legitimacy to particular ways of thinking about, encountering, experiencing, and looking at and through material culture and natural history. They are, arguably, experiential landscapes in the vein observed by Greg Dickinson, Bryan Ott, and Brian Aoki in their study of the Plains Indian Museum: “experiential landscapes invite visitors to assume (to occupy) particular subject positions. These subject positions, in turn, literally shape perceptions; that is, they entail certain ways of looking and exclude others.”³⁵³ Furthermore, they argue, “spaces of memory are better thought of as constitutive elements of landscapes than as discrete texts, that landscapes entail both physical and cognitive dimensions, and that such landscapes offer fully embodied subject positions, which literally shape visitors’ practices of looking.” Similarly, I argue, the BRPDC positions visitors to the Parkway as travelers along a road where infinite pleasure and possibility may be attained by experiencing it through the lenses of others who have traveled it before. Although the BRPDC is a new facility that has not yet figured prominently in popular culture and public memory, its exhibits articulate the material, cultural artifacts of the recent past to a compelling narrative that invites identification

through memories of common (or similar) experiences. In this way, these exhibits articulate public memory to personal experience in ways that heighten visitor perceptions of the Parkway. In this regard, the BRPVDC discourses position the Parkway as “exceptional” and as a unique cultural treasure whose existence enables visitors to create, hold, capture, and rewrite memories of place *in place*.

At the same time, however, they work against each other. As noted later in this chapter, the two most explicit enactments of conservation that point to the real work that the NPS is doing to “lead” the way are encapsulated in the building itself, which is not at all part of the exhibits or public programming, and the interpretive exhibit on the American chestnut tree, which is sidelined. Outside of the BRPVDC, the building has been the subject of several news articles that focus on its enviable and surprisingly do-able green building components. On site, however, the building is figured as little more than the scene in which the seductive narratives and potential experiences to be had on the Parkway are rehearsed and made public. The absence or -- given the tendencies observed thus far at other NPS sites -- the silences about this building are problematic for a variety of reasons. Again, conservation is figured as something that simply happens, not as the result of strategic planning, careful design, and ethical implementation. Instead, the two examples that best exemplify a conservation-oriented use of taxpayer dollars -- the chestnut tree exhibit and the BRPVDC building itself -- are largely parenthetical to the ways in which the Blue Ridge Parkway as a site/sight of nature and culture is made public. Here, conservation civics once again figure as the rhetorical performances of environmentality. Visitors to the center are encouraged to interpret the Parkway through the lenses, narratives, and technologies that do not require

much critical engagement with conservation-oriented notions like sustainability. In this way, the lack of visibility afforded to the center and the chestnut exhibit suggests yet another strategic silence that directs visitor attention and desire elsewhere. Here, conservation civics positions “good” citizens as those who use their leisure time to connect with the national past and who view personal, private transportation as a fundamental component of personal freedom. Despite the fact that the BRPVDC is a gold-certified LEED building that incorporates many of the most sustainable conservation technologies and techniques into its design, this information is not at all part of the discourses that work to make conservation public at the Parkway. In this way, the NPS positions visitors as environmental subjects who need not worry about the consequences of their choices as consumers or citizens. This particular place is uncritically positioned as a triumph of modern values and engineering. Here, conservation is once again positioned as something that the nation and its citizens have always-already excelled at: thus, no further action is needed.

Figure 5.1: Layout of the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Destination Center (BRPVDC)



Note: Diagram is not to scale

Table 5.1: Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Destination Center Kiosk Themes

	Kiosk 1	Kiosk 2	Kiosk 3
A	Richness Revealed	Technology & Vision	Tourism Traditions
B	Nature in Abundance	Opportunities for People	The Hey Day of Auto Touring
C	The Lure of the Mountains	Building Upon Economic Strengths	Enjoying the Great Outdoors
D	Tapestry of the Blue Ridge	Prepare to Be Inspired	Renewing Experiences

Learning How to Conserve, er, Consume the Parkway

“A cohesive, integrated society was sought in which land patterns would promote a wholesome combination of work, play, and education. In the 1930s, Americans still viewed the landscape, along with church and family, as a force in character formation. This idealism imbued the landscape.” -- Phoebe Cutler³⁵⁴

Located just past Milepost 384 on the Blue Ridge Parkway east of Asheville, 30 miles south of Mount Mitchell and 2 miles north of the Folk Art Center, the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Destination Center (BRPVDC) is intentionally invisible from the roadside.³⁵⁵ Nestled into a hillside and tucked away on Hemphill Knob, the BRPVDC opened “softly” to visitors in December, 2007 and officially opened its doors with a week-long celebration in April 2008 that culminated just before Earth Day.³⁵⁶ The 12,000 square foot facility “includes a 10,000-square-foot green roof that was seeded with drought-tolerant native plants, hydronic radiant-heated flooring, a high-efficiency HVAC system with an energy recovery unit and daylight harvesting with a lighting system that is expected to reduce lighting loads by 78 percent.”³⁵⁷ The facility, according to one of the primary architects involved in the project, was designed to evoke a sense of place that reminded visitors of a treehouse:

The parkway has a strong vernacular, and the Park Service is keen to keep their buildings in line with that vernacular. But in looking at this project, they were interested in letting the building show off its

sustainable elements. The roof is an example of where we integrated the two ideas. They liked the idea of the sloping green roof because it has a form consistent with other Parkway buildings.³⁵⁸

Indeed, the open floor plan and floor-to-ceiling windows and wood-planked ceiling create an aesthetic warmth that is matched by the radiant warmth emanating from the floor tiles.

Although the space can be navigated in multiple ways, visitor traffic tends to flow from the front of the center to the rear as visitors explore the center's kiosks en route to the orientation film and/or the I-Wall. As the circle is completed back toward the parking lot, visitors pass the bookstore, restrooms, and a glass marker that explains the building's LEED certification.

Figures 5.2 and 5.3: Exterior of BRPVDC and Parkway “Rules of the Open Road” Sign



In the following pages, I offer a critical analysis of a selection of the visual and material rhetorics of place that are on display within the BRPVDC. My purpose here is to interpret those aspects of the center's discourses that are most salient, visible, and relevant to

the questions that guide this project, and to consider the ways in which these rhetorics make conservation public. How might these discourses be balanced against the overarching goal, as observed by a Charlotte-based reporter, that “the hope [of the NPS] is [that] the center will help get visitors off the road and spending money”?³⁵⁹ And, when visitors enter the BRPVDC and encounter the following quote emblazoned on the wall in six-inch tall letters -- “The idea is to fit the Parkway into the mountains as if nature has put it there” -- might this tribute to the Parkway’s first superintendent and Chief Landscape Architect, Stanley Abbott, haunt the ways in which they understand this place? Ian Firth provides one possible answer in his critical consideration of Abbott’s articulation of aesthetics and engineering. Firth’s research suggests that Abbott’s vision for the Blue Ridge Parkway was significantly influenced by Olmstead’s parkways in New York and elsewhere. In order to design a place-appropriate variation in the mountains, Firth argues, Abbott adopted an ethic focused on preservation and conservation that produced a “rural vernacular landscape.”³⁶⁰ He and his staff accomplished this, Firth continues, by actively deploying the CCC to reclaim land that had been mismanaged, “cleaning up forests and woods” by engaging in “remedial cutting” and transforming “ragged fields [into] permanent pastures or strips of corn, hay, and grains arranged along the contours.”³⁶¹ As Whisnant and Firth make evident, the Parkway’s landscapes offer clear-cut examples of what Carr has termed “wilderness by design” and offers a curated, authored, and managed experience that visitors interpret as authentic.

Figures 5.4 and 5.5: Exterior of the BRPVDC and Green Roof; Inside Foyer



Although his critique perhaps unproblematically celebrates the ways in which the NPS produced the Parkway, Firth does acknowledge that “the Parkway came to present in its historical exhibits a very selective view of mountain life. Nostalgia for a pioneer period created a picture that focused on isolated subsistence farms and ignored the real social and economic diversity of the mountains.”³⁶² Indeed, as the NPS was busy building “miles of split rails around pastures,” it was also persuading farmers whose land was visible from or adjacent to the Parkway to “grow crops of pumpkins, buckwheat, and linen flax to enrich the scenery.”³⁶³ Here, Firth builds upon Cutler’s work to argue that the Parkway “became a part of the Roosevelt administration’s national exercise in morale building.”³⁶⁴ In this way, I argue, the Parkway must also be understood as an exercise in public memory and public

forgetting enacted under the sign of modernity and the national mandate of modernization. Since its enactment as a national self-improvement project, Parkway discourses have not readily revealed the cuts, revisions, erasures, and inventions of place made in its name. Further complicating matters, the Parkway's landscapes and vistas invite visitors to read them as authentic representations of an earlier, imagined era where nature and culture co-existed in harmony -- in rurality and in pristine wilderness. In this way, the BRPVDC must also be understood as a metaplace or metacenter that offers instruction to visitors regarding the ways in which they should navigate and remember the Parkway. Although it offers fresh perspectives on the Parkway, the BRPVDC remains ever faithful to the mythologies of place that have been in circulation since its inception, lest it critically disrupt or trouble public memory and desire rooted in those experiences. Under the mandate of the NHA, then, the BRPVDC can be understood as a new chapter in the Parkway's long history of defining and reinventing the ways in which the nature and culture of southern Appalachia are experienced, interpreted, and imagined for outsiders. This matters, as David Glassberg cautions, because "a sense of place does not spring naturally from the environment."³⁶⁵ Instead, he argues, "place values are rooted in the material world" in ways that "inextricably intertwine" place and history.³⁶⁶ As a destination *about* a destination, the BRPVDC is designed to do the rhetorical and performative work of cultivating those roots: echoing Anna Klingmann's influential analysis of "brandsapes," the BRPVDC positions visitors not as "customers" or consumers but as "aspirants" seeking fulfillment in an "experience economy."³⁶⁷ Here, the experiential landscapes created by each kiosk and its unique theme not only position visitors as viewers, but they also locate them as consumers in the Parkway's experience economy.

Immediately after entering the BRPVDC, visitors encounter a tri-panel exhibit (Figure 5.6, also labeled “trees” in Figure 1) that outlines the near-extinction of the American chestnut tree and gives a basic overview of the steps taken by scientists to potentially reintroduce the tree to the region by creating a genetically-engineered, blight-resistant tree. Although this is perhaps one of the most explicitly conservation-oriented messages in the center, I noted that few visitors took interest. I suspect that this may be due to its location within the center -- literally at the margins -- and the draw of the sensory-oriented, multimedia attractions that await just ahead (see Figure 5.7). Unlike the other exhibits that are bundled within the kiosk model and are thematically self-contained into singular, disconnected units, these panels require visitors to engage all of them (linearly) in order for them to make sense. Anecdotally, I overheard more than one visitor complain that these panels were not worth their time because they were “too much reading.” Nevertheless, this exhibit outlines the ways in which the “the American chestnut tree is distinctively tied to the natural and cultural history of the Blue Ridge” by explaining the ways in which the tree was used as an important food source for foraging animals and humans alike. Unlike the other exhibits, however, these panels suggest that natural resources are not infinitely abundant nor are human actions without environmental consequence. As the first panel, “The American Chestnut Tree,” explains, the chestnut tree offered settlers and Native Americans alike a seemingly infinite, abundant resource that ultimately became a fundamental component of the local economy: used as a tea, building material, and food, the chestnut tree ensured subsistence for some and increased opportunity for prosperity for others. Unfortunately, “all of this came to an end” when blight appeared.

Figure 5.6: The American Chestnut and Contemporary Conservation Efforts



Blight, as the second panel explains and emphasizes, was a *foreign* fungus that attacked with a vengeance, “spread[ing] across the country killing most of the American chestnut trees within forty years” and littering the Blue Ridge with “tree skeletons.” The third panel, however, offers the possibility for hope and renewal, ensured by technological expertise and the joint efforts of scientists and volunteers. Visitors who are still reading at this point discover that “a long-term cross-pollination program may yield a disease-resistant American chestnut tree that one day may regain its former glory along the Blue Ridge.” And unlike the other exhibits, visitors must engage with images of chestnut trees and the material goods that humans have derived from them for centuries from a distance: lacking multimedia and a feel

good message, this exhibit is easily dismissed by most visitors, given the alternatives that await them just a few steps beyond where “richness” will be revealed.

Just inside the doors of the BRPVDC past the tri-panel chestnut exhibit, visitors are greeted by three distinctly themed square kiosks that aim to introduce visitors to the Parkway and the entire region represented in the National Heritage Area (Fig. 5.7). From floor to ceiling, these kiosks practically overflow beyond their borders with contemporary and archival photos, multimedia, interpretive panels, and cultural artifacts. Enclosed in glass with metal accents, the kiosks invoke a contemporary aesthetic sensibility that, while durable, invites visitors to engage the materials and discourses on their own terms without necessarily following a linear trajectory. The spatial layout of the kiosks -- and the fact that each side of each kiosk represents a self-contained theme that can be understood on its own *or* in conversation with other themes -- invites visitors to wander and to traverse the floor by following their interests, not a predetermined historical narrative. Each side of each kiosk offers a unique theme (as noted in Table 1) that draws from history, nature, and culture to highlight past and present ways of using and remembering the Parkway through its particular lens. Regardless of the order in which they are engaged, these themes work together to weave a rhetorical framework through which visitors can experience the Parkway and read their experiences back onto it. At kiosk 1D, for example, visitors are encouraged to conceptualize the Parkway as a tapestry, as a “richly woven fabric of natural and cultural delights.” Here, visitors are invited to imagine taking a

drive along the Blue Ridge parkway any time of year and you will encounter awesome landscapes and breathtaking views. From spring's first wildflowers to autumn's profusion of color, the Blue Ridge provides a never-ending show. Mountains reflecting violent geologic beginnings provide a backdrop for a

distinctive American story, one that combines unparalleled natural diversity with an array of cultural traditions.

Immediately surrounding this panel are panoramic, captioned images of Roan Mountain, Graveyard Falls, the Altapass Hayride, and macro-level images of the Trout Lilly and the Turk's Cap Lilly. An oversized photo of the Parkway as it curves through a lush crop of sunflowers hangs from the ceiling. Hanging to its right are images of young and old people playing the the fiddle, guitar, and banjo at public performances, and twelve equally-sized, family album-style color photos of people engaging in different recreational activities available along the Parkway, such as white water rafting, painting, biking, picnicking, alongside older sepia and black and white archival photos of people who helped build the Parkway during the Great Depression. Here, the Parkway comes to life as various "threads" are woven together in ways that allow for visitors to add their own strands on their own terms.

While most of the themes in the BRPVDC kiosks focus on the abundant and diverse recreational opportunities afforded by the Parkway (from white water rafting to photography) and the unique aspects of the region's material culture (including a sample of the kinds of souvenirs that one could purchase elsewhere), a few kiosk exhibits explicitly focus on nature. Unlike the chestnut exhibit, however, these kiosk exhibits celebrate nature's abundance : here, nature can and does thrive, despite the demands placed upon it by visitors and their automobiles. Indeed, as one exhibit focusing on the "hey day of auto tourism" suggests, "The Blue Ridge Parkway opened the region to recreational driving as more people than ever before took to the highways for fun and relaxation." Contextually, the automobile and nature

are articulated as mutually dependent in these discourses: across the kiosk exhibits, the automobile figures prominently as a benign (if not benevolent) technology.

Figures 5.7 and 5.8: “Richness Revealed” (Kiosk A1) and “The Hey Day of Auto Touring” (Kiosk 3B)



Here, it enables American families to experience nature and provides them with a special place where they can “slow down and enjoy the scenery” and “take pleasure in the region's outstanding natural environments.” Visually and materially, nature and scenery are synonymous and automobiles figure prominently in nearly all of the kiosk exhibits.

Consequentially, wilderness, as Louter observes in his analyses of three national parks in Washington, is tamed and made safe for public consumption. As he notes, automobiles provided a “new way of knowing national parks [that] did not necessarily signal the

destruction of nature, but the beginning of something promising.”³⁶⁸ This phenomenon, he argues, significantly influenced how Americans conceptualized and related to nature:

Automobiles provided Americans with the authentic experience they desired from the natural world.

Automobiles supplied not only the vehicle by which middle-class Americans got back to nature, but also the vehicle by which they knew nature itself . . . what evolved was a model of national parks in which automobiles and the highways they traveled seemed to be a part of nature.³⁶⁹

Indeed, the presence of automobiles in national parks and the auto-centric logics that drove park policy regarding facilities siting and construction, resource management, as well as the ever-increasing demand for more parking and more roads is often cited within popular histories of the contemporary American environmental movement as sparking the mobilization of the wilderness and roadless movements.³⁷⁰ Together, the kiosks exhibit locate the Parkway and the automobile as the justification for conservation. At the “Technology and Vision” kiosk, this claim is boldly advanced, situating the Parkway as an organic development:

Road building through the Blue Ridge required clearing land, creating tunnels, and engineering bridges. but the Blue Ridge Parkway was meant to be much more than a road. Roads get people to where they need to go. Parkways enhance the view and provide recreational opportunities. This scenic roadway was designed so that it blended harmoniously with the landscape, appearing as if it had grown out of the soil.

Perhaps not surprisingly, these themes emerge in detail in the park orientation film, “America’s Favorite Journey,” where viewers soar through the sky and speed along the Parkway. And, after viewing the film, the 22-foot I-wall takes on additional significance as an interactive tool that enables visitors to navigate the entire length of the Parkway. As they slide the large LED screen from one end of the Parkway to the other, visitors receive

information about the specific things to see, do, eat, hear, contemplate, and/or purchase along the way.

Figures 5.9 and 5.10: Distance and Close-Up Views of the I-wall and an Interactive Kiosk at the BRPVDC



If they desire, visitors can purchase tickets and make reservations at any of the interactive computer kiosks that dot the center for any of the attractions featured on the I-wall. As a hands-on experiential exhibit, the I-wall draws from the imagery and themes featured in the kiosks and mediates them in new ways.

Taken together or interpreted individually, the kiosk exhibits at the BRPVDC actively advance a rhetorical framework that invites visitors to understand their experiences (past and possible) through its thematics. As Ian Woodward argues, material culture studies may offer a useful lens for understanding how the objects placed on display in the kiosks work together

with other discourses at the center to position visitors in relation to nature and culture in particular ways. For Woodward,

Objects are not only defined by their material quality, but by their location within systems of narrative and logic laid out by social discourses related to technology, culture, economics, and politics. Objects exist within networks of relations that serve to define, mediate, and order them, and which in turn are ‘acted upon’ by such objects and human subjects, affording them purpose and meaning within a system of social relations ³⁷¹

Here, Woodward’s observations provide a relevant theoretical support to Dickinson et al’s notion of experiential landscapes. As Urry’s theory of the “tourist gaze” has lost some traction in recent years as a viable lens for tracing and critiquing the relations of power that are cultivated, circulated, and/or challenged in touristic encounters, Dickinson et al’s notion of the I/eye offers rhetorical critics a useful alternative for conceptualizing the ways in which visual and material culture work to perform place, situate and inscribe public memory, and locate visitors as discursive subjects within and against the nation-state.

At the Plains Indian Museum and the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Destination center, material culture both is and is more than the banal and exceptional objects of everyday life, more than the scene or vehicle of rhetorical action. It is the physical and/or technological extensions of bodies – individual, social, collective, corporate, legislative, etc. -- across and in space and time. Material culture projects outward from, stands in for, enrobes, commemorates, disrupts, and augments as it is tasked with representing and symbolizing human affective relations in a particular context. Furthermore, these relationships and contexts are also influenced, modified, and rewritten by the presences (or absences) of other people, other objects, and the practices of remembering and forgetting. While things cannot argue, they can be tasked with projecting claims into the world. Meaning-in-things, however,

cannot exist a priori to human interaction and relationality; it is mediated by, constituted through, and inscribed by human practices. It is (always) incomplete, partial, and, with few exceptions, temporary with no guarantees of permanent use, value, form, or composition. Material culture can travel and be used for traveling. It can facilitate ritual, indicate order, and signal taste (via various forms of, following Bourdieu, social, economic, and cultural capital). It can be used to foster community or to highlight injustice and inequity. It can be used to give voice to excess and to hide the silences of human suffering and environmental devastation. It is perhaps always more than its thing-ness and perhaps equally marked by politics, even when mobility masks the conditions and contexts of its production, circulation, reception, and consumption. Things, then, seem to construe and project a sense of subjectivity -- an ethics. How, then, does the BRPVDC produce and project an ethics through visitor encounters? Before this question can be addressed, we must consider the ways in which the park's orientation film articulates nature and culture on its own and in conversation with the kiosk exhibits. Yet again, conservation civics emerge as a way of situating visitors in relation to the NPS's preferred ways of interpreting nature and culture. Notably, conservation is defined as a practice that emerges naturally through the ways in which *visitors already* use, appreciate, and think about the environment. Like the Smokies and Hatteras, local controversies and contested histories are elided as conflict apparently has *no place* in the narrative of the nation. Here as elsewhere, the park is positioned as a public works project that has continued to work well into the future by preserving local jobs and maintaining the scenery along the Parkway as exemplary of decorous rurality: what's absent from view are the practices of everyday life in the region.

Drive-In Nature

Every half hour during operating hours, park staff and volunteers encourage visitors to take 25 minutes to view the park's orientation film. To celebrate the opening of the new Destination Center, the National Park Service also commissioned the production of a new welcome film that would offer visitors an updated view of the Parkway while also complementing the goals of the new Blue Ridge National Heritage Area (BRNHA). Indeed, the film was a bit of a compromise: one of the center's early boosters, U.S. Rep. Charles Taylor (R-Brevard), had envisioned a IMAX theater on-site, but the plans were scuttled early in the process due to public pressure.³⁷² Yet "The Blue Ridge Parkway: America's Favorite Journey," shot in high definition and mastered in surround sound, frames the Parkway through a curious mix of fact and fiction. The film is presented to the public as a documentary, and it faithfully adheres to many of the standard generic tropes that audiences have come to expect when viewing an "educational" film. From its panoramic long shots that fill the screen with scenery from above to the IMAX-like camera techniques used to move audiences through space, its use of the "Ken Burns" visual technique to move viewers through photographs in ways that make them appear to come to life, and the familiar-sounding tones of the male narrator's voice, the film is produced to stimulate interest.

The film's primary narrative follows a (fictional) middle-aged, caucasian father-daughter pair, Marshall and Lynne Auteri, intent on riding the Parkway on their motorcycles from end to end as a bonding activity. But, as the narrator explains, the Auteris have another, more important purpose: they have journeyed to the Parkway to commemorate the contributions of a family patriarch -- a mason -- to its construction. "But some, like Lynne

and Marshall Auteri, are here to do more than just ride the Parkway. For them it's a rite of passage, a chance to connect with the past, the history of this place, and the history of their family." Although their hometown is not disclosed, Marshall's accent suggests that he hails from the northeastern U.S. Along the way, their story is interrupted by brief vignettes that focus on several (named) regional artisans who produce hand-crafted, original fiddles, pottery, glass, and quilts. One NPS employee is also featured as a Parkway caretaker. The film is edited such that viewers are encouraged to believe that the Auteris are encountering these craftspeople by stopping along the way at their workshops: in one scene, the Auteris are shown driving slowly past the storefront of a featured artisan. "We" go inside, although they are nowhere in sight. This claim is visually reinforced at the end of the film when the Auteris attend a summer craft fair at the end of the Parkway at the Oconaluftee Visitor Center and encounter the same artisans who were featured earlier in the film, among others. Here, they also encounter a (nameless) Cherokee elder who reflects on the universal aspects of spiritual journeys for a gathered crowd:

For every journey has a beginning and an end, and many will travel the same trail, all connected on the same timeless journey. This is what our Cherokee ancestors told us. They had to walk the Trail of Tears. Many died in those dark days, but in the end, we ended up right back here, where we belong -- in the Blue Ridge, our ancestral home.³⁷³

While the historic references and interviews with park employees, local artisans and craftspeople are largely factual (although scripted and staged), the narrative that binds this film together is a work of fiction. Perhaps not surprisingly, this is not disclosed in the film itself or in any visitor center materials; instead, the fact that the two main characters are actors and that their journey is a work of fiction is revealed through the bonus material

included on the souvenir DVD sold in the bookstore. This minor detail complicates the credibility of the documentary to “speak for” the park and may likely generate a small cadre of disappointed visitors who purchase the film as a memento of their own personal journey(s) on the Parkway, only to discover that it is not as they were led to believe.

Unlike other documentaries that circulate within popular culture, park orientation films are endowed with a particular level of credibility because they are often received as official, objective representations of place (and of the nation). To extend Bergman’s work, these films shape the expectations of millions of visitors annually by providing an interpretive framework and a visually compelling narrative that create a rhetorical map for negotiating place, history, nature, culture, self, and other.³⁷⁴ Here, visitors are invited to identify with a place that holds significance in public culture by experiencing it as others have experienced it before them. As the film and the BLPVDC are both approaching their first year in service, additional data should be forthcoming in the near future that shed light on visitation and viewing patterns. Until then, it’s difficult to assess the extent to which the film is part of the “first encounter” that orients visitors to the Parkway. This film, as I discuss in the following pages, positions the Parkway as a lifeline that connects the past and present, bringing modernity to a rural part of the United States and saving its people from themselves in the process. Through the world portrayed by the film, conservation is a set of particular practices enacted by the NPS to ensure the survival of various plants and animals, as well as a set of particular practices enacted by local artisans and craftspeople to ensure the survival of the knowledges and techniques used to produce their goods. This focus, while laudable for its efforts to support a local economy, is also marked by the historical tendency of these

“traditional crafts [to] reinforce perceptions of mountain people as historic holdovers from an earlier age [that worked to create] an almost mythological identity for the southern mountains.”³⁷⁵ Indeed, “there was nothing extraordinary about mountain handicrafts until outsiders discovered them.”³⁷⁶ Yet the crafters featured in “America’s Favorite Journey” are anything but ordinary: from the Mangums’ original pottery to Patti Torno’s quilts, Lawrence Brown’s hand-carved fiddles and John Littleton and Kate Vogel’s hand-blown glass, these award-winning artisans regularly command four figures for their creations.

As I note below, the film positions viewers as ethical subjects who should support and define conservation as an aesthetic practice. This practice is consummated, according to the logics of the film, through the consumption of (authentic) local products made by (authentic) local people in an authentic place (the Parkway and the communities through which it passes). The lifeline, as the film’s rhetoric suggests, can only be as strong as the bonds created through commerce and aesthetic appreciation by those who visit and make it a part of their lives. Implicit in these claims is the notion that the Parkway is unique in its ability to bring modernity and opportunity to the region while also mediating and preventing forms of development that could threaten it. Here, the existence of the Parkway is celebrated as a paradigmatic example of cultural and environmental conservation in largely acontextual ways. And, when interpreted as part of the metadiscourses of the visitor center kiosks and the strategic goals of the BRHNA, the fact that the film focuses on the commercialization of culture makes some sense. It draws its rhetorical power from the ways in which it extends several of the themes presented in the visitor center kiosks that are identified as timeless American traditions. Visually, these themes are brought to life as the film presents the

Parkway and its surrounding communities as safe, welcoming places for outsiders. To accomplish this, the film and the visitor center exhibits must work together to counter negative stereotypes about Appalachia and mountain culture. As Richard Starnes argues in his influential exploration of tourism and society in Western North Carolina, there are historical reasons driving the impulse to remake the image of Appalachia as a sophisticated, nuanced, accessible place.

Image-making is an essential component of tourism development . . . [and the region] benefited from the emergence of the southern highlands in the American collective consciousness after the Civil War.

Echoing earlier portrayals, local colorists, social reformers, and missionaries praised the majestic, rugged mountain scenery while emphasizing the isolation, poverty, and cultural differences that set mountaineers apart from other Americans. Appalachia became an exotic travel destination, a place where both climate and culture offered visitors a myriad of diversions.³⁷⁷

In perhaps unexpected ways, some of these discourses took root in American popular culture such that they are still countered and encountered today. From the mythology of the hillbilly and contemporary films like *Deliverance* that marked the rural south (and Appalachia in particular) as a premodern other to the development of popular (yet historically inaccurate) tourist attractions like Ghost Town in the Sky that borrowed heavily from the frontier themes and stereotypical imagery of the Old West, the “land of the sky” is a place where cultural stereotypes about “the South” and “the wilderness” are still articulated. It’s also a place where tourism boosters must (indirectly and discretely) counter the cultural stereotype of the “horny hillbilly” by presenting Parkway’s surrounding communities as places that are safe and welcome for all travelers, especially women traveling alone and in small tourist groups -- one of the fastest-growing market demographics.³⁷⁸ As Patrick Huber argues, this myth and

its attendant imagery has gained significant currency in popular culture during the past 60 years, and it continues to endure today. Quoting C. Brenden Martin, Huber notes that

Hillbilly souvenirs began to replace Sambo, mammy, and pickaninny souvenirs in the theme parks, roadside attractions, and gift shops of southern Appalachia. At Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, for example, souvenirs often combined the “hillbilly image” with “powerful symbols of the Deep South -- namely, rednecks and the Confederate flag” . . . [and they] powerfully illustrate the historical amnesia about the mountain South found in modern regional tourism . . .³⁷⁹

As Huber, Starnes, and Whisnant have each observed, tourism in southern Appalachia and along the Blue Ridge Parkway in particular, “drives” the economy; and, after nearly a century of catering to outsiders, the economy is often used to defend both unsustainable practices and inaccurate representations of the place and its people in ways that continue to keep the region “in its place” as a site that is emblematic of marginal modernity wherein cosmopolitanism is always already just out of reach. Thus, one of the primary rhetorical challenges that this film must overcome is the popular belief that the Blue Ridge Parkway and surrounding communities are outdated relics of a less tolerant era in American history.

In many ways, the film positions the Parkway as a sustainable way to be outdoors, as a place of infinite possibility where family relationships can be strengthened, and where visitors can escape the pressures of everyday life without venturing into the unknown or uncomfortable. Here, the allure of the automobile as a technology that enables families to spend time together is bolstered and, arguably, greenwashed as the family car provides the opportunity to access nature just off the roadside. Nature and culture, as framed in this film, exist harmoniously in a timeless relationship where nature serves the interests of culture -- and where local knowledges (and occasional expert knowledges) have an inherent sense of balance motivated by an innate, selfless harmony. Indeed, there are several visual parallels

within the film that suggest similarity between flying through the air and riding the Parkway on a motorcycle, like Lynne Auteri. Despite the well-documented precarious status of southern Appalachian ecosystems, the film situates the environment as a pure, untouched, scenic landscape to be enjoyed, used, and appreciated as a resource in perpetuity.

Thematically, the film's focus on material culture is significantly detached from the conditions of production and labor required to produce the goods and experiences that it highlights. The feel-good tone and minor engagement with the historic and contemporary debates about the role of conservation and the environmental concerns facing the region due to the 18 million Parkway visits logged each year may significantly undermine advocates' efforts to address the public about the irreparability and significance of these issues.

According to the film's logic, there is no environmental crisis -- there are no threats to the natural, timeless purity of this place: it is, as the narrator explains, "some of the most remarkable land on earth" where travelers can "journey back in time, for the culture here stretches back centuries . . . these mountains contain some of the wildest spots in the eastern United States, untouched, untamed. For centuries, it's been an oasis of calm." And perhaps not surprisingly, the film does not focus on the ways in which landscape architecture played a significant role in shaping the aesthetics of the Parkway. As Ethan Carr argues in his extensive history of the field's influence in NPS projects through the mid-1960s, initial proposals to link the two parks (Shenandoah and the Smokies) were somewhat instrumental and functional. Before the promise of New Deal funding, "such an interpark route initially was conceived simply as an improved system of state highways that would link national parks and divert the "flow of tourist gold" into hard pressed mountain communities."³⁸⁰

Instead of a highway, which was desired by many rural, isolated communities in the western North Carolina mountains as a way of securing access to markets and developing their infrastructure in ways that were in keeping with the state's self-nominalized reputation as "the Good Roads" state, wealthy boosters in Asheville and influential politicians in Raleigh advocated and lobbied heavily for a parkway.³⁸¹ In the grand tradition of limited access highways influenced by the designs of Frederick Law Olmsted and his disciples, a parkway would significantly restrict access, enforcing a disciplinary logic on the landscape that perpetuated the kinds of rural poverty and isolation that the project was promised to resolve.

Indeed, the film would have visitors believe that there are no disputes over land use, no threats from air or water pollution, no evidence of acid rain, no endangered or threatened species, and no need for mass transit or alternative sources of energy. The Parkway -- the open road -- and the communities that eagerly await tourists along its 469 miles, is rhetorically positioned as a testament to the beneficence of the nation-state that upholds leisure/freedom for visitors and self-determination/opportunity for local businesses. Its endangered areas, we learn, are out of sight and beyond our reach -- and thus, largely, out of mind. From a helicopter-mounted camera hovering above, Park Botanist Chris Ulrey is shown rappelling down a rock face to check on the health of endangered plants. As the camera angles gradually transition to a close-up of Ulrey through the foliage, he notes that

Some of the most unique habitats on the Parkway are these high-elevation rock outcrops. One of my jobs is to monitor the rare species that occur in the park. The only way to tell whether these rare plants are stable is to check on them each year, even if that means crawling out on a rock face. Being out there, hanging from a rope, it's not exactly my idea of fun. But it's work that's got to be done, and it's important work.³⁸²

Because of the superficial ways in which the environment is engaged in this film, nature is positioned rhetorically as a tool, as a known and knowable object that should be conserved for its aesthetic value as a counter or restorative tonic to the ills of modern/city life. It is, according to the film, abundant, healthy, and managed appropriately by the appropriate people (the NPS), so visitors need not concern themselves too much.

Unlike the orientation film at Sugarlands in the Smokies, “America’s Favorite Journey” does not identify or catalog the diversity of plant and animal life along the Parkway, nor does it focus on the stories of particular families or communities affected by the the Parkway’s creation. Instead, the film invokes the language and majestic instrumental music of the nation to replicate the mythologies and fictions of the Parkway that Whisnant and others have long since debunked to locate the Parkway as an overwhelmingly well-received federal intervention. Indeed, the film’s rhetorics position the Parkway as an unproblematic, uncontested project constructed with unwavering local support that has always already served as an economic “engine” for the region. It is, above all, a visually compelling film that invites viewers to define the park as a “path to adventure, the journey of a lifetime” because “everyone who comes to the Blue Ridge chooses their own route.” It is a place

Beyond the asphalt, beyond the steel. Beyond the cars and concrete and the wrenching rhythms of the city, there’s another world . . . a world that rises from the mist outside of time. It flows across the rolling hills, green and gentle, wild and tangled, with the quiet music of a long summer afternoon and the slow, leafy calm of the forest.³⁸³

It is a place, the film would have viewers believe, that emerged without conflict from the landscape. Although the film focuses briefly on the amount of labor and skill required to carve the road out of the mountainside, it does not acknowledge the well-documented ways

in which the NPS negotiated with the states of Virginia and North Carolina to exercise eminent domain and “clear” the landscape of any unwanted views.³⁸⁴ Instead, the narrator suggests that the landscape was laid gently amidst terrain that looked much like it does today, with the exception that a road now runs through it:

It’s hard to believe that anyone could tame this rugged landscape. But back in the 1930s, in one of the toughest times this country has ever known, a handful of men decided to try. Some said it was like painting with the tail of a comet. Little by little, a remarkable road was cut through the mountains, but nothing about it was easy. Stanley W. Abbott was the primary architect of the Blue Ridge Parkway. He cut this remarkable trail through the wilderness, and it wasn’t easy. For Abbott and his team of builders, it was an engineering miracle to open this scenic beauty to visitors and not destroy it . . . the best view of the Appalachians.

Old photographs are brought to life as the sounds of construction permeate the background soundtrack and costumed actors recreate a scene of 1930s-era road construction, replete with heavy machinery and survey tools before returning to the Auteris. Parking their motorcycles along the side of the road, they walk toward a stone tunnel. Here, Marshall removes an old photo from his jacket and invites Lynne to see the tunnel in person, too. In the photo, Marshall’s father is shown standing next to his handiwork -- the same tunnel that appears in front of them. The two step closer and touch the tunnel, noting that “it’s going to be here a long time.” After a hug, they continue on their journey, presumably to the heritage craft festival at Oconaluftee. And here, the narrative themes crescendo:

This is a land of ancient bedrock and rolling forests where every morning speaks of quiet beauty and a chance to start again. This is the legacy that has been passed down across generations -- the legacy of a ribbon of road, a spectacular wilderness, and the journey that lies out ahead.

Notably absent from this film is the notion of the public domain or the notion of stewardship; the journey, as portrayed here, is private and personal, yet part of a national rite of passage.

In every scene featuring the Auteris driving along the Parkway, they are alone: they encounter no traffic, no wildlife, no other humans: they are alone, together, on the open road. As visitors leave the theater, there are two preferred paths through the visitor center as they, too, begin or resume their private, personal journals: the layout of the center funnels visitors either toward the I-wall, or past the tourism information desk on the way to the exit.

During my field observations in the center, I noted that visitors who viewed the film spent more time in the BRPVDC interacting with the I-wall and obtaining tourist destination/information materials from the desk than those who did not. Additionally, those who viewed the film were more likely to go back to kiosk exhibits that they had encountered earlier. While I cannot extrapolate too much from these observations, they suggest that the film may be successful in its attempts to position visitors as ethical subjects and as subjects of desire whose sense of identification with the rhetorical themes of the BRPVDC is strengthened by encountering the film. Given the BRNHA's vision of the center as a place that can jump start economic prosperity in the region, I suspect that it will engage in longitudinal studies that attempt to gauge the causal "effects" of the center's messages on public behavior, attitudes, and spending patterns. Despite the current lack of empirical data, the film and the visitor center kiosks offer visitors a particular rhetorical framework for interpreting, valuing, and understanding the Parkway that continues to position the Parkway and the attendant consumer practices that support it as emblematic of an ideal, balanced relationship between nature and culture, despite significant evidence to the contrary.

Lessons From the Road

This contrast depends, often on just the suppression of work in the countryside, and of the property relations through which this work is organised . . . but there are other elements in the contrast. The means of agricultural production -- the fields, the woods, the growing crops, the animals -- are attractive to the observer and in many ways and in the good seasons, to the men working in and among them. They can then be effectively contrasted with the exchanges and counting-houses of mercantilism, or with the mines, quarries, mills and manufactories of industrial production. That contrast, in many ways, still holds in experience.”-- Raymond Williams³⁸⁵

During the course of my fieldwork along the Blue Ridge Parkway, I encountered several literal detours, as the road was subject to several closures during the autumn months in 2008. These detours were due to unsafe road conditions that could not be immediately repaired by the NPS due to a significant lack of funding. Along the way, I also experienced several theoretical and experiential detours that significantly shaped this chapter. At the outset, several committee members suggested that I “embrace the journey” and wait until after I had traveled the length of the Parkway to determine what discourses, practices, and/or places would feature prominently in my research. I am glad that I took their advice. As I noted in Chapter 3, the cost of gasoline during my fieldwork was exorbitant, and the Blue Ridge Parkway and surrounding communities were affected by gas shortages. As a result, I was unable to drive the length of the Parkway from end to end during one trip. Instead, I traveled the Parkway during the course of two months, traveling different distances at different times and searching for a way to conceptualize the rhetorics of a 469-mile long place. Fortunately, the new BRPVDC accepted that challenge in advance of my fieldwork and provided an ideal case study for considering the ways in which nature and culture are articulated along the Parkway. In many ways, the center’s portrayal and marketing of the Parkway differ significantly from my experiences: after spending time in the field at the

Smokies and at Hatteras, the Parkway seemed to offer a dearth of interpretation. With few wayside exhibits and even fewer ranger-led interpretive programs taking place during the fall (and with several on the chopping block, as some NPS employees were subject to temporary furloughs and work-from-home requests due to the gas shortage), I was convinced that my efforts to understand how conservation is made public along the Parkway would be limited to interpreting the promotional materials distributed by tourism trade groups at visitor comfort stations. Nevertheless, the BRPVDC emerged as a rhetorically important site that, while in its nascence, is likely to serve as the interpretive *center* of the Parkway well into the future.

Although the BRPVDC is a LEED-certified building and is perhaps the most visible example of proactive conservation work that I have encountered during my studies in two other units within the NPS systems, it does not feature prominently as a theme, topic, or subject of note in the center itself. With the exception of a glass plaque adjacent to the restrooms that commemorates the building's recognition by the U.S. Green Building Council, there are no exhibits or informational materials that make its characteristics public. And, with the exception of a few books and children's toys in the bookstore that focus on the environment, conservation is also presented solely through the orientation film and the kiosks as an afterthought. While this is a national place, it adopts a distinctly curated regional or local posture as it beckons visitors to interpret their experiences through lenses that deflect and remain silent about local controversies. To be clear, the BRPVDC is not promoting ecotourism; but what kinds of tourism are being promoted and to what ends? As I noted earlier, the BRPVDC is an exemplary model of sustainable building practices and has been recognized by architectural and environmental critics alike. Its accolades, however, are not

made public on site/sight. In this regard, it seems to figure as a silent memorial of hope or possibility to a path that has not yet been chosen as the well-traveled one. Indeed, the building itself stands in stark opposition to its rhetorical contents -- the film, exhibits, and I-wall. In this way, the BRPVDC experience also performs and forwards a discourse of conservation civics that visitors are invited to take with them as lessons from and lessons for the road. As Dickinson et al. note, the I/eye positionality cultivates a form of visual and material identification with the stories about place that are on display in public. These stories are taken as those that matter, and those that should matter to us if we seek identification with the nation. Indeed, the Auteris' experiences may be read, desired, and even "worn," in Landsberg's terms, as our own. For her, "memories are inflected by the specificities of [one's] other experiences and place in the world" because visitors to "experiential museums" like the BRPVDC "do not confront the events of their own lived pasts, but, rather, the events and traumas of cultural and collective pasts."³⁸⁶ Thus, if conservation-as-sustainability is not foregrounded as a quintessential part of "the American experience" in these discourses, then it may significantly hinder public identification with those values in the future.

CHAPTER 6

TOWARD A RHETORICAL THEORY OF ENVIRONMENTALITY

“The ethical constitution of what might be called ‘green’ subjectivities might be the endless process of ‘ethicization’ of being human in the world.” -- Eric Darier³⁸⁷

“From the standpoint of rhetoric, environment figures as a discourse to be measured both against the facts of the case and its own vision of the good. From the standpoint of dramatic performance, it figures as the enactment of human emplacement. But environment can also be figured as that which constitutes the discourse that constitutes it.” -- Lawrence Buell³⁸⁸

From the foothills of the Smokies to the dunes of Ocracoke, national parks fulfill an extraordinarily important role in American public culture: they are protected places and they provide a national commons. In this way, and similar to monuments, memorials, national cemeteries, and museums, for example, they represent a significant degree of symbolic and material value to the nation. As Allen Putney suggests, these values may be understood as “the material resources of protected areas that contribute to human physical well-being, the intangible benefits that contribute to the nonmaterial dimensions of the quality of life, and intrinsic benefits that exist independently of humankind.”³⁸⁹ As noted at various points in this dissertation, national parks are also rhetorical places where visitors encounter a variety of discourses produced by the NPS that aim to influence how they interpret, remember, and value these places. Clearly, the NPS does more than simply manage the land: it manages how visitors encounter and experience national nature. In turn, NPS discourses work to position visitors as participants in the story of the “park idea.” Indeed, by being present and

by learning how to “read” and “value” national parks appropriately as iconic, monumental representations of public environmental conservation (i.e. through the interpretive frameworks offered by the NPS), visitors are positioned as co-participants in a celebratory story of national triumph. These discourses, following Agrawal, situate visitors in particular relations of power and knowledge to the nation and to the environment. Unconditionally and unproblematically, visitors are positioned as environmentally aware citizens whose support for the parks (no matter how unsustainable) is construed as conservation.

From guidebooks to wayside exhibits, NPS rhetorics regularly define conservation as a set of beliefs, attitudes, and practices in ways that elide controversy, maintain strategic silences, celebrate everyday acts of consumerism, and deflect attention away from the complexity of legitimate forms of conservation. As a result, conservation is made public and defined in ways that do not provide incentives to visitors for identifying sustainable practices and mobilizing civic power to end those that are not. Instead, visitors encounter a range of discourses which suggest that the nation is already doing (more than) enough for the environment by managing the parks. At the same time, however, visitors encounter a range of silences and omissions in the face of legitimate environmental threats to the parks. From air pollution to species loss, visitors are presented time and again with a rhetorical refrain which suggests that there isn't much that the nation *can* do because it's impossible to trace blame to particular industries, consumer practices, or governmental policies for environmental damages. In this way, the nation -- and, by extension, government -- is figured as authoritative, benevolent, and pragmatic. Here, visitors are invited to accept a definition of conservation that reinforces pro-market values by simultaneously absolving

polluters and displacing agency from the nation's role as a regulatory body with legitimate oversight capabilities. As David Harmon argues, "contemporary conservation theory stresses the need to address the health of whole ecosystems rather than that of select parts only. It is agreed that having a few Yellowstone scattered about the landscape, scenically spectacular and ecologically important though they may be, is not enough."³⁹⁰ Thus, while the parks are important examples of conservation in and of themselves, there is a distinct need for visitors to understand these places as part of a broader environmental context *and* to understand why conservation cannot simply mean anything at all.

This chapter revisits the case studies addressed in Chapters 3-5 to argue that a critical-cultural approach toward environmentality provides a renewed justification for attending to official discourses that address publics through informal yet popular vectors like tourism. Here, I return to earlier discussions about environmentality to conclude that conservation civics as currently articulated by the NPS are reflective of the most recent political era. As such, they may be subject to revision and amendment by the Obama administration in the coming months and years ahead. However, until and unless these new articulations of nation, nature, and culture reach previous audiences and are able to productively and persuasively challenge the ways in which visitors had been positioned in relation to the environment, these rhetorics will continue to exert some degree of influence upon the ways in which millions of Americans think about conservation and how they remember the parks. However, these discourses are not as intractable as they may appear. If the NPS has succeeded in legitimizing and authorizing its ways of defining conservation to the public, then an abrupt shift in the NPS's discourses that acknowledges conflict and directs visitors' attention toward

unsustainable practices may be perceived as a threat to those who have become accustomed to its previously celebratory tone and its strategic silences. Indeed, it begs the question: would the American public embrace and accept the NPS and continue to support the parks if conservation civics were more reflective of sustainable environmental practices, policies, and economic relations?

In this chapter, I reflect on the observations and critical analyses offered in previous chapters to make a case for the consideration of environmental public memory as a relatively new, yet important, area of inquiry. As this dissertation demonstrates, NPS rhetorics represent one important and extraordinarily visible component of a diverse set of rhetorical and performative practices that aim to commemorate and memorialize threatened, endangered, lost, and even conserved places. When considered through the analytic of public memory, a range of environmental discourses about specific crises -- from melting glaciers and polar bear loss to the devastated communities left behind in the wake of Chernobyl, Katrina, and mountaintop removal in Appalachia -- become imbued with an additional degree of significance as documentary evidence of what once was and what may not be again. In closing, this chapter also identifies and situates conservation civics as an expression of environmentality. I revisit the specific ways in which NPS discourses at Hatteras, on the Parkway, and in the Smokies encourage visitors to adopt a *laissez-faire* perspective toward the environment that does *not* require any additional regulation or protection. Ultimately, I argue that this articulation of conservation civics is rather irresponsible of the NPS because the future(s) of the parks are in a state of ecological, as well as economic, crisis.

Conservation Civics Revisited

In Chapter 1, I demonstrated a need for critics to attend to the ways in which conservation civics and environmentality produce particular ways of relating to nature and culture. Because conservation civics emerge through rhetorical performances, they provide a helpful lens for thinking about *how* power is materially and discursively enacted in ways that influence how millions of American tourists come to understand themselves as citizens, consumers, and inheritors of the “park idea.” In this way, environmentality provides a renewed justification for attending to official discourses that address publics through informal yet popular vectors like tourism. As Crang and Coleman, Edensor, Neumann, and Pezzullo have suggested, tourism is much more than a leisure activity.³⁹¹ As a sensory, embodied way of knowing place and self, tourist encounters and the enactments of place mark tourist destinations and experiences as distinctive from everyday encounters. They, too, are rhetorical and performative; yet unlike an audience member listening to a political candidate’s campaign speech, tourists are addressed in ways that are not always evident as meaningful forms of public address. In this capacity, tourists (or, to return to the NPS’s preferred terminology, visitors) are often *addressed* publics who circulate through different sites/sights where places are experienced, remembered, and often commemorated. Tourism, especially eco-tourism and nature tourism, invites the critique implicit in the theory of environmentality because of the multiple ways in which tourists/visitors are frequently positioned as subjects of green knowledges or other discourses that attribute value to particular ways of conceptualizing and articulating nature and culture. Clearly, some places -- such as national parks -- offer more substantive opportunities for tracing the trajectories of

power and knowledge that aim to situate tourists within particular ethical frameworks. And, while most rhetorics articulate (to some degree) an ethics or set of governing relationships and/or interpretive paradigms that shape the conditions of possibility for choice, freedom, and other actions, those that invoke the environment and address tourists in public, national places offer rich opportunities for understanding how nation, nature, and culture are valued within that particular context. At the same time, these discourses are not absolutist: while powerful, they are not totalizing in their ability to produce particular social relations and ways of interpreting nature, culture, and nation, and NPS do assert their own agency at times and depart (sometimes radically, and often through humor) from the “official” narrative.

In the following pages, I draw briefly from each of the case studies to highlight the particular civics lessons that emerge from NPS discourses. As noted earlier, the stories, images, experiences, and exhibits about exceptional places and, by extension, exceptional people that have been “made public” by the NPS matter because they come from a source that is invested with a significant degree of authority and ethos, even in a culture marked by skepticism toward official versions of “the truth.” Taken together, these findings suggest that NPS rhetorics position visitors as environmental citizens of a conservation-oriented nation. Perhaps most problematically, conservation is defined differently in each park, yet each gets it wrong. Taken together, these public articulations of conservation are a *mélange* of practices and attitudes toward nature and culture that are often highly anthropocentric and equally dismissive of the environmental effects of the very tourist practices that bring millions of people to the parks each year. Conservation civics, as discussed earlier in this dissertation, emerge from NPS discourses as a set of broad thematics that positions visitors in

relation to nature and the nation. Conservation civics tend to center around several key themes. They are discourses that elide conflict, focus on conservation *as* commemoration, position the relationships between nature and culture as national and free of local complexity or nuance, encourage visitors to value these particular places as scenic, as abundant natural resources, and as inherently representative of the nation's moral character as just, wholesome, and pure. Conservation civics, as demonstrated through my case studies, do not generally deploy scientific evidence to make their claims, relying instead on experiential ways of knowing that are often deeply affective, embodied, and pleasurable. Perhaps predictably, these official discourses aim to make conservation public by *not* interrupting, challenging, or contesting the status quo. Reflecting back on the case studies discussed in Chapters 3-5, I discuss below the ways in which each park makes this particular vision of conservation public through the following three principles. Emerging from careful critical-interpretive analysis of NPS discourses -- and while not exhaustive -- I have identified three ways in which conservation civics work to teach visitors how to interpret nature, nation, and culture at the beach, on the parkway, and in the mountains.

Principle #1: Parks saved the people from themselves and continue to do so today. Thus, parks demonstrate the wisdom and benevolence of the nation. The parks are living commemorations of conservation; to honor them and ensure their future survival, visitors should support them by spending money in communities that border the parks. Thus, good citizens support their parks and their nation.

Despite the different historic circumstances that contributed to the development of each park referenced in this study, as well as the various local, state, and non-governmental actors that participated in and/or challenged the park, the federal government gets all of the

credit and none of the blame. In each instance, visitors are informed about the specific ways in which locals were unable to care for the land in sustainable ways or recognize its value. In the Smokies, visitors learn that logging, clear-cutting, mining, and topsoil erosion due to agricultural mismanagement all contributed to the devastation of the landscape until public and private interests intervened in the 1930s to preserve what was left of the wilderness. On the Parkway, visitors learn that southern Appalachia was long a region devastated by poverty, poor land management practices, and a misguided sense of aesthetics. Until private and public interests collaborated in the 1930s to build the road and bring outsiders and jobs to the region, visitors are told, locals could not figure out how to stake their claim to modernity by attracting capital and building infrastructure. At the Outer Banks, visitors learn that the natural resources of the island had been relatively depleted by the early 1930s. Geographic isolation and the limitations of agricultural practices on the coast are blamed for poor nutrition and poverty, and Ocracoke especially is positioned as one of the last frontiers of premodern life. Here, paved roads are figured as an important indicator of modernity, and visitors learn that there were no paved roads on Ocracoke for the first half of the 20th century.

Time and again, the NPS interprets the history of these places such that they are figured as rural frontiers that required government intervention in order to protect the people from themselves. Despite substantive evidence that complicates this thesis, the existence of each park is celebrated by the NPS as a triumph of the people, for the people, and by the people. These rhetorics position the nation as a wise and benevolent actor and encourage visitors to support and identify with its vision of conservation, development, and

intervention. The impetus to conserve the park by engaging in acts of consumerism are perhaps most evident (and perhaps ironically) inside the LEED-certified BRPVDC where visitors are informed that their presence makes it possible for local artisans and their specialized knowledges to survive. Here, the health of the parks is equated to the health of tourism-based economies that surround the park in its gateway communities. The visitor orientation film at the BRPVDC makes this relationship rather explicit: as the Auteris travel the length of the Parkway to commemorate their heritage, their consumer practices are featured in ways that present the consumption of local goods along the Parkway as a noble act of reciprocity. Here, the purchase of local goods is figured as an exchange for local residents' continued and, as the film would have it, conflict-free and robust support for the Parkway and all of the tourists who traverse it.

Principle #2: Visitors should not worry about the environmental impact of their visit to the parks. The parks are here for visitors' enjoyment and recreation, and worrying about the environment distracts visitors from being happy. National parks are not significantly threatened by pollution, global warming, or overuse anyway, so why worry?

Despite the wide range of interpretive programs, brochures, wayside exhibits, visitor center displays, and other NPS materials available to visitors at each of the parks, very little is mentioned about the specific ways in which park visits affect the environment. Nor are visitors generally informed about the particular environmental issues that impact each park. While visitors to one particular campground in the Smokies who happen upon a bulletin board that connects home electricity use with coal-burning power plants and the air pollution that presents a dangerous public health threat to park visitors and residents of surrounding communities alike, park rhetorics do not explicitly address conservation of resources. As

noted previously, most visitors to the parks drive long distances to get there. All three parks lack public transportation options and personal vehicles are the primary way in which millions of people navigate these places each year. Furthermore, in the case of the Smokies and the Parkway, visitors spend nearly all of their time in the car. The environmental impacts of air pollution do not emerge with any frequency in either park, nor are visitors actively encouraged to turn off their vehicles when they stop at overlooks to take photos. Along the Blue Ridge Parkway alone, there are more than 200 overlooks. While I was not able to stop at every one and assess its signage, none that I stopped at suggested that visitors should prevent their vehicles from idling. At all three parks, NPS rhetorics suggest an abundant wealth of natural resources that are infinitely capable of sustaining a constant flow of visitors. Other than admonitions to protect one's food from bears in the Smokies, park rhetorics invited visitors to celebrate America's natural and cultural heritage by spending time in the park without any consideration of how their presence and consumer practices might affect the environment. Along the Parkway and on Ocracoke, the message was equally clear: please don't litter or feed the wildlife, but otherwise, have a great time! In this way, park experiences are framed as deeply personal and not necessarily subject to critique: to drive a Hummer H3 along the Parkway is just as acceptable as driving a Toyota Prius or riding a bicycle. And, as there are no sidewalks along the road and very few well-supported shoulders, walking is not really an option. To each his or her own is the ethic that rules the day, but please don't pick the ginseng.

Principle #3: Conservation is not controversial.

From the strategic silences on Ocracoke that neglect to mention the ORV controversy, despite its overwhelming visual and material presence on the island, to the ways in which conservation is presented as a distinctly premodern, nostalgic, and relatively easy accomplishment at the Mountain Farm Museum, NPS rhetorics work to locate visitors outside of controversy. In this way, the NPS emplaces controversy firmly beyond the park's borders as something that has no place within. In this way, conservation is rhetorically situated as a conflict or friction-free framework for engaging nature and culture. Time and again, however, visitors are positioned as witnesses to history in ways that situate contemporary conservation efforts as less fulfilling and less important than daily acts of conservation by individuals, communities, and corporations. Here, to know nature is not to know what needs to be conserved; rather, it is to know how to read a landscape and to possess the power of identifying by name its flowers, trees, animals, and geologic features without consideration for the ways in which they symbiotically exist as part of a particular ecosystem. As noted in Chapter 4, these hermeneutic practices are marked by significant aporias and work to unreflexively position the visitor as an expert interpreter and as a witness. As Pezzullo suggests, "tourists" and "witnesses" are "critical categories . . . that tend not to signify the same thing."³⁹² Here, she argues, witnessing "has generally been endowed with the assumption that the act of witnessing is political and therefore somehow distinct from practices of pleasure, such as tourism."³⁹³ At the same time, to quote Diana Taylor, "witnessing entails the acceptance of the 'heavy weight of sorrow' and it entails responsibility. And it's not without its own risks."³⁹⁴

On Ocracoke, witnessing is divorced from its political and ethical power. Here, the practices of looking are cultivated by the NPS in ways that discourage and even foreclose visitors' abilities to read the beach in all of its complexity. Ranger Robert admitted that most of the information conveyed to the public during the "Explore the Shore" program is derived from a book sold in the visitor center titled *How to Read a North Carolina Beach*, by Duke University geologist Orrin Pilkey.³⁹⁵ Although it's clearly not possible for rangers to convey an entire book's worth of information to the public in a 30-45 minute interpretive session, it is curious to note that the book and the interpretive programming alike do not address topics like overfishing or the myriad ecological problems facing the Outer Banks. It's also curious to note that the book does discuss the importance of "conservation of beaches" and explicitly states the relationships between sea level rise and global warming while the interpretive programs do not engage this topic. Indeed, Pilkey et al. even argue that beachfront property owners are responsible for many of the activities (directly or indirectly) that contribute to beach erosion and the cyclical problems related to beach nourishment.³⁹⁶ Furthermore, they plainly suggest that these activities constitute an "environmental disaster," yet visitors who participate in ranger-led interpretive programs must purchase the book or seek out other sources of information if they wish to learn how to read the beach in its complexity.³⁹⁷ In this way, the NPS reinforces its voice and its interpretations -- no matter how partial or incomplete -- as the final, authoritative word.

My findings, as distilled above, must be considered as representative of a particular cultural moment and specific context. As noted earlier in this chapter and elsewhere in the dissertation, NPS employees faced significant degrees of implicit censorship and other

disincentives for making conservation public in ways that acknowledge its contested, complicated nature. Indeed, my long-term research agenda will explore how the NPS has made conservation public during other moments in American history and culture. These interpretations are also guided (and limited) by the particular encounters with nature and culture that I had during the course of my fieldwork during the summer and fall semesters in 2008. Although it may take several years for the NPS to revise and/or redo many of its most visible forms of public communication, nearly all of the materials that formed the basis of this study were produced during the George W. Bush administration and, as my interviews with NPS employees suggest, are deeply informed by the prerogatives of the NPS's upper division management. As PEER, Foresta, and others have observed, many of these career positions were filled by political ideologues who embraced Bush's neoconservative land ethic. Furthermore, the influence of two previous Interior Department secretaries, known anti-environmentalist and industry apologist Gale Norton and her successor, Dirk Kempthorne, have also wielded an unprecedented degree of influence upon the workaday policies and interpretive "habits" of the NPS.

For these and other reasons noted earlier in this dissertation, I suspect that these discourses may shift toward more recognizable definitions of conservation in the immediate future while also acknowledging the explicit conservation work that the NPS does. In this way, the NPS may once again be able to foreground its efforts to boost the populations of endangered and threatened species, recover and restore polluted ecosystems, and communicate honestly and openly with the public about the legitimate threats to the nation's ecological sustainability that are often most visible in the parks. In this way, the particular

ways in which NPS discourses situate visitors as environmental subjects will likely remain in place and of place as one of the lingering legacies of the George W. Bush administration and his political appointees. In this way, environmentality is clearly rhetorical and performative, but it is also extraordinarily contextual. In this way, as I note below, this dissertation makes a case for further consideration of the possibility of environmental public memory studies.

The Possibilities for Environmental Public Memory

With the emergence of environmental communication, sustainability studies, conservation biology, political ecology, and other affiliated areas of inquiry during the past 35 years, environmental issues have been brought to bear on different disciplines and domains of inquiry. Environmental communication, with its roots in rhetorical theory, performance studies, discourse analysis, cultural studies, and organizational communication, is perhaps uniquely positioned as a locus for the study of public memory through an environmental framework. Given the relative youth of the discipline, and the extent to which its earliest contributors (such as Christine Oravec) had to negotiate and legitimize the study of environmental issues through established scholarly paradigms before environmental communication emerged as a unique player within the field, there are a surprising number of studies that gesture toward environmental public memory. Although few of these scholars explicitly invoke that terminology to situate their work, there appears to be fruitful ground for exploring the ways in which public memory informs the study of the environment.³⁹⁸ Given the interventions made by environmental justice advocates to reposition the environment as much more than wilderness -- as the places where we live,

work, play, and/or worship -- the ways in which the environment is remembered, commemorated, contested, and figured as a sight and site where particular iterations of the public are invoked through documentary, advocacy, narrative, performance, and other communicative actions is perhaps more viable and important than at previous moments.

As noted earlier in this chapter, communicative processes mediate how the environment is figured in history and culture: from mediated representations of environmental destruction and irreparability to performances of place like Danielle Sears Vignes' "Hang it Out to Dry," an environmental approach to public memory enables critics to engage the ways in which these discourses are used to advocate, to interrupt, and to displace unsustainable paradigms. In this way, image events may be understood, following DeLuca, well beyond their immediate context as provocative interventions that aim to reconfigure public discourse. Indeed, as images of the damage caused by the Exxon Valdez oil spill and painted landscapes that claim to represent "authentic," pre-Manifest Destiny American wilderness continue to make claims on the ways in which the environment is understood in contemporary popular and political culture, considering these artifacts as representative of environmental public memory may generate productive theoretical perspectives for future advocates and critics alike. As my work here demonstrates, national parks (especially the Smokies) are rhetorically situated as material evidence of environmental public memory: they are sights/sites where visitors learn how to interpret and remember nature and culture across place and time. Furthermore, if the NPS continues to build new visitor centers using similar technologies and material exhibits as noted at the BRPVDC, the deployment of prosthetic memory as a normative mode through which visitors experience nature may

become increasingly standardized. And, if the Centennial Initiative's efforts to reposition the parks as exceptional public places achieves even a moderate number of its ambitious goals, then such experiences will likely become commonplace. To that end, if the CI also fails to curtail or reduce those environmental impacts that are currently edging toward the proverbial tipping point (such as the (permanent) melting of glaciers in Glacier National Park), then public memory and a variety of archival materials will likely comprise the dominant modes through which future publics experience those environments.

In summary, the implications of this dissertation gesture toward a rhetorical and performative approach to the "optic" of environmentality. These case studies explicitly address the ways in which three different park sites make conservation public by defining it in ways that are radically contextual, yet largely divorced from the ways in which conservation is understood as a philosophical and political orientation toward the environment. Here, the ways in which nature and culture are articulated to the nation are identifiable as situated practices that produce conservation civics. In this way, our understanding of environmentality is significantly augmented by considering the everyday or banal forms of publicity that are enacted by the nation-state as it constitutes publics and writes its narrative upon the terrain of everyday, political life. From Junior Ranger programs to visitor center orientation films, parks function as crucibles of experience where the state is positioned as a benevolent and rational actor. As the case studies offered here have suggested, this theme is articulated through various rhetorical experiences that position visitors as recipients of the gift of conservation and environmental stewardship. The parks, then, may be understood as technologies for expressing the environmental reason of the state

-- the subtle (and not so subtle) regulation of discourses and practices that govern both people and place in ways that seem common-sensical or reasonable but are nevertheless represented and situated as such through conservation civics. To be clear, conservation civics must always-already be understood as a deeply contextual and contingent discourse.

As perhaps with any project worth doing, there are many unexplored avenues that emerge from this dissertation. Given the current state of the NPS archives, it was not possible to engage in a longitudinal or genealogical study of how conservation has been made public through multiple media since the Reagan era. As the environmental issues have become increasingly politicized and demonized, particularly by free-market fundamentalists and others who believe that jobs and prosperity must always trump sustainability, these rhetorical challenges have also been brought to bear on the NPS. As PEER and my interviews both confirm, long-time NPS employees are generally demoralized due to the ways in which political priorities and funding have influenced the day-to-day operations of the NPS and individual employees' abilities to engage the public. While this dissertation gestures toward a theory of rhetorical environmentality, this is clearly a long-term project that will require significant additional research -- both archival and site-based. Clearly, that extends well beyond the limitations of a dissertation.

A rhetorical approach to environmentality, as noted earlier in this dissertation, has a strong foundation from which it may emerge as an alternative to psychoanalytic and identity-based models of subjectivity. Furthermore, it provides a useful way for rethinking the ways in which publics are addressed in late modernity through multiple fragments and rhetorical vectors by considering how power is replicated, challenged, and recycled across space and

time under the sign of the nation. Although I do not focus on visitor experiences or the explicit ways in which local controversies about the the NPS and park policies emerge and play out through particular social movements, my fieldwork has yielded several future opportunities for additional study. As an outsider, I have not yet been able to gain access to the NPS in ways that would better enable me to understand and critically trace how particular flows and enactments of internal power translate into particular rhetorical texts. I was not granted access to the revisions, drafts, or meeting minutes that went into the planning and execution of any of the exhibits, interpretive performances, or brochures that are currently in circulation., as that component will be part of a larger research timeline and trajectory of scholarship extending beyond the dissertation.

Despite these limitations, however, this dissertation offers a critical-interpretive framework for rethinking how the rhetorics of place influence how publics relate to particular articulations of nature and culture. It gestures toward a theory of rhetorical environmentality as a critical intervention in environmental communication while also providing a foundation for additional work in environmental public memory. Indeed, there is much work to be done. At the same time, this research offers a new set of lenses for thinking about familiar places by questioning the ways in which conservation -- a generally “assumed” practice of the NPS -- is and is not made public in ways that matter. Indeed, these discourses offer a significant challenge to environmental advocates who aim to move the social politically and affectively by educating the public about conservation as a particularly sustainable set of beliefs and practices that do require private and public support. Simply put, the ethos of the NPS is difficult to counter, given its institutional weight and its reception as a trusted public

resource. It is my hope that this study may provide a foundation for considering the ways in which environmental public memory is constituted, produced, performed, and institutionalized in popular and political culture. In summary, a rhetorical approach to environmentality situates power and discourse within the realm of human experience and enables critics to tease out the specific ways in which official discourses are deployed, in informal settings, to influence public policy and public attitudes outside of the traditional domain of electoral politics.

In closing, it is worth repeating that these discourses are not intractable. Indeed, in light of the increased publicity that the NPS is likely to invite and receive as a result of the CI in the next 7 years, I suspect that this heightened level of visibility will invite additional opportunities for criticism, intervention, and opportunities for addressing the very ways in which conservation civics is producing a particular way of understanding nature, culture, and nation that leaves much to be desired in terms of real environmental and social change. As noted earlier, conservation civics are highly contextual and vary significantly in their rhetorical and political orientation across the NPS system. One limitation of this study is that I have only focused on three units during a short time period. I strongly suspect that additional archival work, interviews with NPS employees, visitors, retirees, and residents of gateway communities will yield a more complex understanding of how conservation civics are produced in ways that are deeply rooted to the particularities of place and politics. As this project moves forward, I also suspect that there will be additional openings in conversations, interviews, and archival materials that speak more vividly and candidly toward resistances, counterdiscourses, and the fluidity of subjectivity as it is continually

(re)produced in everyday life. Thus, a rhetorical and performative orientation toward environmentalism enables us to trace and draw attention to the fissures and fractures that complicate state discourses from producing a totalized state of being and/or becoming. Indeed, visitors and NPS employees involved in interpretation have agency; departures from the 'official script' and strategic uses of humor and questioning do occur and open a space for alternative interpretations and discourses. In this capacity, the optic of environmentalism reminds us that another future is possible.

¹ Lawrence Buell, *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2005), 63. Buell offers a provocative challenge to environmental studies, rhetoric, and literary studies by questioning the role of environmental criticism as an effective and/or affective paradigm for moving the social.

² David Quammen, "An Endangered Idea: The Future of Parks." *National Geographic* 210 (2006), 62. Quammen's work engages a general readership and makes the case that national parks are a fundamental component of a sustainable future. For Quammen, the nation's symbolic and environmental health depend on the future of the parks in ways that are more important than other measures, such as GDP.

³ As a result, balancing visitors' desires to "authentically" experience relatively undeveloped (or "wild") places today with the exigencies inherent in the struggle to preserve them for tomorrow is perhaps one of the most fundamental challenges faced by the NPS. Through a mix of performance, aesthetics, argumentation, and place-based experiential education, the NPS both interprets the land and models a land ethic that the visiting public is encouraged to adopt and/or adapt for themselves. This perception of influence and "intervention" is, perhaps, the primary reason why anti-environmental groups like the Blue Ribbon Coalition and others who engage in park-specific backlash against environmental regulations enact a rhetoric of patriotic dissent in order to position themselves as defenders of political and economic freedom (despite the fact that their campaigns are often heavily supported by industry and neoliberal foundations).

⁴ Indeed, there is a rich and lengthy history of rhetoric's engagement with "the public" and the notion that publics are rhetorically (re)produced and discursively enacted, sometimes through law, precedent, custom, and/or the governing documents of a nation-state. The "problem" of "the public" has vexed and productively complemented the study of rhetoric and governance from Aristotle through Jefferson, Dewey, Habermas, Arendt, and in the contemporary moment by rhetoricians like G. Thomas Goodnight, Daniel Brouwer and Rob Asen, as well as critical scholars like Michael Warner. As Carole Blair, Brian Ott and Greg Dickinson note in their forthcoming manuscript on rhetoric and memory (in press), "Rhetoric is the study of discourses, events, objects, and practices that attends to their character as meaningful, legible, partisan, and consequential. But what most clearly distinguishes rhetoric from other critical protocols (cultural studies or literary criticism, for example), is that it organizes itself around the relationship of discourses, events, objects, and practices to ideas about what it means to be 'public'" (n. pag).

⁵ J. Robert Cox, "Nature's "Crisis Disciplines": Does Environmental Communication Have an Ethical Duty?" *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture* 1 (2007), 5-20; Emily Plec, "Crisis, Coherence, and the Promise of Critical Rhetoric," *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture* 1 (2007), 49-57. Cox's call borrows from the crisis discipline of conservation biology to reconsider the implications for a critical approach to environmental scholarship that goes beyond criticism for criticism's sake. As I interpret Cox's call and the responses from junior and senior colleagues that self-identify with the Environmental Communication Division of NCA, the implications of a crisis orientation are still under debate.

⁶ While I am not suggesting that NPS discourses stifle alternative stories, interpretations, counterdiscourses, or experiences of place (or the possibility thereof), they are nevertheless more visible and more widely circulated due to the sheer volume of people who encounter them and/or seek them out during visits to the parks. Furthermore, NPS employees have recently been encouraged to embrace overtly unsustainable and/or anti-environmental stances that have been championed by powerful political appointees within the White House and Cabinet.

⁷ Philip Shabecoff, *A Fierce Green Fire: An American Environmental Movement*, (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2003); James Speth, *Red Sky at Morning* (Yale University Press: New Haven, CT, 2004). Shabecoff and Speth offer two accessible and well-documented histories of the American environmental movement while also attending to the specific and potentially irreparable ecological crisis facing the world at the beginning of the 21st century.

⁸ Arun Agrawal, *Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005). 236.

⁹ Timothy M. Lenton et al, "Tipping elements in the Earth's climate system." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* 105 (2008): 1786-1793. Lenton offers a clear definition of the tipping point concept and outlines specific instances in which irreparable conditions may be immanent alongside their consequences.

¹⁰ John De Graaf, David Wann, and Thomas H. Naylor, *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic*. (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2005). This popular PBS series and textbook made an important contribution to the critiques of consumer culture that circulated in the early 2000s in reaction to President George W. Bush's post-9/11 call to "go shopping" and to the emergent patterns of debt and consumption worldwide (and especially in developing nations like India and China) that contributed to what Andrew Ross and others have termed the race to the bottom. In this moment, cheap consumer goods, exploitative labor practices, and unsustainable levels of resource consumption were the norm, alongside glorified representations of wealth and affluence in popular culture. See, for example, the media "obsession" with celebrities and material excess.

¹¹ Robert Cox, *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006); Philip Shabecoff, *A Fierce Green Fire: An American Environmental Movement*, (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2003); James Speth, *Red Sky at Morning* (Yale University Press: New Haven, CT, 2004).

¹² Quammen; Michael Shnayerson, "Who's Ruining Our National Parks?" *Vanity Fair* June 2006, online special: <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2006/06/nationalparks200606> Accessed 8 March 2009; John G. Mitchell, "Threatened Sanctuaries: The State of U.S. Parks." *National Geographic* 210 (2006); Tom Arrandale, "National Parks Under Pressure: Should Conservation or Recreation Take Precedence?" *Congressional Quarterly Researcher* 16 (2006): n. pag.

¹³ David Helvarg, *The War Against the Greens: The "Wise-Use" Movement, the New Right, and the Browning of America*, (Boulder, CO: Johnson Books, 2004). As Helvarg discusses at length, the "Wise Use" movement grew from the burgeoning "property rights" movements of the American west during the late 1970s and 1980s. From the advocacy efforts of the Center for the Defense of Free Enterprise to Chuck Cushman's deliberate use of physical violence against environmental advocates, the capitalized "Wise Use" movement capitalizes (pun intended) on the popular meanings of the phrase as advocated by Pinchot. "Wise Use" differs from "wise use" significantly. As Sourcewatch notes, "The so-called "Wise Use" movement is an industry-front anti-environmentalist organization founded by Ron Arnold in the late 1980s, primarily dealing with timber and mining issues in the western US. It inspired a number of spin-off groups, including the "Share" groups in the Canadian province of British Columbia (B.C.), which give the appearance of being grass-roots community organizations, but are in fact organized and funded by major corporations. (For example, the "B.C. Forest Alliance" was chaired for its initial period by an executive of Burson-Marsteller.) This type of "fake grass-roots" group led to their description of the advocacy as being an astroturf campaign. "Wise Use groups are often funded by timber, mining, and chemical companies. In return, they claim, loudly, that the well-documented hole in the ozone layer doesn't exist, that carcinogenic chemicals in the air and water don't harm anyone, and that trees won't grow properly unless forests are clear-cut, with government subsidies. Wise Use proponents were buffeted by Bush's defeat and by media exposure of the movement's founders' connections to the Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church network (tainted by charges of cultism and theocratic neo-fascism), but the movement has quickly rebounded. In every state of the US, relentless Wise Use disinformation campaigns about the purpose and meaning of environmental laws are building a grassroots constituency. To Wise Users, environmentalists are pagans, eco-nazis, and communists who must be fought with shouts and threats." See http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Wise_Use_Movement Accessed 22 March 2009.

¹⁴ National Park Service, "Public Use Visitation Statistics," <http://www.nature.nps.gov/stats/> Accessed 15 October 2007.

¹⁵ National Park Service, "National Park System Attendance Rises in 2007," <http://home.nps.gov/applications/release/Detail.cfm?ID=785> Accessed 24 July 2008.

¹⁶ Robert Reinhold, "Fearing Recession, American Skimp on Vacation Costs," *The New York Times* 13 August 1990. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C0CEED71F3FF930A2575BC0A966958260&sec=travel&spon=&pagewanted=all> Accessed 2 March 2009.

¹⁷ Horace M. Albright, and Robert Cahn, *The Birth of the National Park Service :The Founding Years, 1913-33*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Howe Bros., 1985); Horace M. Albright, and Marian Albright Schenck, *Creating the National Park Service :The Missing Years*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999); William C. Everhart, *The National Park Service* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983); Ronald A. Foresta, *Resources for the Future: America's National Parks and their Keepers*, (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future, 1984); George B.Hartzog, *Battling for the National Parks* (Mt. Kisco, NY: Moyer Bell, 1988).

¹⁸ Arrandale, n.pag.

¹⁹ Mitchell, n. pag.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Kim Heacox, *An American Idea :The Making of the National Parks* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 2001).

²² Quammen.

²³ Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Major Uses of Land in the United States," (2006: Economic Information Bulletin No. (EIB-14) May 2006; Accessed 18 July 2008; www.ers.usda.gov/publications/arei/ah722/arei1_3/AREI1_3farmtenure.pdf

²⁴ See Shabecoff, Heacox, and Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* 4th ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

²⁵ Gifford Pinchot, *Principles of Conservation* Online. <http://www.muhsenberg.edu/depts/interdis/envisci/faculty/pinchot.html> Accessed 17 February 2009. n. pag.

²⁶ National Parks Conservation Association, "Who We Are," http://www.npca.org/who_we_are/ Accessed 21 July 2008.

²⁷ National Park Foundation, "Ford Motor Company and National Park Foundation Send SCA Students to Work in National Parks as Transportation Interpreters," June 2005 <http://www.nationalparks.org/news/?fa=viewArticle&articleID=47> Accessed 14 January 2009. From the press release: "As a Proud Partner of America's National Parks, Ford is working closely with NPF and NPS to help develop transportation and environmental solutions that enable visitors to enjoy all 388 National Parks without compromising their beauty. The Ford Proud Partner Transportation Interpreter Program was developed to encourage National Park visitors to use alternative modes of transportation, such as buses, trains or ferries, with the ultimate goal of reducing vehicle congestion as well as noise and air pollution. "The National Park Foundation is very grateful to Ford for their commitment to preserving and enhancing public lands as a Proud Partner of America's National Parks," said Vin Cipolla, President, National Park Foundation. "Ford's support of the Transportation Interpreter Program is a perfect example of how Ford is enriching the visitor experience by introducing innovative initiatives that preserve and protect the breathtaking beauty of America's National Parks. "Ford Motor Company is committed to helping preserve and protect America's National Parks," said Sandra E. Ulsh, President, Ford Motor Company Fund. "These dedicated students are helping us to achieve that commitment by spreading the word about how alternative transportation systems are helping to enhance the visitor experience without harming the environment."

²⁸ National Park Service, "1916-2016: The National Park Service Centennial Initiative," <http://www.nps.gov/2016/> Accessed 15 October 2007.

²⁹ PBS, "The National Parks: America's Best Idea," http://www.pbs.org/nationalparks/about_the_film.htm Accessed 15 January 2009.

³⁰ Joan Moody, "Secretary Salazar Lauds Upcoming Ken Burns' Series on PBS: Burns and Duncan Made Honorary Park Rangers" 5 March 2009. Department of the Interior, http://www.doi.gov/news/09_News_Releases/030609.html Accessed 17 March 2009.

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- ³⁴ Carl Herndl and Stuart Brown, *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 215.
- ³⁵ James Kieley, "A Brief History of the National Park Service," http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/kieley/index.htm Accessed 18 August 2008.
- ³⁶ Dwight Fay Rettie. *Our National Park System: Caring for America's Greatest Natural and Historic Treasures* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 4.
- ³⁷ Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 1997), 8.
- ³⁸ *Ibid*, 10.
- ³⁹ Runte, Sellars.
- ⁴⁰ Runte, 1.
- ⁴¹ Sellars, 11.
- ⁴² *Ibid*, 17.
- ⁴³ Heacox, 250.
- ⁴⁴ Foresta, 17.
- ⁴⁵ Heacox, 250.
- ⁴⁶ Sellars, 8.
- ⁴⁷ Mark Daniel Barringer, *Selling Yellowstone: Capitalism and the Construction of Nature*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002); see also Mark Neumann, *At The Rim*; Tim Edensor's work on national identity and environmental ruins, and Ethan Carr's *Wilderness by Design*.
- ⁴⁸ Foresta, 11.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid*.
- ⁵⁰ Heacox, 11.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid*, 105.
- ⁵² *Ibid*.
- ⁵³ Heacox, 182.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 156-7.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 183.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 214.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 218-9.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 234.

⁵⁹ Nash, 67-69.

⁶⁰ Horace M. Albright, and Robert Cahn, *The Birth of the National Park Service :The Founding Years, 1913-33*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Howe Bros., 1985); Horace M. Albright, and Marian Albright Schenck, *Creating the National Park Service :The Missing Years*, (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999); William C. Everhart, *The National Park Service* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983); Ronald A. Foresta, *Resources for the Future: America's National Parks and their Keepers*, (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future, 1984); George B.Hartzog, *Battling for the National Parks* (Mt. Kisco, NY: Moyer Bell, 1988).

⁶¹ Arrandale.

⁶² Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting our Heritage*, 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 8.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 30.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 87-88.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 70.

⁶⁷ Arrandale, Quammen, Mitchell, Shnayerson. See also PEER.

⁶⁸ Gary E. Machlis and Donald R. Field. *National Parks and Rural Development :Practice and Policy in the United States*. (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2000), 7.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 52.

⁷⁰ See Chapter 3; this perspective was reiterated by Amy and Jennifer on different occasions.

⁷¹ Massey quoted in Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture, and Everyday Life*, 32.

⁷² Among others, see: Barbara Biesecker, "Remembering World War II: The Rhetoric and Politics of National Commemoration at the Turn of the 21st Century." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 393-409; Carole Blair, "Contemporary U.S. Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric's Materiality." *Rhetorical Bodies*. Ed. Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999. 16-57; Carole Blair and Neil Michel, "The AIDS Memorial Quilt and the Contemporary Culture of Public Commemoration," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* - Volume 10, Number 4, Winter 2007, pp. 595-626; Marouf Hasian, Jr. "Remembering and Forgetting the "Final Solution": A Rhetorical Pilgrimage through the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* Volume 21, Number 1 (March 2004): 64-92.; Phaedra C. Pezzullo, "Touring "Cancer Alley," Louisiana: Performances of Community and Memory for Environmental Justice. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 23 (2003): 226-252.

⁷³ Robert Ivie, "The Social Relevance of Rhetorical Scholarship." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 138.

⁷⁴ Charlotte L. Stuart, "Architecture in Nazi Germany: A Rhetorical Perspective." *Western Speech* 37 (1973): 253.

⁷⁵ Darryl Hattenhauer, "The Rhetoric of Architecture: A Semiotic Approach." *Communication Quarterly* 32 (1984), 73.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 74.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 76.

⁷⁸ Foss; Haines; Carlson and Hocking; Ehrenhaus; and Blair.

⁷⁹ Carole Blair, Marsha Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci, "Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veteran Memorial as Prototype," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77 (1991), 265.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Without citing the entire repertoire of this scholarship, I point readers toward the special issues on rhetorical criticism in *Western Journal of Communication* in 1980, 1990, and 2001, respectively.

⁸³ Tim Cresswell, *In Place and Out of Place* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 173.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 13.

⁸⁶ Robert Ivie, "A Question of Significance." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80 (1994): 382.

⁸⁷ Cresswell, 13.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Edward Casey, *Getting Back Into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), xvii.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 15-16.

⁹¹ Ibid, 13-15.

⁹² Ibid, 23.

⁹³ See, for example, Douglas Torgerson, *The Promise of Green Politics: Environmentalism and the Public Sphere* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Frank Fischer, *Citizens, Experts, and the Environment: The Politics of Local Knowledge* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); and Andrew Jamison, *The Making of Green Knowledge: Environmental Politics and Cultural Transformation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁹⁴ Arun Agrawal, *Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 229.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 230.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 219.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 226.

⁹⁸ Michel Foucault, "The Political Technology of Individuals," *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* ed. Luther H. Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick Hutton (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 148-150.

⁹⁹ Thomas Lemke, "Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique" online. <http://www.thomaslemkeweb.de/publikationen/Foucault,%20Governmentality,%20and%20Critique%20IV-2.pdf> Accessed 15 January 2009, 11.

¹⁰⁰ Grusin, 161.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 14.

¹⁰² Ronald Walter Greene, "Another Materialist Rhetoric." *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 15 (1998), 30.

¹⁰³ Timothy W. Luke, "Environmentality as Green Governmentality," in *Discourses of the Environment*, ed. Eric Darier (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999), 145-151.

¹⁰⁴ Greene, 31.

¹⁰⁵ In this regard, my thinking has been significantly influenced by Arturo Escobar's collaborative approach to environmental issues and social movements in *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes* (2008) Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Locating his work in conversation with cultural studies, Escobar draws from Grossberg's work to gesture toward "the conjunctural." Here, cultural studies offers a methodological edge that is "centered on the study of conjunctures, understood in terms of articulations or condensations of contradictions within a given social formation that need to be examined along multiple axes, planes, and scales" (23). Escobar's framework offers a way of thinking through the production of knowledge as a collaborative, critical endeavor.

¹⁰⁶ *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture* Volume 1, Issue 1 May 2007, passim. Here, Cox offers a perspective articulated by conservation biology's most public voice, Michael Soule, and makes a similar case for environmental communication to position itself as a crisis discipline. In the same special issue, Steve Schwarze responds to Cox's call for scholars to intervene in and address publics with regard to the dissemination of scholarship. Schwarze suggests that such an orientation must also be considered in terms of how it influences the production of scholarship such that its focus does not become seduced by ideological forms of criticism that generate reductive and/or insular knowledges.

¹⁰⁷ Steve Schwarze, "Environmental Communication as a Discipline of Crisis." *Environmental Communication* 1 (2007): 93.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁰⁹ CO2gether Carbon Calculator: https://www.co2gether.org/my_co2/about/help/how_manage_monthlycarbonsource_index.htm Accessed 18 March 2009.

¹¹⁰ Darier, xi-21.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹¹² Michel Foucault, trans. Rosi Braidotti and revised by Colin Gordon, in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, eds. *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 87-104. Specifically, Foucault outlines governmentality as "the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses, and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge, political economy, and as its essential technical means, apparatuses of security" (102-103). Furthermore, as Thomas Lemke notes in "Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique" in a paper presented at the 2000 Rethinking Marxism Conference at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, governmentality is "the missing link" between "ethical questions" and "the genealogy of the subject." (n. pag). This point is important as governmentality offers a lens for thinking through how "governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself" (Foucault 1993, p. 203-4)" (4). See Lemke's article online (only) at <http://www.thomaslemkeweb.de/publikationen/Foucault,%20Governmentality,%20and%20Critique%20IV-2.pdf> Accessed 15 January 2009.

¹¹³ Darier, 22.

¹¹⁴ Paul Rutherford, "The Entry of Life into History," in Darier, 47.

¹¹⁵ Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

¹¹⁶ Rose, 88.

¹¹⁷ Thomas Rosteck, ed., *At the Intersection: Cultural Studies and Rhetorical Studies* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999).

¹¹⁸ Della Pollock and J. Robert Cox, "Historicizing 'Reason': Critical Theory, Practice, and Postmodernity," *Communication Monographs*, 58 (1991): 170-78. Barbara Biesecker, "Michel Foucault and the Question of Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25 (1992): 351-364; Carole Blair, "Contested Histories of Rhetoric: The Politics of Preservation, Progress, and Change." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 (2002): 403-428;

¹¹⁹ See also *Rhetorical Bodies*, ed. Selzer and Crowley, and *Rhetorics of Display*, ed. Prelli.

¹²⁰ Raymie E. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," *Communication Monographs* 56 (1989), 91-111; Robert Hariman, "Critical Rhetoric and Postmodern Theory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77, (1991): 67-70; Maurice Charland, "Finding a Horizon and Telos: The Challenge to Critical Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77 (1991): 71-74; Raymie E. McKerrow, "Critical Rhetoric in a Postmodern World," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77 (1991): 75-78; Kent Ono and John Sloop, "Commitment to Telos--A Sustained Critical Rhetoric," *Communication Monographs* 59 (1992): 48-60; Dana Cloud, "The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Communication* 58 (1994): 141-163; John Murphy, "Critical Rhetoric as Political Discourse," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 32 (1995): 1-15.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹²² Jack Bratich, Jeremy Packer, and Cameron McCarthy, "Governing the Present," *Foucault, Cultural Studies, and Governmentality*. Jack Bratich, Jeremy Packer, and Cameron McCarthy, eds.(Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2003), 7-8.

¹²³ Kenneth Rufo, "Rhetoric and Power: Rethinking and Relinking," *Argumentation & Advocacy* 40 (2003), 65-84.

¹²⁴ Davi Johnson, "Psychiatric Power: The Post-Museum as a Site of Rhetorical Alignment," *Communication & Critical/Cultural Studies* 5 (2008): 344-362; Davi Johnson, "Managing Mr. Monk: Control and the Politics of Madness," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 25 (2008): 28-47.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* ("Managing," 29).

¹²⁶ Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture, and Everyday Life* (New York: Berg, 2002), 99.

¹²⁷ Peter Hay, *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 323.

¹²⁸ Julia B. Corbett, *Communicating Nature: How We Create and Understand Environmental Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2006), 307-8.

¹²⁹ National Park Service, "Listening to Americans," <http://www.nps.gov/2016/assets/interactive/NPS.html> accessed 8 March 2009.

¹³⁰ Michael Calvin McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54 (1990): 274-289; See also Michael Calvin McGee, "The 'Ideograph': A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1980): 1-16; and Michael Calvin McGee, "In Search of 'The People': A Rhetorical Alternative." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61 (1975): 235-249.

¹³¹ Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta, *The Anthropology of the State* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 165.

¹³² James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State : How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), and Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

¹³³ John Clarke, *Changing Welfare, Changing States: New Directions in Social Policy* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004), 107-117.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 119-158.

- ¹³⁵ Michael Lane Bruner, *Strategies of Remembrance: The Rhetorical Dimensions of National Identity Construction*. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 3.
- ¹³⁶ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995).
- ¹³⁷ National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov> Accessed 10 October 2007.
- ¹³⁸ Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (New York: Verso, 1991).
- ¹³⁹ Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest : The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: Norton, 1987).
- ¹⁴⁰ Michael Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy : Social Poetics in the Nation-State*. (New York: Routledge, 1997), 21.
- ¹⁴¹ Teresa Bergman, "Can Patriotism Be Carved In Stone? A Critical Analysis of Mt. Rushmore's Orientation Films," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 2008 11(1): 90.
- ¹⁴² Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites. *No Caption Needed : Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
- ¹⁴³ Bergman, 91.
- ¹⁴⁴ Billig, 6.
- ¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 6-7.
- ¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 10-11.
- ¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 6.
- ¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 8.
- ¹⁴⁹ Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*. (New York: Berg, 2002), 12.
- ¹⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁵¹ Ibid, 39.
- ¹⁵² Ibid, 40.
- ¹⁵³ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 65.
- ¹⁵⁵ Gregory Clarke, *Rhetorical Landscapes in America: Variations on a Theme from Kenneth Burke*. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 70-71.
- ¹⁵⁶ Billig 126
- ¹⁵⁷ Quoted in Gregory Clark, 162.
- ¹⁵⁸ Arun Agrawal, *Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).
- ¹⁵⁹ Gregory Clark, 150.
- ¹⁶⁰ See Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969).
- ¹⁶¹ Barbara Biesecker, "Remembering World War II: The Rhetoric and Politics of National Commemoration at the Turn of the 21st Century." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80 (2002): 393-409.

¹⁶² See also Craig J. Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780 : Programme, Myth, Reality. The Wiles Lectures Given at the Queen's University of Belfast.* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹⁶³ Bruner, 1.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 1-2.

¹⁶⁵ Hariman and Lucaites, 33.

¹⁶⁶ See Biesecker and Blair's repertoire, as well as Olson et al and Lawrence Prelli, *Rhetorics of Display* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2006).

¹⁶⁷ Bruner, 7-8.

¹⁶⁸ Hariman and Lucaites, 42-43.

¹⁶⁹ As noted earlier, both Blair and Biesecker offered fundamental interventions re: the articulation of Foucauldian studies and rhetorical studies into the discipline in the late 1980s and early 1990s. See also their recent work on a range of nationalist and public memorials, monuments, museums, and national media.

¹⁷⁰ Kendall R. Phillips, "Introduction," *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall Phillips (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 2-3.

¹⁷¹ Edward S. Casey, "Public Memory in Place and Time," in *Framing Public Memory*, 28-29.

¹⁷² Barbie Zelizer, "Reading the Past Against the Grain: The Shape of Memory Studies," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 12(2): 235.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 237.

¹⁷⁵ Stephen Browne, "Reading, Rhetoric, and the Texture of Public Memory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995): 244

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 248.

¹⁷⁷ Casey, 20-32.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 32-36.

¹⁷⁹ Carl George Herndl, and Stuart C. Brown. *Green Culture : Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America.* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 3.

¹⁸⁰ Sharon Beder, *Global Spin : The Corporate Assault on Environmentalism.* (White River Junction, Vt.: Chelsea Green, 2002); . Julia B. Corbett, *Communicating Nature: How We Create and Understand Environmental Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2006)

¹⁸¹ Buell.

¹⁸² Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life,* (New York: Berg, 2002), 12.

¹⁸³ Ibid, 19.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 26.

¹⁸⁵ Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 4. It should be noted that Tsing's conception of friction is metaphoric. Indeed, the concept of "friction" originates, as Carole Blair observed (personal communication, April 2009) not in the social sciences but in physics, and the notion of friction as a metaphor for describing interpersonal, political, argumentative, or other forms of disjuncture or conflict in social life has a long history across multiple disciplines, including rhetoric. Thus, while Tsing does not explicitly locate friction as a rhetorical "effect" or consequence, I suggest that it offers a productive opening into thinking through the ways in which "the social" is moved and (re)produced through discourse.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 8-10.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 272.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 272.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Cindy M. Spurlock, "Performing and Sustaining (Agri)Culture and Place: The Cultivation of Environmental Subjectivity on the Piedmont Farm Tour," *Text & Performance Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (2009), 5-21.

¹⁹¹ Carole Blair and Neil Michel, "The AIDS Memorial Quilt and the Contemporary Culture of Public Commemoration," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* (2007), 621n.

¹⁹² Tsing, 2005; Phaedra C. Pezzullo, *Toxic Tourism :Rhetorics of Pollution, Travel, and Environmental Justice*. Rhetoric, Culture, and Social Critique (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007); Jennifer Daryl Slack, "Resisting Ecocultural Studies," *Cultural Studies* 22, nos. 3-4 (2008), 477-497.

¹⁹³ Barbara Biesecker, "Remembering World War II: The Rhetoric and Politics of National Commemoration at the Turn of the 21st Century," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002), 393-409; Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, and Enrico Pucci, Jr. "Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial as Prototype," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 77 (1991), 263-288; Carole Blair and Neil Michel. "Commemorating in the Theme Park Zone: Reading the Astronauts Memorial," *At the Intersection: Cultural Studies and Rhetorical Studies*, ed. Thomas Rosteck. (New York: Guilford, 1999), 29-83; Carole Blair and Neil Michel. "Reproducing Civil Rights Tactics: The Rhetorical Performances of the Civil Rights Memorial," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 30 (2000), 31-55; Greg Dickinson, "Memories for Sale: Nostalgia and the Construction of Identity in Old Pasadena," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83 (1997), 1-27; Ethel S. Goodstein, "Southern Belles and Southern Buildings: The Built Environment as Text and Context in Designing Women," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 9, (1992), 170-183; Tamar Katriel, "Sites of Memory: Discourses of the Past in Israeli Pioneering Settlement Museums," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80 (1994), 1-20; Phaedra C. Pezzullo, "Touring 'Cancer Alley,' Louisiana: Performances of Community and Memory for Environmental Justice," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 23 (2003), 226-252.

¹⁹⁴ Bruce E. Gronbeck, "The Rhetorics of the Past: History, Argument, and Collective Memory," *Doing Rhetorical History: Concepts and Cases*, ed. Kathleen J. Turner. (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 47-60

¹⁹⁵ Jody Berland and Jennifer Daryl Slack, "On Environmental Matters," *Cultural Studies* 8, no. 1 (1994), 2.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 82.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 81-83.

¹⁹⁹ Eric Kaufmann, "'Naturalizing the Nation': The Rise of Naturalistic Nationalism in the United States and Canada." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 40 (1998): 675.

²⁰⁰ Ibid 677-679.

²⁰¹ Runte, 11.

- ²⁰² Andrew Jamison, *The Making of Green Knowledge: Environmental Politics and Cultural Transformation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 160-1.
- ²⁰³ Douglas Torgerson *The Promise of Green Politics: Environmentalism and the Public Sphere*. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), 11-12.
- ²⁰⁴ Ibid, 55.
- ²⁰⁵ Martin Edward Thomas, "A Multicultural Landscape: National Parks and the Macedonian Experience: Contents," http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/readingroom/reports/npws/npws-6_.html Accessed 18 August 2008.
- ²⁰⁶ Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); Meaghan Morris, *Too Soon Too Late: History in Popular Culture*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).
- ²⁰⁷ Homi K. Bhabha *The Location of Culture*. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 140.
- ²⁰⁸ Ibid, 143.
- ²⁰⁹ Ibid, 159.
- ²¹⁰ Quammen; Michael Shnayerson, "Who's Ruining Our National Parks?" *Vanity Fair* June 2006, online special: <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2006/06/nationalparks200606> Accessed 8 March 2009; John G. Mitchell, "Threatened Sanctuaries: The State of U.S. Parks." *National Geographic* 210 (2006); Tom Arrandale, "National Parks Under Pressure: Should Conservation or Recreation Take Precedence?" *Congressional Quarterly Researcher* 16 (2006): n. pag.
- ²¹¹ Lester Olson, Cara Finnegan, and Diane Hope, "Visual Rhetoric in Communication: Continuing Questions and Contemporary Issues," *Visual Rhetoric: A Reader in Communication and American Culture* ed. Lester Olson, Cara Finnegan, and Diane Hope (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 9.
- ²¹² <http://www.nps.gov/grsm/parkmgmt/statistics.htm> *Great Smoky Mountains Park Statistics*. Accessed 15 October, 2008.
- ²¹³ Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park: The Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 136.
- ²¹⁴ <http://www.nature.nps.gov/stats/viewReport.cfm> *NPS Stats*. Accessed 12 December 2008.
- ²¹⁵ <http://www.gatlinburg.com/things-to-do/national-park> *Things to Do: Great Smoky Mountains National Park*. Accessed 1 December 2008.
- ²¹⁶ Ibid. See also Tim Hollis, *The Land of the Smokies: Great Mountain Memories* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007).
- ²¹⁷ Throughout his book, Hollis makes a reasonable effort to represent the region's contested acceptance of tourism as a source of income, as well as tourists' diverse motives and complex desires for visiting the region.
- ²¹⁸ Michael Ann Williams, *Great Smoky Mountains Folklife* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1996), 133. I observed this discursive shift throughout my fieldwork and discovered Williams' book afterward.

²¹⁹ While the notion of “American cultural values” is highly overdetermined and impossible to define in any empirically-meaningful way, it is useful to look at the ways in which a collective vision of “the American experience” is (re)produced and (re)circulated rhetorically to normalize a sense of commonly-held beliefs. McGee’s work on ideographs is useful here, and there are countless works that discuss common cultural myths in contemporary U.S. culture. Thus, my point is not that there is a fixed catalog of “American values” but, rather, that there are particular values that are trumpeted and marketed as part and parcel of everyday life regardless of one’s political, social, economic, or cultural milieu. This is the myth of commonality, of the moral (or silent) majority. On point, see Sarah Palin’s invocation of the “real” America during the 2008 presidential campaign. As I discuss later, public memory offers a conceptually rich way of theorizing these issues without slipping into the theoretical reductionism of ideology critique.

²²⁰ TEA/ERA Attendance 2006 Theme Park Attendance Report. Ed. Judith Rubin. <http://www.econres.com/ASSETS/7923E2BF24704463B75A1BD182E58BD5/4.pdf> Accessed 1 December 2008.

²²¹ Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 9.

²²² *Ibid.*, 10.

²²³ Campbell, 12.

²²⁴ Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian Ott, “Introduction: Rhetoric/Memory/Place,” in *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, forthcoming), 35.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

²²⁶ Tim Edensor. *Tourists at the Taj: Performance and Meaning at a Symbolic Site*. (New York: Routledge, 1998), 38.

²²⁷ Tim Edensor. *National Identity, Popular Culture, and Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford, 2002), 84-88.

²²⁸ The high level of public trust and satisfaction enjoyed by the NPS was a key theme in conversations with park rangers. Numerous NPS documents and unaffiliated websites invoke a similar claim, yet references to actual data are either outdated, erroneous, or absent. I was able to locate a 2005 Harris Poll which indicated that the National Park Service enjoys the highest approval rating of any government service (85%). See http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/printerfriend/index.asp?PID=620, and <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2003/03-18695.htm>

²²⁹ Gregory Clark, *Rhetorical Landscapes in America: Variations on a Theme from Kenneth Burke* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), 150.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

²³¹ *Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century: A Report of the National Park System Advisory Board, July 2001*” <http://www.nps.gov/policy/report.htm> accessed 29 November 2008.

²³² Michael Hyde, ed. *The Ethos of Rhetoric* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2004), xvi.

²³³ Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture, and Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford, 2002), 32.

²³⁴ “Great Smoky Mountains” brochure. National Park Service document. GPO :2007 -- 330-358/00799

²³⁵ *Ibid.* This is the *complete* quote; the ellipses are a part of the quote as it appears on the brochure.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ With apologies and appreciation to Carole Blair and Neil Michel for this intentional riff on their essay, "Commemorating in the Theme Park Zone: Reading the Astronauts Memorial." *At the Intersection: Cultural Studies and Rhetorical Studies*. Ed. Thomas Rosteck. (New York: Guilford, 1999), 29-83.

²³⁹ The ubiquitous, oval OBX, TI, and HH (Outer Banks, Turtle Island, and Hilton Head) stickers that adorn the rear windows of high-end SUVs and luxury sedans as visible mementos of family vacations to exclusive or rarified destinations have no analog here, except, perhaps for the official "Friends of the Smokies" license plates that residents of North Carolina and Tennessee can purchase to publicly declare their support for the park. While tourists are just as likely to drive to Smokies as to the Outer Banks and southern barrier islands, the destination is not publicly rehearsed in a similar display of commemorative consumption. See also Hollis, *The Land of the Smokies*.

²⁴⁰ These observations were repeated in multiple conversations with park employees, and they are verifiable at <http://www.nps.gov/grsm/parkmgmt/statistics.htm>. Of the more than 9,000,000 visits to the park each year, the backcountry campsites log approximately 77,000 annual visits, and the backcountry trails log 400,000 hikers annually. This number is augmented by the presence of the Appalachian Trail, with 70 miles running through the park. Additionally, more than 350,000 visits to the park's 10 "developed campgrounds" are recorded each year.

²⁴¹ "Well over 1,000,000 pieces of literature produced by GSMA were distributed in 2007," according to the Great Smoky Mountain Association, the park's official non-profit partner and bookstore operator. GRSM website. "About Us." http://www.smokiesinformation.org/downloads/annual_report2007.htm Accessed 15 October 2008.

²⁴² It should also be noted that, of my three field sites, my interactions with the staff here at GRSM were more rigidly outlined than at BLRI or CAHA. All appointments, information requests, etc. had to be cleared by Nancy Gray, the park's public relations officer even though I had a permit to conduct research in the park. My experiences were also echoed by Margaret Brown, who noted that "the park has yet to make a long-term commitment to the archives" (354).

²⁴³ Although it likely goes without saying, I have more material than I can possibly use at this time. For the purposes of keeping this particular research project and its attendant questions in focus, many of the materials that are not immediately relevant have been shelved for future research and further development of the issues raised in this dissertation during its transition to a book-length manuscript.

²⁴⁴ "Gas Shortage Leads to Fights, Threatens College Football in the South," <http://www.cnn.com/2008/US/09/26/gas.shortage.roundup/index.html> Accessed 27 September 2008.

²⁴⁵ Bruce Siceloff, "Gas shortage hits Western N.C." *Raleigh News and Observer* 26 September 2008. Online: <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/growth/traffic/gas/story/1232853.html> Accessed 14 December 2008.

²⁴⁶ Bob Janiskee, *Visitation Decline at Great Smoky Mountains National Park Has Area Businesses, Residents, and Governments Worried*," <http://www.nationalparkstraveler.com/2008/09/visitation-decline-great-smoky-mountains-national-park-has-area-businesses-residents-and-gov> Accessed 14 December 2008.

²⁴⁷ Bryson City. <http://www.city-data.com/city/Bryson-City-North-Carolina.html> Accessed 15 December 2008.

²⁴⁸ Image courtesy of Kent Cave, NPS. Permissions pending. <http://www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/mfm.htm>

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Tom Robbins, "*Mountain Farm Museum*" (Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Association, no date given), 3.

²⁵¹ Sara McDowell, "Heritage, Memory, and Identity," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* Ed. Brian Graham and Peter Howard (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 37-40.

²⁵² Benjamin W. Porter, "Heritage Tourism: Conflicting Identities in the Modern World," Ibid, 268.

²⁵³ Ibid, 279.

²⁵⁴ David Atkinson, "The Heritage of Mundane Places," *Ibid*, 388.

²⁵⁵ Tom Robbins, 4.

²⁵⁶ <http://www.nps.gov/grsm/planyourvisit/upload/mfmbroad-med.mov>

²⁵⁷ John Nolt, *A Land Imperiled: The Declining Health of the Southern Appalachian Bioregion* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 48.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*. See also recent news coverage about the eastern Tennessee coal ash spill and the resultant environmental devastation: Sue Sturgis, "'Empty Promise': The Broken Federal Commitment Behind the Tennessee Coal Ash Disaster," *Facing South*, 26 December 2008. <http://www.southernstudies.org/2008/12/empty-promise-the-broken-federal-commitment-behind-tenne.html> Accessed 27 December 2008.

²⁵⁹ "A collaboration among the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation, Great Smoky Mountains National Park (a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve), the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, and The Mountain Institute used bilingual wayside signs in English and Cherokee to link Cherokee spiritual and cultural traditions and stories to features of the natural environment – trees, river, mountain, birds - along the Oconaluftee River Trail that runs from the Oconaluftee Visitor Center to the edge of the Cherokee's ancestral lands. The Museum of the Cherokee Indian selected submissions from contemporary Cherokee artists to illustrate the waysides. The designs were finalized by the US National Park Service and the text translated into Cherokee by the Office of Cultural Resources of the Eastern Band. A ceremony with Cherokee dancers celebrated the installation of the completed waysides and excited considerable public interest and media attention. Since many Cherokees, both adults and children, walk this trail for exercise, the signs help them to pass on their traditions to the younger generation and reinforce the revival and teaching of the Cherokee language in their schools. The exhibits also enable them to reach the wider public". "Case Study Summary: "Mountains. Spirituality, and the Cherokee," <http://www.med-ina.org/delos/sites-6.htm> Accessed 14 December 2008.

²⁶⁰ "New Exhibit in Great Smoky Mountains National Park Tells Cherokee Stories," <http://www.aboutcherokee.com/cherokee-stories.html> Accessed 14 December 2008.

²⁶¹ Jo Littler, "Heritage and 'Race'," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity* Ed. Brian Graham and Peter Howard (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 95.

²⁶² *Ibid*, 94-95.

²⁶³ Tom Robbins, "*Mountain Farm Museum*" (Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Association, no date given), 2.

²⁶⁴ Curiously, the most visibly critical interpretation of the park's history and the role of the Cherokee occurs in the Clingmans Dome booklet, updated in 2005. Here, far from Cherokee and the Mountain Farm Museum, the booklet includes a photo of a contemporary Trail of Tears reenactment and acknowledges it by name as a "brutal roundup" and a "removal." Geoff Cantrell, *Clingmans Dome* (Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Association, 2008), 15.

²⁶⁵ Gregory Ashworth, "Heritage, Identity, and Interpreting a European Sense of Place," *Contemporary Issues in Heritage & Environmental Interpretation*, Ed. David Uzzell and Roy Ballantyne (London: The Stationery Office, 1998), 113.

²⁶⁶ Nolt, 37.

²⁶⁷ David Louter, *Windshield Wilderness: Cars, Roads, and Nature in Washington's National Parks* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 165.

²⁶⁸ Doris Gove, *Newfound Gap Road Auto Tour* (Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Association, 2008), 9.

²⁶⁹ Ed Goldstein, *Newfound Gap Road Auto Tour* (Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Association, 1999), 16.

²⁷⁰ According to a 2002 study, most of the air pollution that plagues the Smokies is produced locally. Ken Ellingwood, "Breath of Fresh Air Is Rare in Great Smoky Mountains," *L.A. Times* (September 1, 2002): <http://articles.latimes.com/2002/sep/01/nation/na-smoky1> Accessed 14 December 2008.

²⁷¹ Great Smoky Mountains Association and the National Park Service, *Air Quality, Folio #2* (Gatlinburg, TN: 2006), 4. This document is also available online at <http://www.nps.gov/grsm/naturescience/upload/air%20quality.pdf> Accessed online 19 December 2008.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Margaret Lynn Brown, *The Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2000), 351.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 357.

²⁷⁵ Williams, 160.

²⁷⁶ Carson Brewer, *Cades Cove Tour* (Gatlinburg, TN: Great Smoky Mountains Association, 1999), 2.

²⁷⁷ See L.F. Truett, S.M. Chin, and E.C.P. Chang, *Strategic Plan for Coordinating Rural Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Transit Development in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Transit Administration, 2002) and *Sightline: Resource Issues in Great Smoky Mountains National Park* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Energy, Environment, and Resources Center, 2002).

²⁷⁸ See Brown and Williams. Williams also offers an updated critique that discusses the perceived anti-environmentalism of Cades Cove residents and their descendants in "When I Can Read My Title Clear: Anti-Environmentalism and Sense of Place in the Great Smoky Mountains," in *Culture, Environment, and Conservation in the Appalachian South*, ed. Benita J. Howell (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 87-99. See also Pierce, 154-173.

²⁷⁹ Williams (2002), 92-93.

²⁸⁰ The Cades Cove Tour guidebook notes in one entry, buried on page 12, that the "other historic buildings were brought from elsewhere in the park."

²⁸¹ Williams (1995), 185.

²⁸² Terence Young, "Grounding the Myth: Theme Park Landscapes in an Era of Commerce and Nationalism." *Theme Park Landscapes: Antecedents and Variations* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002), 5.

²⁸³ Ibid, "Virtue and Irony in a U.S. National Park," 164-169.

²⁸⁴ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 214-215.

²⁸⁵ Brewer, 23.

²⁸⁶ See Williams (1995); Williams (2002); Brown (2000); and Daniel Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2000).

²⁸⁷ One of the more widely-trafficked external park sites, www.cadescope.net, reiterates these points in its own "Pioneers" section: "John and his wife were as much a part of the land as were the bear, deer, fish and other living things of the Smoky Mountains. The cove society they began and participated in was a practical organic one which ebbed and flowed naturally with God's seasons and times." http://www.cadescope.net/cades_cove_pioneers.html Accessed 26 December 2008.

²⁸⁸ Although costumed interpreters will occasionally offer interpretive programming in the Cove, most interpretation is driven by the Cades Cove Guidebook, items available for sale in the park bookstores, and occasional ranger-led interpretive programming. Of the two programs that I experienced in the Cove, both were intended for children as part of the Junior Ranger program (two others on my to-do list were canceled due to inclement weather). One addressed park wildlife and bear safety, and the other displayed turn-of-the-century toys and demonstrated common farm chores, such as churning butter and gathering firewood. Visitors to the Cove are generally left to their own devices re: exploring the buildings, and learning about the particular history of the place and its residents. Without exception, the critical histories of the Cove that address the ways in which the NPS ‘revised’ the land through landscape architecture and other planning principles are not visible or otherwise discussed on-site.

²⁸⁹ Although I have chosen to close this chapter with a brief discussion of the film, it should be noted that *our* “tour” of the Smokies in this chapter has followed somewhat of a reverse-order logic. While many people do experience the park from a Cherokee-to-Gatlinburg orientation, many more do so from a Gatlinburg-to-Cherokee perspective . . . if they even get that far. During the winter months, 441 is often closed due to inclement weather and adverse driving conditions, thus preventing visitors from making the trip from one end of the park to the other without venturing an hour north of Gatlinburg to I-40, traversing the eastern border of the park, and then traveling another hour and a half south of Asheville to Cherokee.

²⁹⁰ Kenneth R. Olwig, “Reinventing Common Nature: Yosemite and Mount Rushmore -- A Meandering Tale of a Double Nature.” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: Norton, 1996), 379-408.

²⁹¹ Thomas B. Farrell, *Norms of Rhetorical Culture*. (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1993), 274.

²⁹² **Give examples from the tourism/rhet/rhet of place lit.**

²⁹³ Bob R. O’Brien, *Our National Parks and the Search for Sustainability* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1999), 1.

²⁹⁴ Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science*, 162(1968):1243-1248.

²⁹⁵ Campbell, 10.

²⁹⁶ Ibid. N.B: No primary reference or citation offered for Krug’s speech in Campbell’s text. I was able to locate the original speech, published by Krug in the *Journal of Forestry*, 44 (1946): 549-551.

²⁹⁷ See John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 13-20 and David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), passim.

²⁹⁸ Joyce Appleby, “Recovering America’s Historic Diversity: Beyond Exceptionalism,” in *Marks of Distinction: American Exceptionalism Revisited*, ed. Dale Carter (Oakville, CT: Aarhus University Press, 2001), 25.

²⁹⁹ Donal Carbaugh, “Naturalizing Communication and Culture,” in *The Symbolic Earth: Discourse and Our Creation of the Environment* Ed. James Cantrill and Christine Oravec, (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 38-57.

³⁰⁰ Lisa M. Benton and John Rennie Short. *Environmental Discourse and Practice* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999), 156.

³⁰¹ Ibid, 159-172.

³⁰² Green, 31.

³⁰³ Allison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (Columbia: New York, 2004).

³⁰⁴ Ibid, 2.

³⁰⁵ Ibid, 2-3.

³⁰⁶ Albright; Brown; Everhart; Foresta; Heacox; Sellars.

³⁰⁷ Cameron Binkley, "The Creation and Establishment of Cape Hatteras National Seashore: The Great Depression Through Mission 66." National Park Service Administrative History. Published by the Southeast Regional Office, Cultural Resources Division (2007). Available online: http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/caha/caha_ah.pdf Accessed 4 January 2009.

³⁰⁸ Ibid, 4.

³⁰⁹ Although these claims are a bit difficult to verify empirically, they were offered in two separate interviews with Park Service personnel and an informal conversation with a local innkeeper.

³¹⁰ Ibid. See also John Alexander and James Lazell, *Ribbon of Sand: The Amazing Convergence of the Ocean & the Outer Banks* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 2000); Anthony Bailey, *The Outer Banks* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1999); David Stick, *An Outer Banks Reader* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1998); Dirk Frankenberg, *The Nature of the Outer Banks: Environmental Processes, Field Sites, and Development Issues, Corolla to Ocracoke* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1995); Alton Ballance, *Ocracokers* (Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press, 1989); David Shears, *Ocracoke: Its History and People* (Washington, D.C.: Starfish Press, 1989); Ann Sebrell Ehringhaus, *Ocracoke Portrait* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair Publishers, 1988); Carl Goerch, *Ocracoke* (Kingsport, TN: Kingsport Press, 1968).

³¹¹ As someone who has worked in both the Smokies and on Ocracoke, Jennifer Thomas was an invaluable resource. She offered several useful insights for comparing and contrasting how park administration managed visitor experiences and the role played by administration in developing, implementing, and assessing interpretive programming. According to Jennifer, CAHA staff were granted more freedom to develop programming and interact with visitors in less-scripted ways. My fieldwork experiences also confirm this, as CAHA administration were less involved in my day-to-day activities in the park. At GRSM, for example, all interviews and visits had to be cleared through the park's public relations officer; at CAHA, interviews were free to happen whenever they were convenient.

³¹² Interview with Jennifer Thomas, August 1, 2008.

³¹³ These conflicts will likely be the focus of a future long-term study (ideally, with additional, long-term/on-site fieldwork) because they offer additional opportunities for considering how social antagonisms and local politics "work" in the cross-hairs of national bureaucratic jurisdiction. In this particular instance, several communities and long-term residents (i.e. "historic families") are entrenched in a long-term struggle that harkens old rhetorical trope of jobs vs. the environment, locals vs. outsiders, etc. as the NPS works to bring its practices in line with a recent court decision (2006) that upholds key portions of the Migratory Bird Act and that requires the NPS to develop new guidelines for off-road vehicle (ORV) access. While intriguing, the depth and complexity of this particular controversy is deserving of a full-length study of its own; I am unable to do justice, at this time, to its rich possibilities. Given the specific struggles over the inclusion of the term "Recreational Area" in CAHA's title and its appearance and disappearance in park discourses during the past 50 years, as well as the recent campaign launched by the Dare County Tourism Board (in collaboration with several off-road vehicle advocacy organizations, sports-fishing associations, local politicians and local business owners -- see <http://preservebeachaccess.org>), one possible conceptual framework for such research might be "No Common Ground: "Recreation" and the Uses of Public Memory in the ORV Debate."

³¹⁴ Consequently, I do not use the real names of my informants in this chapter, although I have their permission to do so.

³¹⁵ National Park Service, "The Future of America's National Parks." "The Vision" -- <http://www.nps.gov/2016/assets/interactive/NPS.html> Accessed 4 March 2009.

³¹⁶ Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder --National Parks Special Edition* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2008).

³¹⁷ Permission to use this quote was obtained, but my colleague does not wish to reveal her identity publicly or in my dissertation as an official source. She has been active in state-level environmental advocacy since the mid-1990s and studied under Robbie Cox as an undergraduate.

³¹⁸ Indeed, visitors are positioned as subjects who are praised for their ability to visually identify and taxonomize nature without any critical capacity. Here, identification (say, of a whelk shell on the Outer Banks or an elm in the Smokies) is celebrated by NPS interpreters as evidence of the public's ability to engage "nature." At the same time, however, visitors are not instructed in how identify, classify, and assess (critically) the extent to which particular ecosystems, animals, or wildlife are sick, injured, decaying, in a state of decline, or otherwise impaired by the consequences of human actions, which are often classified under a free market paradigm as environmental "externalities." To be clear, multiple subjectivities and relationalities to the environment and the nation-state, as I have noted elsewhere in this dissertation, are one of the many effects or consequences of conservation civics.

³¹⁹ *Attended; **Attended more than once; ***Cancelled due to inclement weather

³²⁰ David W. Orr, *Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2004) and *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992).

³²¹ "Soundside Sleuths on the Seashore" <http://www.nps.gov/caha/parknews/soundside-sleuths-on-the-seashore.htm> Accessed 27 February 2009.

³²² Lawrence Grossberg, *Caught in the Crossfire: Kids, Politics, and America's Future* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2005).

³²³ Robert Asen, "A Discourse Theory of Citizenship." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90, no. 2 (2004): 189-211.

³²⁴ This language is identical in each of the age-appropriate Junior Ranger program booklets (updated in 2003, 2005, and 2008, respectively). On some occasions -- depending upon the ranger and the child's comfort level -- I witnessed children being "sworn in" as Junior Rangers and reciting the pledge orally in the visitor center (with family members and strangers watching) before receiving the appropriate patch and/or badge.

³²⁵ Although I would argue that there are indeed meritorious elements of the Junior Ranger program, its means are somewhat problematic because it accomplishes its ends by positioning children within a discursive paradigm of citizenship and self-discipline.

³²⁶ Louv, 291-314.

³²⁷ These issues have been widely documented during the Bush administration under the Mainella and Bomar administrations of the NPS, respectively. For additional information, see "How Old Is the Grand Canyon? Park Service Won't Say," released by the park advocacy group, Park Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), in 2005: http://www.peer.org/news/news_id.php?row_id=801 and Leon Jaroff, "Faith Based Parks?" in *Time Magazine* November 2005: <http://www.time.com/time/columnist/jaroff/article/0,9565,783829,00.html> Accessed 24 February 2009.

³²⁸ National Leadership Council minutes, National Park Service. <http://www.nps.gov/policy/nlc/JAN08.pdf> Accessed 18 February 2009; "PRTM's Mainella Elected to National Park Trust Board," http://www.hehd.clemson.edu/Pages/News_Events/onlinenewsarchive/2008/oct08/fran-mainella.php Accessed 19 March 2009.

³²⁹ National Park Foundation, "National Park Event Celebrates Junior Rangers" <http://www.nationalparks.org/news/?fa=viewArticle&articleID=34> <http://www.nps.gov/learn/juniorranger.htm> Accessed 27 February 2009 and National Park Foundation, "Junior Rangers" <http://www.nationalparks.org/who-we-help/youth-engagement/?fa=junior-ranger> Accessed 27 February 2009.

³³⁰ North Carolina Beach Buggy Association online message board: Seashore Ranger Program for 2009 <http://buggyboard.ncbba.org/viewtopic.php?p=508&sid=ff26056ff817c138a529b676fa553e43> Accessed 27 February 2009.

- ³³¹ National Park Service, “2008 Centennial Initiative Progress Report,” http://www.nps.gov/2016/assets/files/FINAL_CentennialReport_web_2-5-09.pdf Accessed 27 February 2009.
- ³³² Ibid.
- ³³³ Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).
- ³³⁴ Cheryl Glenn, *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004).
- ³³⁵ Tim Edensor, *National Identity, Popular Culture, and Everyday Life* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 86.
- ³³⁶ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 46.
- ³³⁷ Jean Baudrillard, *America* trans. Chris Turner (London and New York: Verso, 1998), 54. Cited in Jeremy Packer, *Mobility Without Mayhem* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), xii.
- ³³⁸ National Park Service. Visitor Statistics. <http://www.nature.nps.gov/stats/park.cfm> Accessed 15 February 2009.
- ³³⁹ David Louter, *Windshield Wilderness :Cars, Roads, and Nature in Washington's National Parks*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).
- ³⁴⁰ National Park Service . Blue Ridge Parkway. <http://www.nps.gov/blri/siteindex.htm> Accessed 20 February 2009. See also Harrison Metzger “\$9.8 Million Visitor Center Opens Along the Parkway,” *Blue Ridge Now* 17 December 2007, <http://www.blueridgenow.com/article/20071218/NEWS/712180338>
- ³⁴¹ Anne Mitchell Whisnant, *Super-Scenic Motorway :A Blue Ridge Parkway History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 328.
- ³⁴² Ibid.
- ³⁴³ Freeman Tilden, *The National Parks: What They Mean To You And Me* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1951), 52.
- ³⁴⁴ See also Zygmunt Bauman, *Community :Seeking Safety In An Insecure World. Themes for the 21st Century*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2001).
- ³⁴⁵ Tilden, 52.
- ³⁴⁶ Penn Dameron, quoted in “Explore the Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center” promotional video, hosted by visitnc.com <http://www.visitnc.com/journeys/multimedia/popular-attractions/1/explore-the-blue-ridge-parkway-visitor-center/> Accessed 20 January 2009. Dameron is the executive director of the BRNHA and has previously described the Parkway as “the ‘main street’ of our 25-county Heritage Area, so to have a presence here is even more meaningful.” <http://www.quotesea.com/Quotes.aspx?with=National+Park+Service> 16 February 2009.
- ³⁴⁷ Blue Ridge Parkway Destination Center Optimizes Energy Performance. *Buildings* (January 2009): <http://www.buildings.com/Magazine/ArticleDetails/tabid/3413/ArticleID/6875/Default.aspx> Accessed 22 February 2009.
- ³⁴⁸ National Park Service, *What Is a National Heritage Area?* <http://www.nps.gov/history/heritageareas/FAQ/index.htm> Accessed 24 February 2009. See also National Park Service, *Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Frequently Asked Questions* <http://www.nps.gov/blrn/faqs.htm> Accessed 24 February 2009.
- ³⁴⁹ Becky Johnson, *Park or Promoter? Park Looks for High Ground in New Role of Peddling Tourism*. Smoky Mountain News, 9 November 2005: http://www.smokymountainnews.com/issues/11_05/11_09_05/out_park_promoter.html Accessed 27 February 2009.
- ³⁵⁰ Instead, the Parkway features the Blue Ridge Parkway Directory and Travel Planner, an annually-produced free magazine written and sponsored by the Blue Ridge Parkway Association (BLPA), a coalition of tourism-dependent businesses in the region.

- ³⁵¹ Several interpretive programs are conducted throughout the summer and early fall at locations like Mabry Mill where VIPs (Volunteers in Parks) demonstrate weaving, smithing, and spinning.
- ³⁵² The Park Service is not yet ready to release materials related to the construction of the visitor center, its displays, or its design elements.
- ³⁵³ Greg Dickinson, Brian L. Ott, and Eric Aoki. "Spaces of Remembering and Forgetting: The Reverent Eye/I at the Plains Indian Museum." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 3 (2006): 30.
- ³⁵⁴ Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscapes of the New Deal* (New Haven: Yale, 1985), 4. Quoted in Ian Firth, "The Blue Ridge Parkway: Road to the Modern Preservation Movement," in *Designing Culture: Claiming America's Landscape Heritage* ed. Charles A. Birnbaum and Mary V. Hughes (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 198.
- ³⁵⁵ Folk Art Center, Asheville http://www.romanticasheville.com/folk_art.htm Accessed 2 March 2009.
- ³⁵⁶ "Assistant Secretary of the Interior Lyle Lavery Showcases New Blue Ridge Parkway "Destination Center" 14 April 2008 http://www.doi.gov/news/08_News_Releases/080415.html Accessed 3 March 2009.
- ³⁵⁷ "Visitor Center for Blue Ridge Parkway Lands a LEED Gold Rating," Greener Buildings. <http://www.greenerbuildings.com/news/2009/01/13/blue-ridge-parkway> 13 January 2009; accessed 2 March 2009.
- ³⁵⁸ John Starr, quoted in "Parkway Destination Center is True Blue," Russell Boniface, *AIArchitect* 28 March 2008. http://info.aia.org/aiarchitect/thisweek08/0328/0328d_blue.cfm Accessed 19 February 2009.
- ³⁵⁹ Richard Maschal, "Blue Ridge Visitors Center a Nod to This Green Earth" *Raleigh News & Observer* 30 April 2008: <http://www.newsobserver.com/news/story/1055019.html> Accessed 19 February 2009.
- ³⁶⁰ Ian Firth, "The Blue Ridge Parkway: Road to the Modern Preservation Movement," in *Designing Culture: Claiming America's Landscape Heritage* ed. Charles A. Birnbaum and Mary V. Hughes (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 190-1.
- ³⁶¹ *Ibid*, 199.
- ³⁶² *Ibid*, 200.
- ³⁶³ *Ibid*, 192.
- ³⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 198.
- ³⁶⁵ David Glassberg, *Sense of History: The Place of the Past in American Life* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 122.
- ³⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 124-5.
- ³⁶⁷ Anna Klingmann. *Brandscapes :Architecture in the Experience Economy* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007).
- ³⁶⁸ Louter, 4.
- ³⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 4-5.
- ³⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 72. See also Philip Shabecoff. *A Fierce Green Fire :An American Environmental Movement*. Rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2003) (PAGE #s)
- ³⁷¹ Ian Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007), 16.
- ³⁷² Johnson.
- ³⁷³ Aperture Films, *The Blue Ridge Parkway: America's Favorite Journey* (2008).

- ³⁷⁴ Teresa Bergman, "Can Patriotism Be Carved In Stone? A Critical Analysis of Mt. Rushmore's Orientation Films," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 2008 11(1): 89-112
- ³⁷⁵ Richard D. Starnes, *Creating the Land of the Sky* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2005), 151.
- ³⁷⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷⁷ Starnes, 185.
- ³⁷⁸ Anthony J. Stanonis, ed. *Dixie Emporium: Tourism, Foodways, and Consumer Culture in the American South* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008); see also the BRNHA 2006 Visitor Survey conducted by a team of researchers at Appalachian State University: <http://www.blueridgeheritage.com/resources/images/RobBell/Research/BRNHAVisitorSurvey2006.pdf> Accessed 10 March 2009.
- ³⁷⁹ Patrick Huber, "The Riddle of the Horny Hillbilly," in *Dixie Emporium: Tourism, Foodways, and Consumer Culture in the American South* ed. Anthony J. Stanonis (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 78.
- ³⁸⁰ Ethan Carr, *Wilderness By Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 276.
- ³⁸¹ Whisnant, 13-182.
- ³⁸² Aperture Films, *The Blue Ridge Parkway: America's Favorite Journey* (2008).
- ³⁸³ Ibid.
- ³⁸⁴ Whisnant, *passim*, offers an extraordinarily detailed history of how the NPS and various stakeholders, including wealthy landowners and developers, exerted their official influence in order to design the Parkway to suit their aesthetics and financial priorities. Although a comparison is beyond the scope of this chapter, there are interesting parallels worth exploring at a later date regarding the public-private controversies and conflicts that have left their mark long afterward in ways that afford the well-informed traveler to read the Parkway as an contested place. Notably, these controversies bear some similarities to contemporary environmental controversies that focus on land use issues; see, for example, Terre Satterfield, *Anatomy of a Conflict: Identity, Knowledge, and Emotion in Old-Growth Forests*. (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2002).
- ³⁸⁵ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 46.
- ³⁸⁶ Landsberg, 21.
- ³⁸⁷ Eric Darter, "Foucault and the Environment," *Discourses of the Environment* ed. Eric Darter, (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1999), 27.
- ³⁸⁸ Buell, 50.
- ³⁸⁹ Allen D. Putney, "Introduction." *The Full Value of Parks: From Economics to the Intangible* ed. David Harmon and Allen D. Putney (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 5.
- ³⁹⁰ David Harmon, "The Source and Significance of Values in Protected Areas," Ibid, 13.
- ³⁹¹ See Simon Coleman and Mike Crang, eds. *Tourism: Between Place and Performance* (New York: Berg Hahn, 2002); Mark Neumann, *On the Rim: Looking for the Grand Canyon* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), and Pezzullo.
- ³⁹² Pezzullo, 145.
- ³⁹³ Ibid.
- ³⁹⁴ Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts* qtd. in Pezzullo, 146.

³⁹⁵ Orrin Pilkey, William J. Neal, and Tracy Monegan, *How to Read a North Carolina Beach* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 133-143.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

³⁹⁸ Although its scope extends far beyond the specifics of environmental public memory, Andrew Pleasant, James Shanahan, Brad Cohen, and Jennifer Good's content analysis (2001) of the extant literature on environmental communication provides a fruitful beginning. See <http://www.esf.edu/ecn/downloads/Pleasant.rtf> Accessed 9 April 2009. Furthermore, I would argue that recent publications by Pezzullo and DeLuca, as well as earlier work by DeLuca and Demo, Oravec, Schwarze, Depoe, and others gestures toward environmental public memory because of the ways in which these essays perform a double articulation: they call forth our critical attention to the issue(s) at stake and reposition them within scholarly and/or public discourse such that they are not forgotten as moments of crisis, conflict, irreparability, and the tensions between preservation and conservation.