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CHRISTIAN PROGRESS AND AMERICAN MYTH:  
A DEEP CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF SPATIALITY AND EXCEPTIONALISM  
IN STRUGGLES OVER AMERICAN INDIAN LANDS

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A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the University of Denver and the Iliff School of Theology Joint PhD Program

University of Denver

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

Bradley J. Klein

May 2012

Advisor: Tink Tinker

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Title: CHRISTIAN PROGRESS AND AMERICAN MYTH: A DEEP CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF SPATIALITY AND EXCEPTIONALISM IN STRUGGLES OVER AMERICAN INDIAN LANDS

Advisor: Tink Tinker

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## Abstract

Although typically characterized in politico-economic, social, and environmental terms, land struggles involving American Indian communities can be more accurately and valuably characterized as deep culture conflicts over the problem of space. As scholars like Vine Deloria Jr. and Tink Tinker contend, a significant distinction can be noted between the traditional American Indian and White Western approaches to this problem regarding how human communities should relate to particular spatial locations. In short, while Indian peoples tend to situate their identities relative to clearly defined places or lands, individuals of European descent are inclined to subordinate spatial relations to temporal concerns. Considering this distinction in light of the United States' particular context of power, this dissertation explores the connection between spatiality and faith in American Exceptionalism.

I argue that the widespread Exceptionalist faith depends profoundly upon the perpetuation of a fundamental disorientation to space deep within the dominant culture. American Exceptionalism, as a particular discursive formation within the master narrative about America, functions to prevent local communities from meaningfully and relationally engaging the spaces in which they exist. It does so in part by shaping thought about American identity and history through a deceptive set of images of the land.

Conversely, the cultural influence of a deeply embedded disorientation to space ensures that only those types of behavior which support Exceptionalism can be deemed logically acceptable and ethically proper. This largely unconscious cognitive-behavioral approach legitimizes and extends politico-economic hegemony, creating an oppressive feedback loop of privilege into which only those individuals deemed “American-enough” are enabled to enter. The feedback loop is sustained both deliberately and implicitly, as the privileged seek to protect their advantage and the marginalized are socialized not to question the claims of the master narrative.

The illicit bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalist faith touches nearly every corner of American life. However, its complex nature is exposed perhaps most explicitly and thoroughly through struggles over American Indian lands, which demonstrate the intimate interconnection between environmental exploitation and the exploitation of those types of beings (both human and non-human) habitually classified as “Other.”

Based firmly in the disciplinary realm of cultural studies and utilizing discursive-semiotic analysis as a primary methodological tool, the dissertation is advanced through a theoretical synthesis which illustrates the enduring influence of Western cultural mores and Christian theological values. The synthesis is built upon a two-level deconstruction of deep cultural symbols related to space. First, spatial cognition is considered in light of four well-known yet deceptive images which index how the land should be conceptualized. These four images include promised land, *terra nullius* (“uninhabited land”), frontier wilderness, and city upon a hill. Next, spatial behavior is investigated in

relation to four broadly accepted themes which signify how the land should be treated. These themes are categorized as privilege, property, positivism, and progress. Finally, the theoretical synthesis is evaluated in light of three distinctive responses to the natural world present and active within the dominant culture—dominion, stewardship, and deep ecology—and three case studies involving historical struggles over Indian lands: *Newe Sogobia* (“Land of the People”) and the Western Shoshone of the Nevada region, Crandon Mine and the Sokaugon Ojibwe of northern Wisconsin, and the “Save San Onofre” campaign and the Acjachemen of southern California.

## Acknowledgments

I would first like to acknowledge the land itself—the specific places in which I have had my being, and the life communities that have long called these places home. My hope is that these meager words might contribute to a larger quest for justice, healing and reconnection, while helping destabilize the prevailing misguided approach to space and time.

I would also like to express my deep gratitude to the following beings, who represent the six directions of relationship that have oriented my journey through the joys and struggles of the writing process:

- To my committee, Richard Clemmer-Smith, Sally Hamilton, Nancy Wadsworth, and especially my advisor Tink Tinker;
- To my family both seen and unseen, especially Jane and Jimmie Klein, Elizabeth and Dave Laurvick, Ruth and Cletus Schneider, Lois and James “Buddy” Klein, Meghan and Brad Laurvick, and Bobby Klein;
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1. Reflecting on Who We Are:  
Spatiality and Exceptionalism in America

It may be true that America has the best possibility for setting the style for the future, but America must come to terms with its own depth in reality before it can move authentically into a future. It is not a coincidence that the basic problems that confront us as a nation today result from the fact that we have not taken the integrity of nature seriously. The exploitation of our natural resources and of blacks and other racial minorities stems from this fact. Until we come to terms with these dimensions of our experiences and the meanings resulting from them, any future will be an escapism sustained only by the physical and psychological repression. . . The challenge before America is not so much eschatological as it is reflective. Let us take the time for this reflection on who we are.<sup>1</sup>

– Charles H. Long  
From *Significations* (1986)

What would it mean for Americans to take the integrity of nature seriously? For those who accept the messages promoted in the master narrative about America, this question might seem immaterial. After all, it would seem commonsensical that a people who so regularly gathers to sing patriotic anthems venerating “amber waves of grain,” “woods and templed hills,” and “oceans white with foam” would already possess an intimate appreciation for and knowledge of the natural world in which they exist.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles H. Long, *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*, originally published 1986 (Aurora: The Davies Group, 1999), 160.

<sup>2</sup> Lyrics taken from “America the Beautiful” by Katharine L. Bates, “My Country ‘Tis of Thee (America)” by Samuel F. Smith, and “God Bless America” by Irving Berlin, respectively. Each of these

Certainly, the geographical landscape has figured prominently in descriptions of the national character since the colonial era, and remains a central motif even today. Yet as survivors of the Nazi *vaterland* and myriad other aggressive nationalisms and colonial regimes might attest, patriotic ejaculations about the glory of the home country can often serve to mystify rather than enlighten.<sup>3</sup> To determine which of these conditions might best characterize the American experience, the content of the master narrative must first be explored in light of the actual ways in which the people relate to the land.

Of course, with any authentic exploration of master narratives comes the potential that inconsistencies might be unearthed and long-established patterns of thought and action upset. This potential may be feared by some as a threat to comfortable and profitable routine; but for others, it is embraced as a herald of longed-for social transformation. Clearly, Charles H. Long falls into the latter category. As this chapter's opening quotation suggests, Long argues that the regimes of exploitation at work in this country are sustained in part by the stubborn refusal of Americans to engage the type of sustained reflective work that might undermine dominant accounts of their historical inhabitation of the land. In intriguing fashion, Long connects the rape of the natural world

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songs may commonly be found in the religious hymnals used by various Christian denominations across the country.

<sup>3</sup> As a particularly poignant and relevant example, I reference an inscription found at Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp: "Es gibt einen Weg zur Freiheit, seine Meilensteine hießen: Gehorsam, Fleiß, Ehrlichkeit, Ordnung, Sauberkeit, Nüchternheit, Wahrhaftigkeit, Opfersinn und Liebe zum Vaterland" (There is only one road to freedom and its milestones are obedience, alacrity, honesty, orderliness, cleanliness, sobriety, truthfulness, dedication, and love of the Fatherland)." See "A Gallery of Camp Art in the Auschwitz Museum," Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum, 14 July 2004, accessed 23 September 2010, <http://en.auschwitz.org.pl>.

to the oppression of certain human groups, arguing that both species of manipulation emerge from a common etiological foundation and process. Namely, in seeking mechanisms by which to legitimize dominant social and politico-economic frameworks, Americans have been forced to “repress the profound and agonizing relationship which has defined their being in space and nature.”<sup>4</sup> This repression has, in Long’s assessment, created a sense of unnatural innocence which perverts existing expressions of cultural identity and prevents more authentic ones from coming to fruition.<sup>5</sup>

In terms of psychoanalytic theory, repression occurs primarily on an unconscious level and is generally viewed as the most fundamental of all defensive mechanisms.

Jerome L. Singer notes:

“Repression has...often been called the ‘queen of the defenses,’ the most general form of avoidance of conscious representation of frightening memories, wishes, or fantasies or of the unwanted emotions...Whether manifested on the stage of national foreign policy or in the privacy of one’s consciousness, the effort at ‘disassociating’ oneself from potential culpability or ‘dissociating’ two incompatible experiences or wishes in one’s personal life seems to be critical to understanding human psychology.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Long, *Significations*, 157.

<sup>5</sup> Long explains, “The American has for one reason or another never taken time to contemplate the ambiguity of act and value, the horror and the evil which is synonymous with the conquest of this new land. But this innocence is not a natural innocence, that innocence which is prior to experience; rather this innocence is gained only through an intense suppression of the deeper and more subtle dimension of American *experience*.” *Significations*, 156 (emphasis original). Long’s description is closely related to Rollo May’s notion of American “pseudo-innocence.” See *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972).

<sup>6</sup> Jerome L. Singer, “Preface: A Fresh Look at Repression, Dissociation, and the Defenses as Mechanisms and as Personality Styles,” in *Repression and Dissociation: Implications for Personality Theory, Psychopathology, and Health*, ed. Jerome L. Singer (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990), xii, xv. In this section Singer is referencing the seminal work of Sigmund Freud.

Although such a mechanism can offer immediate benefits in terms of the performance of day-to-day activities, it nevertheless tends to demand a great deal of mental energy in order to be consistently maintained. Further, by artificially limiting the bounds of awareness, it generates a harmful fragmentation in the sense of self. This fragmentation inevitably impacts not only the individual, but also the individual's relationships with others. Similar to a child who reacts to stimuli without the combined benefit and burden of previous knowledge, the repressor is shielded from threatening emotions by thinking and acting as if the source of the emotions did not exist. However, unlike the authentically innocent child the repressor can never fully escape a deep awareness of the past. Elaborate psychological mechanisms must be employed to keep the offending material down; yet, the conditional nature of these mechanisms ultimately renders them fragile and subject to collapse.

Especially when viewed as exposing a false boundary between psychological and historical inquiry,<sup>7</sup> Long's assertion about repression takes on immense significance. If we as Americans have bought our unnatural innocence at the steep price of repressing aspects of who we are from conscious recognition, then it would seem critical that this phenomenon be explored before its inevitable implosion. Unlike the consequences of

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<sup>7</sup> This viewpoint intentionally builds upon the "situated psychoanalysis" developed by Anne McClintock: "a culturally contextualized psychoanalysis that is simultaneously a psychoanalytically informed history." *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 72. Following McClintock, I argue that unconscious psychological processes on the individual level must be considered in relation to the systemic unfolding of social, cultural, and politico-economic trajectories (and vice versa). My exploration of repression is also heavily indebted to Tink Tinker's extensive analysis of the role of denial in the American colonial system. For example, see generally *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008).

individual repression which are rendered moot in death, the consequences of social repression continue to grow and fester as the defensive mechanism is passed from generation to generation in social narratives and traditions. These consequences are bound to play out not on some ethereal or theoretical plane, but rather in the daily struggles and sufferings of actual living beings. Considering the stakes, we must seek to more precisely identify *why* this unnatural innocence has developed, *how* it has been sustained, and *what* it has meant. In other words, we must look backward and inward so that we might discern how best to look forward and outward.<sup>8</sup>

We would be wise to begin with what Long identifies as the most vital target of our repression: the integrity of nature, and our being in relation to it. This source of our most basic problems calls for a sustained reflection on how we can develop greater awareness of and appreciation for both the historical process by which we have come to inhabit the spaces in which we live and act, and the character of those spaces in themselves. We may fortunately find some assistance in pursuing such reflection, for the land itself holds memory. I convey this assertion not in a metaphysical sense, but rather both literally and metaphorically.<sup>9</sup> First, to the extent that the physical qualities of the

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<sup>8</sup> As Rollo May relates, “One can, and ought, to *reflect* on experience. This not only gives power to thinking but also communicates being...It is arbitrary and confusing to say that reflection is also part of experience; we must keep the thinking function in its own right. The error is in using experience as a way to shut out thinking or in using ‘immediate’ experience to evade the implications of history. The younger generation is right in its attack on ‘mere’ thought, ‘mere’ words, and so on; but it makes the same error when, under the guise of ‘experiencing life,’ it seizes on ‘mere’ feelings, ‘mere’ actions, or any other partial function of man. The ‘experience’ then becomes intellectual laziness, an excuse for sloppiness of execution.” *Power and Innocence*, 76-77 (emphasis original).

landscape indicate how human societies have used and interacted with them over time, they represent literal embodiments of identity and culture. Second, the ways in which Americans have come to imagine and portray the natural world through the master narrative act as powerful metaphors of who they believe they are and what they consider their way of life to be about. By looking to the land, we can begin to deconstruct the master narrative piece by piece and thereby subvert the unnatural innocence that has been our ill-fated inheritance.

Of course, the move away from a state of innocence can often be painful and angst-filled—even, or perhaps especially, when that innocence has been contrived through a process of repression.<sup>10</sup> And in our case, where repression has functioned on a societal scale to safeguard hierarchies of politico-economic privilege, efforts at deconstruction are bound to meet with even greater fear and opposition. Yet considering the choice between numbing ignorance and liberating knowledge, such efforts would seem both justified and worthy of attention. Small though it may be, my hope is that this exploration might embody one example of this type of effort.

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<sup>9</sup> Although I do not necessarily discount claims regarding the metaphysical, transcendental, or spiritual properties of particular spaces or lands, the analysis of such claims is outside the scope of this project.

<sup>10</sup> The specific sort of repression to which I primarily refer roughly corresponds to Herbert Marcuse's notion of surplus-repression, defined as those "restrictions necessitated by social domination." Unlike basic repression, which involves the "'modifications' of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization, surplus-repression involves the "additional controls over and above those indispensable for civilized human association." *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon, 1955), 35, 37.

Responding to Long's call for reflection on who we are, I attempt to plumb the complex depths of American cultural identity<sup>11</sup> by focusing on what seems to be a most basic and inescapable defining factor: the land. A desire to possess and profit from the land has permeated our occupancy of this continent, resulting in not only widespread ecological devastation but also egregious human oppressions. This desire has been implicated in the enslavement of African-Americans on plantations, the forced labor of Hispanic and Asian immigrants in fields and along railroads, the confinement of women to roles of domestication, the slaughter of aggressive wars over territory, and the exclusion of the poor or disabled from participation. However, the symbolic and material significance of space has historically manifested most starkly in relation to American Indian nations. Perhaps more than with any other human group or type of being, American Indians have been consistently exploited as the consummate "Other" against whom American identity has been defined and from whom American wealth has been

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<sup>11</sup> My use of the term "cultural identity" is indebted to the work of Stuart Hall. Hall asserts that it is significantly misleading to conceive of cultural identity "in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common." Instead, "cultural identity...is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture, and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past." See "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chris man (New York: Columbia University, 1994), 393, 394. Hall's understanding of cultural identity also informs my formulation of deep culture—a complex phenomenon which, while being rooted in historical narratives, constantly influences and is negotiated in everyday life.

derived.<sup>12</sup> The past and present struggles of Indian communities against this exploitation reveal land as a paramount site of contestation over culture and power.

I therefore look particularly to these struggles in order to interrogate our relationships with the places we inhabit and the other beings that share them with us. The ways we think about and behave within spatial relationship reveal the contours of our repressive tendencies. If such repression is indeed passed on through a master narrative which keeps exploitative regimes and inequitable hierarchies in motion, then through honest and sustained reflection we might be able to discover narrative possibilities that are healthier, more accurate, and more just.

#### *A. Thesis, Theory, and Methodology*

Although typically characterized in politico-economic, social, and environmental terms, land struggles involving American Indian communities can be more accurately and valuably characterized as deep culture conflicts over the problem of space.<sup>13</sup> As Vine Deloria Jr., Tink Tinker, and other scholars contend, a significant distinction can be noted between the traditional American Indian and White Western<sup>14</sup> approaches to this problem

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<sup>12</sup> For example, see Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University, 1999); and Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> For the sake of conciseness, I follow Joseph Shaules in defining deep culture as the largely unarticulated and “unconscious frameworks of meanings, values, norms, and hidden assumptions that we use to interpret our experiences.” *Deep Culture: The Hidden Challenges of Global Living* (Tonawanda: Multilingual Matters, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> Although the term “White Western” is used here to unequivocally introduce a connection between racial and cultural background, I generally understand the terms “White,” “Western,” and “European” to mark overlapping areas of significance. I therefore employ them somewhat interchangeably,



of how human communities should relate to particular spatial locations. In short, while Indian peoples tend to situate their cultural identities in relation to clearly defined places or lands, Westerners are inclined to subordinate spatial relations to temporal or historical concerns.<sup>15</sup> Illustrating the significance of this distinction in how different groups tend to organize their experiences of the world, Deloria states:

When the [American] domestic ideology is divided according to American Indian and Western European immigrant...the fundamental difference of one of great philosophical importance. American Indians hold their lands—places—as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind. Immigrants review the movement of their ancestors across the continent as a steady progression of basically good events and experiences, thereby placing history—time—in the best possible light. When one group is concerned with the philosophical problem of space and the other with the philosophical problem of time, then the statements of either group do not make much sense when transferred from one context to the other without the proper consideration of what is taking place.<sup>16</sup>

Viewed in the context of history and power, such philosophical differences take on considerable concrete implications despite their largely unconscious nature.<sup>17</sup> For

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with “White” emphasizing the imagined racial boundaries of the people in question, “Western” emphasizing their typical cultural dispositions, and “European” emphasizing their basic geographical origins. In doing so, I also recognize that the socially constructed and problematic nature of all these terms. As limited devices of language that help us point to much more complex phenomena, they must be continually redefined, contested, and decentered.

<sup>15</sup> See generally Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*, 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed. (Golden: Fulcrum, 2003); and Tinker, *American Indian Liberation*.

<sup>16</sup> Deloria, *God is Red*, 61-62.

<sup>17</sup> A profound attention to dynamics of historiography and power must be made paramount in explorations of this type. The emphasis upon context not only helps prevent the sufferings and struggles of real beings from being lost amidst the claims of master narratives, but also keeps the use of analytical tools like situated psychoanalysis grounded and honest. As McClintock explains, “psychoanalysis cannot be imposed ahistorically on the colonial context, if only because psychoanalysis emerged in historical relation to imperialism in the first place.” *Imperial Leather*, 73-74.

example, there can be little doubt that the Western emphasis on time, as contained and conveyed within its dominant systems of values and laws, has vitally influenced the genocide of American Indian peoples.<sup>18</sup> This influence is demonstrated by a wealth of critical scholarship identifying the ways in which cultural imposition has functioned to support the goals of colonial domination. One particularly useful source, Tinker's *Missionary Conquest*, carefully documents how efforts to convert American Indian peoples to Christianity—a religious perspective which centers upon a specific salvation “history” in which god irrupts into time—were built upon often veiled assumptions regarding the superiority of Western patterns of thinking and behaving. As the author relates, these efforts sought “the resolution of ‘the Indian problem’ in the replacement of Indian culture with Western culture, sometimes blatantly referred to as ‘Christian culture’ or ‘Christian civilization.’”<sup>19</sup> Along with more outwardly sinister endeavors such as slavery and murder, this forced imposition contributed not only to the social and cultural devastation of Indian societies, but also to a 98 percent reduction in the physical population by the 1890's.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The connection between temporality and genocide is further developed in McClintock's distinction between panoptical time and anachronistic space. While the former term refers to “the image of global history consumed—at a glance—in a single spectacle from a point of privileged invisibility,” the latter represents a “trope [in which] the agency of women, the colonized, and the industrial working class are disavowed and projected onto anachronistic space: prehistoric, atavistic, and irrational, inherently out of place in the historical time of modernity.” *Imperial Leather*, 37, 40. A more comprehensive and specific exposition of American Indian genocide can be found in Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1997).

<sup>19</sup> George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 9.

Of course, this story is not the one that has come to be promoted through the American master narrative. Instead, the conquest and genocide of Indian and other non-Western peoples has tended to be portrayed as the inevitable, natural, and ultimately beneficial result of lesser peoples coming into contact with a superior one. This portrayal and its meanings are generally explored in the scholarly literature under the heading of American Exceptionalism. Connecting American Exceptionalism to European colonial endeavors more generally, Robert A. Williams Jr. explains:

In seeking the conquest of the earth the Western colonizing nations of Europe and the derivative settler-colonized states produced by their colonial expansion have been sustained by a central idea: the West's religion, civilization, and knowledge are superior to the religions, civilizations, and knowledge of non-Western peoples. This superiority, in turn, is the redemptive source of the West's presumed mandate to impose its vision of truth on non-Western peoples.<sup>21</sup>

Over time the nation's faith in its own Exceptionalism came to be codified in a system of laws which, while being "regarded by the West as its most respected and cherished instrument of civilization," nevertheless acted simultaneously as its "most vital and effective instrument of empire during its genocidal conquest and colonization of the non-Western peoples of the New World, the American Indians."<sup>22</sup> Such codification has

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<sup>20</sup> Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide*, 97. As Churchill and others relate, many mechanisms of cultural genocide were applied toward the subjugation of Indian peoples, including the imprisonment and reculturation of Indian youth at boarding schools, the breakup of communally held territories of land, the outlawing of traditional indigenous social structures, politico-economic systems, and spiritual practices, among many others.

<sup>21</sup> Robert A. Williams Jr., *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest* (New York: Oxford University, 1990), 6. For more specific examples of how notions of racial and civilizational hierarchies influenced the conquest of the Americas, see Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide*, 97-128.

functioned to validate, and indeed to normalize as common knowledge, the largely imaginary version of history presented in the master narrative. Likewise, the promulgation of this narrative has served to bolster the authority of the rule of law by designating it as a hallowed guardian of what is professed to be the country's Exceptional purpose, in short, securing "liberty and justice for all."<sup>23</sup>

Conveniently for White invaders, this dubious symbiosis between law and narrative has generally served to support, legitimize, and the same time obscure, the usurpation of Indian lands and concomitant oppression of Indian folk and other marginalized groups. Noting that over 95 percent of the United States' (US) continental territory was stolen from Indian nations, Winona LaDuke reminds us that "Land has always been a source of wealth and power, and the issue of land rights and ownership is a central point of contention between settler and indigenous governments."<sup>24</sup> Today, the people of these nations represent the ethnic group with the highest rates of poverty and the lowest indicators of health.<sup>25</sup> A number of key cultural processes have allowed this

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<sup>22</sup> Williams, *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> This phrase concludes the Pledge of Allegiance, composed by Francis Bellamy and first published in 1892. Interestingly, Bellamy served as a Baptist minister in Boston, MA until 1891, when his liberal political leanings and penchant for socialist thought caused him to be forced out. Bellamy originally considered wording the concluding phrase "with equality, liberty, and justice for all." However, he eventually decided to omit the term "equality" out of fear that its controversial connotations related to the status of women and African-Americans would cause repercussions. See John Baer, *The Pledge of Allegiance, A Centennial History, 1892 - 1992* (Annapolis: Free State, 1992); and Margarette S. Miller, *Twenty-Three Words* (Portsmouth: Printcraft, 1976).

<sup>24</sup> Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Cambridge: South End, 1999), 116

situation to be created and sustained, and these processes are deserving of intense scrutiny. For whether it is portrayed in terms of “manifest destiny,” eminent domain, legal purchase or treaty, or the just spoils of victorious warfare, the usurpation of Indian land unquestionably represents a primary if carefully concealed underpinning of American cultural identity and politico-economic might.

In the study of Exceptionalism we begin to perceive the precarious and contradictory nature of American cultural identity. On the one hand, this culture prioritizes temporality by remaining faithful to a singular narrative history, a direct legacy of its Western Christian inheritance. On the other, it cannot totally neglect spatial concerns without delegitimizing control of the land which provides resources for life, receives claims of belonging, and allows a semblance of internal cohesion. But while the master narrative portrays, in Deloria’s words, “a steady progression of basically good events and experiences,” the land itself remains tainted with the stains of blood and the witness of continuing injustice. Further, while dominant historical accounts can be endlessly reshaped to suit the desires of those with the power to shape them, the physical landscape might be described as somewhat less malleable.<sup>26</sup> As Americans we can

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<sup>25</sup> Statistics related to American Indian poverty rates and health indicators are referenced in various sources. Although official government sources of such information may not always be entirely reliable, the following references provide useful synopses: Edna L. Paisano, “The American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut Population,” US Census Bureau, accessed 30 September 2010, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/pop-profile/amerind.html>; and “American Indian/Alaska Native Profile,” US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, accessed 30 September 2010, <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=52>.

<sup>26</sup> It is important to note that I use the term “malleable” here mainly to distinguish the ways space and time might interact with culture, rather than to describe their properties in relation to Einsteinian

neither fully escape nor perpetually ignore the pretense that is our faith in Exceptionalism. Despite our best efforts to repress the knowledge and consequences of this pretense by ignoring the integrity of the natural world, however, we remain consumed and defined by it.

In light of this condition, I propose that the stark prioritization of temporal concerns has yielded what might be termed a fundamental disorientation to space deep within American culture. By “disorientation,” I intend to connote a sense of fragmentation, ambivalence, and separation which impedes local communities from authentically exploring what it means to exist in and with a particular place. By “space,” I follow Deloria in referring not to some generic expanse but rather to the reality that specific landscapes are distinguished by distinctive and dynamic characters. The unsightly and unconscious offspring of our repression, this disorientation to space has been profoundly implicated in the dual domination of land and Other.

My proposal is offered in part as an attempt to consider unasked questions and destabilize normative assumptions. At the same time that complex articulations of American Indian conceptions of both time and space have begun to appear with greater frequency in academic and political discourses, explicit examinations of these phenomena are understood in Western cultures remain fairly rare.<sup>27</sup> Further, although it

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relativity, quantum mechanics, or some other class of theoretical physics. Of course, one of the central themes of this dissertation how history is shaped with and through the transformation of the landscape.

<sup>27</sup> The express purpose of this project is to pursue an analysis of the dominant American culture, not the distinct cultures of American Indian communities. I do, however, reference several sources that

seems clear that the fundamental disorientation to space present within American culture is linked in some way to widespread notions regarding the Exceptional nature of the American experiment and people, this link has yet to be adequately theorized. Most existing examinations of Exceptionalism have tended to emphasize easily observable and quantifiable surface phenomena—politico-economic institutions and civic religious beliefs, for example—while ignoring more instinctive and deeply-rooted aspects of culture. Such inadequacies suggest the need for new types of analyses better suited to target these concealed but critical cultural components and dynamics.

In response to this need, I argue the following thesis: *As struggles over Indian lands demonstrate, faith in American Exceptionalism depends profoundly upon the perpetuation of a fundamental disorientation to space deep within the dominant American culture.* American Exceptionalism, as a particular discursive formation within the master narrative about America, functions to prevent local communities from meaningfully and relationally engaging the spaces in which they exist. It does so in part by shaping *cognition* about American identity and history<sup>28</sup> through a deceptive set of images of the land. Conversely, the cultural influence of a deeply embedded and potent disorientation to space ensures that only those types of *behavior* which support Exceptionalism can be deemed logically acceptable and ethically proper. This particular

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consider Indian ways of thinking about and behaving in space. These references are included not to be interrogated per se, but rather for their comparative import. The works of Deloria and Tinker are especially relevant and valuable in this regard.

<sup>28</sup> Or, as Godfrey Hodgson and others clarify, what might be more properly called American “myth.”

cognitive-behavioral approach legitimizes and extends American politico-economic hegemony, creating an oppressive feedback loop of privilege into which only those individuals deemed “American-enough” are enabled to enter. The feedback loop is sustained both deliberately and implicitly, as the privileged seek to protect their advantage and the marginalized are socialized not to question the claims of the master narrative regarding identity and history. Although this illicit bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism touches nearly every corner of American life, its complex nature is perhaps most openly and thoroughly exposed in the struggles of American Indian communities over their traditional lands.

I advance this argument by proposing a theoretical synthesis which illustrates what spatial disorientation is and how it is connected to the widespread faith in American Exceptionalism. Based primarily in the realm of cultural studies,<sup>29</sup> this synthesis integrates insights from a broad but carefully circumscribed range of intellectual disciplines.<sup>30</sup> Utilizing discursive-semiotic analysis as a primary methodological tool, I

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<sup>29</sup> Simon During helpfully defines cultural studies “as the engaged analysis of contemporary cultures. Cultural studies is *engaged* in three different senses. First, in the sense that it is not neutral in relation to the exclusions, injustices, and prejudices that it observes. It tends to position itself on the side of those to whom social structures offer least, so that here ‘engaged’ means political, critical. Second, it is engaged in that it aims to enhance and celebrate cultural experiences: to communicate enjoyment of a wide variety of cultural forms in part by analyzing them and their social underpinnings. And third, and this marks its real difference from other kinds of academic work, it aims to deal with culture as a part of everyday life, without objectifying it. In fact cultural studies aspires to join—to engage in—the world, itself.” *Cultural Studies: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 1.

<sup>30</sup> Listed roughly in order of significance, these disciplines include: a) theological and philosophical perspectives illustrating the distinction between Indian and Western responses to the problem of space and the tremendous influence of Christianity on the development of American deep culture; b) political and legal theory related to the American social contract, especially as it is expressed in legal structures dealing with the possession of territory and protection of individual property, and supported



identify the major symbolic structures existing in deep culture that guide how Americans think about and behave in relation to the land.<sup>31</sup> I do so in part by examining their expression in various sources of discourse—writings, speeches, laws, materials, etc. Specific spatial symbols are organized into the categories of cognition and behavior in order to differentiate their respective functions, and then deconstructed in order to illustrate their origins and consequences. Finally, the bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism is evaluated in light of three case studies of struggles over Indian lands: *Newe Sogobia* (“Land of the People”) and the Western Shoshone, Crandon Mine and the Sokaogon Ojibwe, and the “Save San Onofre” campaign and the Acjachemen. These particular struggles have been chosen for their ability to act as cultural mirrors, revealing the vital if unconscious role of unnatural innocence in extending oppressive circulations of power and privilege.

The goal of this process is to produce a holistic conceptual map that indicates how specific deep cultural symbols induce disorientation in the way we think about and act in relation to the land, and how this disorientation validates and actualizes Exceptionalism

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through the maintenance of a dominant American narrative; c) postcolonial thought unpacking the politico-economic and psycho-social characteristics of colonial endeavors; d) development inquiries examining cultural logics related to landscapes and ideas of progress; e) cultural and critical race theory exploring cultural hegemony, the culture of positivism, and the social construction of race; and f) environmental justice principles highlighting the uneven distribution of environmental benefits and burdens in relation to race and class differences, especially in terms of the deliberate targeting of Indian communities. In an attempt to appropriately balance the weight of my own social location, I draw heavily on scholars from communities of color and other marginalized groups.

<sup>31</sup> Following Pierre Bourdieu, I am concerned with understanding how symbols function in this context as “instruments of domination” which provide a “power of constructing reality,” “serve particular interests which they tend to present as universal interests,” and “[contribute] to the legitimation of the established order.” *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thomson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1991), 166-167.

in turn. It is informed by Michel Foucault's notion of counter-memory<sup>32</sup> and inspired by Linda Tuhiwai Smith's assertion that "The challenge [of research] always is to demystify, to decolonize."<sup>33</sup>

The first set of deep cultural symbols I consider deal with spatial cognition. The concept of spatial cognition refers to the distinctive content and process by which a cultural group conceptualizes the places in which it finds itself. Acknowledging the disproportionate impact of visual sensory data in American culture,<sup>34</sup> I focus primarily on a set of four cognitive images which support faith in Exceptionalism by indexing descriptive–yet deceptive–illustrations of land. These four images include: promised land, *terra nullius* ("uninhabited land"), frontier wilderness, and city upon a hill. In short, these cognitive images guide how we think about the land. Although the four images are

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<sup>32</sup> Working from Friedrich Nietzsche's notion of genealogy, Foucault describes the concept of counter-memory as "a transformation of history into a totally different form of time." See *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1977), 160. Interpreting this description, Michael Clifford states: "As an avenue of freedom, counter-memory bears directly on the processes of subjectivization. That is, we constitute ourselves as political subjects, in part, through an appropriation of discourses of ideology and modes of self-comportment. In fact, the appropriation of an ideology (the possibilities for which are delimited by discursive practices and power relations) is what constitutes an individual *qua* subject; but more than that, individuals are determined in and through their recognition of themselves as subjects, governed by this more or less arbitrary appropriation of an identity for themselves. The constitution of a political identity entails an individual being deeply embedded in a constellation of beliefs, practices, relationships, and ways of thinking: a specific mode of being. We are circumscribed and determined by the type of political identity we become. Counter-memory in a sense liberates us from a particular mode of subjectivity in that we come to recognize the optionality and nonessentiality of a particular way of being. Through counter-memory, we disinvest ourselves from the power that a particular constellation of meanings once held over us. By means of genealogical accounts of that constellation, we distance ourselves from its authority." *Political Genealogy After Foucault: Savage Identities* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 133.

<sup>33</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed, 1999), 16.

<sup>34</sup> For example, see Martin A. Berger, *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California, 2005).

certainly not the only influences on our spatial cognition, they do reveal quintessentially American patterns of thought in a particularly cogent and comprehensive way. For while each image connects American identity and history to specific Western cultural mores and Christian theological values, each also does so in a way that radically misrepresents the actual qualities of the land. This misrepresentation disorients local communities and prevents them from developing meaningful relationships with the spaces in which they exist and the fellow beings within them. Most basically, disorientation is brought about as the guiding images dissolve the American Indian heritage of the land and validate its theft, control, and transformation by White invaders. I explore the origins, applications, and consequences of these images, along with their promotion through the master narrative.

The second set of deep cultural symbols embraces spatial behavior. Spatial behavior involves the distinctive patterns of conduct related to the land that are deemed logically acceptable and ethically proper in a particular culture. I again focus on a cluster of four themes tied to Exceptionalism, each of which signifies how we should behave in relation to particular spaces. These themes, which include privilege, property, positivism, and progress, require a measure of unpacking here. The following snippet taken from one of my case studies provides a demonstrative preview of how these themes function to guide spatial behavior.

Among the Western Shoshone of the Nevada region, the piñon pine tree has represented a crucial link between the people and their land for centuries.<sup>35</sup> In addition to offering obvious dietary and economic benefits, this organism plays vital cultural and political roles through its positioning in oral traditions and community gatherings. Thus, when the Nevada Bureau of Land Management (BLM) began in 1960 to clear piñon pine from the land to make room for other species deemed “more desirable,” Western Shoshone communities unsurprisingly fought back. The BLM justified its actions in terms of three related claims: first, the replacement would make the land more useful to ranchers and therefore more productive; second, it would benefit large animals like deer and cattle; and third, it would make the overall environment more manageable. These claims, which served to justify the desires of dominant actors, were shown over time to have been fundamentally disoriented to the particular space in question. Not only were large animals observed to prefer uncleared areas, but ranching was also left relatively unimpacted as piñon pine soon began to retake what was supposed to be an easily manageable environment.<sup>36</sup>

Thus the BLM, as a representative of the dominant culture, demonstrated its reliance on an identifiable set of guiding themes about how humans should behave in relation to space. In basic terms, these themes might be described as follows: a) that in

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<sup>35</sup> See Steven J. Crum, “The Road on which We Came: A History of the Western Shoshone” (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1994).

<sup>36</sup> See Richard O. Clemmer, “The Piñon-Pine: Old Ally or New Pest? Western Shoshone Indians vs. the Bureau of Land Management in Nevada” *Environmental Review* 9, no. 2 (1985).

keeping with dominant Western cultural mores and Christian theological values, certain forms of knowledge, uses of land, and types of beings should be treated as *privileged* over others (e. g. Western science over Indian traditions, ranching over the gathering of piñon nuts, large animals over plant life, etc.); b) that the land in question could be manipulated as *property* of the US government despite Western Shoshone protests to the contrary; c) that the land, and strategies related to its manipulation, could be objectively and rationally evaluated and managed with regard to usefulness and efficiency (a tenet of *positivism*); and d) that intensive human control over the development of a supposedly “wild” or empty space would represent *progress*. In contrast to the Western Shoshone perspective, the inherent value of the land as an entity in-and-of-itself existing in relationship with a particular human community and other communities of beings was never considered. Although the BLM did not succeed in improving the space in any meaningful way, its behaviors did effectively disempower local communities and extend existing systems of privilege. The behavioral themes which guided the BLM proved to be utterly disoriented to the nature of Western Shoshone land, but eminently attuned to the advancement of the Exceptional few.

As this snippet demonstrates, disorientation to space has been fundamentally and complexly implicated in the American colonial project. In referring to colonialism, I follow Sandy Grande’s definition of “a multidimensional force underwritten by Western

Christianity, defined by white supremacy, and fueled by global capitalism.”<sup>37</sup>

Considering that the colonial project is still ongoing to a great—and greatly harmful—extent, it stands to reason that the lack of analyses of how and why we think about and act upon the land as we do represents a significant breach in the understanding of American political economy and ecology. Likewise, faith in Exceptionalism continues to represent a primary device by which the colonial project is justified and realized. If, as I contend, Exceptionalist faith depends profoundly upon the perpetuation of a fundamental disorientation to space deep within the dominant culture, it would seem imperative that the nature and repercussions of this dependency be clearly articulated.

### *B. Definitions of Key Concepts*

Before exploring this argument further, however, I want to briefly pause in order to offer working definitions of certain key concepts. Three such concepts seem worthy of specific consideration due to their importance and somewhat ambiguous meanings. These concepts include disorientation to space, American Exceptionalism, and deep culture.

First, the concept of *disorientation to space* integrates two basic terms—“disorientation,” and “space”—each of which can harbor unclear references or assumptions. Concerning the definition of disorientation, the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) offers the following entries:

1. The condition of being disorientated; deviation from the eastward position.

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<sup>37</sup> Sandy Grande, Grande, Sandy. *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004.

2. The condition of having lost one's bearings; uncertainty as to direction. Also, a confused mental state, often due to disease, in which appreciation of one's spatial position, personal identity, and relations, or of the passage of time, is disturbed.<sup>38</sup>

Considered jointly, these entries provide intriguing allusions which prove helpful in illustrating how we can think of disorientation in this context.

One of these allusions involves the Christian notion of *ad orientem*, or “to the east.” This notion refers to the tradition of privileging an eastward orientation when constructing church buildings, arranging altars and other holy objects, and celebrating liturgies. Although comparable traditions were known among other religious groups in the ancient Near Eastern world, such as the Jewish practice of facing Jerusalem during prayer and the custom of following the sun observed by many so-called “pagan” sects, the Christian interpretation took a distinctive turn. In this interpretation, concrete geographical or astrological emphases were quite intentionally replaced with a more abstract theological—and temporal—rationale. Explaining this replacement, Uwe Michael Lang explains:

There is no doubt that, from very early times, it was a matter of course for Christians all over the known world to turn in prayer towards the rising sun, that is to say, towards the geographical east. In private and in liturgical prayer Christians turned, no longer towards the earthly Jerusalem, but towards the new, heavenly Jerusalem; they believe firmly that when the Lord came again in glory to judge the world, he would gather his elect to make up this heavenly city. The rising sun was considered an appropriate expression of this eschatological hope.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> *The Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “disorientation,” accessed 3 October 2010, <http://www.oed.com>.

<sup>39</sup> U.M. Lang, *Turning Towards the Lord: Orientation in Liturgical Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 45. The celebration of mass *ad orientem* in the Roman Catholic tradition involved the priest facing away from the participants, i.e. with his back to them. The strict enforcing of this hierarchical

What began as a tradition based on identification with a particular place was thus converted into one tied to belief in a specific salvation history. The sequence of time, rather than the permanence of place, came to possess ultimate meaning in the Christian perspective that would eventually distinguish Western peoples.

As the direction of the east had long come to be accepted as the holy and proper orientation for these peoples, the impact of the permanent westward movement demanded by colonial projects in the Americas should not be undervalued. Although early invaders such as Christopher Columbus initially thought themselves to have arrived in the mythical “Orient,” they were soon forced to come to terms with their erroneous assumptions. Encountering unknown spaces inhabited by strange forms of plant and animal life and unknown human societies, the frames of meaning relied upon by early White invaders were stretched to keep pace.<sup>40</sup> If the direction of the rising sun meant goodness, safety, and comfort, its opposite implied something more sinister, dangerous, and unfamiliar. Considered in this context, we can imagine how the embryonic American cultural identity fulfilled definitional criteria like uncertainty as to direction, confused mental state, and a disturbed appreciation for spatial position, personal identity, and relations.

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formation ceased with the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), although its supporters have remained a vocal minority in church circles.

<sup>40</sup> Stephen Greenblatt presents an excellent analysis of how concepts like the mythical “East” and the “New World” functioned in Columbus’ cultural framework. See *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University Of Chicago, 1992).



Perhaps such confusion and disturbance could have been overcome by the establishment of new relationships based on mutual respect, recognition, and learning. Yet as the early European explorations of profit potential in the Americas gave way to full-blown colonial systems, the existing disorientation was exacerbated. As thinkers such as Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Homi Bhabha, and Salman Rushdie make clear, colonial systems tend to invite by their very nature a sort of widespread bewilderment as the traditional boundaries of cultural identity are forcibly shifted toward a state of liminality.<sup>41</sup> Reflecting on this liminal state, Bhabha writes:

For there is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the ‘beyond’: an exploratory, restless movement caught so well in the French rendition of the words *au-delà*—here and there, on all sides, *fort/da*, hither and thither, back and forth.<sup>42</sup>

Although disorientation in this sense is often used to describe the material, psychological, and spiritual effects of oppression upon subjugated groups (in Memmi’s words, the “colonized”), it can be applied just as effectively to the impact of oppressive systems on their main beneficiaries (the “colonizers”).

For in spite of efforts at assimilation or erasure, colonized groups can still authentically seek to claim the lands to which they belong (however this belonging is defined) and the cultural traditions that demonstrate this belonging. Colonizers can make

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<sup>41</sup> As thinkers such as Fanon and Memmi relate, liminal cultural identities are often contradicted by the firm politico-economic and social hierarchies at work in colonial systems. Furthermore, liminality can be deliberately placed aside in favor of nationalistic or ethnic unity for the purposes of revolutionary activity. Yet while the borders of nationality and ethnicity are admittedly often amorphous in so-called “postcolonial” or “postmodern” societies, I strongly disagree with the school of thought that suggests these notions are virtually meaningless in the contemporary age.

<sup>42</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 2.

no such claims without relying on fictions and contradictions which belie their unjust systems of privilege and diseased sense of cultural identity.<sup>43</sup> And yet no colony can exist without denying the legitimacy of the colonized and endorsing the fraud of the colonizer when it comes to the land. Space therefore acts as an inevitable site of contestation and disorientation in colonial systems.

The concept of space is used here to denote the network of relationships that exist among specific lands and the various forms of life found within them. Different spaces are shaped by distinctive characters, rhythms, and contexts. Space conceived of in this sense differs radically from dominant notions of time, which tend toward the abstract, teleological, and impersonal. To demonstrate the cultural implications of this difference, I again refer to the analysis of Deloria:

There appears to be a peculiar relationship between thinking in temporal and spatial terms. We are inevitably involved, whether we like it or not, with time; but when attempting to explain the nature of our experiences, we are often not necessarily involved with spatial considerations once we have taken time seriously. The whole nature of the subject of ethics appears to validate this peculiarity. Ethical systems are notorious for having the ability to relate concepts and doctrines to every abstract consideration except the practical situations with which we become involved. Ethics seems to involve an abstract individual making clear, objective decisions that involve principles but not people. Ideology unleashed without being subjected to the critique of the real world proves demonic at best. Spatial thinking requires that ethical systems be related directly to the physical world and real human situations, not abstract principles, are believed to be valid at all times and under all circumstances. One could project, therefore, that space must in a certain sense precede time as a consideration for

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<sup>43</sup> Whether colonizers claim to authentically belong to either the colony or the metropole, they must necessarily invalidate some aspect of their asserted identity. See Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, (Boston: Beacon, 1991). Although Memmi later backed away from some of the basic claims made in this seminal work (first published in 1957), it nevertheless retains significant explanatory value. For example, while I recognize the significant limitations of essentialist groupings like “colonized” and “colonizer,” I nevertheless employ them cautiously in order to highlight important general characteristics.

thought. If time becomes our primary consideration, we never seem to arrive at the reality of our existence in places but instead are always directed to experiential and abstract interpretations rather than to the experiences themselves.<sup>44</sup>

In keeping with this reasoning, spatial disorientation tends to preclude communities from tempering the conclusions of generic, universal theory with the lessons of concrete, intimate experience. Such preclusion impedes the formation of authentic historical understandings and realistic ethical perspectives while undergirding a sense of unnatural innocence. Not coincidentally, these precise qualities help define American Exceptionalism.

Although many distinct notions of *American Exceptionalism* have been proposed since Alexis de Tocqueville first described American life as “quite exceptional” in 1835, a basic outline can nevertheless be sketched.<sup>45</sup> As most sources suggest, notions of Exceptionalism merge certain Western cultural mores and Christian theological values into a unique object of faith. This merger posits the American experiment as the highest realization of the natural, preordained progression of civilization. But while such claims shape politico-economic and social life, they remain essentially philosophical, or more specifically theological, in nature. Hinting at this distinction, Seymour Lipset writes:

The United States is exceptional in starting from a revolutionary event, in being “the first new nation,” the first colony other than Iceland, to become independent. It has defined its *raison d’être* ideologically. As historian Richard Hofstadter has noted, “It has been our fate as a nation not to have ideologies, but to be one.” In

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<sup>44</sup> De loria, *God is Red*, 72.

<sup>45</sup> See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, trans. Henry Reeve (New York: Edward Walker, 1847), especially 36-37.

saying this, Hofstadter reiterated Ralph Waldo Emerson and Abraham Lincoln's emphases on the country's "political religion," alluding in effect to the former's statement that becoming American was a religious, that is, ideological act.<sup>46</sup>

Lipset is certainly correct in acknowledging the fundamentally religious nature of Exceptionalism. If the American "nation" signifies more a religious construct than sociological entity, then candid assessments of its vital beliefs and practices can be more revealing of its soul than empirical descriptions of its organization or demography. But while Lipset writes largely as an apologist of the Exceptionalist faith, more critical sorts of analyses are required to develop deeply meaningful understandings of American cultural identity.

Any such analysis begins with a recognition of the country's long Christian heritage, a heritage which reaches back through the colonial era and into the earliest invasions of the land.<sup>47</sup> One example of the enormous formative influence exercised by Christianity on notions of Exceptionalism can be illustrated through the concept of elective monotheism. As outlined in the work of Martin S. Jaffee, the concept of elective monotheism can be distinguished from other types of monotheism, especially that which

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<sup>46</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: W.W. Norton: 1996), 18.

<sup>47</sup> Works illustrating the influence of Christianity on early European expeditions to the Americas abound. For a variety of perspectives related to what is perhaps the most widely known and ideologically loaded of these expeditions, that of Christopher Columbus, see Claudia L. Bushman, *America Discovers Columbus: How An Italian Explorer Became an American Hero* (Hanover: University of New England, 1992); Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide*, 81-96; Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*; Samuel Eliot Morison, *Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus*, vol. 2 (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1942); Kirkpatrick Sale, *The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1990); and Tink Tinker and Mark Freeland, "Thief, Slave Trader, and Murderer: Christopher Columbus and Caribbean Population Decline," *Wicazo Sa Review* 23.1 (2008): 25-50

is termed metaphysical monotheism. With early examples in both Greek and Asian thought, metaphysical monotheism can be described as a way of looking to first principles in order to explain the coherence of the world, or as “the conceptual activity that yields abstract reflections on the nature of the one Being who sustains all beings.”<sup>48</sup> Primarily an exercise of thought, metaphysical monotheism provides a way to conceptualize ultimate origins that does not necessarily direct daily behavior or exclude other perspectives.

In contrast, elective monotheism represents a religious way of life, a praxis based upon belief in the existence of one god who has selected one specific community to be a chosen people. Jaffee explains:

The unique Creator of the world discloses his love and will in a unique moment of self disclosure to a unique human community. As a result of this self-disclosure, the community embarks on a collective endeavor of obedient response to the Creator's love and will. The purpose is to bring all of humanity into proper moral relationship with the Creator. The unfolding of time between the original self-disclosure and the community's successful completion of the mandate that called it into being is the historical process. History is the stage of the community's struggle to be worthy of its call.<sup>49</sup>

Unlike its counterpart, elective monotheism sets up a cosmic dichotomy between the chosen community, who envision themselves as knowing and following the will of the creator and attempting to spread this will over all creation, and the Other—those who fall outside that community and fail to heed the creator god’s call. This dichotomous struggle

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<sup>48</sup> Martin S. Jaffee, “One God, One Revelation, One People: On the Symbolic Structure of Elective Monotheism,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 69, no. 4 (2001) 759.

<sup>49</sup> Jaffee 760.

is perceived to play out in the immediate historical process. Possessing a beginning, the struggle will also possess an end—usually predicted to entail the “explicit physical and spiritual annihilation” of the Other at the eschaton.<sup>50</sup>

As evidenced in text and practice, elective monotheism has played a formative role in shaping notions of Exceptionalism. In the master narrative, America is consistently depicted in theologically loaded terms which lay claim to its unique chosen nature. It is the “city upon a hill” pictured by John Winthrop in 1630<sup>51</sup> and praised by Ronald Reagan in 1989.<sup>52</sup> It is the “last best hope of earth” promoted by Abraham

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<sup>50</sup> Jaffee 769.

<sup>51</sup> Setting this reference in context, Winthrop preached: “The Lord will be our God, and delight to dwell among us, as His own people, and will command a blessing upon us in all our ways, so that we shall see much more of His wisdom, power, goodness and truth, than formerly we have been acquainted with. We shall find that the God of Israel is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies; when He shall make us a praise and glory that men shall say of succeeding plantations, “may the Lord make it like that of New England.” For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world. We shall open the mouths of enemies to speak evil of the ways of God, and all professors for God's sake. We shall shame the faces of many of God's worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into curses upon us till we be consumed out of the good land whither we are going.” “A Model of Christian Charity,” (sermon probably offered aboard the *Arabella*, 1630), University of Virginia Library, accessed 28 February 2012, <http://religiousfreedom.lib.virginia.edu/sacred/charity.html>.

<sup>52</sup> Summing up his vision of the American experiment, Reagan stated “...And that's about all I have to say tonight, except for one thing. The past few days when I've been at that window up stairs, I've thought a bit of the "shining city upon a hill." The phrase comes from John Winthrop, who wrote it to describe the America he imagined. What he imagined was important because he was an early Pilgrim, an early freedom man. He journeyed here on what today we'd call a little wooden boat; and like the other Pilgrims, he was looking for a home that would be free. I've spoken of the shining city all my political life, but I don't know if I ever quite communicated what I saw when I said it. But in my mind it was a tall, proud city built on rocks stronger than oceans, windswept, God-blessed, and teeming with people of all kinds living in harmony and peace; a city with free ports that hummed with commerce and creativity. And if there had to be city walls, the walls had doors and the doors were open to anyone with the will and the heart to get here. That's how I saw it, and see it still. And how stands the city on this winter night? More prosperous, more secure, and happier than it was 8 years ago. But more than that: After 200 years, two centuries, she still stands strong and true on the granite ridge, and her glow has held steady no matter what storm. And she's still a beacon, still a magnet for all who must have freedom, for all the pilgrims from all

Lincoln in 1862 and the beacon of hope endorsed by conservative media pundits on an hourly basis today.<sup>53</sup> Finally, it is also the “most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth” defended by Barack Obama, who affirmed during his 2009 Inaugural Address:

America. In the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, let us remember these timeless words. With hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents, and endure what storms may come. Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested we refused to let this journey end, that we did not turn back nor did we falter; and with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations."<sup>54</sup>

In addition to preserving its gifts for future generations to enjoy, America is also envisioned as possessing a divine mandate to spread them to the world at large. These gifts, cataloged by Lipset as “liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and

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the lost places who are hurtling through the darkness, toward home . . .” See Ronald Reagan, “Farewell Address,” (address given at the White House, Washington DC, 11 January 1989), in *American Presidents: Farewell Messages to the Nation, 1796-2001*, ed. Gleaves Whitney (Lanham: Lexington, 2003), 460.

<sup>53</sup> Speaking in the weeks before the promulgation of the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln asserted: “. . . Fellow-citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance, or insignificance, can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass, will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We -- even we here -- hold the power, and bear the responsibility. In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free -- honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just -- a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless.” Abraham Lincoln, “Annual Message,” (speech given 1 December 1862), qtd. in John M. Hay and John G. Nicolay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, vol. 4 (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2009), 401. Also see William Lee Miller, *President Lincoln: The Duty of a Statesman* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008); and Mark E. Neely, *The Last Best Hope of Earth: Abraham Lincoln and the Promise of America* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1993).

<sup>54</sup> Barack Obama, “Inaugural Address” (address given in Washington DC, 20 January 2009); also cited by Natsu Taylor Saito, *Meeting the Enemy: American Exceptionalism and International Law* (New York: New York University, 2010), 1. Saito offers valuable insights related to the way American Exceptionalism functions in the international arena, many of which I draw upon in my third chapter.

laissez-faire,”<sup>55</sup> are built upon a particular epistemological and ontological assumptions regarding race, gender, and culture.<sup>56</sup> But while the simultaneous development of these gifts nearly always yields inequitable politico-economic outcomes in actual practice, such development is consistently promoted both domestically and internationally as a universal path toward happiness and salvation.

Largely unconstrained by status, ideology, or time, faith in Exceptionalism is debated in application but rarely questioned in essence. Summing up the widespread significance of this perceived divine mandate, Deborah L. Madsen states:

My argument is that American Exceptionalism permeates every period of American history and is the single most powerful agent in a series of arguments that have been fought down the centuries concerning the identity of America and Americans. Though the arguments themselves change over time, the basic assumptions and terms of reference do not change, and it is the assumptions that are derived in important ways from the exceptionalist logic taken to the New World by the first Puritan migrants. Exceptionalism describes the perception of the Massachusetts Bay colonists that as Puritans they were charged with a special spiritual and political destiny: to create in the New World a church and a society that would provide the model for all the nations of Europe as they struggled to reform themselves (a redeemer nation). In this view, the New World is the last and best chance offered by God to a fallen humanity that has only to look to His exceptional new church for redemption. Thus America and Americans are special, exceptional, because they are charged with saving the world from itself and, at the same time, America and Americans must sustain a high level of spiritual, political, and moral commitment to this exceptional destiny – America must be as “a city on a hill” exposed to the eyes of the world.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Lipset, *American Exceptionalism*, 19.

<sup>56</sup> For example, Aileen Moreton-Robinson argues that Whiteness acts as “an epistemological and ontological *a priori* in Western culture which sets the possibilities of thought and discourse.” Extending this argument, I contend that other categories function in a similar and mutually supportive way in relation to Exceptionalism (for example, maleness, wealth, heterosexuality, able-bodiedness, etc). See “Whiteness, Epistemology, and Indigenous Representation,” in *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, ed. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies, 2004), 84.



As an active, guiding force present within American culture from its earliest days, Exceptionalism is built upon the identification of a particular space (the “New World”) as set aside by divine providence for the inhabitation of a specific chosen people.

Ubiquitous in American culture, such notions are largely taken for granted by those who benefit from them and even many who do not. Evidence of the ubiquity of Exceptionalism can be seen on the flags that adorn people’s homes, the celebration of national holidays, and on the money we carry in our pockets.<sup>58</sup> For example, printed on every one dollar bill printed by the US Mint is an image of the “Great Seal of the United States,” which was adopted in 1782. The reverse side of this seal, which appears on the left side of the bill, portrays a pyramid around which are situated the “Eye of Providence” (also known as the “All-seeing Eye of God”) and two mottos inscribed in Latin: *Annuit Coeptis* (“He [God] has favored our undertakings”), and *Novus Ordo Seclorum* (“A new order of the ages”).<sup>59</sup> This image openly frames American cultural identity in light of the biblical story of the Hebrews’ liberation from Egypt. Though the message communicated by these details may not receive conscious recognition with every glance at the back of a dollar, it is not purely coincidental that this symbolic representation can be found on the

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<sup>57</sup> Deborah L. Madsen, *American Exceptionalism* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1998), 1-2.

<sup>58</sup> Of course, reigning systems of privilege ensure that not all folks can enjoy the luxuries of home ownership, holiday vacations, or pocket money.

<sup>59</sup> See *The Great Seal of the United States*, US Department of State Bureau of Public Affairs, September 1996, accessed 4 October 2010, [http://www.state.gov/www/publications/great\\_seal.pdf](http://www.state.gov/www/publications/great_seal.pdf).

most common denomination of the most widely circulated currency in the entire world economy.

The unconscious but widespread influence of Exceptionalism suggests that it functions underneath and through everyday cultural life, at the level of deep culture. Composed of an array of symbolic components, deep culture allows for continuity in cultural groups even as these groups recognize new priorities and adapt to new realities. Generally, the symbols of deep culture can be described as possessing three main attributes: a) they are pervasive within a given culture, b) they wield real, powerful, and consistent influence on the continuing formation of that culture, and c) their influence goes largely unrecognized and unexamined in the everyday cultural consciousness. In cultures that prioritize temporal concerns, a fourth characteristic of deep cultural symbols can be noted: their power derives in part from an abstract and impersonal content that can retain a semblance of legitimacy in spite of material inconsistencies and concrete challenges. Due to their unconscious nature, such symbols must be identified through their representation in the major images and themes that impel distinct patterns of thought and behavior.

For example, the distinct elements of the Great Seal collectively communicate a clear and revealing message about the nature of the American experiment. In short, this message declares: The masculine god watches over and favors America's undertakings in establishing a new, universal order of the ages. Although this message permeates much of politico-economic and social life, it is rarely scrutinized in open dialogue. Further, although the message seems to convey a clear meaning at first, more intense scrutiny

suggests that it actually quite ambiguous in terms of details. What “undertakings”? Who counts as “America”? What sort of “order”? A large rational leap is not required to predict that the ways in which such details have been unconsciously filled in by individual Americans may have everything to do with the type of society that they have created. It is in this process of unconscious filling-in that the concept of deep culture takes center stage.

My usage of the concept draws on three main sources: Tinker on deep and surface structure, Mike Hawkins and Loring Abeyta on worldview and ideology, and Pierre Bourdieu on habitus. Together, these three perspectives illustrate distinct aspects of deep culture and endorse its value as a theoretical tool.

First, in order to explain the nature of the conflict that has accompanied the invasion of the Americas, Tinker looks to the distinction between deep and surface structure. Originally articulated in the Chomskian linguistic theory,<sup>60</sup> this distinction is applied by Tinker to cultural experience in the American colonial system. Writing in *Missionary Conquest*, the author explains:

To use a paradigm devised by linguist Noam Chomsky over three decades ago, Indian and white people may see an identical surface structure, yet understand that surface structure in radically different ways because they are rooted in culturally disparate deep structures. To make matters even more confusing, the two may go along for a long time without recognizing the deep structure differences in understanding.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> See Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*, Janua Linguarum, Series Minor, no. 4 (The Hague: Mouton, 1957); and *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge: MA: MIT, 1965).

<sup>61</sup> Tinker, *Missionary Conquest*, 121.

In other words, when Indian folks and Whites experience a common cultural phenomenon (a ceremony, movie, policy, etc.), they may well interpret that phenomenon in very different ways. Although “this sort of confusion is a part of the intrinsic ambiguity of human language,” Tinker points out that “it also has caused destruction and radical cross-cultural misunderstandings.”<sup>62</sup>

In this view different cultural groups tend to operate from specific deep structural perspectives, each of which contains a variety of linguistic schemas which help members make sense of experience and orient themselves to the world. As the modifier “deep” suggests again in this case, these perspectives usually go unarticulated and unnoticed in everyday life. In a later work, Tinker identifies four main areas of deep structure difference which distinguish American Indian peoples from their White counterparts, two of which I have already alluded to here. These areas include:

spatiality as opposed to temporality; attachment to particular lands or territory; the priority of community over the individual; and a consistent notion of the interrelatedness of humans and the rest of creation.<sup>63</sup>

Although such differences are constantly being negotiated, they have historically yielded a one-sided oppression in the American colonial project. Thus, just as deep structure provides a generative grammar which supports the expression of language, deep culture provides guiding symbols which support the expression of identity.

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<sup>62</sup> Tinker, *Missionary Conquest*, 121-122.

<sup>63</sup> Tinker, *American Indian Liberation*, 7.

The division of deep and surface structure is mirrored by the division of worldview and ideology. Although definitions of this pair of concepts are expressed differently in distinct discourses—and are often contested even within the same ones—some relevant insights can be gleaned. For example, the work of Hawkins, which is helpfully refreshed and extended by Abeyta,<sup>64</sup> offers another theoretical perspective on the multi-layered processes by which cultural groups come to understand and relate to the world. Worldview is defined by Hawkins as “a set of assumptions about the order of nature and of the place of humanity within it, and how this order relates to and is affected by the passage of time.” In contrast, ideology exists in the conscious realm of thought and action, comprising “a theory of human interactions and how these are mediated by institutions.”<sup>65</sup> Whereas worldview consists of fundamental guiding beliefs about the natural order and social reality, ideology possesses both descriptive and evaluative aspects which are informed by and built upon the underlying beliefs. Further, while ideology can be described as relatively fluid in relation to time, context, and agency, worldview is theorized as somewhat less elastic, more beholden to the contingencies of cultural inheritance, and largely unintentional.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Loring Abeyta, “Worldview/Ideology” (lecture given at the Iliff School of Theology, Denver, CO, 30 September 2010).

<sup>65</sup> See Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860-1945: Nature as Model and Nature as Threat* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997), 21.

<sup>66</sup> A fourth theoretical perspective which deserves some mention here arises from the work of Milton Rokeach on the organization of belief-disbelief systems. Seeking to explain the dynamics of ideological dogmatism, Milton proposes that psychological functioning can be understood as an asymmetrical structure encompassing “on one the one hand a system of beliefs that one accepts, and, on the

Worldview, then, can be described as the main organizational schema in which deep cultural symbols fit together and interact. Although individuals can hold several distinct ideological positions simultaneously, they will almost always remain rooted in a single worldview. Different individuals may express distinct ideologies while sharing a particular worldview, while the same individual may express contradictory ideological propositions even as they act out of a single organizational scheme. In addition, changes in ideology are often mistaken for changes in worldview, further entrenching this set of basic assumptions. While it is possible to shift ideologies by choice, authentic shifts in worldview rarely occur either quickly or entirely. This organizational schema is simply too foundational to a person's grasp of reality to be replaced without an extended process of immersion and relearning. Of course, a person can attempt to hasten this process by intentionally adopting an ideology which conflicts with the inherited worldview. Such an attempt would require an insightful awareness of what is attempting to be replaced, a vigilant watch over the constant silent seduction of old unwanted patterns, and the help of a competent and supportive community. And even then, it might take a lifetime to achieve.

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other, a series of systems that one rejects" (32). Further, the contents of the belief-disbelief system can be divided along a spectrum that reflects relative importance and purpose. Rokeach divides this spectrum into three main categories: a) "primitive" beliefs, which "refer to all the beliefs a person has acquired about the nature of the physical world he lives in, the nature of the 'self' and of the 'generalized other'; b) "intermediate" beliefs, which include "the beliefs a person has in and about the nature of authority and the people who line up with authority, on whom he depends to help him form a picture of the world he lives in"; and c) "peripheral" beliefs, which represent "the beliefs derived from authority, such beliefs filling in the details of his world-map (40). See Milton Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind: Investigations into the Nature of Belief Systems and Personality Systems*, (New York: Basic, 1960). Although some aspects of Rokeach's theoretical perspective betray a strong Western cultural bias, he nevertheless offers pertinent insights related to, and another way of envisioning, the concept of deep culture.

Part of this difficulty is explained by Bourdieu's conception of habitus. Although similar conceptions have been espoused by diverse range of thinkers extending back at least to Aristotle,<sup>67</sup> Bourdieu's conception offers particularly relevant and developed insights. Defining habitus as "both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgments and the system of classification (*principium divisionis*) of these practices," Bourdieu continues:

The habitus continuously generates practical metaphors, that is to say, transfers (of which the transfer of motor habits is only one example) or, more precisely systemic transpositions required by the particular conditions in which the habitus is 'put into practice'... The practices of the same agent, and, more generally, the practices of all agents of the same class, owe the stylistic affinity which makes each of them a metaphor of any of the others to the fact that they are the product of transfers of the same schemes of action from one field to another.<sup>68</sup>

Although shaped by the context in which they form, the practical metaphors generated by the habitus gain their own inertia over time and may therefore come to hold influence that is out of sync with contemporary conditions. Habitus creates reality even as it is created by it, through generating the preferences and patterns embraced by a cultural group.<sup>69</sup>

Conceived in this way, the concept of habitus refers to both the observable habits of cultural identity and the involuntary process by which these habits are formed. These twin meanings are often inadvertently alluded to in everyday conversation through

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<sup>67</sup> See Bruce Holsinger, *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005), especially 94-113.

<sup>68</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1984), 170, 173.

<sup>69</sup> See Stephen May, "Critical Multiculturalism and Cultural Difference: Avoiding Essentialism," in *Critical Multiculturalism: Rethinking Multicultural and Antiracist Education*, ed. Stephen May (Philadelphia: Falmer, 1999), 30.

attempts to describe the basic qualities of particular groups. While Bourdieu illustrates such allusions by referencing the “aristocratic asceticism of teachers” and “the pretension of the petite bourgeoisie,” we might use a more relevant example. Namely, in speaking of the unnatural innocence of Americans:

one is not only describing [this group] by one, or even the most important of their properties, but also endeavouring to name the principle which generates all their properties and all their judgments of their, or other people’s, properties.<sup>70</sup>

The American way of life, if such a thing exists, can therefore be understood as the ongoing result of the functioning of its distinct habitus. Yet it would be inaccurate to ascribe a strictly deterministic status to the concept. While thoughts and actions will often be heavily influenced and informed by habitus, this influence is neither total nor mechanistic. Instead, the possibility exists for individuals and communities to exercise creative agency (both deliberately and accidentally) in reshaping their respective habitus, although the weight of acquired dispositions may never be thrown off entirely.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 170.

<sup>71</sup> Summarizing Bourdieu’s relatively dense insights, John H. Scahill writes, “The Latin, habitus, means condition (of the body); character, quality: style of dress, attire, disposition, state of feeling; habit. Bourdieu’s concept of human habitus matches somewhat the original Latin meaning, except perhaps for “character.” For Bourdieu, habitus refers to socially acquired, embodied systems of dispositions and/or predispositions...Hence it refers not to character, morality, or socialization per se, but to “deep structural” classificatory and assessment propensities, socially acquired, and manifested in outlooks, opinions, and embodied phenomena such as deportment, posture, ways of walking, sitting, spitting, blowing the nose, and so forth. Habitus underlies such second nature human characteristics and their infinite possible variations in different historical and cultural settings. While habitus derives from cultural conditioning, Bourdieu does not equate habitus with its manifestations; nor does he think of habitus as a fixed essence operating like a computer program determining mental or behavioral outcomes.” “Meaning-Construction and Habitus,” *Philosophy of Education Yearbook* (1993), accessed 5 October 2010, <http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-Yearbook/1993.html>.



As habitus lingers somewhat apart from—or rather serves to alter—memory and consciousness, it inevitably has a hand in selecting the dispositions (mores and values) around which societies become arranged. The arrangement of subtle dispositions of taste affects the arrangement of societies in much more tangible ways as well. Bourdieu writes:

Life-styles are thus the systematic products of habitus, which, perceived in their mutual relations through the schemes of the habitus, become sign systems that are socially qualified (as ‘distinguished,’ ‘vulgar,’ etc.). The dialectic of conditions and habitus is the basis of an alchemy which transforms the distribution of capital, the balance-sheet of a power relation, into a system of perceived differences, distinctive properties, that is, a distribution of symbolic capital, legitimate capital, whose objective truth is misrecognized.

Such a perspective indicates how actual disparities in wealth, status, and opportunity can be justified based on assumed disparities in priorities, beliefs, or abilities. It also suggests how differences in habitus can induce conflict among distinct groups, especially when the objective truth of that difference is consistently misrecognized. If we understand the practical metaphors generated by habitus to be expressions of the symbols of deep culture, then we see how these symbols can come to exercise significant influence over the formation of cultural identity.

### *C. Note on Social Location*

In seeking to honor a commitment to open and ground dialogue, it seems only fitting that I foreground my own social location as an author, making it a matter of scrutiny in the text. Although this stylistic choice may be frowned upon by academic traditionalists, I see no other appropriate way to tackle the subject matter at hand than by keeping my identity close to the page. In contrast to many of the authors whom I engage

here, I must acknowledge how my background and appearance often allows me beneficial access to the feedback loop of privilege supported by the master narrative. Similarly, I recognize that my own deep cultural formation was formed from birth around disorientation to space and faith in Exceptionalism. A particular challenge and opportunity of this exploration is to reflect on how the deconstruction of such deep cultural dispositions is subjectively received by me as an author.

Another challenge and opportunity inherent to works such as this one is to avert the Western propensity for “objective” universalizing and impersonal Othering. It is therefore important to mention at the outset that I do not claim to offer an expert nor emic perspective on American Indian cultures, lifeways, or spiritualities. My explicit purpose is to explore the symbolic contours and tangible impacts of American cultural identity, not to analyze the Indian world. Although these sorts of analyses are certainly of vital importance, I leave their pursuit to more qualified and suitable parties. Following Akim Reinhardt in his exploration of politics among the Oglala Lakota, I maintain that “[Indian peoples] are quite capable of speaking for themselves, and I would not be so presumptuous as to speak for them.”<sup>72</sup> The perspectives of Indian communities are referenced as they pertain to the subject matter at hand, but always with a cautious eye to accuracy and context. Further, while I seek to respect the experiential wisdom conveyed by these perspectives, I assiduously avoid reproducing the common escapist dynamic wherein a “fantasy image” of Indians as extinct noble savages is uncritically presented

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<sup>72</sup> Akim Reinhardt, *Ruling Pine Ridge: Oglala Lakota Politics from the IRA to Wounded Knee* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University, 2007) xxviii.

for disaffected Whites to revere.<sup>73</sup> Especially considering the long complicity of people like me in the genocide of Indian peoples, any potential drawbacks to such restraint seem more than justified.<sup>74</sup>

But what does it mean to say that I am primarily addressing this work to an audience of people “like me”? This question of identity and belonging is a complex one that strikes at the heart of what I seek to discover. On the one hand, I am deliberately speaking to individuals that share one or more aspects of my social location as a White, American, heterosexual man of Christian upbringing and presumable able-bodiedness. Too often, folks who fit within these categories are utterly ignorant of the privilege that they carry and the ways in which this privilege originates and functions. In contrast, I realize that among communities that do not share this privilege in one way or another, at least some of what I am arguing may be received as all too obvious. I have no intention of following that most intrinsic of colonial patterns whereby I assume that my grasp on universal truth justifies me in telling these sorts of communities what they should think and do. On the other hand, however, I think the topic of this exploration may be of interest to a different and much wider sphere of people “like me.” This sphere includes

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<sup>73</sup> Deloria states that Indians have typically been portrayed as “either a villainous warlike group that lurked in the darkness thirsting for the blood of innocent settlers or the calm, wise, dignified elder sitting on the mesa dispensing his wisdom in poetic aphorisms.” It is this second portrayal that I am particularly determined not to reify. *God is Red*, 23. Also see Ward Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race: Literature, Cinema, and the Colonization of American Indians* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2001); and Lee Schweninger, *Listening to the Land: Native American Literary Responses to the Landscape* (Athens: University of Georgia, 2008).

<sup>74</sup> In particular, I am speaking of the complicity of academics and researchers. For example, see Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide*, 129-288; Churchill, *Fantasies of the Master Race*, 27-66; Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1988), 78-100; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 1-90; and Tinker, *American Indian Liberation*, 17-35.

anyone who is influenced or affected or benefitted by—or curious or angry or skeptical about—the bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism. I welcome all readers who identify with any of these characteristics to join me in dialogue.

I envision the exploration making three main contributions. First, by synthesizing several related but as yet largely unconnected insights from a broad range of disciplinary perspectives, a different way of understanding American cultural identity is proposed. Separately, each of the various insights offers limited details regarding some of the influences upon this identity—stories and symbols, benefits and burdens, priorities and precedents. When connected together through a conceptual map, however, the insights present a much more revealing portrait of its form and function. This map indicates how the American orientation to a fundamental problem of human life—the problem of faith—depends profoundly upon the orientation (or lack thereof) to another human problem—the problem of space. Although some richness of description is necessarily sacrificed in order to manage such a variety of insights, the resulting integration outweighs the simple sum of its parts.

Second, as this conceptual map is framed against past and present struggles over the land, the genocidal and ecocidal implications of the bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism are exposed. Relatively little consideration of deep culture has been pursued in relation to these struggles, a significant deficiency in light of its role in setting the terms of conflict and the priorities of those involved. Ideally, such consideration could help provide participants on all sides of ongoing struggles with a more robust awareness of difference, an enhanced ability to communicate, and a broader

imagination for justice. Although such ideals may be impossible to attain, they remain worth striving for. At minimum, I contend that those participants in positions of relative disempowerment deserve to have their voices heard fairly and their conditions portrayed honestly.

Finally, this exploration demonstrates not only how our unnatural innocence continues to promote the disempowerment of marginalized groups, but also how it has impacted people in positions of relative privilege. This impact has occurred first and foremost through a fragmentation of our sense of collective self, and has ensured that our relationships (with the land, other beings, other nations, etc.) be marked by anxiety even amidst the trappings of privilege. Even as many we have benefitted materially from both old and new forms of colonialism, we have continued to be wounded spiritually. “The conquest has always been spiritually harmful to Euroamericans,” Tinker explains, “even when the damage has gone largely unrecognized due to the systemic camouflage of wealth and physical comfort.”<sup>75</sup> Certainly, communities of relative privilege and communities of relative marginalization have always experienced colonial systems in very different ways. Yet the mutual experience of harm can be optimistically interpreted as a potential incentive for cooperative efforts at reflection and resistance. This sort of cooperation is made a topic of analysis in my case studies, most immediately through common but complicated motif of alliance building.

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<sup>75</sup> Tinker, *Missionary Conquest*, 123.

It is my hope that these contributions not only enhance academic discussions, but also inform real world movements for justice and social change. By digging deeply within the dominant culture and sifting through the problematic symbols and inconsistent assumptions that exist there, it is possible that more authentic accounts of history can be recovered, more meaningful identities formed, more liberating patterns of thought and behavior developed, and more just politico-economic systems emplaced. Of course, such transformation represents a monumental task. This exploration can only begin to address some obstacles involved with that task, and even then merely in a limited way. But if the stout prison walls of a repression this ingrained and consequential are to ever be escaped, the hidden bricks which hold it together must be deconstructed slowly and methodically, piece by painstaking piece.

#### *D. Outline of Chapters*

My presentation is organized around seven chapters in addition to this first introductory one. Chapter 2 builds upon the initial articulation of my thesis by focusing on the first set of deep cultural symbols that link faith in American Exceptionalism to disoriented patterns of spatial cognition. This set of symbols includes four cognitive images which have fundamentally shaped how the American landscape is conceptualized and categorized: promised land, *terra nullius* (“uninhabited land”), frontier wilderness, and city upon a hill. The chapter opens with a basic synopsis of key insights from cognitive theory, especially as they are articulated and applied by Steven Newcomb in his exposition of the Christian foundations of the American rule of law. It then moves into a genealogical analysis of four cognitive images. The influence of each image is connected to critical historical moments of American colonial expansion, and placed in context with relevant legal, politico-economic, and social developments. Using primary source references as a starting point, the chapter explores the meanings, applications, and consequences of these particular symbolic expressions, especially as supported the repression of more authentic understandings of the land.

Continuing this analysis, Chapter 3 shifts its focus onto a second set of deep cultural symbols related to spatial behavior. These symbols consist of four behavioral themes that have formed the standards of conduct governing how Americans relate to the land. These themes include privilege, property, positivism, and progress. Although not behaviors in themselves per se, the themes are presented as the major guiding influences on how we determine what is suitable behavior in relation to different types of spaces.

The chapter begins by using Charles Taylor's theory of social imaginary to introduce how the modern conception of moral order is manifested in the American context. A brief examination of the dominant values and mores that inform this manifestation is presented, followed by a more specific discussion of the four behavioral themes. Again, a genealogical approach is applied to each theme. In keeping with such a method, the discussion is not intended to be comprehensive but rather to demonstrate some main currents and discontinuities which have distinguished American cultural identity. The relationships between dominant spatial behavior and prevailing hierarchies of politico-economic life and social organization are emphasized.

Adding layers of complexity and nuance to the theoretical synthesis, Chapter 4 considers how deep culture is negotiated through the everyday process of living in places. Building on the notion of deep culture as an extremely influential but ultimately non-determinative force, this chapter explores three major responses to the natural world. These responses are categorized as dominion, stewardship, and a third, more varied grouping referred to as deep ecology. The major question which is investigated regards whether these responses tend to subvert the dominant American approach to the problem of space in constructive ways, or whether they actually tend to divert attention from this approach in a problematic fashion. The investigation concludes by finding that while the three categories point to major distinctions in how individuals conceptualize and act in relation to the natural world, they also reveal the underlying and undeniable presence of spatial disorientation. Put differently, while Americans respond to the land through different surface expressions, their cognitive-behavioral patterns betray deeper



commonalities in influence and consequence. These patterns consistently reinscribe and reinforce faith in Exceptionalism.

The three case study analyses occur in Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Each of these analyses considers a particular land struggle involving American Indian communities and various types of Western actors. As a whole, the case studies demonstrate how the poisonous and self-reinforcing bond between spatial disorientation and American Exceptionalism can play out in different contexts. Chapter 5 revolves around the case of *Newe Sogobia* and the Western Shoshone. This case represents a “classic” sort of land struggle scenario, in which Indian communities have worked largely unassisted to oppose dominant control of traditional lands in the Nevada region for centuries. In contrast, the focus of Chapter 6 paints a more complicated yet similarly revealing portrait. Examining the case of Crandon Mine and the Sokaogon Ojibwe, this chapter explores the cultural dynamics arising from the successful campaign of Indian communities to create an anti-mine alliance with White sportfishers and environmentalists in northern Wisconsin. Of particular interest in this examination are the distinct relations to land demonstrated by these actors in spite of their political coalition. Chapter 7 contributes another distinct perspective by presenting the “Save San Onofre” campaign of southern California. This chapter examines the varied assemblage of environmentalists, surfers, and members of the Acjachemen Indian nation which came together to oppose the proposed construction of a toll road extension along the Pacific coast. Unlike in the Crandon case, this assemblage was forged largely through the leadership of a few key non-indigenous

environmental protection groups. The deep cultural formations the various actors are considered in light of the historical context and field of power.

Integrating the insights and questions raised by the previous chapters, Chapter 8 puts the finishing touches on the conceptual map indicating the links among spatiality, Exceptionalism, and American deep culture. This concluding chapter evaluates the value of the stated thesis and discusses the possibility of next steps. In particular, the demanding task of moving from repression to awareness to transformation is considered. More than anything, this task is about a new search for meaning and different ways of developing relationships. In order to meaningfully reflect on who we are, we must enter into more realistic and constructive sorts of relationships with ourselves, other beings, and the land. Conversely, in order to develop these sorts of relationships we must begin to see ourselves in a deeper and more honest way. This sort of transformation will require that we listen to new sorts of symbols to guide our thought and conduct, even as we relentlessly attempt to escape the familiar voice of the old. It will also require a just dismantling of systems of privilege and the tangible politico-economic inequities from which we benefit. Only then will the possibility of escaping our spatial disorientation begin to appear over the horizon, signaling a move away from unnatural innocence and toward a more mature experience of the world.

## 2. Spatial Cognition and the Symbolic Restructuring of the Land

Symbolic forms are created, then, by the ego to relate the content of the repressed wish, the congruent form of the repressing activity, and the realization of this activity in the external world. These are the symbols that become culturally important: culture itself is established to maintain the world in a shape that conforms to the symbolic needs of the ego's activity. It is one thing to daydream and conjure up wishful images of the way things ought to be in order that one's instinctually-based fantasies may come true. It is quite another matter, and a more important one in cultural terms...to restructure the world symbolically and to act upon it to achieve discharge and mastery—actually apply symbolic vision to the alteration of reality itself. The symbols so employed will be more remote from the original wish than those in dream activity, because they represent, not the original fantasy itself, but the fantasy as altered through the interposition of the ego. But what is lost in vividness is gained in safety, for the ego now assumes active control over what had been threatening to the person, when, as a helpless child, he suffered the full brunt of his impossible wishes. And what is gained in safety becomes multiplied in power.<sup>1</sup>

– Joel Kovel  
From *White Racism* (1984)

The heart of American cultural identity beats in countertime to the tempo of its repressed relationship with the land. The unnatural innocence which distinguishes this identity is mutually imbricated<sup>2</sup> with the symbolic restructuring of the world which has

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<sup>1</sup> Joel Kovel, *White Racism: A Psychohistory* (New York: Columbia University, 1984), 99-100.

<sup>2</sup> I employ the notion of mutual imbrication in a similar manner to Nicholas Dirks, Simon Gikandi, Anna Johnston, Richard King, and Sara Suleri among others. For example, King writes, "In particular, I wish to argue for an awareness of the mutual imbrication of religion, culture, and power as categories. This is not to say that religion and culture can be reduced to a set of power relations but rather that religion and culture are the field in which power relations operate. Materialist and cultural analyses are not mutually

occurred as part and parcel of the American colonial system. In terms of cognition, symbolic restructuring occurs in large part through the operation of certain images which have guided thought toward misleading portrayals of space and sanitized accounts of history. Existing at the level of deep culture and carried through the master narrative, these cognitive images support societal repression of the uncomfortable emotions and contradictory ideals inherent to the colonial system by offering disorienting illusions of purity and authenticity to those who buy in. Instead of feeling compelled to seek more authentic relationships with the land and atone for historical injustices, Americans remain assured by a fundamental faith in the integrity of their nationhood, the righteousness of their politico-economic system, and the legitimacy of their belonging. This Exceptionalist faith drives a quest for hegemony that has brought unearned privilege to certain types of beings at the expense of genocidal and ecocidal implications for others.

Before engaging in an extended analysis of four images that guide American thought about the land in particularly significant ways, however, it might be useful to briefly introduce some aspects of cognitive theory. The perspective on cognitive theory which I adopt here is more fully developed by Steven T. Newcomb, who in turn draws on

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exclusive, 'either/or' explanations. Power is not mere material conditions without cultural trace since there is no power in the abstract—power, indeed, is constituted in particular cultural forms. Equally, cultural forms are embedded in a field of power relations. What is required, therefore, is an approach that avoids materialist reductionism (which denies culture) or culturalist reductionism (which denies power) with a renewed emphasis upon the mutual imbrication of the two.” *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India, and ‘The Mystic East’* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 1. Also see Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism* (New York: Columbia University, 1996), xviii; Anna Johnston, *Missionary Writing and Empire: 1800-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2003), 3; and Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1992), 7.

the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.<sup>3</sup> Cognitive theory offers vital insights into the cognitive unconscious, yet another concept that can help us understand the nature and functioning of deep culture. Explaining the basis behind this concept, Lakoff and Johnson begin by suggesting that the contributions of cognitive science can be summed up in three related major findings: first, “The mind is inherently embodied”; second, “Thought is mostly unconscious”; and third, “Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical.”<sup>4</sup> These findings directly challenge traditional Western assumptions about cognition and carry significant implications related to the understanding of who we are as thinking beings. In the words of Lakoff and Johnson, “A radical change in our understanding of reason is...a radical change in our understanding of ourselves.”<sup>5</sup>

Just as individual thought can be described as fundamentally embodied, mostly unconscious, and largely metaphorical, so too can collective thought be conceived in similar fashion. This point is convincingly demonstrated by Newcomb in his analysis of

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<sup>3</sup> See respectively Steven T. Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery* (Golden: Fulcrum, 2008); and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic, 1999). I would be remiss to not acknowledge the indebtedness of this chapter to Newcomb’s work in particular.

<sup>4</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 3. While the insights of cognitive theory might well be applicable in a more widespread fashion, I employ them here exclusively to explore patterns of cognition common to Western cultural groups. Especially since both my social location and focus of inquiry rest in these groups, I see no reason or need to advocate for a more universal relevancy here.

<sup>5</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 4. The authors further state, “Confusion sometimes arises because the term *cognitive* is often used in a very different way in certain philosophical traditions. For philosophers in these traditions, *cognitive* means *only* conceptual or propositional structure. It also includes rule-governed operations on such conceptual and propositional structures. Moreover, *cognitive* meaning is seen as truth-conditional meaning, that is, meaning defined not internally in the mind or body, but by references to things in the external world. Most of what we will be calling the *cognitive unconscious* is thus for many philosophers not considered *cognitive* at all” (12) (emphasis original).

one of the most characteristic of American institutions, the rule of law. Applying cognitive theory to the legal system, the author exposes several underlying patterns of cognition which, being embedded as they are in the system's foundational doctrines, tend to restrict its possibilities and shape its outcomes.<sup>6</sup> One of the most important of these patterns involves the functioning of a phenomenon called "image-schemas." Arising out of basic everyday experience, image-schemas are "mentally modeled after the structure, functions, activities, and spatial orientation of the human body and its interactions with the social and physical world."<sup>7</sup> Value-free in themselves, image-schemas are nevertheless always contingent upon the cultural contexts in which they operate. As mechanisms of the cognitive unconscious, they give form to the expression of metaphor by connecting the symbols found in deep culture to physical habits such as walking, standing, eating, etc. Further, they streamline communication by providing shared, unspoken, and rudimentary frames of understanding regarding how the world works—at least among individuals who share a similar background.

Following Lakoff and Johnson, Newcomb identifies several types of image-schemas that arise out of this experience of embodiment. Each is named for the specific bodily conditions to which it is related and the distinctive manner in which it shapes thought. How such shaping occurs, of course, is largely dependent the deep cultural formation with which a particular image-schema comes to interact. Certain image-

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<sup>6</sup> Certainly including, but not limited to, the legal doctrine of precedent.

<sup>7</sup> Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land*, 3.

schemas can induce great sway in one culture, while holding less influence, or a significantly different sort of influence, in another. Of particular relevance to my exploration of spatial cognition in the American context are four distinct types. These types include source-path-goal, container, force/barrier, and up/down.

*Source-Path-Goal:* The source-path-goal image-schema emerges from the basic experience of bodily movement. From birth, we learn that movement generally begins at some source, occurs along a path, and eventually terminates at some goal. An infant is carried from crib through the house to the table, a child sees a falling leaf and chases it along its course until it is caught, an adult gets in a car and drives along the roadways until arriving at the store. Through these and countless other experiences, an individual's acceptance of the same basic pattern is reinforced. Moreover, as this acceptance is held in common by many individuals, it becomes an implicit point of connection and understanding. Even as certain exceptions or variations inevitably become built into the image-schema through the vicissitudes of life, the general pattern retains significant cognitive currency.

Originating in the experience of physical movement, the source-path-goal image-schema comes to shape thinking in more abstract ways as well. For example, within Western culture where temporal concerns are typically prioritized over spatial ones, history is usually thought of as unfolding along a single linear track with specific starting and ending points. Such thinking encourages forward (i.e. future)-directed and objective-

based postures.<sup>8</sup> It also tends to interpret people and experiences who do not conform to these sorts of postures as backward or unnatural. By contrast, among groups where space is prioritized over time, history can be thought of in a more circular fashion. The source-path-goal image-schema may not relate to thinking about time among these groups, although it may relate to other subjects of thought.

*Container*: Arising out of the experience of individual embodiment, the container image-schema incorporates three parts: an inside, a boundary, and an outside.<sup>9</sup> Through various experiences, the body comes to be understood as a container comprised of these three basic parts. For example, through the act of eating we learn that food must pass from outside the body, through the boundary of the mouth and enter the inside in order to give nourishment. As this fundamental pattern is internalized, it opens the door for other situations to be categorized in a similar way.<sup>10</sup> More abstractly, the notion of categorization is in itself an example of the container image-schema at work. Steven L. Winter explains:

The use of the container schema to structure the concept “category” (and “concept”) leads to the inference that categories (and concepts) have well-defined boundaries. This inference in turn yields several fundamental rationalist assumptions about reasoning and categorization. It structures the notion of a distinction as a dichotomous choice. It yields the conventional tautology of formal logic: P or not-P.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> See Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 32.

<sup>10</sup> See Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land*, 6; and Steven L. Winter, *A Clearing in the Forest: Law, Life, and Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001), 15.

<sup>11</sup> Winter, *A Clearing in the Forest*, 63.



Although categorization may be a natural instinct, the complexities of life rarely fall into neatly divided groupings.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the way that categories are formed can have much to say about a people's disposition. Within Western culture, the container image-schema has come to exercise particular influence. Just as the source-path-goal image-schema has encouraged and normalized forward-looking and goal-based postures in these cultures, so too the container image-schema has encouraged and normalized dichotomous thinking that neatly divides that which is considered to be inside, intimate, and familiar against that which is seen as outside, foreign, and strange.<sup>13</sup>

Even the very nature of this dissertation project, embedded as it is within Western academic discourses, demonstrates the potent reach of the image-schema. In short, to be judged as "inside" and therefore acceptable, it must adhere to certain narrowly-defined and firmly established processes of argumentation and styles of presentation; in Winter's words, it must be deemed as "P" and not as "not-P." Although genuine wisdom can be communicated via a huge variety of means, very few are typically even considered for inclusion beyond the hallowed (if imaginary) boundaries of Academia. Of course, such

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<sup>12</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> The signature of the container image-schema can also be seen in persistent Western notions regarding a dichotomy of "mind" and "body." Often attributed to the "Father of Modern Philosophy," René Descartes, such notions have deep roots in both Christian and classical Greek thought. As Marleen Rozemond argues, "From a historical point of view Descartes's position that the mind is incorporeal was not at all new: the idea that the mind or soul is an incorporeal entity that is separable from the body is, of course, at least as old as Plato. More directly relevant for understanding Descartes is the fact that the Aristotelian scholastics also accepted it." Yet in contrast to the scholastics who maintained a more theologically flavored conception of the Great Chain of Being, Descartes prefigured the culture of positivism as he "wanted to develop a conception of body such that everything in the physical world could be explained mechanistically." *Descartes's Dualism* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1998), xiii, xiv.

consideration is based as much upon cultural preferences and power dynamics as upon perceptions of merit or novelty. As with all types of image-schemas, the generic container form is not automatically bound to any specific values or applications.

*Force/Barrier*: The force/barrier image-schema arises from the experience of physical obstruction. Explaining this origin, Newcomb relates:

This schema follows from the experiential fact that in the process of moving through the overall 'journey' of life, we often have to deal with barriers, challenges, contests, or dramatic struggles that impede our movement.<sup>14</sup>

From the chair that blocks the path of a child to its mother, to the mountain that stands in the way of the traveler's destination, we are consistently reminded that force (of body, mind, will, etc.) is often necessary to surpass the barriers that stand in the way of our goals. Among Western peoples, this image-schema shapes thought in a number of crucial ways. First, it encourages the identification of obstacles and the framing of life situations in terms of competitive contests. Second, it naturalizes the use of force—whether conceptualized in physical, intellectual, or moral terms—as a rightful obligation of existence. Finally, it accentuates winning (that is, overcoming barriers) as preferable to compromise or redirection.

*Up/Down*: Finally, the experience of basic bodily conditions such as standing up and lying down represents the basis for the up/down image-schema.<sup>15</sup> While the condition of standing upright might be associated most closely with activities of life such

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<sup>14</sup> Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land*, 7.

<sup>15</sup> See Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land*, 8.

as running, walking, etc., the condition of lying down might be more aptly connected with inactivity, sleep, and death.<sup>16</sup> Depending on the symbolic import associated with such activities in diverse cultures, the up/down image-schema can shape thought in different ways. For example, in cultures influenced by traditional Christian beliefs and practices, the directions of up and down, along with the experiences and metaphysical properties associated with them, can be quite precisely associated with notions of good and evil. “Up” is correlated with what are considered to be fruitful and decent pursuits and indicates the direction of heaven and the realm of god. On the contrary, “down” denotes sedentariness, depravity, and the consequences of the “Fall of Man,” signifying hell and the realm of the devil.<sup>17</sup>

By understanding the operation of image-schemas generally, we are enabled to detect basic patterns of thought among a given people. By applying an understanding of these particular image-schemas to the American cultural context, however, we gain the ability to identify much more detailed patterns in how we think about the land and

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<sup>16</sup> Another exemplar of the “down” categorization can be found in the activity of sexual intercourse—at least when considered within the dominant cultural context. Through the significant formative influence of Puritan (and more widely Protestant Christian) theological beliefs, sex has long been “logically” linked in a strangely negative and seemingly incongruous fashion with both sleep and death. Admitting that this linkage “has not been altogether severed in modernity and postmodernity,” Christian apologist Rodney R. Clapp warns an American audience, “The Christian tradition helps us see and admit that sex is a mystery, and that in a fallen world it is potentially a dangerous and painful mystery.” *Tortured Wonders: Christian Spirituality for People, Not Angels* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2004), 64-65.

<sup>17</sup> “To the woman [god] said: ‘I will intensify the pangs of your childbearing; in pain shall you bring forth children. Yet your urge shall be for your husband, and he shall be your master.’ To the man he said: ‘Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat, Cursed be the ground because of you! In toil shall you eat its yield all the days of your life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you, as you eat of the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat, Until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; For you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return.’” Genesis 3: 16-19 (New American Bible translation).

ourselves. I contend that the four image-schemas discussed here—source-path-goal, container, force/barrier, and up/down—correspond significantly with the four cognitive images that guide thought about the land—promised land, *terra nullius*, frontier wilderness, and city upon a hill. The correspondence of each image-schema to its respective cognitive image reveals a great deal about the content and process of our cultural identity. Further, it helps explain why we have become so disoriented to space, and how this disorientation has constituted such a critical support to our faith in Exceptionalism. As Lakoff and Johnson assert:

What is important is not just that we have bodies and that thought is somehow embodied. What is important is that the peculiar nature of our bodies shapes our very possibilities for conceptualization and categorization.<sup>18</sup>

By shifting the scope of this assertion from “bodies” to lands, we come to appreciate the limits and consequences of our collective cognitive possibilities.

#### *A. Promised Land*

Undoubtedly, one of the most influential images on American spatial cognition is that of the “promised land.” Dating back to the earliest invasions of the land, the image has significantly impacted notions of history and expressions of identity. Yet its impact is rarely recognized or scrutinized in the popular imagination, indicating the embeddedness of the image within deep culture.

As most commentators note, the promised land image is gleaned directly from the story of the Hebrews (later the “Israelites”) as found in what is commonly known as the

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<sup>18</sup> Lakoff and Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, 19.

“old” testament of the bible. Asked to briefly describe this well-known story, most Christians might be likely to recount something similar to the following basic outline:

The god Yahweh instructs a man named Abram (later “Abraham”) to move to Canaan, promising him the land and a long line of descendents which will be Yahweh’s chosen people. Abram does so, although through a series of events these descendents later fall into slavery in Egypt. The Hebrews are eventually led out of bondage in Egypt by Moses, and after miraculously escaping the pursuit of their former captors are made to wander in the desert for forty years by Yahweh before being allowed to return to the promised land of Canaan.

Such a recounting reveals a few key features: an omnipotent deity (Yahweh), a chosen people (the Hebrews), and a promised land (Canaan). It also follows the basic cognitive form related by the source-path-goal image-schema, with the Hebrews traveling along a specific if indirect trajectory (both physically and spiritually) from their original source in order to reach a final, and preferable, destination. However, this sort of account also obscures a critical detail by omitting the fact that the land of Canaan was already inhabited by several indigenous communities which had to be conquered before Hebrew settlement could occur.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, the actual biblical text attempts no such obfuscation and clearly announces the names of these communities and their fates at the hand of the invaders. For example, it states:

But the LORD said, "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the country of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites;

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<sup>19</sup> Although this point thoroughly developed in the work of Vine Deloria, Jr., Tink Tinker, Newcomb, and others, I believe it nevertheless bears repeating here.

and

...in the cities of those nations which the LORD, your God, is giving you as your heritage, you shall not leave a single soul alive. You must doom them all-the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites-as the LORD, your God, has commanded you, lest they teach you to make any such abominable offerings as they make to their gods, and you thus sin against the LORD, your God.<sup>20</sup>

It is for this reason that Newcomb challenges traditional thought regarding the genre of the Hebrew Scriptures by classifying it instead as a “colonial adventure story.”<sup>21</sup> Read in this way, accounts of the land of Canaan reveal descriptive and value-laden content related to spatial cognition. First, distinguished as a “good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey,” Canaan is symbolically represented as place with seemingly endless natural resources for the Hebrews to use and enjoy. Second, although indigenous inhabitation of the land is acknowledged in the text, this acknowledgement tends to occur in a somewhat inconsistent and contradictory manner. For example, while the first passage above mentions the land’s previous occupancy only in passing, as if was incidental or irrelevant to the story,<sup>22</sup> the second presents it as a serious threat to the invaders’ goals of religious control and physical domination. Finally, the land itself is conceptualized as a gift given by god as a “heritage” to his chosen people (importantly,

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<sup>20</sup> Exodus 3:7-8; Deuteronomy 20: 16-18 (New American Bible translation) (emphases original).

<sup>21</sup> See Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land*, especially 39-42.

<sup>22</sup> Indeed, this portrayal is identified by Newcomb as characteristic of the entire text. He states: “...the Old Testament portrays the “chosen people” as having received a promise from the Lord (conquerer). This promise included a command that the chosen people were to go forth, subdue, seize and occupy the land of Canaan, the “promised land.” The story treats the fact that many indigenous peoples were already living in those promised lands as entirely irrelevant.” *Pagans in the Promised Land*, 51.

the masculine gender of god is made plain in the text), due in part to their historical experience as victims of unjust suffering. What is particularly relevant about this content is the ease and comprehensiveness with which it eventually comes to be transferred to the American context.

The fact that early Puritan settlers conceptualized America through the image of a promised land is widely accepted as fact within the American popular imagination.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, such a conceptualization is seemingly made plain in the language of primary source documents such as Thomas Morton's *New English Canaan*, first published in 1637,<sup>24</sup> and the extant sermons of Cotton Mather.<sup>25</sup> As such first-hand accounts illustrate, these early settlers often described themselves quite explicitly as the new Israelites, chosen by god to conquer and possess his great gift of a new and bountiful land. Avihu Zakai explains:

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<sup>23</sup> For accounts of the significance of the Promised Land image in early American history, see David Gelemter, *Americanism: The Fourth Great Western Religion* (New York: Random House, 2007); and Fritz Hirschfeld, *George Washington and the Jews* (Newark: University of Delaware, 2005), especially 40-57.

<sup>24</sup> See Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan: Text, Notes, Biography, and Criticism*, ed. Jack Dempsey (Scituate: Digital Scanning, 2000). Dedicating his work "To the right honorable, the Lords and others of His Majesty's most honorable Privy Council, Commissioners for the Government of all His Majesty's Foreign Provinces," Morton connects Christian piety with conquest of the land, stating: "The zeal which I bear to the advancement of the glory of God, the honor of his Majesty, and the good of the weale publike, hath encouraged me to compose this abstract, being the model of a rich, hopeful, and very beautiful Country, worthy the Title of Nature's Masterpiece, which may be lost by too much sufferance" (2).

<sup>25</sup> Highlighting the chosen status of the New England settlers, Mather states, "'Tis very certain, that the greatest Entertainments must needs occur in the History of the People, whom the Son of God hath Redeemed and Purified unto himself, as a Peculiar People, and whom the Spirit of God, by Supernatural Operations upon their Minds, does cause to live like Strangers in this World, conforming themselves unto Truths and Rules of his Holy Word, in Expectation of a Kingdom, whereto they shall be in another and better World advanced.'" See "A General Introduction," in *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings*, vol. 1, eds. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson (Mineola: Dover, 2001), 167-168.

For English Puritans in general, the exodus theme of Israel's flight out of Egyptian bondage indeed became the mirror of the whole history of human salvation and redemption. Illustrating this is the picture on the title page of the Geneva Bible of 1560 which depicts the "Israelites" standing on the shore of the "Red Sea," their backs towards the mighty Egyptian army and their faces towards the vision of the promised land looming in the distance. The Geneva Bible, sometimes called the Puritan Bible, was the most popular version in Puritan circles in England and New England. For Puritan emigrants to America, the flight from England to New England symbolized in vivid and concrete terms their exodus from bondage in Egypt, or England, to the promised land of Canaan. Theirs was a migration of a "Nation" driven out of another nation into the wilderness with a "speciall Commission from heaven, such as" was the case with "the Israelites" in past times.<sup>26</sup>

Conviction in this "speciall Commission from heaven" thus represented an embryonic form of the Exceptionalist faith which would come to characterize American cultural identity.

In spite of this lineage, it is unlikely that the early Puritan settlers foresaw their legacy unfolding along such a course. As even Exceptionalist scholars like Perry Miller and Robert Kagan confess, these settlers did not envision America as a promised land in the way they are widely believed to have done today. Instead, they were considerably more focused on compelling the transformation of the society from which they came rather than on populating a new land, at least initially. In this perspective, leaders such as Morton and Mather are more accurately understood as "global revolutionaries" who, "unlike the biblical Jews...looked forward to the day, they hoped not far off, when they might return to a reformed Egypt."<sup>27</sup> These sorts of discrepancies between actual

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<sup>26</sup> Avihu Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom: History and Apocalypse in the Puritan Migration to America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1992), 65.



historical events and their common perception in the popular imagination offer vital insights into the nature of deep culture. The abundant references to a promised land found in Puritan writings and sermons have been convincingly interpreted through modern hermeneutical lenses as rhetorical tropes utilized to express a desire for theological reform in the universal Christian church. Yet by the Revolutionary period, these same references were being applied quite prolifically to the immediate politico-economic and physical landscape while maintaining their theological fervor. As a return to England became increasingly doubtful, the need arose to create a new master narrative in which the permanent conquest of the land and its inhabitants could be not only normalized but commended.

It was in this effort that the legacy of individuals such as John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Paine was forged. Although construction on the new narrative had already begun decades earlier, these “Founding Fathers” contributed a crucial section by using their status to complete two main objectives. First, by explicitly classifying the War of Independence as the inevitable and necessary culmination of Puritan settlement, they

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<sup>27</sup> Kagan sustains Miller’s surface adjustment of the master narrative: “The picture of Puritan America as a pious Greta Garbo, wanting only to be left alone in her self-contained world, is misleading. For one thing, Winthrop’s Puritans were not isolationists. They were global revolutionaries. They escaped persecution in the Old World to establish the ideal religious commonwealth in America, their “new Jerusalem.” But unlike the biblical Jews, they looked forward to the day, they hoped not far off, when they might return to a reformed Egypt. Far from seeking permanent separation from the Old World, the Puritans’ “errand into the wilderness” aimed to establish a base from which to launch a counteroffensive across the Atlantic. Their special covenant with God was not tied to the soil of the North American continent. America was not the Puritans’ promised land but a temporary refuge. God had “peopled New England in order that the reformation of England and Scotland may be hastened.” As the great scholar of Puritan thought Perry Miller explained many years ago, the Puritan migration “was no retreat from Europe: it was a flank attack.” The “large unspoken assumption in the errand of 1630” was that success in New England would mean a return to old England.” Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America’s Foreign Policy from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 2007), 8.

fashioned a seamless account of history. Second, by openly embracing the same symbols that had inspired this settlement—“a fallen Old World (harboring Romish Antichrist), an Egyptian England (in bondage to a ‘hardened, sullen-tempered pharaoh’), and a New Canaan charged ‘by the design of Heaven’ with ‘the cause of all mankind’”—they offered an evocative justification for the colonial system.<sup>28</sup> Although these symbols were directed toward different ends than they had been initially, the basic values and mores they embodied were carefully preserved.

By 1778, we find no less a totemic figure than George Washington employing the promised land image in order to distinguish the identity of America and defend its mission in Exceptionalist terms. Writing to Patrick Henry, he states:

The independence of America is the offspring of that liberal spirit of thinking and acting, which followed the destruction of the scepters of kings and the mighty power of Great Britain. But sir, we have only passed the Red Sea. A dreary wilderness is still before us; and unless a Moses or a Joshua are raised up in our behalf, we must perish before we reach the promised land. We have nothing to fear from our enemies on the way... America can only be undone by herself.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, while the early Puritan settlers may not have conceptualized America as a promised land in the popular sense, they undoubtedly remain significant for their role in planting this seminal image into the deep cultural terrain. Growing from this terrain, the image has come to influence the development of cognitive patterns that merge spiritual and politico-economic concerns within a single historical trajectory. These patterns represent America

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<sup>28</sup> Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1980), 131 and 121. Also see Steven G. Calabresi, “‘A Shining City on a Hill’: American Exceptionalism and the Supreme Court’s Practice of Relying on Foreign Law,” *Boston University Law Review* 86, no. 5 (2006): 1353-1354.

<sup>29</sup> George Washington, *George Washington; Being His Correspondence, Addresses, Messages, and Other Papers, Official and Private*, vol. 5 (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1858), 495-496.

not only as the land that was promised to a chosen people in the beginning, but also as the land that promises to bring history to its proper end.<sup>30</sup> In so doing, they also overshadow and obscure spatial matters related to the character of the land, its relations with a variety of beings, and the manner of its conquest.

But while the influence of Puritanism on American politico-economics, literature, and overall cultural identity has been widely (and perhaps excessively) demonstrated, the vital influence of other invading groups has often been overlooked.<sup>31</sup> Christian invaders among the Dutch, French, and Spanish also projected the promised land image onto what is today American soil, although this projection occurred in different ways dependent upon the region and objectives of the respective invasions. For example, the writings of Spanish colonizers such as Gregorio García (a Dominican missionary) and Juan de Torquemada (a Franciscan friar) reveal the pivotal role played by the Exodus story in framing the conquest of what is today Mexico and the southern US. In fact, as Jorge

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<sup>30</sup> Bercovitch explains this dual significance: “[American Puritans] shared the allegorical outlook with all Christians. For them as for Bunyan, any believer’s life was a journey from the Egypt of sin, across the Red Sea of baptism, and so through the wilderness to the heavenly Canaan. They also thought that for them, *as for no others*, that spiritual journey had a distinctly historical meaning. Historically, in this world, they had left a sinful land; literally they had crossed a sea to win a new life; they were confronting Satan in a real wilderness; and if their goal was not heaven, it was something no less divine: the thousand-year reign of the saints in glory. They described their undertaking accordingly. Their summons from Europe was an evangelical call, their Atlantic crossing was tantamount to conversion, their hardships in settling the country were the temptations of Satan, the blossoming New World ‘garden’ made tangible, as it were, the *hortus conclusus* of the redeemed soul. “The American Puritan Imagination: An Introduction,” in *The American Puritan Imagination: Essays in Reevaluation*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1974), 11.

<sup>31</sup> For examinations of the Puritan influence, see Robert Daniel Stacey, *The Puritan Influence on the American Founding: Birth and Rebirth in Early America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1994); Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism and Other Writings*, trans. Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells (New York: Penguin, 2002); Ellwood Johnson, *The Goodly Word: The Puritan Influence in American Literature* (Toronto: Clements, 1995); and Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale University, 1975).

Cañizares-Esguerra suggests, justifications of conquest arising out of Spanish Catholic culture may have actually prefigured and influenced later English Puritan theological and political thought.<sup>32</sup> Regardless of this chronology, however, the writings of de Torquemada reflect an interesting reversal of the promised land image.

Explaining this reversal, Cañizares-Esguerra states:

Drawing upon a well-established patristic tradition that events and characters of the Old Testament were “types” or prefigurations of future history, Torquemada read the history of the Aztecs as the inverted, perverse fulfillment of the Old Testament...According to Torquemada, the Aztecs were one of many peoples who over the course of the centuries had swept into central Mexico from the north. What was unique about them was that they were Satan’s elect. Since Satan liked to mimic God, it stood to reason that the Aztecs shared with the Israelites more than an exodus through the wilderness.<sup>33</sup>

In this inversion of the traditional interpretation, the Aztecs were portrayed as the chosen people of Satan who, following the same pattern of the source-path-goal image-schema, endured a journey of hardship and warfare before securing their diabolical promised land. This inversion served two related purposes. First, it invalidated Aztec claims to space as illegitimately gained and divinely repudiated. Second, and equally important, it offered divine sanction for European conquest of the land by any means necessary. This matched pair of disingenuous and dangerous rationalizations would reappear with remarkable persistence over the ensuing several centuries as colonizing efforts continued to bring Whites into contact with Indian peoples across the continent.

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<sup>32</sup> See Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550-1700* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2006), especially 104-110.

<sup>33</sup> Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors*, 104-105.

The image of the promised land not only informed and motivated American colonization in its early stages, but has also shaped its long-term development in significant and concrete ways.<sup>34</sup> Its inherent flexibility has allowed it to be employed in diverse efforts to justify American westward expansion across the continent, promote the exploitation of natural resources, validate brutal and seemingly irrational violence, and refute alternative claims to particular lands. Put another way, and to reference this chapter's opening quotation, this image has helped restructure the world symbolically and alter the reality of the land itself. While the promised land has also been deliberately adopted as a trope by movements seeking to subvert the dominant culture—most notably twentieth century African-American liberation movements—this adoption can say more about the agency of oppressed groups than the flexibility of the image itself.<sup>35</sup> In fact, by identifying the need to undermine the established meanings of this image, these

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<sup>34</sup> Expanding on the religious justification of conquest, Newcomb states: “The monarchs and conquistadores of Christendom transformed Yahweh’s command to the Hebrews to take over the land of Canaan into a globalized Christian version of the same doctrine. In keeping with a Christian perspective, the Old Testament story was changed from ‘Yahweh’s command to the Hebrews’ into ‘God’s command to the Christians’ to take possession of all the lands throughout the world that had not yet been subdued and possessed by Christians forced under Christian imperium and dominium.” *Pagans in the Promised Land*, 45. Also see Steven T. Newcomb, “What Is Meant When We Say Promised Land,” *Kumeyaay.com*, 11 April 2008, accessed 9 February 2011, <http://www.kumeyaay.com/kumeyaay-news/news-archive/1252-what-is-meant-when-we-say-promised-land.html>.

<sup>35</sup> Within this context, the Promised Land image was adopted perhaps most prominently by Martin Luther King Jr. Prophetically employing this image in a speech delivered on the night before his assassination, King subverted its dominant interpretation: “Well, I don’t know what will happen now. We’ve got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn’t matter with me now. Because I’ve been to the mountaintop. And I don’t mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I’m not concerned about that now. I just want to do God’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land. And I’m happy, tonight. I’m not worried about anything. I’m not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.” “I See the Promised Land,” in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 286.

movements highlight the integral and consistent role it has played in maintaining unjust systems of privilege over time.

The basic structure of allusions to the promised land has changed little since the Revolutionary period, even as the explicitly religious tone with which these allusions were once communicated has been frequently replaced by a more outwardly secular one. This uniformity is evidenced by even cursory analyses of how such allusions have manifested in more recent times. For example, one need look no further than a 1952 commencement address delivered by none other than America's "Great Communicator," Ronald Reagan. Addressing the graduating class of William Woods College, Reagan asserted:

I, in my own mind, have always thought of America as a place in the divine scheme of things that was set aside as a promised land. It was set here and the price of admission was very simple: the means of selection was very simple as to how this land should be populated. Any place in the world and any person from those places; any person with the courage, with the desire to tear up their [sic] roots, to strive for freedom, to attempt and dare to live in a strange and foreign place, to travel halfway across the world was welcome here.<sup>36</sup>

This sort of rhetorical device, which would come to represent a familiar refrain in speeches of the future president, enabled him to encode a very specific Exceptionalist message in seemingly benign, optimistic packages.<sup>37</sup> In the second sentence of the above

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<sup>36</sup> Ronald Reagan, "Commencement Address," (address given at Williams Woods College, Fulton, MO, June 1952), qtd. in "Reagan Quotes," Public Broadcasting Service, accessed 17 October 2010, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/reagan/sfeature/quotes.html>.

<sup>37</sup> It is vital we consider the extent to which Reagan (and other politico-economic elites in American history) consciously and deliberately encoded Exceptionalist messages, for such consideration exposes how deep culture symbols shaped circulations of power. Much debate surrounds Reagan's presidential legacy and the amount of control exerted by outsiders on his speeches and policies. For various

quote alone, Reagan presents three related spatial assumptions as self-evident facts, namely: a) that the land was largely unpopulated until European settlement; b) that it was set aside by a divine entity as a special place meant for a particular, chosen people, and c) that only those individuals who could meet certain, specific criteria could be selected as legitimate inhabitants in this special place.<sup>38</sup>

Arguably, the lasting appeal of this message rests in its ability to reassure Americans as to their chosen status and divinely-mandated mission. Yet the message serves another equally important purpose by covering over certain questions that could betray the existence of structural inequalities and contradictory practices. Some of these questions might include: Who controls judgment regarding the “means of selection”? Which cultural and ethical standards are used to distinguish between those who are considered to truly have “courage” and the desire to “strive for freedom,” and those who do not? What evidence demonstrates that America has actually been “set aside as a promised land”?

When asked in light of the generic master narrative, such questions are given clear answers. Asked in relation to specific struggles over the land and situations of politico-economic conflict, however, such questions yield different sorts of answers. This

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perspectives, see Robert Dallek, *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1999); John Ehrman and Michael W. Flamm, *Debating the Reagan Presidency* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009); and Kurt Ritter and David Henry, *Ronald Reagan: The Great Communicator* (New York: Greenwood, 1992).

<sup>38</sup> Apologists of Exceptionalism frequently underestimate pre-contact Indian populations in order to diminish, or at least mystify, the reality of genocide. For an exposition of how and why this tactic has been applied to the context of Hispaniola, see Tinker and Freeland, “Thief, Slave Trader, and Murderer: Christopher Columbus and Caribbean Population Decline,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 23, no. 1 (2008): 25-50.

discrepancy is illustrated through the contemporary American debate surrounding the issue of undocumented immigration, in which the promised land image is employed regularly by participants on all sides.<sup>39</sup> Far from being presumed as equals so long as they have “courage” and value “freedom,” undocumented immigrants are instead evaluated quite strictly in this debate with regard to deeply held beliefs in interlinked hierarchies of class, race, gender, ability, etc. According to these beliefs, the “desire to tear up [one’s] roots” can be deemed an acceptable standard for selection into the chosen nation only if the cultural soil in which those roots originally grew is sufficiently similar to the ground to which they will be transplanted. Or if the cultural soil is different, then standards can be amended to consider what benefits an immigrant can offer to the nation as it seeks to fulfill its divine promise. In either case, the disorienting cognitive influence of the promised land image helps obscure the presence of over 11 million undocumented immigrants already residing in an overwhelmingly peaceful and productive fashion within the country.<sup>40</sup>

The obscuring effect is demonstrated in the following excerpt from a recent Internet blog post written by Lena Margita, a self-described “single mother who believes in hard work, family, America and most of all God.” Joining in the virtual dialogue surrounding immigration laws in the state of Arizona, Margita writes:

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<sup>39</sup> In an albeit unscientific test of this correlation, an internet query completed on 18 October 2010 using the search terms “promised land,” “America,” and “immigration” returned “about 207,000” unique results through the Google search engine. <http://www.google.com>.

<sup>40</sup> For a more robust report of relevant immigration statistics, see William Finnegan, “Borderlines,” *The New Yorker*, 26 July 2010, accessed 18 October 2010, [http://www.newyorker.com/talk/comment/2010/07/26/100726taco\\_talk\\_finnegan](http://www.newyorker.com/talk/comment/2010/07/26/100726taco_talk_finnegan).



Someone told me this week: “A nation that does not protect its borders is not a Nation.” What is it going to take for the Arizona Governor to act as a governor—leader of the state—and deploy her National Guardsmen to the border with full orders to shoot to kill? Sounds harsh, huh? You can’t believe I said it or even thought it. But it is the right thing to do... Under Janet Napolitano, southern Arizona residents didn’t have a standing with the government. As a liberal and a Democrat, she would like you to live in a fantasy world where people coming across the border are just hard working people trying to be free and make a living. She was conditioned, as many of us were, that as Americans, people just want to be like us and therefore no real law is being broken.<sup>41</sup>

To ignorant and hateful folks like Margita, the US border represents the boundary line between the civilization of the rightfully privileged and the wasteland of the rightfully damned. But even among self-described liberals who take a less outwardly hostile stand, the contrived nature of the border as a marker indicating the extent of a historical progression of land theft from indigenous nations is rarely questioned, let alone recognized.

Physically and psychologically, the national border conveys the message that while “people just want to be like us,” the chosen nature of the American land and people ensures that not everyone can or should be allowed to inhabit New Canaan. Instead, space must be progressively demarcated from nation-states down to the level of individual property through the application of a rule of law which, in addition to materially restructuring ecological processes and lifescapes, also symbolically restructures human relationships with those spaces. Viewed from this angle, the conditions surrounding the construction, expansion, and patrolling of border fences along the southern US border in

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<sup>41</sup> Lena Margita, “Protecting Arizona” *Our Life in America* (blog), 24 April 2010, accessed 18 October 2010, <http://lenamargita.com/?p=24>.

last decade can be understood as somewhat analogous to those surrounding railroads on the central Plains in the mid-1800's. In both cases, the material and symbolic restructuring of the landscape enhanced the positions of relatively privileged persons while undermining the basic survival of marginalized ones.<sup>42</sup> Further, in both cases this violent and artificial restructuring was directed through a partnership of elites in government, the military, and the private sector and fueled by the national fixation on controlling the space designated as the promised land.

*B. Terra Nullius ("Uninhabited Land")*

The "border wars" of the early 2000's and the "Indian wars" of a century and a half earlier bear a further similarity. At least in the account of the master narrative, the regions with which these events were primarily associated—the deserts of southwest US and the Great Plains, respectively—were portrayed mainly as empty spaces devoid of life. Or more precisely, they were portrayed as being devoid of the advanced sort of life represented by Western civilization, the only sort of life with inherent value. Paradoxically, from the earliest days of European invasion the American landscape has been simultaneously praised as both a promised land teeming with all manner of

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<sup>42</sup> In the case of the Plains, the construction of railroads impacted Indian nations such as the Lakota in lasting ways. One of the most significant impacts involved the decimation of the great buffalo herds with which these nations existed in a complex interdependence. The railroad lines artificially broke up buffalo migration zones and impeded ecosystems, while the increasing numbers of White invaders they transported decimated the remaining herd fragments and settled on the best Indian lands. Deliberately encouraged by official government policy, the resulting combination of ecocide and genocide shaped the contemporary character of the Great Plains. See Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Cambridge: South End), 139-166; and Winona LaDuke, *The Winona LaDuke Reader: A Collection of Essential Writings* (Stillwater, MN: Voyageur, 2002), 158-165.

abundance and a *terra nullius* or gaping void in which the particulars of a new world order could be written. Each image complements the Exceptionalist import of the other—while the promised land image emphasizes the blessings bestowed by god on his chosen people, the image of *terra nullius* stresses the duty of this people to fill up the empty space with its presence and gifts. Recalling the biblical maxim that “Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more,”<sup>43</sup> these images nudge spatial cognition in line with explicit Christian references to divine favor and consent and characterize the American experiment in terms of ultimate earthly and metaphysical consequence.

The image of *terra nullius*—or uninhabited, unspoiled land—has thus represented a predominant force in the dominant cultural imagination. The strength of this force can be measured not only by its effects in shaping how Americans *do* think of the historical process by which they came to inhabit the land, but also how they *do not* think of it. The following passage from R.L. Bruckberger’s 1959 work entitled *Images of America* helps to illustrate this claim:

What did these settlers find in America that so captivated them? Their delight lay in finding nothing. They had to start afresh, on a continent they could not measure, among primitive, nomadic tribes against whom they would soon have to fight. The land they came to was stern, rockbound, thick with forests that added to its strangeness; the climate was extreme in heat and cold. They had to clear the forest, plow and plant the soil, stand continual guard to protect their crops and their families against the Indians. Suddenly these men from the Old World were rediscovering the call for that elementary, simple heroism which had marked the dawn of civilization. In that solitude, in that hostile wilderness, every man stood alone facing God, facing a cruel nature that had to be mastered, facing the daily

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<sup>43</sup> Luke 12:48 (New American Bible translation).

need for subsistence and security. No man could depend on anything but his own hands. The settlers had to begin anew, as though they stood at the threshold of history. They had to be priests, soldiers, and producers for the society they were building on virgin soil.<sup>44</sup>

Far from acknowledging the colonization of America as a violent conquest of whole societies and an illegal theft of occupied land, Bruckberger waxes poetic about the heroic perseverance of the White men who built a nation out of nothing through their own blood, sweat, and tears. These prototypical Horatio Algiers are pictured as heroes, not butchers or frauds. Further, while Bruckberger does at least mention the presence of Indian peoples, he does so only to amplify the sense of triumph over vanquished obstacles.<sup>45</sup>

Bruckberger's comments also expose an important association between the *terra nullius* image and the container image-schema. Through this association, the land has come to be conceptualized as a container which the American civilization has filled up over time. However, in order for the container to be filled, it first needed to be emptied of anything that might complicate the advancement of this civilization. The presence of significantly populated and highly organized indigenous nations certainly posed a major complication. These nations needed to be erased for European settlement to be viable and validated. Tangibly, erasure has been pursued through a multifaceted process of genocide

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<sup>44</sup> R.L. Bruckberger, *Images of America: a Political, Industrial, and Social Portrait* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2009), 12.

<sup>45</sup> Upon reading such a portrayal, we might presume that Bruckberger had grown up steeped in the American master narrative. In actuality, however, Bruckberger was a French Dominican priest whose direct experience in the country amounted to only eight years of residence. To have come away with such a quintessentially Exceptionalist outlook, we can assume the good Frenchman did not spend much time in dialogue with Indian folks during his stay.

that has decimated entire peoples and left those who remain to fight for the survival of their cultures and livelihoods. This tangible erasure has been accompanied by symbolic erasures as well. For example, as Indians have been linked to the biblical Canaanites through the promised land image, their rights to land and life have been classified as forfeit. Alone, however, this justification leaves uncomfortable room for doubt. More fundamentally, the integrity, sophistication, and very existence of pre-contact Indian societies have been expunged from the official historical record through the portrayal of the land as empty and unclaimed. For if virtually no people subsisted here before White folks arrived—and if those that did were relatively primitive and malevolent—no genocide could possibly have occurred.<sup>46</sup>

Consequently, the *terra nullius* image protects faith in Exceptionalism by promoting a profound repression of the historical relationship between Americans and the land. This cognitive image was propagated by many of the earliest European invaders, including especially Christopher Columbus. In Stephen Greenblatt's examination of this most famous (or infamous) of invaders, Columbus's awareness of the utterly ridiculous premise behind this image is made plain:

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<sup>46</sup> These symbolic erasures correspond with the dichotomous characterization of the human species historically recognized in the West. George M. Frederickson explains: "There were two crucial distinctions which allowed Europeans of the Renaissance and Reformation period to divide the human race into superior and inferior categories. One was between Christian and heathen and the other between 'civil' and 'savage.' The first reflected the religious militancy nurtured by the long and bitter struggle for supremacy in the Mediterranean between Christian and Islamic civilizations." The second was informed by "'Aristotle's doctrine that some people are 'natural slaves'" and illustrated in Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda's argument that slavery was the natural condition of "'persons of both inborn rudeness and of inhuman and barbarous customs.' [Sepúlveda] argued that civilized men are the 'natural lords' of such savages, and that if the latter 'refuse this overlordship, they may be forced to obey by arms and may be warred against as justly as one would hunt down wild beasts.'" See *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (New York: Oxford University, 1982), 9.

...it is difficult to believe that Columbus is unaware of these infelicities, for he knows very well that these are *not* uninhabited territories; indeed he notes that they have an immense population—*gente sin número*. It might have been possible to argue that these numberless people were so barbarous that they had no rights—the argument was made repeatedly in the sixteenth century and beyond—but Columbus does not do so and would probably have resisted the suggestion, since he wishes to believe that he has arrived in the ‘Indies’ and hence he must assume that he is in the outlying regions of a great empire, ultimately under the control of the Grand Khan. And he recognizes almost at once that even here, on these small islands with their naked inhabitants living in tiny hamlets and appearing to share everything, there is a political and social order of some kind.<sup>47</sup>

As Columbus’s own diaries admit, the lands in which he arrived were anything but desolate and untouched. Yet in spite of this awareness (or perhaps due to it, depending on how Columbus’s intentions are conceived), the great “discoverer” of America went forward with formal rituals of possession which were designed to establish sovereign control over unclaimed space. These rituals were designed to satisfy the requirements of international law as established and recognized by the European powers.

Perhaps the most revealing of these rituals involved a verbal pronouncement uttered in the Spanish tongue. Discussing the significance of this pronouncement, Greenblatt continues:

According to medieval concepts of natural law, uninhabited territories become the possession of the first to discover them. We might say that Columbus’s formalism tries to make the new lands uninhabited—*terrae nullius*—by emptying out the category of the other. The other exists only as an empty sign, a cipher. Hence there can be no contradiction to the proclamation from anyone on the islands themselves, because only linguistic competence, the ability to understand and to speak, would enable one to fill in the sign. There is, of course, a whole multinational culture—the Europe from which Columbus has come—that has this competence and could both understand and dispute the claimed possession, but

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<sup>47</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University Of Chicago, 1992), 65

then this culture is not in the right place at the right time. When the moment arrived to contradict the proclamation, those who could contradict it were absent, and all subsequent claims will be forever belated and thus invalid...I said at the outset that Columbus's words—'And there I found very many islands filled with people innumerable, and of them all I have taken possession for their highnesses'—were empty place-holders for the unknown and unimaginable. We could call this quality of the words their *open formalism*, since it is precisely their formal vacancy (a set of blanks that have not yet been filled in) that makes possible the imperial indeterminacy of the claim to possession. But now we find that this openness is itself the effect of an underlying *closed formalism*, since the ritual of possession itself precludes the intervention (or even the understanding) of those who, the ceremony implicitly acknowledges, are most likely to object.<sup>48</sup>

By emptying out the category of the other, Columbus fabricates the conditions required by legal precepts such as the doctrine of discovery for conquest to be legitimized.

Further, he confirms the supremacy of his own deep cultural assumptions by exploiting what amount to empty ritual structures that automatically disqualify the participation of alternative perspectives. This disqualification occurs through the use of basic cultural tools such as language and symbolism which had long been embedded in the Western ideas of law and government.

Although *terra nullius* was not explicitly designated as a mechanism of international law until the early twentieth century, its roots reach back much deeper into colonial histories. The emergence of this cognitive image can be found in philosophical traditions of natural law which go back at least to the time of the Roman Empire.<sup>49</sup> For

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<sup>48</sup> Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*, 60.

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Fitzmaurice describes the deep embeddedness of notions of natural law in Western culture, stating: "[it] was not a formal or institutional system of law but a philosophy or, more accurately, a mentality. It informed the formal legal system at the same time that it informed and reflected Europeans' thinking more generally about their relations to each other and the wider world." "The Genealogy of Terra Nullius," *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 129 (2007): 2. For additional discussion of the relationship

example, the *Institutes of Justinian* (circa 535 CE) speak directly to the connections between possession and natural law, stating:

Now things become the property of individuals in many ways: for of some things ownership arises by natural law which, as we have said is called the law of nations, and of others at civil law. It is more convenient to start with the older law and, obviously, the older law is natural law which the nature of things introduced with humankind itself...Hence, wild animals, birds, and fish, i.e. all animals born on land or in the sea or air, as soon as they are caught by anyone, forthwith fall into his ownership by the law of nations: for what previously belonged to no one is, by natural reason, accorded to its captor.<sup>50</sup>

Clearly implied in this statement are beliefs regarding a rigid anthropocentrism in which humans are “naturally” endowed with the right to control and possess other types of entities, spaces, and objects. But whereas this hierarchy is portrayed by the *Institutes* and the legal systems they have influenced as entirely organic and therefore universal and immutable, it more accurately embodies a cultural construction which emerged out of a specific historical trajectory and field of power. We must be careful not to discount either the politico-economic or religious motivations at play in development of natural law, for by the time of Justinian’s rule Roman society was marked by stark stratification and the rapid expansion of Christianity.<sup>51</sup>

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between *terra nullius* and natural law, see: Christopher Tomlins, *Law, Labor, and Civic Identity in Colonizing English America, 1580-1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2010), especially 113-120.

<sup>50</sup> J.A.C. Thomas, ed., *The Institutes of Justinian* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1975), Book 2, i, 11-12.

<sup>51</sup> For further information on the social and politico-economic context of the Roman Empire in this time period, see generally Margaret Atkins and Robin Osborne, eds. *Poverty in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006); George Herring, *Introduction to the History of Christianity* (New York: New York University, 2006); and Stephen Mitchell, *A History of the Later Roman Empire: AD 284-641* (Malden: Blackwell, 2007).



Buoyed by the substantial clout of natural law, the image of *terra nullius* rose to an entirely new level of influence by the dawn of the European colonial era. In fact, its employment came to represent a chief tactic in a particularly effective and nefarious strategy of conquest and profit. Coming into contact with distinctive but considerably advanced indigenous societies in the Americas, White invaders could have chosen to engage in a spirit of mutual recognition and learning—a possibility often overlooked by historians. But instead, they overwhelmingly chose to engage in a quest for politico-economic gain which drove seekers of fame, fortune, and comfort to cross the sea and quickly abandon cooperative endeavors in favor of exploitive ones.<sup>52</sup> To self-justify these endeavors, invaders needed simply to follow the familiar patterns of spatial cognition encoded in their deep culture in order to empty out the category of the Other and open possession of the land to the first to lay claim. More specifically, by interpreting unfamiliar ways of thinking about and relating to space (and their accompanying forms of social organization) as violations of natural law, White invaders could designate Indian peoples as uncivilized and their lands as available for occupation.

Requiring a cognitive apparatus by which to distinguish “civilized” peoples whose lands were occupied from “uncivilized” peoples whose lands could be taken, proponents of colonialism found a ready and suitable option in the emerging notion of sovereignty.<sup>53</sup> Jérémie Gilbert explains this intellectual sleight of hand by stating:

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<sup>52</sup> Or as Memmi succinctly remarks, they chose to embark on “a voyage to an easier life.” *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, (Boston: Beacon, 1991), 3.

Behind the idea that indigenous communities could not “effectively” occupy their territory transpires the same legal fiction that was at the basis of *terra nullius*. Both are based on the discriminatory view that indigenous peoples are not politically and socially organized adequately under the criteria of international law to effectively occupy their own territories. Under the rule of effective occupation, indigenous territorial rights have been deliberately ignored on the same basis, i.e., that indigenous communities or nations are not “civilized” enough to occupy their lands and thus have no right of ownership.<sup>54</sup>

The chronologically contemporaneous and politico-economically related development of European colonial enterprises and the notions of supreme territorial authority should not be underappreciated. Legally articulated through the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, sovereignty has represented a principal means by which space has been conceived in domestic and international structures of law and governance for the last several centuries. Reflecting the emphasis on dichotomy present within the container image-schema, this notion has been used to effectively divide the world into two diametrically opposed categories—autonomous states vs. uninhabited lands. While recognized states enjoy full legal authority in the land they occupy, the rights of other groups over land remain nebulous at best.

Determined by the very actors who stood to benefit from its implementation, sovereignty has come to function as both a culturally subjective benchmark of civilization and a validation for the subjugation of non-Western peoples.<sup>55</sup> This function has proven

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<sup>53</sup> Building on a great deal of previous work, Dan Philpott succinctly defines sovereignty as “supreme authority within a territory.” *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University, 2001), 16.

<sup>54</sup> Jérémie Gilbert, *Indigenous Peoples’ Land Rights under International Law* (Ardslay: Transnational, 2006), 34-35.

especially potent in the American colonial context, where the US government has historically restricted expressions of Indian tribal sovereignty to the point where the value of term itself must be called into question.<sup>56</sup> Underscoring this point, Gilbert concludes:

Applied in this context the principle of *terra nullius* meant that any territory that was not under the jurisdiction of a State, in the sense defined by the actors of international law, was an empty territory. Therefore, at the time of the European colonization, most of the world was “legally” empty and free for conquest and occupation; legally the “new world” was “vacant.” In this sense, the concept of *terra nullius* was based on a fiction created by the colonial powers, enabling them to ignore indigenous peoples’ territorial rights and to acquire territory by simple occupation. This judicial fiction was used all over the world by European imperial colonizers at different stages of the history of colonization.<sup>57</sup>

By restructuring the globe symbolically through the notion of sovereignty, colonizing powers were able to change its character in significant ways. The extent of this change is

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<sup>55</sup> For these reasons Taiaiake Alfred calls on indigenous peoples to reject Western-centric strategies as inappropriate and stagnant, whether they promote sovereignty (conventional recognition of nation-statehood) or aboriginalism (submissive assimilation into imposed identities). Discussing the challenge of finding healing and effective alternative paths to self-determination from his own cultural perspective, Alfred concludes on a note of humorous yet biting sarcasm: “The authentic Onkwehonwe reaction to this has been diverse in terms of defining the ideal relationship of the Onkwehonwe nation and the state (there are varying approaches to the practical implementation of the nation-to-nation concept that underlies all Onkwehonwe ideas of coexistence). But Onkwehonwe are united in their demand of the Settler state a recognition of cultural diversity, political autonomy, collective identities and rights, legal pluralism, and indigenous forms of political representation. Yet they have run head-on into the fundamental reality of state sovereignty and the Western notion of power: control and monological thinking. Onkwehonwe ideas and complex, pluralistic beliefs are too complicated and difficult, it seems, for simple-minded Settler institutions and the elites who control them, who reduce the world into categories of us-versus-them and right-versus-wrong. Aboriginalism, with its roots in this dichotomizing essentialism, plays the perfect foil to Western mentality. Settlers can remain who and what they are, and injustice can be reconciled by the mere allowance of the Other to become one of Us. What higher reward or better future is there than to be finally recognized as achieving the status of a European?” *Wasáse: Indigenous Pathways of Actions and Freedom* (Peterborough: Broadview, 2005), 135.

<sup>56</sup> The restriction of tribal sovereignty was legally established through the so-called “Marshall Trilogy,” a series of three Supreme Court cases presided over by Chief Justice John Marshall: *Johnson v. M’Intosh* (1823), *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), and *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832). Also important is *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock* (1903), which was decided after Marshall’s death.

<sup>57</sup> Gilbert, *Indigenous Peoples’ Land Rights under International Law*, 27.

exhibited in D.K. Fieldhouse's oft-cited calculation that by the 1930's nearly 85% of the Earth's land surface had been, or was still, a European colony.<sup>58</sup>

With new spaces for colonization running short and increasingly vigorous liberation movements arising in many settings, the image of *terra nullius* has been increasingly directed inward as colonizing powers seek to consolidate control over disputed territories. In the contexts of North America, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere, this inward turn has contributed to the establishment of enduring systems of internal colonialism, described by Ward Churchill as:

the result of an especially virulent and totalizing socioeconomic and political penetration whereby the colonizing power quite literally swallows up contiguous areas and peoples, incorporating them directly into itself.<sup>59</sup>

Although the explicit negations of *terra nullius* have been repudiated in some recent academic and judicial work,<sup>60</sup> these reactionary efforts have done little to dislodge the abiding influence of the cognitive image or to repair the concrete systemic injustices with which it has been so intimately involved. Further, they have failed to upset deep cultural assumptions regarding the ultimate supremacy of American civilization, even among

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<sup>58</sup> D.K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Delacorte, 1967), 373.

<sup>59</sup> Ward Churchill, *Struggle for the Land: Native North American Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide, and Colonization* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2002), 25.

<sup>60</sup> For example, in its 1992 *Mabo v. Queensland* decision the High Court of Australia overturned the country's legal acknowledgement of *terra nullius*, calling it "a blight on the history of Western civilization as abhorrent of the legacy of slavery." While this conceptual repudiation was not actualized through a return of land to indigenous communities, it nevertheless set a standard that has so far been disregarded by the US courts. See Anthony J. Hall, *The American Empire and the Fourth World* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 2003), 31; and Fitzmaurice, "The Genealogy of Terra Nullius," especially 12-15.

those who concede some of the more sordid aspects of its past expansion and present condition.

### *C. Frontier Wilderness*

At a gathering of historians held to coincide with the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Illinois, a young University of Wisconsin professor named Frederick Jackson Turner introduced the image of frontier wilderness as the centerpiece of his lecture on the development of American cultural identity. Turner would continue to develop this "frontier thesis" through his career until it eventually came to represent, in the words of John Mack Faragher, "the single most influential piece of writing in the history of American history."<sup>61</sup> Illustrating the meaning behind this image, Turner proclaims:

Up to our own day American history has been in large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous repression, and the advancement of American settlement westward, explain American development. Behind institutions, behind constitutional forms and modifications, lie the vital forces that call these organs to life and shape them to meet changing conditions. The peculiarity of American institutions is, the fact that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people – to the changes involved in crossing a continent, in winning a wilderness, and in developing at each area of this progress out of the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier the complexity of city life... Thus American development has exhibited not merely advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line, and a new development for that area. American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous

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<sup>61</sup> John Mack Faragher, "Introduction: A Nation Thrown Back Upon Itself," in *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" and Other Essays*, by Frederick Jackson Turner, ed. John Mack Faragher (New Haven: Yale University, 1999), 1.

touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character.<sup>62</sup>

Although Turner was certainly not the first to frame American history as an ongoing encounter with frontier wilderness, his thesis embodies the most comprehensive and prominent presentation of this argument.<sup>63</sup> As this thesis maintains, it has been in the continual conquering of frontiers that the unparalleled American character has been forged. Embodying the best of Old World civilization and New World primitivism, this character has generated a fundamentally new type of nation which epitomizes the height of human evolution. Such a process of evolutionary advance has occurred through a continual penetration and transformation of “wild” spaces which by definition have been utterly lacking in order, purpose, or occupancy. At first, the encounter with these spaces threatens to overwhelm the White settler due to both the inhospitableness of the environment and the settler’s own inherited predisposition to luxury. However, over time the settler’s superior intellect and stout heart allow him (notably, settlers are nearly always identified as male in dominant accounts), to subdue the wilderness by resolving

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<sup>62</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1920), 2-3

<sup>63</sup> Harold P. Simonson notes, “The Wisconsin historian Frederick Jackson Turner was not the first American to call attention to the frontier. The concept goes back to the early seventeenth-century journals of William Byrd, William Bradford, and John Winthrop, back to the time when America’s frontier was the lush Carolina hills and the rock-bound New England coast. It goes back to Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, whose *Letters from an American Farmer*, published in 1793, announced that on the American frontier “individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men”; or back to less enthusiastic observers who, like Timothy Dwight of Yale, associated the frontier with unlettered bumpkins. Regardless of viewpoint, Americans acknowledged a frontier early in their history.” *Beyond the Frontier: Writers, Western Regionalism, and a Sense of Place* (Fort Worth: TCU, 1989), 16.

himself to the task at hand, developing a greater toughness of mind and body, and adapting innovative survival strategies.

According to this thesis, while Americans share the civilized attributes of Europeans, they slowly surpassed their counterparts over the course of their westward advance across the continent. This surpassing occurred in part due to the experience of emulating, eventually replacing, the peoples indigenous to the land. Turner asserts:

The frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. It puts him in the log cabin of the Cherokee and Iroquois and runs an Indian palisade around him. Before long he has gone to planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick; he shouts the war cry and takes the scalp in orthodox Indian fashion. In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so he fits himself into the Indian clearings and follows the Indian trails. Little by little he transforms the wilderness, but the outcome is not the old Europe... The fact is, that here is a new product that is American.<sup>64</sup>

In the experience of the wilderness the delicate, pampered European settler becomes transformed into a new American creature, as solid and resilient as the wood which he cuts down. He is reborn as a sort of hybridized *übermensch* with the power to survive within, change, and eventually dominate any environment in which he finds himself. But unlike in Friedrich Nietzsche's formulation where this unprecedented creature develops firmly in the here-and-now, the American superman articulated by Turner emerges at the

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<sup>64</sup> Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 4.

apex of a historical trajectory which has been divinely instituted from the beginning of time.<sup>65</sup>

“Like the steady growth of a complex nervous system for the originally simple, inert continent,” the transformation of frontier wilderness is commonly assumed today to have enhanced not only the character of the people who transformed it, but also the quality of the space itself.<sup>66</sup> The master narrative eulogizes the ability of Indian peoples to have survived in supposedly unforgiving places, while simultaneously characterizing these abilities more as the result of animalistic instincts than intellectual reasoning. In doing so, it devalues the knowledges and lifeways of Indian peoples and relegates their existence to the past. Further, it establishes an implicit contrast with the traits allegedly instilled in Americans through the conquering of the frontier, described by Turner as:

That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom. . .<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Turner understood the processes of building civilization, spreading Christianity, expanding capitalism, and supporting democracy as clearly interrelated. Further, he portrayed their development in the American context as a direct fulfillment of the divine will. For example, writing of the settlement of the Ohio Valley he states: “Let us hope that its old love of democracy may endure, and that in this section, where the first trans-Alleghany pioneers struck blows at the forests, there may be brought to blossom and to fruit the ripe civilization of a people who know that whatever the glories of prosperity may be, there are greater glories of the spirit of man; who know that in the ultimate record of history, the place of the Ohio Valley will depend upon the contribution which her people and her leaders make to the cause of an enlightened, a cultivated, a God-fearing and free, as well as a comfortable, democracy.” *The Frontier in American History, 175-176*. In contrast, Nietzsche professes, “I love those who do not first seek beyond the stars for reasons to go down and be sacrifices: but who sacrifice themselves to the earth, that the earth may one day belong to the Superman.” *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin, 1961), 44.

<sup>66</sup> Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 15.



Such a description of character has come to be taken for granted by many Americans over time. Yet it remains intimately tied to a problematic way of thinking of the land that is actually more temporal than spatial in nature. As a cognitive image engrained in deep culture, frontier wilderness conveys a message that is primarily about a self-serving view of history, not an authentic relationship with place.<sup>68</sup>

Further, in keeping with wider patterns of spatial cognition, the image of frontier wilderness functions to obscure the systems of privilege that have distinguished American cultural identity from its beginnings. Even in colonial New England, this image was already providing symbolic justification for the colonial project in both politico-economic and spiritual terms. As Sacvan Bercovitch notes, the Puritan conceptualization of their mission as an errand into the wilderness immediately imbued the land with a meaning that was concurrently “literal and eschatological,” “secular and sacred,” and “historical [and] prophetic.”<sup>69</sup> In their sermons and writings, figures such as Samuel

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<sup>67</sup> Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 37.

<sup>68</sup> Or as Turner affirms, “Thus the advance of the frontier has meant a steady movement away from the influence of Europe, a steady growth of independence on American lines. And to study this advance, the men who grew up under these conditions, and the political, economic, and social results of it, is to study the really American part of our history.” *The Frontier in American History*, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, 15. Putting these phrases in context, Bercovitch writes: “The newness of New England becomes both literal and eschatological, and (in what was surely the most far-reaching of these rhetorical effects) the American *wilderness* takes on the double significance of secular and sacred place. If for the individual believer it remained part of the wilderness of the world, for God’s “peculiar people” it was a territory endowed with special symbolic import, like the wilderness through which the Israelites passed to the promised land. In one sense it was historical, in another sense prophetic; and as Nicholas Noyes explained, in a sermon on the errand three decades after Danforth’s, “Prophesie is Historie antedated; and Historie is Postdated Prophesie: the same thing is told in both” (emphasis original).

Danforth and Richard Mather make this meaning clear: once more, god's chosen people must overcome the wilderness in order to discharge the divine will.<sup>70</sup> This conceptualization set the stage for future iterations like Turner's thesis by portraying frontier wilderness as a dangerous yet necessary space in which courage was forged, democracy fostered, and freedom expanded. It also made its way directly into the master narrative; but as with most aspects of this narrative, a closer examination exposes the deceptive nature of such a perspective.

Despite common assumptions to the contrary, the theocratic elite of the New England colonies harbored no more intentions of establishing politico-economic justice and social equality *within* their communities than they did *between* their communities and neighboring Indian nations. Perry Miller illustrates:

Hence, for a student of New England and of America, it is a fact demanding incessant brooding that John Winthrop selected as the "doctrine" of his discourse, and so as the basic proposition to which, it then seemed to him, the errand was committed, the thesis that God had disposed mankind in a hierarchy of social classes, so that "in all times some must be rich, some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignity; others mean and in subjection." It is as though, preternaturally sensing what the promise of America might come to signify for the rank and file, Winthrop took the precaution to drive out of their heads any notion

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<sup>70</sup> To early Puritan settlers, the promised land image was linked directly to the notion of a frontier wilderness. Avihu Zakai illustrates this linkage: "'Is not the way to Canaan through the wilderness?' asked Richard Mather. 'Doubtless,' he continues, 'through the wilderness you must go, if ever you will come to Canaan.' By its very definition in ecclesiastical history, the wilderness represents an intermediate zone between Egypt and the Land of Promise; it is, therefore, an essential part of the Exodus type of religious migration. Consequently, Puritans in America identified their migration with Exodus, claiming 'God hath dealt with us as with the people of Israel; we are brought out of a fat land into the wilderness.' So powerful was this image of migration to America as an exodus that even during the time of the Puritan Revolution in England, some Puritans in New England warned against going back to England as a return to Egypt. "'Will you be gone back to Egypt,' Cotton admonished his brethren in Boston, New England. And he warned them that return to England, or Egypt, means that 'you must worship the beast or the image of the beast.'" *Exile and Kingdom*, 66.

that in the wilderness the poor and mean were ever so to improve themselves as to mount above the rich or eminent in dignity.<sup>71</sup>

In accepting and enforcing the belief that hierarchy naturally arises within and among societies, Winthrop prefigured a predisposition which would later come to be persistent (if often expressed in more secular terms) in the dominant culture. The errand into the wilderness may have been marketed as an effort to improve humanity in the abstract, but it was certainly never intended to bring all individuals to a more equivalent standing in any tangible sense. Even if the experience of the land did tend to encourage more cooperative or egalitarian attitudes, events such as the Pequot Massacre and Salem Witch Trials quickly established the commitment of colonial elites to protecting systems of privilege.

In keeping with this understanding, no analysis of the frontier wilderness image would be complete without an acknowledgement of the gender dynamics at play within it. The actual roles assumed by women across the course of American westward expansion can only be described as diverse and complex.<sup>72</sup> Yet as Annette Kolodny and others reveal, such diversity and complexity are startlingly underrepresented and tellingly camouflaged in primary (male) accounts of this expansion. While prevailing tales about this expansion tend to ignore or misrepresent the lives of actual women, nearly all

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<sup>71</sup> Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1956), 4-5.

<sup>72</sup> For a few vital discussions of these roles, see Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), especially 48-54; Patricia Nelson Limerick, *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), especially 70-73; and Sandra Wilson Smith, "Frontier Androgyny: An Archetypal Female Hero in the Adventures of Daniel Boone," *Journal of American Studies* 44, no. 2 (2010): 269-286.

integrate a feminine presence as a central character. This character is the land itself. Consistently referenced through the use of feminine pronouns such as “she” and “her,” the land is rendered primarily as a passive female entity which male settlers must endure and subdue.<sup>73</sup> The feminization of the land thus simultaneously reveals the deeper anxiety and appetite of the colonizer personality. For while frontier wilderness is typically conceptualized as “wild” (chaotic, dangerous, overpowering, etc.) in the master narrative, it is also conceptualized as “virgin” (untainted, submissive, innocuous, etc.).

Kim Marra describes the development of this dual conceptualization of feminine character:

Premised on the classical (Aristotelian) paradigm that gendered male the active, ordering principle, and gendered female the chaotic, primitive matter for the male principle to work upon, this discursive tradition made woman the alpha and omega of American individual and national transformation. The white, European pioneer escaped a tyrannical motherland to seek freedom and fortune in a wilderness figured as a woman’s body ripe for possession. [Kolodny] suggests the image of virgin land may have been formulated to diffuse the emasculating specter of terrible nature, awesome and beautiful, but also “dark, uncharted, and prowled by howling beasts.” She argues more centrally, however, that a vexing ambivalence inhered in the abundance of the virgin land itself. Approaching her as a mistress, the pioneer, through the penetration of settlement, turned her into a mother, inducing regeneration and extracting nurturance and riches, but at the same time reconstellating archaic male fears of maternal power in a New World context. The threat of emasculation posed by constructions of either a “savage” wilderness or an immolating maternal plentitude fueled increasingly aggressive male assertions of control over both feminine nature and actual women, coupled with growing nostalgia for lost paradise.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> See Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1975).

<sup>74</sup> Kim Marra, “Taming America as Actress: Augustin Daly, Ada Rehan, and the Discourse of Imperial Frontier Conquest,” in *Performing America: Cultural Nationalism in American Theater*, ed. Jeffrey D. Mason and J. Ellen Gainor (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1999), 54-55.

While Marra astutely identifies the philosophical background of this gendered paradigm, she fails to distinguish how the paradigm came to be extended in religious terms. The stark division between an active male principle and passive female matter may have emerged in Greek thought, but it was in Christian tradition that the wild and virgin aspects of feminine character came to be formulated.

For example, shifting accounts of female martyrdom expose how this dual conceptualization served to support the patriarchal culture of the West. As Hanne Blank notes, until relatively late in Christian history woman martyrs were most often portrayed as “spiritual superheroines” who were chaste in sexuality, yet “mad, bad, and dangerous” in overall personality. However, over time the memory of these complex figures was deliberately altered so that “The disruptive, mouthy, dangerous, and even deadly virgin rebels of the early Church [were] harnessed and brought to heel as quiet, self-effacing lambs.”<sup>75</sup> Since stories about powerful female ancestors posed a substantial threat to patriarchal control over the lucrative land holdings and politico-economic endeavors of the church—especially as colonial profit machines began to operate—they were unsurprisingly targeted for revision. As the suppression of the memory of dead women was supplemented by the suppression of the power of living women, a clear moral message about gender was promoted: the wild aspect of the feminine character must be conquered by men so that the virgin aspect can be rightfully enjoyed. This message was

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<sup>75</sup> Hanne Blank, *Virgin: The Untouched History* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), 160.

quite easily superimposed on the colonial experience of both land and Other in order to sanction continued White male domination.

Such superimposition is reflected in the real and imagined relationships that have developed historically between American Indian women and White men. First, Indian women have often been depicted as passive, innocent victims whose virginal nature has been corrupted by primitive politico-economic and religious systems built upon coercion, tyranny, and superstition. As illustrated in the writings of figures such as Thomas Jefferson, this depiction has been harnessed to validate efforts to subdue Indian nations (and take their lands) in the interest of saving them from hell and liberating them from themselves.<sup>76</sup> It also inspired what Albert Hurtado calls the “time honored” custom in many frontier zones of White men taking Indian women as wives. This custom was certainly fueled in part by stereotypes regarding the submissive, hard-working, and chaste

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<sup>76</sup> From Jefferson’s perspective, a vital measurement of civilization involved the presence or absence of a cult of domesticity. A preoccupation with proper and acceptable gender relations enveloped early American society, and remains vigorous today. Evidence of this preoccupation can be found throughout the writings of Jefferson and many other citizens and elites. Brian Steele describes the “natural” and “rational” connections observed among domesticity, civilization, and equality: “For Jefferson, then, the natural equality of women as women was a signpost of civilization, which apparently entailed the removal of all the artificial hierarchies and shackles that prevented men and women from achieving their highest natural potential. In Jefferson’s view, the dawning of civilization would produce proper gender roles, and the practice of proper gender roles would produce civilized people. In his implicit reasoning, gender roles—especially the status of women—became both sign and cause of relative standing in the hierarchy of peoples. If ‘civilization alone’ granted women their natural equality and if such equality for women guaranteed their domesticity, then civilization could be measured by the extent of women’s domestication. The corollary might also be true: Corruption in a society might be measured in part by women’s power and activity in the public sphere, whether this took the form of hard labor, as in Indian communities, or, as he discovered in France, political engagement and sexual license. Jefferson’s underlying assumption, then, was that civilization could be recognized where people expressed natural gender roles.” See “Thomas Jefferson’s Gender Frontier,” *Journal of American History* 95, no. 1 (2008): 22.

nature of Indian women. To White men, these women were often seen as little more than a means by which to satiate their various appetites. Hurtado explains:

Once the frontier era had passed, male pioneers and their biographers often extolled their heroic exploits while politely forgetting to mention the Indian women who baked their bread and bore their children. Yet they often sneeringly divulged the sexual adventures of other fellows who crossed the color line.<sup>77</sup>

Such sneering attitudes highlight a second major depiction of Indian women, one which has coexisted with the first by further building upon a hypocritical upholding of Christian moral standards. In this second depiction, Indian women have been represented as precarious and mendacious Jezebels with a penchant for leading honorable White men astray through sexual temptation, rebellious action, and demonic religion. In addition to obscuring the actual diversity and integrity of Indian women, this conceptualization has aided in the repression of the violence of the colonial process. Many, if not most, Indian societies are characterized by traditional emphases on matrilinearity, matrilocality, strong female leadership, and a deep respect for the various roles of women—a fact entirely obscured by this conceptualization.<sup>78</sup> Further, countless accounts demonstrate how White men have routinely forced rape, communal fragmentation, and religious conversion upon Indian women, not the other way around. Yet by labeling these women as “squaws”—a misogynistic and offensive term which references female genitalia and implies an innate debasement—White colonizers could more easily rationalize not only the daily operation

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<sup>77</sup> Albert L. Hurtado, *Intimate Frontiers: Sex, Gender, and Culture in Old California* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1999), 41.

<sup>78</sup> For a critically important presentation of female leadership in relation to one indigenous context, see Barbara A. Mann, *Iroquoian Women: The Gantowisas* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000).

of their oppressive systems but also the mass murder committed at places like Sand Creek, Wounded Knee, and many others.<sup>79</sup> Whereas the depiction of Indian women as submissive virgins has embodied a projection of White male appetite, the depiction of Indian women as wild harlots has embodied a projection of White male anxiety.<sup>80</sup>

These patterns persist today, and are mirrored in a variety of related symbolic representations. The attribution of feminine character to beings or places that stand in the way of White male hegemony serves to justify the ongoing exploitation, assault, and disregard of women, non-White men, homosexual and transgender persons, certain types of animals, and of course the land itself. Accordingly, such attribution is given form through the force-barrier image-schema. In the master narrative, American history

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<sup>79</sup> Further exposing the dual conceptualization of gender imposed upon Indian women, several commentators contrast the label of “squaw” with the label of “princess.” Daniel Francis explains, “Opposed to the princess was the *squaw*, an anti-Pocahontas. Where the princess was beautiful, the squaw was ugly, even deformed. Where the princess was virtuous, the squaw was debased, immoral, a sexual convenience. Where the princess was proud, the squaw lived a squalid life of servile toil, mistreated by her men. Non-Native writers described Indian women hanging around the margins of White settlement, drinking and prostituting themselves. This stereotype of the Indian woman as a low, sexual commodity—a ‘bit of brown’ as the fur trade governor George Simpson put it—became increasingly common as Native people were pushed to the fringes of White settlement, neglected and powerless.” *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp, 1992), 122. Dagmar Wernitznig adds, “Unlike ‘princess,’ the term ‘squaw’ is still widely used, even by ‘friends’ of the Indian, without being aware of its misogynistic connotation.” *Going Native or Going Naïve? White Shamanism and the Neo-Noble Savage* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2003) 11.

<sup>80</sup> David Spurr writes, “With the expansion of knowledge into those parts of the world which traditionally had served as places of savagery and wildness for the European imagination, [Hayden] White sees a progressive despatialization of the concept of wildness, with a compensatory process of psychic interiorization... Here I would argue that modern colonial discourse has produced a despatialization of the savage, or that it at least maintains, on the level of ideology, a projection of an anxiety onto the racial and cultural Other that has always been part of the human imagination. The contributions of psychoanalytic theory, moreover, suggest that the interiorization of savagery does not simply replace a concept of the savage as *out there*, but rather takes place simultaneously with a process of symbolic elaboration that objectifies savagery, wildness, and animality in other human beings.” *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (Durham: Duke University, 1993), 77 (emphasis original).



becomes twisted into a legendary tale of daring individual settlers conquering a progression of frontier wilderness spaces en route to fulfilling their destiny to possess and control the land. On the one hand, these spaces are understood as wild, dark, and anarchic morasses to which the light of civilization must be brought. On the other, they are considered as unsullied but receptive virginal zones that must be penetrated and made to assume their proper subservient role. But as the tale makes clear, the barriers they embody always have been and will be overcome by the force present in the settlers' own determined and sometimes necessarily violent efforts to follow the omnipotent will that backs their agenda. Such is the power of deep culture that even when this cognitive image is not consciously acknowledged, it continues to shape thought in powerful ways among the privileged and the marginalized alike.

By promoting a widespread disorientation to space, the frontier wilderness image functions as a flexible mechanism by which faith in Exceptionalism is supported. In the process, it helps to conceal the more unappealing aspects of conquest that could call into question the integrity of the nation and the authenticity of its guiding values. This enduring function is described eloquently by Patricia Nelson Limerick, who states:

...a presumption of innocence and exceptionalism is interwoven with the roots of frontier history, as Americans have understood it. The contrast becomes clearest when one thinks of a nation like South Africa. Europeans forcibly took South Africa from the natives, everyone understands, and the residents still struggle with the consequences. But the idea of the frontier permits the United States to make an appeal to innocence and exceptionalism: while South Africa underwent an invasion and a conquest, the United States had an expanding frontier of democracy, opportunity, and equality. The term "frontier" blurs the fact of conquest and throws a veil over the similarities between the story of American westward expansion and the planetary story of the expansion of European empires. Whatever meanings historians give the term, in popular culture it carries

a persistently happy affect, a tone of adventure, heroism, and even fun very much in contrast with the tough, complicated, and sometimes bloody and brutal realities of conquest. Under these conditions, the word “frontier” uses historians before historians can use it.<sup>81</sup>

Of course, it is not only historians who fall victim to the charms of this cognitive image. Rather, their malady is representative of the larger sense of unnatural innocence that is both intentionally crafted and involuntarily assumed in the cultural imagination. The longer this sense has persisted, the harder it has become to displace.

Far from being closed as Turner argued over a century ago, the frontier wilderness continues to operate (in the words of Limerick) as a “process, not a place,” wherein pockets of primitive savagery are superseded by the continuously expanding American civilization.<sup>82</sup> This process, which was originally embodied in White settlement across the continent, has found new life in efforts to spread American politico-economic hegemony across the globe. But as Guatemalans and Cherokees, Filipinos and Navajos, and Afghans and Lakotas can all testify, notions of “civilization” and “savagery” remain as culturally subjective and ideologically loaded today as they were in the days when the Mayflower supposedly landed upon Plymouth Rock.

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<sup>81</sup> Patricia Nelson Limerick, “The Adventures of the Frontier in the Twentieth Century,” in *The Frontier in American Culture*, by Richard White and Patricia Nelson Limerick, ed. James R. Grossman (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), 74-75.

<sup>82</sup> Referencing Superintendent of the Census Robert Percival Porter’s 1890 report regarding the disintegration of a coherent frontier line, Turner notes, “This brief official statement marks the closing of a great historical movement.” He then amends this view later in the same document, clarifying: “He would be a rash prophet who should assert that the expansive character of American life has now entirely ceased. Movement has been its dominant fact, and, unless this training has no effect upon a people, the American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise” *The Frontier in American History*, 1, 37. Also see Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest*, 26.

#### *D. City Upon A Hill*

Like the image of the promised land to which it is evocatively linked, the image of the city upon a hill derives originally from a biblical source. In a section of the gospel of Matthew that has come to known as the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus states:

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.<sup>83</sup>

Interpreting this passage through a commonly used hermeneutic, a few issues of critical import can be noted. First, by identifying the followers of Jesus as the “salt of the earth,” the passage reaffirms their chosen status while also highlighting the tenuousness of this status. Christians must take care not to “lose [their] taste”; in other words, they must remain faithful to the divine will or face god’s vengeance. Second, in order to honor this will Christian individuals and communities have a responsibility to make themselves a visible example to the rest of the world, i.e. those not included in the chosen fold. Finally, while these individuals and communities must expect their faithful example to involve hardship and attract persecution, they must work to prevent such obstacles from impeding their progress in spreading the god’s true message. By inducing outsiders to witness and

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<sup>83</sup> Matthew 5:12-16 (New American Bible translation).

hopefully adopt their ways of thinking and acting, Christians earn glory for their heavenly Father and great reward for themselves.

Although this passage can certainly be understood in diverse ways, there can be little doubt that the first Puritan settlers (or at least their theocratic leadership) interpreted it largely in the way presented above. Importantly, such an interpretation helped prevent these early settlers from developing realistic and meaningful relationships with the spaces and inhabitants they encountered by ensuring that they kept their focus firmly upon temporally-oriented, rather than spatially-grounded, concerns. Illustrating the import of this perspective through the notion of the Puritan “errand,” Miller asserts:

In this respect, therefore, we may say that the migration was running an errand...not so much for Jehovah as for history, which was the wisdom of Jehovah expressed through time. Winthrop was aware of this aspect of the mission—fully conscious of it. “For wee must Consider that wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are uppon us.” More was at stake than just one little colony. If we deal falsely with God, not only will He descend upon us in wrath, but even more terribly, He will make us “a story and a by-word through the world, wee shall open the mouthes of enemies to speake evill of the ways of god and all professours for Gods sake.” No less than John Milton was New England to justify God’s ways to man, though not, like him, in the agony and confusion of defeat but in the confidence of approaching triumph. This errand was being run for the sake of Reformed Christianity; and while the first aim was indeed to realize in America the due form of government, both civil and ecclesiastical, the aim behind that aim was to vindicate the most rigorous ideal of the Reformation, so that ultimately all Europe would imitate New England. If we succeed, Winthrop told his audience, men will say of later plantations, “the lord make it like that of New England.”...In America, he promised, we shall see, or may see, more of God’s wisdom, power, and truth “then formerly wee have beene acquainted with.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*, 11-12.

Some observers might be tempted to question whether Winthrop's call for building a city upon a hill, expressed more than three centuries ago, has retained its cultural currency over the course of history.<sup>85</sup> However, a perusal of political speeches and texts quickly and definitively indicates that if anything, the cultural currency of this image has grown over time. Without deviating significantly from the basic Puritan presentation, figures on the ideological left and right alike consistently employ the city upon a hill as a favorite rhetorical device. Among many others, some of the most well-known figures to invoke it in the public arena have included John Adams, Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton.<sup>86</sup> Examining its widespread usage in the campaign leading up to the 2004 presidential election, journalist Kimberly Winston characterized the phrase as a modern "political password" that "has burrowed so deeply into the American consciousness that some prominent religion scholars and pol-watchers say it is nearly obligatory during Presidential races."<sup>87</sup> Even Barack Obama, a figure whose perceived hostility to Exceptionalism led conservative commentators

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<sup>85</sup> Somewhat to my surprise, this very question was posed to me by the administrative committee of my academic program upon submitting the proposal for this dissertation.

<sup>86</sup> See Hans Zeiger, *Reagan's Children: Taking Back the City on the Hill* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006), 182.

<sup>87</sup> Kimberly Winston, "From Theological Tenet to Political Password," *Beliefnet*, January 2003, accessed 31 October 2010, <http://www.beliefnet.com/News/Politics/2004/02/From-Theological-Tenet-To-Political-Password.aspx?p=2>. Winston goes on to quote Charles Haynes, "a First Amendment scholar at the Freedom Forum in Arlington, VA," as stating: "I would argue...that it is almost impossible for a political candidate to win major office in this country without making his or her 'city on the hill' speech...Almost anyone who wants to lead the nation has to strike that chord to be taken seriously by the American people."

Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer to proclaim he was waging a “war on America,”<sup>88</sup> unequivocally affirmed the integrity of the image in a 2006 speech:

It was right here, in the waters around us, where the American experiment began. As the earliest settlers arrived on the shores of Boston and Salem and Plymouth, they dreamed of building a city upon a hill. And the world watched, waiting to see if this improbable idea called America would succeed. For over two hundred years, it has. Not because our dream has progressed perfectly. It hasn't. It has been scarred by our treatment of native peoples, betrayed by slavery, clouded by the subjugation of women, wounded by racism, shaken by war and depression. Yet, the true test of our union is not whether it's perfect, but whether we work to perfect it. Whether we recognize our failings, identify our shortcomings, and then rise to meet the challenges of our time.<sup>89</sup>

The words of this alleged enemy of America demonstrate the impressive staying power of the city upon a hill image in the face of shifting surface cultural preferences and trends. It remains flexible enough to absorb perceptions of the nation's various discrete failings and shortcomings yet durable enough to keep these perceptions from rupturing the overall unifying faith in Exceptionalism. In light of such a capacity, this cognitive image (along with the three others presented in this chapter) can be understood to function in deep culture not as a symbol in some generic sense, but rather as what Leander E. Keck calls a “tensive symbol.” Describing this term, Keck states:

Tensive symbols... function best when they are polyvalent, when they evoke multiple associations or images, and so embrace ambiguity and invite further thought; they appeal to the emotions as well as to the mind; they stimulate the

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<sup>88</sup> See Pamela Gellar and Robert Spencer, *The Post-American Presidency: The Obama Administration's War on America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010).

<sup>89</sup> Barack Obama, “Commencement Address,” (address given at the University of Massachusetts at Boston, Boston, MA, 2 June 2006), transcript presented by Paskorn Champrasert, *PC Blog*, 28 November 2008, accessed 31 October 2010 <http://blogs.umb.edu/paskornchamprase001/2008/11/28/remarks-of-senator-barack-obama-commencement-address-at-umass-boston>.

imagination and energize the will. Moreover, because a symbol in its native habitat evokes known images and associations even when it reconfigures them, it can be used effectively—without explanation—to modify common associations.<sup>90</sup>

As a tensive symbol, the city upon a hill is both already here and not yet perfected.<sup>91</sup> It merges spiritual and politico-economic affairs into a single historical timeline, thus bridging the gap between the Puritans' original reforming mission and more contemporary quests to eliminate terrorism and spread democracy and capitalism. Further, it reminds Americans that they are to understand themselves as set apart for the world to see, that what they do will be emulated by civilized nations and feared by barbaric ones.<sup>92</sup>

The influence of this message has only been enhanced as technological developments in transportation and communication have begotten an ever widening scope and ever quickening pace of attention. The globalization of capital has expanded

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<sup>90</sup> Leander E. Keck, *Who is Jesus? History in Perfect Tense* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 70. Keck follows Philip Wheelwright's definition of tensive symbols.

<sup>91</sup> The manner in which the city upon a hill image functions in American culture is thus related to the manner in which the kingdom of god image functions in Western Christian tradition. See Keck, *Who is Jesus?*, 110; and Tinker, *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), 51-52.

<sup>92</sup> Perry Miller explains: "The Puritans never intended that their holy experiment should eventuate in a conflict, let alone a contradiction, between the religious program and civil employments. They did not suppose that conditions in the New World would make it any more difficult than in the old for virtuous men to turn necessities into virtues: because—we cannot too often remind ourselves—they did not think of New England as being "new." It was going to be the old, familiar world of sin and struggle: it differed only in that it was vacant (except for a few Indians), that therein men might draw breath to resume the fight, at that moment discouraged in England, against sin and profligacy. This is what John Winthrop meant when, on the deck of the *Arabella*, he said we 'seeke out a place of Cohabitation and Consorteshipp vnder a due forme of Government both ciuill and ecclesiasticall.' The migration was no retreat from Europe: it was a flank attack. We are to be a city set upon a hill, the eyes of all the world upon us; what we succeed in demonstrating, Europe will be bound to imitate, even Rome itself. *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1983), 5.

America's politico-economic interests far beyond Europe, and related developments such as 9/11, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and global climate change have forced the nation to acknowledge a new range of spiritual, cultural, and ecological issues. Such developments are widely construed as necessitating that the city shine brighter and reach further than ever before, although exactly how such an abstract necessity should be pursued in concrete terms remains a hotly debated topic. Despite the debate, however, the prioritization of temporal concerns continues to eclipse increasingly critical spatial matters. This ongoing cultural pattern can be observed in a particularly instructive way through the operation of a notion that is closely tied to and sustained by the city upon a hill image—the notion of manifest destiny. While the term itself may have fallen out of vogue in recent years, the notion behind the term has lost no significance in the operation of the dominant culture.

Although the exact etiology of the term “manifest destiny” is somewhat unclear, it is certain that the central thrust of the notion was widely circulating within politico-economic and religious circles by at least the time of the Jefferson presidency.<sup>93</sup> In brief, manifest destiny originally described America's “relentless, predestined, and divinely inspired advance across the continent.”<sup>94</sup> But as the continent's frontiers came to be thought of as closed, new avenues for the nation's advance were sought. Robert Miller

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<sup>93</sup> See Robert D. Sampson, *John L. O'Sullivan and his Times* (Kent: Kent State University, 2003), xvii.

<sup>94</sup> Robert J. Miller, *Native America, Discovered and Conquered: Thomas Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, and Manifest Destiny* (Westport: Praeger, 2006): 2.



augments the term's original definition by noting that "historians have for the most part agreed that there are three basic themes to manifest destiny.

1. The special virtues of the American people and their institutions;
2. America's mission to redeem and remake the world in the image of America; and,
3. A divine destiny under God's direction to accomplish this wonderful task."<sup>95</sup>

This tripartite rationale represented the primary inspiration and justification behind many of the foundational historical moments lauded in the master narrative, such as the Louisiana Purchase, Lewis and Clark Expedition, Annexation of Texas, Mexican-American War, and Gadsden Purchase. However, the limits of its utility were not reached at the Pacific coastline. On the contrary, the notion of manifest destiny shapes many aspects of American domestic and foreign policy today, as the power of the shining city upon a hill is exerted over the territories of other nations both within (e.g. the Western Shoshone) and outside of (e.g. Pashtun Afghans) officially recognized borders.

One of the most overt and authoritative expressions of this notion was articulated by Albert J. Beveridge in a speech delivered to Congress at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Serving as a senator for the state of Indiana from 1899-1911, Beveridge was a vocal supporter of Theodore Roosevelt and an acclaimed historian who collected a Pulitzer Prize for his biographical portrait of Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall. Speaking specifically of one manifestation of manifest destiny—the American occupation

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<sup>95</sup> Miller, *Native America, Discovered and Conquered*, 120.

of the Philippines—Beveridge connected immediate politico-economic circumstances with a much deeper vision of cultural identity:

Mr. President, this question is deeper than any question of party politics, deeper than any question of the isolated policy of our country, even; deeper even than any question of constitutional power. It is elemental. It is racial. God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns. He has given us the spirit of progress to overwhelm the forces of reaction throughout the earth. He has made us adepts in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples. Were it not for such a force as this the world would relapse into barbarism and night. And of all our race He has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America, and it holds for us all the profit, all the glory, all the happiness possible to man. We are trustees of the world's progress, guardians of its righteous peace. The judgment of the Master is upon us: "Ye have been faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many things."<sup>96</sup>

Beveridge's words unconditionally affirm the message of manifest destiny carried by the city upon a hill image. Namely, the promise of America can only be fully realized through the continuous and courageous penetration, control, and transformation of the chaotic, undeveloped, and uncivilized lands of the Other. This promise is understood as a fulfillment of the higher will (the will of god and/or the will of reason), and as being to the ultimate advantage of all involved. "It is only natural that America would intervene as a model and guardian of the greater good," this message insists, "for this is the very *raison d'être* of the nation."

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<sup>96</sup> Albert Beveridge, "Policy Regarding the Philippines," remarks given before the US Senate, 33 Cong. Rec. 711 (9 January 1900).

Assuredly, for such a rationalizing message to be persuasively imparted through the master narrative, its expressions must be continually re-molded to suit changing social currents. While Beveridge's unrestrained depiction of "savage and senile peoples" might have been rhetorically effective in 1900, such language would likely come across as uncouth and unconvincing in today's culture of political correctness.<sup>97</sup> But as the following fragment of a 2002 speech given by George W. Bush demonstrates, though the fashions of language change over time, the relevance and reach of cognitive images like the city upon a hill remain potent. Defending the occupation of Iraq, Bush argued:

America believes that all people are entitled to hope and human rights, to the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity. People everywhere prefer freedom to slavery, prosperity to squalor, self-government to the rule of terror and torture. America is a friend to the people of Iraq. Our demands are directed only at the regime that enslaves them and threatens us. When these demands are met, the first and greatest benefit will come to Iraqi men, women and children. The oppression of Kurds, Assyrians, Turkomen, Shia, Sunnis and others will be lifted, the long captivity of Iraq will end, and an era of new hope will begin. Iraq is a land rich in culture and resources and talent. Freed from the weight of oppression, Iraq's people will be able to share in the progress and prosperity of our time... We did not ask for this present challenge, but we accept it. Like other generations of Americans, we will meet the responsibility of defending human liberty against violence and aggression. By our resolve, we will give strength to others. By our courage, we will give hope to others. And by our actions, we will secure the peace and lead the world to a better day.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Of course, outmoded terms have simply been replaced by newer, more seductive ones (such as "terrorist", "anarchist," "fundamentalist," "jihadist," "radical," etc.). The hijacking and selective application of these ideologically-loaded labels serves the master narrative well in an era dominated by 24 hour cable news networks, conservative talking heads, and 30 second soundbites.

<sup>98</sup> George W. Bush, "President Bush Outlines Iraqi Threat," (address given in Cincinnati, OH, 7 October 2002), The White House, accessed 20 February 2012, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2002/10/20021007-8.html>.

To Beveridge, Bush, and a great many of their fellow Americans, the city upon a hill has represented both a spectacle and a watchtower. It has been imagined as a shining star to which the eyes of all people are drawn, as well as a citadel for the monitoring and guarding of freedom.

Further, it has been portrayed as a mission that must not fail. From the time of the Puritans onward, the specter of divine retribution has lurked around the edges of the shining city as a constant admonition to assimilation and submission. This specter was referenced by Franklin when he warned that failure would be “a reproach and byword down to future ages,” and by Adams in his contention that:

The people in America have now the best opportunity, and the greatest trust, in their hands, that Providence ever committed to so small a number, since the transgression of the first pair: if they betray their trust, their guilt will merit even greater punishment than other nations have suffered, and the indignation of heaven.<sup>99</sup>

Yet in spite of these generic proclamations of doom and gloom, the Founders never articulated any tangible criteria by which the failure of their experiment in nation-building might be identified.

Instead, what they did consistently articulate was the notion Americans had entered into a covenant that, being righteous in the eyes of god and necessary in the light of reason, was secured under the protection of providence. Hence, we find James Madison declaring in relation to the Constitution, “It is impossible for the man of pious reflection not to perceive in it a finger of that Almighty hand which has so frequently and

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<sup>99</sup> Qtd. in Calabresi, “A Shining City on a Hill,” 1356.

signally extended to our relief in the critical stages of the revolution.”<sup>100</sup> This unshakable and deep-seated faith in the Exceptional covenant has defined cultural identity to the extent that even relatively open-minded and progressive citizens can acknowledge enduring heritages of genocide, ecocide, racism, war-making, and various other oppressions while simultaneously accepting the success of the overall American experiment.

Such inconsistency has often been covered over by appeals to grace, a Christian theological notion that has always been part and parcel of the city upon a hill image.<sup>101</sup> Whether employed directly or implicitly, appeals to divine grace have historically served to validate claims of Exceptionalism and forgive the more seedy aspects of colonial expansionism. As familiar cultural documents such as the song “America the Beautiful” overtly suggest, god has shed his grace on the American people and by this grace the people are guided in their mission and absolved of their transgressions. Though abstract in nature, the theological notion has nonetheless delivered tangible support for systems of privilege.

This sort of support has been exemplified in spaces like the Hawai’ian Islands, where White-owned resort hotels and US military installations overshadow a large (and

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<sup>100</sup> James Madison, “The Federalist, No. 37,” in *The Federalist with the Letters of “Brutus,”* by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, ed. Terence Ball (New York: Cambridge University, 2003), 173.

<sup>101</sup> For discussion of how notions of grace have historically filled out the city upon a hill image, see Larry Witham, *A City Upon a Hill: How Sermons Changed the Course of American History* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), especially 17-34.

growing) Native Hawaiian homeless population.<sup>102</sup> Although the 1898 annexation of Hawai'i—which occurred just five years after Katharine Lee Bates penned the original lyrics to “America the Beautiful—is widely acknowledged as a clear violation of international law, efforts to restore Native self-determination and control of the land have garnered little support outside of indigenous circles.<sup>103</sup> Instead, Hawai'i has been popularly conceptualized as an essential piece of the city upon a hill, and one whose politico-economic and military value can be understood as a matter of grace. Here I am thinking of Kathryn Tanner's claim that in capitalistic societies “grace has everything to do with money,” with wealth typically interpreted as a sign of favor and its multiplication as a matter of ultimate consequence.<sup>104</sup> For many American elites at the turn of the twentieth century, Hawai'i was understood as a vital source of wealth and power under the rule of a relatively primitive indigenous people. Grace therefore compelled annexation even as it absolved the costs. As President William McKinley asserted in officially dissolving the Native Hawaiian government, “Annexation is not change... it is consummation.”<sup>105</sup> And today, the beauty of this space is interpreted by many as simply

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<sup>102</sup> See LaDuke, *All Our Relations*, 165-186.

<sup>103</sup> See Jon M. Van Dyke, *Who Owns the Crown Lands of Hawai'i?* (Manoa: University of Hawai'i, 2008), especially 151-171. The clear illegality of the Hawai'i annexation even prompted the US Congress to issue a formal (but toothless) apology in 1993.

<sup>104</sup> Kathryn Tanner, *Economy of Grace* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 29. Calling for a less reductionist and more just conversation between theology and economics, Tanner observes that “Grace has everything to do with money because in grace money finds its greatest challenger and most obstreperous critic.”

<sup>105</sup> Qtd. in Philip Perlmutter, *Legacy of Hate: A Short History of Ethnic, Religious, and Racial Prejudice in America* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 151. Perlmutter importantly notes that the minority of

another indicator of the graced nature of the American land and people, while the actual history of its statehood is forgotten.<sup>106</sup>

Employed to condone both action and inaction, appeals to grace ensure that the failure of the covenant ideal—that is, the failure of America’s mission to act as both spectacle and watchtower to the world—can be leveraged by politico-economic elites as a persuasive but mostly empty threat. This understanding of grace also helps explain why forceful intervention in other places of politico-economic and military interest (like Iraq and Afghanistan in more recent times) has been conceptualized as just and necessary, while conflict and disaster in places perceived to be of lesser worth (like the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, and the Sudan) have been treated more as internal matters to be left alone.<sup>107</sup> In light of this perspective, we can look anew at the image of the city upon a hill as signified by Lyndon Johnson in his 1965 inaugural address:

They came here—the exile and the stranger, brave but frightened—to find a place where a man could be his own man. They made a covenant with this land.

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American elites who opposed expansionism did so on the grounds that such action might allow “alien and inferior races” to become “citizens,” thus diluting the racial and cultural purity of America (152).

<sup>106</sup> I am reminded here of author Paul Theroux’s unintentionally revealing comment in the *London Observer* that “Hawaii is not a state of mind, but a state of grace.” Qtd. in Robert Andrews, ed., *The Columbia Dictionary of Quotations*, (New York: Columbia University, 1993), 397.

<sup>107</sup> For information on the neglect of these latter conflicts, see respectively Dave Eggers and John Prendergast, “In Sudan, War Is Around the Corner,” *The New York Times*, 12 July 2010, accessed 2 November 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/13/opinion/13eggers.html>; Mark Levine, “No ‘Hope for Haiti’ Without Justice,” *Al Jazeera*, 19 January 2010, accessed 14 October 2011, <http://english.aljazeera.net/focus/2010/01/20101196265844450.html>; Jeffrey Gettleman, “Mass Rapes in Congo Reveals U.N. Weakness,” *The New York Times*, 3 October 2010, accessed 2 November 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/04/world/africa/04congo.html?ref=congothedemocraticrepublicof>; and Lydia Polgreen, “Congo’s Death Rate Unchanged Since War Ended,” *The New York Times*, 23 January 2008, accessed 2 November 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/23/world/africa/23congo.html?ref=congothedemocraticrepublicof>.

Conceived in justice, written in liberty, bound in union, it was meant one day to inspire the hopes of all mankind; and it binds us still. If we keep its terms, we shall flourish...If we fail now, we shall have forgotten in abundance what we learned in hardship: that democracy rests on faith, that freedom asks more than it gives, and that the judgment of God is harshest on those who are most favored. If we succeed, it will not be because of what we have, but it will be because of what we are; not because of what we own, but, rather because of what we believe. For we are a nation of believers. Underneath the clamor of building and the rush of our day's pursuits, we are believers in justice and liberty and union, and in our own Union. We believe that every man must someday be free. And we believe in ourselves. Our enemies have always made the same mistake. In my lifetime—in depression and in war—they have awaited our defeat. Each time, from the secret places of the American heart, came forth the faith they could not see or that they could not even imagine. It brought us victory. And it will again. For this is what America is all about. It is the uncrossed desert and the unclimbed ridge. It is the star that is not reached and the harvest sleeping in the unplowed ground. Is our world gone? We say "Farewell." Is a new world coming? We welcome it—and we will bend it to the hopes of man.<sup>108</sup>

In this context, the suggestion that White invaders made a covenant with the land can be understood as a sly but purposeful pretext. The divine covenant implied by the city upon a hill image directs all focus onto the “city” rather than the “hill.” In other words, it endorses the process of constructing a specific notion of civilization in, over, and through the natural world while devaluing other societies as primitive and obsolete extensions of that subhuman realm. The land itself becomes largely incidental, referenced only to establish the object of control and possession. Through this sort of influence, the form of the up/down image-schema can be clearly recognized. The city, as the symbolic representative of American civilization, is up, good, and worthy; the hill, including the natural world all the forms of being that are conceptualized as mere extensions of it, is

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<sup>108</sup> Lyndon Johnson, “Inaugural Address” (address given in Washington DC, 20 January 1965), The Avalon Project: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy, Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Law Library, accessed 2 November 2010, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/johnson.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/johnson.asp).



“down,” bad, and inferior. Further, as the reach of this civilization is extended and inevitably comes into contact with new worlds, it must inevitably fulfill its destiny by acting as a shining beacon for these worlds to follow. But if these worlds do not follow, then they must be compelled by the light of grace to bend (in a paraphrase of Johnson) to the hopes of [the White American] man.

### *Conclusion*

Through an exploration of the cognitive images of the promised land, *terra nullius*, frontier wilderness, and city upon a hill, we begin to see how the master narrative is founded upon artificial and misleading conceptions of space. Each of these images contributes a unique but complementary message which, when fit together with the others, creates a tautological and composite conceptualization in favor of Exceptionalism. This conceptualization has proven flexible enough to inject meaning into a multiplicity of contexts. Yet its general thrust has stayed largely consistent over time and place: In order to build our city upon a hill in the promised land, we must continually violently penetrate the boundaries of *terra nullius* and conquer each succeeding frontier wilderness found therein. This way of thinking about the land has acted as a vital validation of faith in Exceptionalism, despite being wrought with inconsistencies and contradictions that must be continually repressed in social consciousness.

As a result, Americans remain significantly disoriented to space. Due to the content of the dominant images held within their deep cultural formation and the way these images are given form through the process of the cognitive unconscious,

individuals and communities are significantly impeded from conceptualizing their relationship with the land in meaningful and realistic ways. Instead, when these individuals and communities attempt to think about, classify, and describe particular spaces, they are most often: a) significantly misconstruing the characters of those spaces; and b) actually framing their thought, classification, and description in temporal–not spatial–terms. Although many Americans may never explicitly reference the terms of promised land, *terra nullius*, frontier wilderness, and city upon a hill (and some may even reject them as anachronistic), the shape and function of their thought continues to be significantly influenced by the messages embedded in these terms. Responses of suspicion, doubt, and often outright dismissal spontaneously follow challenges to these messages—that the land was not in fact naturally prepared for and inclined to European settlement, that it was actually quite widely inhabited and cultivated prior to invasion, that frontiers never really existed as either wild or virgin, or that to much of the world the light shining from the great city has been more like that of a nuclear detonation than that of the life-giving sun.

Yet even as such challenges to unnatural innocence are met with a less than warm welcome, they introduce at least the possibility of increased awareness. They also carry hope, trivial though it can seem in the face of widespread repression, by pointing to the constructed nature of dominant cognitive images of the land and the inauthenticity of the master narrative as whole. Describing how the pulling of a single thread in the fabric of this narrative can yield significant unraveling, Rob Shields states:

Places and their images are not scientific ‘objects’ (assuming such things exist, even in the natural sciences). Place-images, and our views of them, are produced historically, and are actively contested. There is no whole picture that can be ‘filled in’ since the perception and filling of a gap lead to the awareness of other gaps. The ‘filling in’ of gaps is itself part of a particular cultural project, which must itself be included in our cultural ‘mosaic’, but its new presence raises questions about, for example, why we are concerned with filling in gaps anyway. And, if individual place-images or even an entire ‘culture’ are not objects to be described, neither are they a unified corpus of symbols and meanings that can be definitively interpreted once and for all for every person. Culture is contested, temporal, emergent.<sup>109</sup>

Understanding culture in this way suggests that the quest for more grounded contestations and negotiations should not simply be dismissed out of hand. Yet at the same time, hope for transformation should not negate an appreciation for the influential weight of the deeper aspects of culture in shaping how people think about, and act in relation to, the land. This weight continues to grow over time, helping to hold down Exceptionalist notions whose lack of legitimate substance might otherwise allow them to be threatened by even the slightest breeze of alternative thought and action.

Part of this growing weight can be explained by the fact that the symbolic restructuring of space in the American context continues to alter the actual character of that space in reality. Directed by Western Christian notions of covenant, sovereignty, civilization, and destiny, lands have been reconfigured, natural processes interrupted, relations among a variety of beings impeded, and longstanding lifeways extinguished. Importantly, this legacy has developed through both the intentional intervention of elites seeking to extend existing systems of privilege in moments of avarice and crisis, and the

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<sup>109</sup> Rob Shields, *Places on the Margin: Alternative Geographies of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 18.

blind acceptance of or forced capitulation to dominant cognitive images by the unwitting or marginalized. These deeply embedded ways of conceptualizing the land have inspired specific types of spatial behavior, and have been regenerated by them in turn. In light of this cycle by which faith in Exceptionalism is continually reinforced, vital questions arise. Would Americans be willing to endure a process of deep and honest reflection on the deceptive power and constructed nature of the ways they think of the land? Would such a process encourage the emergence of new cultural identities or sets of behaviors that are defined less by unnatural innocence and more by authentic relations with space? Would deep and honest reflection make the cohesion of the “nation,” predicated as it is upon inconsistent and deceptive patterns of spatial cognition, implode under the weight of its own repressed character?

3. Spatial Behavior and the American Moral Imagi(nation)

If art and industry should do as much  
As Nature hath for Canaan, not such  
Another place for benefit and rest  
In all the universe can be possessed.  
The more we prove it by discovery,  
The more delight each object to the eye  
Procures, as if the elements had here  
Been reconciled, and pleased it should appear  
Like a fair virgin, longing to be sped  
And meet her lover in a Nuptial bed,  
Decked in rich ornaments to advance her state  
And excellence, being most fortunate  
When most enjoyed. So would our Canaan be,  
If well-employed by art and industry,  
Whose offspring now shows that her fruitful womb,  
Not being enjoyed, is like a glorious tomb,  
Admired things producing which there die,  
And lie fast bound in dark obscurity—  
The worth of which in each particular,  
Who list to know, this abstract will declare.<sup>1</sup>

– Thomas Morton  
From the Prologue to *New English Canaan* (1637)

In referring to the functioning of the American master narrative, I am really speaking of the systemic promulgation and spontaneous performance of a particular

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Morton, “The Author’s Prologue,” in *New English Canaan: Text, Notes, Biography, and Criticism*, ed. Jack Dempsey (Scituate: Digital Scanning, 2000), 7. Although some confusion exists around the composition chronology for *New English Canaan*, Dempsey notes that 1637 represents the most probable date of publication (xxviii-xxxi).

social imaginary. Coined by Charles Taylor, the concept of social imaginary integrates “the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations.”<sup>2</sup> Put into the terms of this theoretical synthesis, a social imaginary can be described as the overarching framework in which the symbols of deep culture are formed and expressed. In other words, it is through the tangible formations and evocative expressions of the social imaginary that deep culture becomes actuated and articulated. Often “carried in images, stories, and legends,” social imaginaries are thus at once “factual and normative,” complex and commonly held.<sup>3</sup> Without them, modern “nations” (in the sense of Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities”) could simply not exist.<sup>4</sup>

In this sense at the very least, the American nation can truly be said to be unexceptional. Like any other self-identified nation, Americans rely upon the perpetuation of a distinctive social imaginary in order to give them a collective sense of coherence, purpose, and identity. If Anderson is correct in suggesting that “Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University, 2004), 23.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 23-24.

<sup>4</sup> Anderson states: “...I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion...In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined.” *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Brooklyn: Verso, 2006), 5-6 (emphasis original).

imagined,” then there can be little doubt that the distinguishing style of America is that of Exceptionalism.<sup>5</sup> While the previous chapter attempts to illustrate this quality by exposing a crucial arrangement of spatial cognition—Taylor’s “deeper normative... images”—this chapter focuses instead upon spatial behavior, or the social “expectations that are normally met” in relation to particular types of spaces. Concentrating on four basic themes which guide behavior, I demonstrate how these behavioral themes are both encouraged by the social imaginary of Exceptionalism and, more importantly, how they function to validate and enlarge it.

The dominant American social imaginary represents a specific formation of cultural identity rooted in Western modernity. The notion of modernity is quite complex, embodying (in the words of Stuart Hall) “the outcome, not of a single process, but of the condensation of a number of different processes and histories.”<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, Taylor suggests that throughout the complex phenomenon of modernity runs a deep and central current, namely:

a new conception of the moral order of society. This was at first just an idea in the minds of some influential thinkers, but... later came to shape the social imaginary of large strata, and then eventually whole societies. It has now become so self-evident to us that we have trouble seeing it as one possible conception among others.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

<sup>6</sup> Stuart Hall, “Introduction,” in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, eds. Stuart Hall et al (Malden: The Open University, 1996) 7. Similarly, Henry A. Giroux argues that “to invoke the term modernism is immediately to place oneself in the precarious position of suggesting a definition that is itself open to enormous debate and little agreement.” *Theory and Resistance in Education* (Westport: Bergin and Garvey, 2001), 183.

<sup>7</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 2.

The modern moral order has acted as the backbone of the American social imaginary by directly and profoundly shaping common expectations about what types of behaviors can be accepted as normal, favorable, and judicious, and what types can be rejected as deviant, inauspicious, and irrational. Although the same basic ingredients of moral order tend to hold sway throughout Western societies and their postcolonial progenies generally, they can manifest somewhat differently depending on contextual idiosyncrasies of history and power.

The American manifestation of the modern moral order thus bears unique markings that can tell us a great deal about the bond between spatiality and Exceptionalism. Of course, it is essential we remember that this manifestation represents merely the expectations of Americans as to how their society should work—not an explanation of how it actually does. No matter how widespread and normalized these expectations might be, they remain more prescriptive than descriptive in determining what values and mores are considered right and possible. Further, while the expectations cover the lives of all members of society in theory, they are actually realized for relatively few in reality. Following Taylor, the modern moral order betrays its origins in natural law theory by routinely functioning as a “hermeneutic of legitimation” that supports existing systems of privilege.<sup>8</sup> This hermeneutic operates with particular authority in the American context through its ability to validate behaviors that demonstrate and extend a fundamental disorientation to space. While alternative

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<sup>8</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 7.



conceptions of moral order (including those classified as “premodern” or “postmodern”) can be witnessed in some pockets of society,<sup>9</sup> the manifestation of modern moral order described here remains the dominant, characteristic, and pervasive conception at play in the American context.

*The Modern Moral Order in America:*<sup>10</sup> As in Western societies generally, the American manifestation of the modern moral order is characterized by the adoration of *civilization*, “a term that connotes a measurable progression of human development with both substantive and normative implications.”<sup>11</sup> The measurement of civilization focuses on the presence or absence of several critical markers which distinguish “civilized” societies from more-or-less “uncivilized” ones. One of these critical markers is embodied in a society’s level of *disenchantment*, or their perceived recognition of and relation to a “world of magic forces and spirits.”<sup>12</sup> Beginning especially with the Christian Reformation and continuing through the Enlightenment, Western societies came to increasingly reject divisions between sacred and profane time and space and affirm socio-political organizations firmly rooted in the here-and-now. The “sanctification of ordinary

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<sup>9</sup> Taylor offers the continuing acknowledgement of patriarchy, especially within familial systems, as one disparate example. *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 16.

<sup>10</sup> This overview offers only limited (though essential) comments on how the modern moral order has distinctly emerged in America. In addition to Taylor, it integrates the significant contributions of three other scholars: Henry A. Giroux, Sandy Grande, and Natsu Saito.

<sup>11</sup> Natsu Saito, *Meeting the Enemy: American Exceptionalism and International Law* (New York: NYU, 2010), 20.

<sup>12</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 49.

life” merged spiritual and politico-economic concerns into a single historical timeline and significantly restructured moral notions regarding the private and public realms.<sup>13</sup>

In the American context this fusion of religious and secular has been modified so that faith in a divine order and telos is not simply supplanted by a purely secularized viewpoint. Rather, a different experience of god and a new way to designate the divine has been arranged through the prioritization of secular time.<sup>14</sup> Taylor asserts that although “the sacred is no longer encountered as an object among other objects, in a special place, time, or person,” in secular time “God’s will can still be very present to us in the design of things, in cosmos, state, and personal life.”<sup>15</sup> This sense of presence can be clearly

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<sup>13</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 102. Taylor further explains: “The newly remade society was to embody unequivocally the demands of the Gospel in a stable and, as it was increasingly understood, a rational order. This society had no place for the ambivalent complementarities of the older enchanted world: between worldly life and monastic renunciation, between proper order and its periodic suspension in Carnival, between the acknowledged power of spirits and forces and their relegation by divine power. The new order was coherent, uncompromising, all of a piece. Disenchantment brought a new uniformity of purpose and principle” (50).

<sup>14</sup> Theologian Max Stackhouse affirms the hidden configuration of Christian faith in modernity: “In spite of several kinds of Enlightenment fundamentalism among the intellectual elite of Europe (and among the elites of the former colonies who studied in the West as well as in many parts of the American universities), the convictions of most of the people incarnate in most of the various spheres of life in the world of Western modernity remained basically Christian... This is so even if many are forgetful or ignorant of its dominant religious vision embedded in the fabric of its civil society. They became secular, but they are secular in a Christian (or Judeo-Christian), not in a Confucian, Hindu, Buddhist or Islamic, way.” He later concludes, “Christianity formed on this basis not only affirms a universal moral law, it transforms the inner structure of every person and society it encounters and orients all of life toward a new, trans-natural telos.” *God and Globalization: Globalization and Grace*, vol. 4, (New York: Continuum International, 2007), 55, 242.

<sup>15</sup> Taylor states, “We can now see the space for religion in the modern state, for God can figure strongly in the political identity. It can be that we see ourselves as fulfilling God’s will in setting up a polity that maximally follows his precepts, as many Americans have done in the revolutionary period and after. Or our national identity can refer to God, if we see ourselves as defined by our unique piety and faithfulness... This is the new space for God in the secular world. Just as in personal life, the dissolution of the enchanted world can be compensated by devotion, a strong sense of the involvement of God in my life, so in the public world, the disappearance of an ontic dependence on something higher can be replaced by a

observed in notions tracing back to the Puritan era that have defined the success of the American experiment as a divine mandate and matter of ultimate import. In keeping with the prioritization of secular time, everyday conditions that support this experiment, such as personal work and citizenship, are imbued with special meaning. Likewise, beliefs and practices that undermine this experiment, conflict with the tenets of a modernized Christian order, or observe an entirely separate metaphysical realm are deemed suspicious or primitive. Although the idea of god as fundamentally outside human experience is formally abjured in the dominant social imaginary, notions of divine will, faithfulness, and destiny nevertheless remain prominent in the quotidian operation of American cultural identity.

A related marker of civilization can be found in the elevation of *rationality*. People are regarded as rational animals, with reason interpreted as “culture-free,” technology as neutral, and “scientific and other rationally based ways of knowing as the preeminent intellectual authority.”<sup>16</sup> The appeal to supernatural revelation is seen as superfluous and dubious for divine providence can be rationally calculated; “reason alone can tell us God’s purposes.”<sup>17</sup> The perceived order of providence is expressed through the

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strong presence of God in our political identity. In both individual and social life, the sacred is no longer encountered as an object among objects, in a special place, time, or person. But God’s will can still be very present to us in the design of things, in cosmos, state, and personal life. God can seem the inescapable source for our power to impart order to our lives, both individually and socially.” *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 193.

<sup>16</sup> Sandy Grande, *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 69.

<sup>17</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 14.

operation of *natural law*, a concept which encompasses the sum of Western rationalizations about how natural and social systems work. From its nascent articulations in Greek and Roman philosophical thought, natural law theory has come to pervade the administration of modern institutions such as government and law. Writing in the first century BCE, Cicero defined natural law as “the highest reason, implanted in nature, which commands what ought to be done, and forbids the opposite.”<sup>18</sup> Christian scholars like Augustine of Hippo and Thomas Aquinas later refined early philosophical articulations from an explicitly theological standpoint, positing natural law as a measure of humanity’s rational participation in the divinely instituted order.

The historical significance of these theological refinements should not be underestimated. Of the various perspectives that impinged upon the evolution of the modern moral order in the American context, few proved as influential as those of the Enlightenment thinkers John Locke and Gottfried Leibniz. Yet contrary to popular perceptions, both Locke and Leibniz possessed unmistakable Christian partialities, and both advanced the concept of natural law as a means of theorizing a fundamental compatibility between (Christian) faith and reason within secular time.<sup>19</sup> The American

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<sup>18</sup> Qtd. in Paul A. Vander Waerdt, “Zeno’s Republic and the Origins of Natural Law,” in *The Socratic Movement*, ed. Paul A. Vander Waerdt (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1994), 272.

<sup>19</sup> Franklin Perkins directly refutes the popular perception of Leibniz as a stereotypical Enlightenment secularist: “The problem with such an interpretation is that Leibniz’s natural theology is profoundly Christian. Patrick Riley argues this point, emphasizing that Leibniz extends natural theology to include charity, making his ‘religion of reason’ particularly Christian. For Leibniz, natural theology coincides with Christianity, when Christianity is properly understood. Since there is not conflict between reason and faith, one never chooses reason over faith. Thus, natural theology is not obscured at all by

Founders generally seized upon this theorized compatibility in order to promote two core “truths” that have endured in the cultural consciousness over time. First, the very ability to accomplish such rational analysis distinguishes human beings as separate from nature and the animal realm.<sup>20</sup> Second, Western—and more specifically, American—civilization represents the highest realization of human potential.<sup>21</sup> These operative “truths” do not epitomize a rejection of hierarchies of being per se, but rather are displayed in a preference for a posteriori rather than a priori postulations of knowledge.

They are further displayed as supranatural beliefs in a Great Chain of Being are rejected in favor of rational calculations regarding: a) the *superiority of humans over nature*; and b) an *equality among human beings*. Instead of openly modeling society around a preordained and scripturally revealed arrangement in which all creation is vertically linked, it is stressed that people simply have an innate aptitude for and logical responsibility to manage the natural world and subhuman beings. This management is seen as a key indicator of the human nature and civilizational status. Although human beings are believed to be created basically equal, they are still judged according to their ability and willingness to successfully perform this intrinsic duty. Such judgment is largely perceived as necessary, unbiased, and liberative, for the assumption is that with greater civilization comes greater opportunity—an entitlement which all individuals are

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Christianity, but it is obscured by the pettiness and bickering of the Christians in Europe.” *Leibniz and China: A Commerce of Light* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004), 157

<sup>20</sup> See Grande, *Red Pedagogy*, 69-70; Saito, *Meeting the Enemy*, 21; Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 14-15.

<sup>21</sup> See Grande, *Red Pedagogy*, 69; and Saito, *Meeting the Enemy*, 27-31.

due but not all societies provide. The product of these rational calculations is a milieu in which theoretical pronouncements regarding individual equality coexist relatively harmoniously with concrete endorsements of social hierarchy and politico-economic disparity. Those types of peoples on the bottom rungs are simply classified as less than fully human in effect if not essence, due to their own failure (or in the case of some international disputes, that of their governing bodies) to conform to normative moral expectations.

The defense of *individual rights* is therefore promoted as the main purpose of any society, with *freedom* representing the most basic expression of these rights. This promotion presupposes the individual as the primary human unit and the autonomous possessor of certain natural rights—what Sandy Grande calls a “subscription to ontological individualism.”<sup>22</sup> In society individuals consent to come together for mutual benefit, forming a social contract to exercise their powers to secure and extend these rights for each other. Tracing this aspect of the modern moral order to the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, G.W.F. Hegel, and Karl Marx, Taylor highlights the concept of individual agency as central to its historical unfolding:

[It] starts with individuals, whom political society must serve. More important, this service is defined in terms of the defense of individuals’ rights. Freedom is central to these rights. The importance of freedom is attested in the requirement that political society be founded on the consent of those bound by it. If we reflect on the context in which this theory was operative, we can see that the crucial emphasis on freedom was overdetermined. The order of mutual benefit is an ideal to be constructed. It serves as a guide for those who want to establish a stable peace and then remake society to bring it closer to its norms. The proponents of

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<sup>22</sup> Grande, *Red Pedagogy*, 69.

the theory already see themselves as agents who, through disengaged, disciplined action, can reform their own lives as well as the larger social order. They are buffered, disciplined selves. Free agency is central to their understanding. The emphasis on rights and the primacy of freedom among them doesn't just stem from the principle that society should exist of the sake of its members; it also reflects the holders' sense of their own agency and of the situation that agency normatively demands in the world, namely, freedom.<sup>23</sup>

Consequently, the organization of society is assessed strictly in terms of its *instrumentality* in promoting the natural order. In other words, a successful society is understood to secure the freedom of its individual members by providing two main instrumental services: collective security and politico-economic prosperity.<sup>24</sup> All other functions remain subordinate to this basic purpose. Further, security and prosperity are represented as universal goods, the steady expansion of which is reflected in the historical advancement of mankind. This use of masculine language is deliberate, for it reflects the modern moral order's predilection for positioning rationality and agency in the male domain, and for interpreting the movement of history as having been driven largely by men.

In America the notions of instrumentality and historical advancement are brought together in a particularly distinctive formula. As Natsu Saito relates, in this formula "human history is a universal and linear path of progress toward increased civilization," with the American nation-state embodying the society most removed from a state of

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<sup>23</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 21.

<sup>24</sup> See Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 13-14.

nature and the “highest stage” of Western advancement.<sup>25</sup> Americans see themselves as standing apart from other societies built on the modern moral order due not only to the expectation of unprecedented security and prosperity, but also the perception of elementary *multiculturalism*. Claims of racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity are offered as proof of supremacy, for the populace is regarded as being united by common ideals rather than a similar background. Multiculturalism integrates the principles of individualism, equality, and rationality by suggesting that all persons possess the capacity and deserve the chance to live in freedom—at least in theory. Its expression as an ingredient of moral order thus sets up the American social imaginary as a process of continual renewal in which each new generation of individuals must collaborate through their differences in order to establish, protect, and enlarge a space of mutual freedom.<sup>26</sup>

In this conception of moral order, such collaboration can only be enduringly achieved through an enlightened combination of *democratic self-rule* and the *capitalist marketplace*. As Henry A. Giroux relates, the combination of political and economic liberalism is presumed to reflect:

the capacity of individuals to be moved by human suffering so as to remove its causes; to give meaning to the principles of equality, liberty, and justice; and to increase those social forms that enable human beings to develop the capacities

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<sup>25</sup> Saito, *Meeting the Enemy*, 27, 18.

<sup>26</sup> Whether conceived in terms of a “melting pot” or “salad bowl,” the notion of multiculturalism remains quite obviously problematic. Suggesting a parity of social and politico-economic status that does not exist in reality, the notion of multiculturalism functions to defuse tension by promoting surface-level displays of difference (in food, dress, art, etc.) while precluding authentic explorations of deep culture conflicts. Although often presented as a descriptive fact, multiculturalism is more aptly characterized by Kwame Anthony Appiah as “shape-shifter, which so often designates the disease it purports to cure.” *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), xiii.



needed to overcome ideologies and material forms that legitimate and are embedded in relations of domination.<sup>27</sup>

As individuals exercise these capacities, they are understood to demonstrate and reassert the principle of *popular sovereignty*. Differentiated from forms of social organization regarded as less advanced, less egalitarian, and less rational, the sovereign people is designated as empowering the American politico-economic system and blessing the social contract on which it rests. Accordingly, this model is promoted as both an obvious exemplar of the possibilities of civilization and an altruistic gift to other societies that remain behind the modern curve. Its continued growth promises a more peaceful and prosperous future for all—or at least this is the social imaginary asserts.

In sum, the American manifestation of the modern moral order begets uniformity by blending the concerns of politico-economics and spirituality, the judgments of rationality and faith, and the tenets of individualism and anthropocentrism. But as Taylor reminds us, social imaginaries and the conceptions of moral order that define them are often just what their title suggests: imaginary, at least in large part. He explains:

Can an imaginary be false? Clearly, the answer to this question is yes... Take our sense of ourselves as equal citizens in a democratic state; to the extent that we not only understand this as a legitimating principle but actually imagine it as integrally realized, we will be engaging in a cover-up, averting our gaze from various excluded and disempowered groups or imagining that their exclusion is their doing. We regularly come across ways in which modern social imaginaries, no longer defined as ideal types but as actually lived by this or that population, are full of ideological and false consciousness. But the gain involved in identifying these social imaginaries is that they are never just ideology. They also have a constitutive function, that of making possible the practices that they make sense

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<sup>27</sup> Henry A. Giroux, *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope: Theory, Culture, and Schooling* (Boulder: Westview, 1997), 187.

of and thus enable. In this sense, their falsity cannot be total; *some* people are engaging in a form of democratic self-rule, even if not everyone, as our comfortable self-legitimations imagine. Like all forms of human imagination, the social imaginary can be full of self-serving fiction and suppression, but it also is an essential constituent of the real. It cannot be reduced to an insubstantial dream.<sup>28</sup>

In this final assertion, Taylor is almost certainly correct. Although a variety of scholars have described the dominant American social imaginary in terms that range from triumphal to revolting, few have portrayed it as insubstantial. This common acknowledgment of importance by supporters and detractors alike underscores an extreme problematic. If we accept the enduring persuasive power of this imaginary, and if we interpret its major function as promoting Exceptionalism by maintaining a widespread disorientation to space, then the chances of a more authentically just, aware, and egalitarian moral order gaining critical mass in timely fashion seem slim.

In the meantime, many spaces throughout the globe and the life communities that exist within them continue to suffer utter devastation and anguish. The social imaginary continues to promote an unnatural innocence born of repression by undermining efforts to establish more authentic relationships with particular spaces and undermining attempts to embrace the memories embedded in those spaces. Further, it incentivizes its own perpetuation by securing inflexible systems of privilege and oppression while simultaneously endorsing romantic notions of equality and freedom. Yet one vital issue that remains intentionally disguised in this arrangement concerns the fact that specific lands have their own characters, properties, and realities which can often be quite distinct

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<sup>28</sup> Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 183 (emphasis original).

from how they are imagined to be. Although the previous chapter discusses how the symbolic restructuring of the land through spatial cognition has contributed to the altered the land in actuality, it is important to note that this process has limits. Natural substances such as metal ore and timber are finite, water cannot be poisoned indiscriminately without repercussion, and unmitigated consumption cannot ground a society indefinitely. The social imaginary mystifies perceptions of space and history in significant and long-lasting ways; however, in the end we are required to come up with ever more fantastical legitimations in order to conceal the contradictions and justify the shortcomings inherent to the ways we think about and act in relation to the land.

With these claims in mind, I turn to an in-depth examination of the four main themes of spatial behavior. Deeply grounded in culture and informed by dominant conception of moral order, these themes guide individuals in classifying different types of spaces and identifying the sorts of actions that can be considered acceptable and proper in relation to them. They also connect the use of land to the exercise of the individual freedom, as expressed through the prioritization of security and prosperity. Working in intimate cooperation with the cognitive images highlighted in the previous chapter, the behavioral themes of privilege, property, positivism, and progress promote faith in Exceptionalism by fostering a fundamental disorientation to space.

### *A. Privilege*

In order to understand privilege as a deep cultural theme guiding American spatial behavior, it is useful to start by acknowledging three main ways in which the term functions as a part of speech in the English language. Privilege can act as: a) an adjective, describing something one is or is not; b) a noun, describing something one has or does not have; and c) a verb, describing something one does or does not favor.<sup>29</sup> By focusing on each of these functions, we are enabled to respond to certain related questions regarding the bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism. Such questions include: Who is privileged enough to determine what uses and categorizations of space are considered more proper and acceptable than others? What benefits and burdens follow from such privilege, and to whom? How does the privileging of certain types of beings, actions, and spaces shape politico-economic hierarchies and fields of power? Our ability to respond to questions like these is crucial, for it helps us expose how the fundamental claims to freedom and equality found in the social imaginary are belied by the potent, persistent, and systemic attachment of privilege to nearly every aspect of spatial behavior.

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<sup>29</sup> For example, Seung Ai Yang demonstrates these three functions by comparatively analyzing the Christian gospel stories of the Roman centurion and the Canaanite woman through a postcolonial hermeneutic: a) The Roman centurion is a privileged person, the Canaanite woman is not; b) Unlike the Roman centurion, the Canaanite woman does not have the privilege to speak; and c) Jesus privileges man over woman and the imperial military over the colonized subject. “Can the Canaanite Other Speak? The Agency of the Other and the Sign of Jonah” (address given at Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago, IL, 13 October 2010), excerpt presented on Chicago Theological Seminary website, accessed 10 November 2010, <http://www.ctschicago.edu/index.php/mnuacademicprograms/faculty/235-can-the-caananite-other-speak>.

The first attachment of privilege that must be acknowledged is embodied in the conception of a stark division between the human and non-human worlds. Although this conception is assumed by many Americans to be eminently rational and quite universal, its emergence in the modern moral order can actually be traced directly to the influence of the biblical creation narrative on Christianity. As found in the book of Genesis, this narrative provides two conflicting accounts of the formation of the universe that nevertheless communicate a clear and congruous message about the natural order. Summed up by Vine Deloria Jr., this message states that though the world is “corrupted... and theoretically beyond redemption” due to the Fall, god has granted man “domination over the rest of creation.”<sup>30</sup> The stated goodness of creation mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis is quickly overshadowed by the impact of the original sin described in the second. Likewise, the ordained superiority of Adam over animals and plants foreshadows the eventual redemption of the world by a man in the Christ event.<sup>31</sup> Such a message immediately devalues the character of the land and non-human beings while advancing an abstract vision of salvation history in which humans are the sole focus.

This anthropocentrism remains so deep and pervasive in the cultural consciousness that even explicit attempts to generate alternative perspectives must

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<sup>30</sup> Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*, 30th anniversary ed. (Golden: Fulcrum, 2003), 79, 81.

<sup>31</sup> This argument is forcefully presented in Lynn White Jr.’s now classic essay entitled “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis.” *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1203-1207.

contend with its seductive influence. To take one prominent example, we can consider the “New Western History” movement and its articulations in the work of scholars such as Richard White and Patricia Nelson Limerick. Undoubtedly, the work of White and Limerick led the way in challenging simplistic accounts of westward expansion based on the frontier thesis, and in emphasizing the influence of culture over how expansion actually proceeded. Their efforts to increase the complexity, diversity, and accuracy of historical accounts of the American West have arguably helped reshape the field in beneficial and lasting ways. Yet in spite of their insightfulness and vitality, these efforts can be critiqued for their overall rootedness in essentially human-centric and temporal frames of analysis.

In a particularly revealing passage from her 2001 book *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West*, Limerick states:

The landscape thus has a number of layers, all demanding the scholar’s attention: rock and soil; plants and animals; humans as a physical presence, manifested in their physical works; and humans as an emotional and spiritual presence, manifested in the accumulated stories of their encounter with a place. Our attention and curiosity here cannot be exclusive. *One can glimpse the full power of a place only in the full story of the human presence there.* Thus, exclusive attention to the movements, actions, and impressions of Anglo-Americans is equivalent to the arbitrary editing of a scripture, skipping entire chapters and devoting disproportionate attention to a few featured verses. The complete story of the investment of human consciousness in the American landscape requires attention to the whole set of participants – indigenous people as well as invaders, eastward-moving Asian-Americans as well as westward-moving Euro-American people. With anything less, the meaning of the landscape is fragmented and truncated.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Patricia Nelson Limerick, *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 192 (emphasis added).

The preceding passage begins to reveal some of the advantages and limitations characteristic of this historiographical method. On the one hand, Limerick's assertion of the need to push beyond the viewpoints of White settlers opens up significant possibilities for the creation of more meaningful historical accounts. However, the passage's initial foray into the spatial dimensions of memory—as indicated in the acknowledgement of “rock and soil; plants and animals; humans as a physical presence”—soon diverts onto the temporal path along which the author really wants to travel—the “complete story of the investment of human consciousness.” This path, which defines the New Western History movement more generally, closely follows the modernist moral order by interpreting equality as a mere equivalency of representation. By giving contending human perspectives identical attention and weight, it is assumed that the fullest and most accurate portrait of reality can be painted.

Left to its own devices, such an assumption bypasses analysis of colonialism as a system, evades assessment of the context of power, and dodges recognition of spatial disorientation. These shortcomings are only amplified by the presentation of marginalized voices that are often attempting to communicate this exact sort of analysis, assessment, and recognition. For example, White opens the first chapter of his seminal work, *It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own*, by asserting that “The first Europeans to penetrate the West arrived neither as conquerors nor as explorers. Like so many others whom history has treated as discoverers, they were merely lost.”<sup>33</sup> In doing so, he

decenters popular images of westward expansion even as he misrepresents the motivating forces behind it. Within the larger context of conquest, folks like Christopher Columbus were anything but “merely lost.” Though such a description helpfully emphasizes the human dimensions of European invasion instead of excusing it as an unstoppable force of nature, it also potently obfuscates the fact that the invaders themselves were guided by a quest for profit, power, and prestige from the very beginning.<sup>34</sup> Many oral histories held within western Indian nations make no such obfuscation, including some of those referenced by White himself.

Likewise, the cultural perspectives of these nations can be contrasted with Limerick’s implied division between creative human subjectivity and the inert objectivity of nature. The relationships of Indian communities with the lands of the West are far older than any others, a longevity that can be construed as conferring a distinct sort of knowledge and authority. But as Deloria notes, modernist notions of equality, individualism, and anthropocentrism are nowhere to be found in the traditional views of these communities. On the contrary:

Behind the apparent kinship between animals, reptiles, birds, and human beings in the Indian way stands a great conception shared by a great majority of the tribes. Other living things are not regarded as insensitive species, Rather they are

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<sup>33</sup> Richard White, *“It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own”*: A New History of the American West (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1991), 5.

<sup>34</sup> In arguing that “the alteration of the American West became a tangled mixture of purpose and accident...[that] only partially conformed to European design,” White quite aptly accentuates the limits of European hegemony and the vigor of Indian agency. Yet as this argument underscores the complexities of historical change, it often loses sight of the fact that a design for conquest did exist in European thought and practice, and that this design was often realized to horrendous consequences. *“It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own”*, 18.



“people” in the same manner as the various tribes of human beings are people...Equality is thus not simply a human attribute but a recognition of the creatureness of all creation.<sup>35</sup>

The effect of such distinctly non-modern and non-Western perspectives on the accounts of “New Western History” has remained negligible, due in large part to the normalized status of Christian notions of creation within American deep culture broadly and the culture of academia more specifically. These notions undergird expectations regarding a natural order and inform assumptions about how the land should be treated, both conceptually and physically. Ironically, the approach of scholars like White and Limerick can therefore be accused of effectively silencing, or at least distorting and consigning to the past, some of the marginalized voices they purportedly reflect. As distinct perspectives are melded into a multicultural *mélange* under the auspices of heightening equality and authenticity, real deep culture difference can be negated through the privileging of historiographical frames that are thoroughly modern and Western in design.

Despite the elevation of human equality in the social imaginary, the privileging of humans over non-human entities is not actually extended uniformly across all groups. Instead, American society remains defined by intensive hierarchies of politico-economic and social inequality.<sup>36</sup> These hierarchies embody the division expressed by the promised

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<sup>35</sup> Deloria, *God is Red*, 192.

<sup>36</sup> And as a variety of indicators suggest, such hierarchies of inequality are only growing larger. Lawrence R. Jacobs and Theda Skocpol assess this trend: “Equal political voice and democratically responsive government are widely cherished American ideals—yet as the United States aggressively promotes democracy abroad, these principles are under growing threat in an era of persistent and rising

land image, which guided early settlers throughout the continent in distinguishing between chosen and non-chosen (or alternately, divinely favored and demonically marked, superior and inferior, or privileged and non-privileged) peoples. Yet as Anne McClintock relates, we miss the complexity of this division if we fail to examine how it has been manifested and camouflaged through the creation of interpenetrating categories of identity. In the modernist discourse of colonialism:

race, gender, and class are not distinct realms of experience, existing in splendid isolation from each other; nor can they be simply yoked together retrospectively like the armatures of Lego. Rather, they come into existence *in and through* relation to each other—if in contradictory and conflictual ways. In this sense, gender, race, and class can be called articulated categories.<sup>37</sup>

We can add to this list categories such as sexual orientation, nationality and immigration status, and religious background. Notwithstanding the intricacies and ambiguities of their articulated nature, these identity categories have proven imperative to the distribution of privileged status. Indeed, it has taken hundreds of years for certain hallmarks of

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inequalities at home. Disparities of income, wealth, and access to opportunity are growing more sharply in the United States than in many other nations, and gaps between races and ethnic groups persist. Progress toward expanding democracy may have stalled, and in some arenas reversed. Generations of Americans have worked to equalize citizen voice across lines of income, race, and gender. Today, however the voices of American citizens are raised and heard unequally. The privileged participate more than other and are increasingly well organized to their demands on government. Public officials, in turn, are much more responsive to the privileged than to average citizens and the less affluent. The voices of citizens with lower or moderate incomes are lost on the ears of inattentive government officials, while the advantaged roar with a clarity and consistency that policymakers readily hear and routinely follow. The scourge of overt discrimination against African Americans and women has been replaced by a more subtle but potent threat—the growing concentration of the country’s wealth, income, and political influence in the hands of the few.” “American Democracy in an Era of Rising Inequality,” in *Inequality and American Democracy: What We Know and What We Need to Learn*, eds. Lawrence R. Jacobs and Theda Skocpol (New York: Russell Sage, 2007), 1.

<sup>37</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 5.

modernist humanhood such as national citizenship, voting rights, and property holding to be extended beyond wealthy White men. And even then, such enfranchisement has arguably encouraged only marginally wider participation in a system that perpetually (to use Herbert David Croly's phrase) "starves and mutilates the great majority of the population."<sup>38</sup>

My point in acknowledging the operation of hierarchies is twofold. First, I contend that fundamental and ranked distinctions both *between* humans and non-humans, and *among* different types of human groups, are widely accepted as truth in the dominant culture. These sorts of distinctions are greatly consequential in real-world effect, yet also routinely overlooked and systemically denied. Second, such inconsistency is made possible as symbolic and material expressions of privilege mutually normalize and endorse one another through the land. The prevailing approach to space is commonly perceived as natural and liberative, even as it disproportionately benefits only certain human groups in actuality.

In the American manifestation of the modern moral order, seemingly laudable appeals to notions like individual freedom and human equality became the very foundation upon which the politico-economic experiment was built. Embodying the sort of ungrounded abstractions characteristic of temporal thinking, these appeals were

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<sup>38</sup> Herbert David Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, (New York, Macmillan, 1909), 14. Although Croly, a leader in the Progressive movement, employs this phrase in a somewhat different manner, one can conjecture that he would not object to this particular adaption. Also, for a more robust examination of how racism, classism, and sexism (among other "-isms") have developed and remained very much alive in American society, see Paula S. Rothenberg, ed., *Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Worth, 2004).

conceptualized as eminently rational in nature and irrefutably universal in scope. However, it is no coincidence that abstract appeals to freedom and equality originally arose in conjunction with, and in large part as a validation for, the tangible colonizing endeavors being advanced through dispossession, enslavement, and genocide. Ironically, the realization of temporal thinking has always relied heavily upon behaviors predicated on the possession and control of space.<sup>39</sup> In the space between social imaginary and social reality, we see mainly White men defining the natural order of the nation in one way while working to establish its functional order in quite another way. Within this specific context of power, the categorization of people has mirrored and complemented the categorization of land. Stated differently (and to return to the term's multiple functions), the groups that have been designated as privileged in American culture have been enabled to privilege the categorizations of space that directly support their individual positions of privilege and the Exceptionalist project more broadly. Conversely, the overriding objective of dominant spatial behavior has targeted the attainment of enduring and interrelated politico-economic goals; namely, the consolidation of territorial sovereignty, the growth of wealth through laissez-faire capitalism, and the entrenchment of the rule of law.

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<sup>39</sup> Marion Clawson notes: "Land history is also human history, and behind the account of the build-up and changes in land institutions, the reader will have to imagine the humans strength and foibles of those who carried these developments. To understand the United States of today, knowledge of its land history is essential." *The Land System of the United States: An Introduction to the History and Practice of Land Use and Land Tenure* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1968), 4. Although the notion of "foibles" is far too weak to accurately describe the colonization process (and is in fact quite misleading), the general thrust of the passage remains germane.

Citing its specific expression in the so-called “wise use” movement, Brian Edward Brown summarizes the general perspective behind the behavioral theme of privilege as:

[An] inveterate conceit that sees land solely in terms of human exploitation. In its reductive vision, such a perspective is blind to inherent value of land other than what it may yield for human use. As both legacy and perpetuation of an antiquated cosmology that minimized the moral significance of the natural world as so many insensible components of a similar inanimate mechanism, the wise use agenda speaks only the language of resource use and management. Its rhetoric, invidiously polarizing the priority of human economic activity against any concern for the protection and well-being of other living creatures, is without ethical complication. Since nature’s value is always subsidiary and derivative from the uses to which humanity applies it, problems do not arise from any recognition of and respect for the innate worth and integrity of living beings. Rather, conflicts arise from the competing claims of varying human interests over the disposition of a natural world rendered wholly domestic and servile through the hoary convention of property.<sup>40</sup>

The theme of privilege reflects an attitude in which land is primarily categorized according to its use value, especially to those human groups that stand at the apex of politico-economic and social hierarchies. Conversely, the relative values of particular spaces can often be determined through the types and intensities of behavior that surround them. Behavioral markers like the number and sort of people who seek to live in and control a particular space, the amount they are willing and able to pay, sacrifice, or demand in order to do so, the uses to which distinct landscapes are put; and the enjoyment of the benefits of such usage all offer insight into the way that value is

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<sup>40</sup> Brian Edward Brown, *Religion, Law, and the Land: Native Americans and the Judicial Interpretation of Sacred Land* (Westport: Greenwood, 1999), 1-2.

determined and extracted. By tracing the emergence of these markers over time, certain patterns in spatial behavior can be observed.

Although the topic of land use in American history is far too complex a topic to be thoroughly examined here, some broad trends can nevertheless be noted. The types of spaces that have tended to be categorized as most valuable have generally included those most closely identified with prevailing notions of civilization. Throughout much of the country's formative years, agricultural spaces and the behaviors related to their management were privileged above most others. It is no secret that the Founders saw American civilization being built on the literal and metaphorical fruits of agriculture. As Thomas Jefferson once asserted, "The greatest service which can be rendered any country [is to] add a useful plant to its culture."<sup>41</sup> The association between civilization and agriculture came to represent a guiding force in the genocide of Indian peoples, the enslavement of Africans on southern plantations, and the subjugation of women within the cult of domesticity. This combined focus on controlling land, labor, and love allowed the possession, production, and profit of agricultural spaces to be maximized.<sup>42</sup> For this

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<sup>41</sup> Qtd. in Francis L. Berkeley Jr., "Introduction," in *Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book*, by Thomas Jefferson, ed. Edwin Morris Betts (Charlottesville: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, 1999), xx.

<sup>42</sup> Leon Fink describes how this focus on control was symbolically represented in the Great Seal of the Grand Assembly of the Knights of Labor, one of the most important American labor organizations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: "Looking from the inside out, the equilateral triangle covering the Western Hemisphere was endowed with three layers of meaning—'humanity': or birth, life, and death; the elements of human happiness: land, labor, and love; and the three keys to economics: production, exchange, and consumption... The lines of the inner pentagon, representing justice, wisdom, truth, industry, and economy, defined the principles of 'Universal Brotherhood,' while they also symbolized the five senses, the five elements of nature (land, air, light, heat, and water,) and the demand for a five-day work week. Powderly's illumination of the pentagon when further to include the five mechanical power, 'the lever, pulley, screw,

reason Frieda Knobloch asserts, “Colonization is an agricultural act. It is also an agricultural idea.”<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Steven T. Newcomb identifies the association between the American colonial project and biblical notions of “seeding” and “cultivating” the promised land with a chosen people and their civilizing gifts.<sup>44</sup>

Beginning with the Civil War and continuing through the great World Wars, technological advances related to war-making and manufacturing helped institute a shift in which industry came to supplant (but not entirely replace) agriculture as the lynchpin in Exceptionalist thought.<sup>45</sup> Although this shift brought about corresponding changes in spatial behavior, such changes remained largely superficial in nature. While urban sprawl occurred alongside the industrialization of farming, the categorization of space continued to be determined in relation to how particular lands could be used to increase the security and prosperity of the privileged. In fact, at any given point in American history patterns

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wedge, and hammer.” *In Search of the Working Class: Essays in American Labor History and Political Culture* (Champaign: University of Illinois, 1994), 96.

<sup>43</sup> Frieda Knobloch, *The Culture of Wilderness: Agriculture as Colonization in the American West* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1996), 1.

<sup>44</sup> Steven T. Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land: Decoding the Doctrine of Christian Discovery* (Golden: Fulcrum, 2008), 42.

<sup>45</sup> Bruce Catton describes how the Civil War marked a turning point in the balance between agriculture and industry: “But if farms enjoyed a war boom, Northern industry had a growth that was almost explosive. Like the farmer, the manufacturer had all sorts of new machinery available—new machinery, and the mass-production techniques that go with machinery—and the war took all limits off his markets. The armies needed all manner of good: uniforms, underwear, boots and shoes, hats, blankets, tents, muskets, swords, revolvers, cannon, a bewildering variety of ammunition, wagons, canned foods, dressed lumber, shovels, steamboats, surgical instruments, and so on. During the first year industry was not geared to turn out all these things in the quantities required, and heavy purchases were made abroad while new factories were built, old factories remodeled, and machinery acquired and installed. By 1862 the government practically stopped buying munitions abroad, because its own manufacturers could give it everything it wanted.” *The Civil War* (New York: American Heritage, 2004), 162.

in the categorization of space can be directly correlated with dominant attitudes toward economic efficiency (i.e. profit), political expediency (i.e. power), and social esteem (i.e. prestige). Though influenced by innovations in technology, fluctuations in domestic and international politico-economics, and transformations in ecology, these attitudes reflect long-standing beliefs passed on in the social imaginary regarding what it means to be American.

The consequences of these beliefs are demonstrated in the record of spaces such as the Colorado Plateau. In this region, sophisticated and successful agricultural strategies were developed as part of the lifeways of indigenous communities like the Hopi long prior to European invasion. In traditional Hopi culture, the raising of corn continues to represent a pivotal aspect of developing an authentic relationship with the land.

Describing this relationship, Dennis Wall and Virgil Masayesva explain:

For traditional Hopis, corn is the central bond. Its essence, physically, spiritually, and symbolically, pervades their existence. For the people of the mesas, corn is sustenance, ceremonial object, prayer offering, symbol and sentient being unto itself. Corn is the Mother, in the truest sense—the people take in the corn and the corn becomes their flesh, as mother’s milk becomes the child. Corn is also regarded as the child, as when the wife of a farmer tends to the seeds and ears. The connection between the people and the corn is pervasive and deeply sacred. In a remarkable symbiosis between the physical and the spiritual, the Hopi people sustain the corn and the corn sustains Hopi culture.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Dennis Wall and Virgil Masayesva, “People of the Corn: Traditional Hopi Agriculture and Sustainability,” in *International Handbook of Research on Indigenous Entrepreneurship*, eds. Léo-Paul Dana and Robert B. Anderson (Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2007), 404-405.



This description of spatial relationship clashes sharply with the following one articulated by the American Commerce Association (ACA) in 1915. Focusing on the same region, the ACA states:

The soil of this section is not productive, but affords fair ranges for live stock. Wool and live stock are the principle products. Silver is found in the mountains. There are no important cities within this area.<sup>47</sup>

These two descriptions reveal fundamentally distinct ways of relating to the same land. In the case of traditional Hopi culture the primary categorization of space seems to be founded on notions of balance and relationship. Humans and the land are envisioned as existing with and for each other, with corn as the vital and living link between them. In contrast, the ACA's comments are marked by a clear and particular vision of civilization and use value. The land is portrayed as unsuited to farming—that is, Western commercial-style farming—but also as profitably employed in the grazing of livestock. Further, by categorizing the space as a regional *terra nullius* in spite of past and present indigenous habitation, the ACA justifies the development of ranching and mining as rational methods by which employ it productively. Of course, in the century following the publication of these comments in 1915, changes occurred in what types of spatial behavior were considered both possible and desirable. For example, the development of irrigation technologies opened more land to Western-style agriculture, while mining efforts shifted to uranium and coal after the area's silver and gold reserves had been depleted. The dominant systems of privilege at work have remained largely consistent

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<sup>47</sup> American Commerce Association, *Traffic Geography*, eds. Elvin S. Ketchum, Edward G. Ward, and Thomas D. Fitzgerald (Chicago: American Commerce Association, 1915), 61.

over the course of such changes, however, even as water tables have bottomed-out, erosion and vegetation loss have intensified, and entire landscapes have been rendered uninhabitable.<sup>48</sup>

Today both urban commercial and industrial centers as well as rich farming and grazing lands represent primary examples of privileged spaces throughout the US, albeit to differing degrees. Another example of privileged space is represented in areas marked by high quality and easily extractable resources such as metals, timber, oil, gas, and coal. Of course, the concept of resources in and of itself embodies a particular type of spatial categorization related to dominant norms and interests. Residential and suburban zones may also be highly valued, although unsurprisingly this value is largely tied to the identity categories associated with people who inhabit these zones.<sup>49</sup> One type of space which has seen a steady increase in its perceived value, especially in regions such as the Southwest, comprises sources of water for drinking, irrigation, fishing, and industrial

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<sup>48</sup> For an in-depth look at ecological threats in this context, see Howard G. Wilshire, Jane E. Nielson, and Richard W. Hazlett, *The American West at Risk: Science, Myths, and Politics of Land Abuse and Recovery* (New York: Oxford University, 2008).

<sup>49</sup> Charles W. Mills movingly expresses the devaluing of spaces inhabited by minority communities in bodily terms: “And this leprous flesh, the boundary of political, moral, and spatial exclusion from the body politic proper, marks the limits of the sovereign’s full responsibilities. As derogated space, inhabited by beings of lesser worth, it is a functionalist space analogous to the body parts below the belt, the ones we keep hidden. Since the normative body is the white body, the black body, or the unavoidable black parts of the white body—its waste products, its excreta—need to be kept out of white sight. White space needs to be maintained in its character *as* white and preserved from contamination by the ever-threatening dark space—evil, shitty, savage, subproletarianized. On the collective white macro-body, these spaces are literally blots on the landscape that we have to tolerate but that must not be allowed to trespass beyond their borders. The politics of racial space then requires that the line be drawn, the boundaries not crossed. These spaces must stay in their place. The racial contract is in part an agreement to maintain certain spatial relations, a certain *spatial regime*, the incarnation of the white body politic, they physical manifestation of the white Leviathan.” “Black Trash,” in *Faces of Environmental Racism: Confronting Issues of Global Justice*, eds. Laura Westra and Bill E. Lawson, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 88 (emphasis original).

uses. With both agriculture and industry competing for a quickly diminishing supply, spaces of water are becoming privileged in exponential fashion.<sup>50</sup> Other natural or “wild” spaces may also be considered as desirable, especially if they are suited to the development of tourism enterprises or the emplacement of military installations. The general bipolar categorization of space as urban/developed versus rural/natural takes on interesting connotations in light of spatial disorientation.

First, as Kjell Andersson et al. assert, the categorization of space as either urban/developed or rural/natural largely represents a false dichotomy. Despite its significant historical influence in shaping American (and more broadly Western) thought about space, this assumed division is actually highly arbitrary, pliable, and conditional. These characteristics make it a key device of behavioral manipulation in the pursuit of dominant interests. As Andersson et al. explain:

Sometimes, “urban centres” have been depicted as signs of human perversion (Sodom and Gomorrah); other times—and more often—as symbols and indications of human progress. Sometimes, rural areas have been regarded as unspoilt landscapes sheltering pristine communities; other times—and again, more often—as backward areas providing towns and cities with raw material and manpower. The rural-urban dichotomy is imputed with an array of ideological elements, all with different amplitudes and linkages to current and historical discourses.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> For a revealing exposition of the relations among water scarcity, privatization, and marginalized peoples in the US Southwest, see Helen Ingram and F. Lee Brown, “Commodity and Community Water Values: Experiences from the US Southwest,” in *Searching for Equity: Conceptions of Justice and Equity in Peasant Irrigation*, Rutgerd Boelens and Gloria Dávila, eds. (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1998), 114-120.

<sup>51</sup> Kjell Andersson et al., “Introduction: Beyond the Rural-Urban Divide,” in *Beyond the Rural-Urban Divide: Cross-Continental Perspectives on the Differentiated Countryside and its Regulation*, Research in Rural Sociology and Development, vol. 14, eds. Kjell Andersson et al. (Bingley: Emerald Group, 2009), 2.

The bipolar categorization of space can be understood in part as a rhetorical trope, the contextual application of which significantly shapes perceptions of how land can and should be used. This misleading but highly normalized trope has allowed inconsistent approaches to space to be held together within a single stabilizing social imaginary. For example, we see certain natural areas utterly decimated for the extraction of useful substances such as oil, coal, and water, while others are set aside as national parks and called “America’s Best Idea.”<sup>52</sup> Both sides of the categorization exemplify the theme of privilege, in that each firmly places the control of space into the hands of elite politico-economic bodies such as resource corporations and the US government. Both also expose the instability inherent to dominant patterns of spatial behavior, which tend to focus on extracting maximum profit, power, and prestige from land use while ignoring consequences to broader ecological lifeways.

Second, as the amount of unexploited rural/natural space has steadily decreased, possession of these spaces has increasingly become a sought-after marker of privilege. This desire for possession is related in part to nostalgic perceptions of the nation’s “authentic” rootedness in agristic and adventurous lifestyles, and in part to the cultural impact of conspicuous consumption. Illustrating the connection between rural/natural space and privileged identity in one historical context—that of Bedford, Connecticut in the early 2000’s—James S. Duncan and Nancy G. Duncan state:

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<sup>52</sup> For an example of the official usage of this phrase, see “America’s Best Idea Today,” US National Park Service, accessed 22 November 2010, <http://www.nps.gov/americasbestidea>.

Since the late nineteenth century, Bedford's elite has been cosmopolitan and urbane in its public and business life, but deeply anti-urban in many aspects of its private life. Bedford has been a highly controlled space, a semi-privatized domain in which supposedly authentic rural republican American identity can be nurtured. Its landscapes are treated as aesthetic productions, highly controlled so that as far as the eye can see, even if one drives or rides on horseback for many miles, one views nothing industrial or distasteful. Residents of Bedford maintain the illusion of disconnection through the spatial separation of home and work and an aestheticized attitude that conflates images of the English country gentleman, owner of all he surveys, with the sentimental pastoralism of the Jeffersonian American small farmer and individualistic agrarianism. This ambiguity can be seen in the language of residents as found in interviews, newspaper articles, town and club histories, and real estate advertisements in which the terms "aristocrat," "great estate," and "commanding distant views" sit comfortably alongside terms such as "the simple country life," "rustic," rural charm," "farmer's club" (actually an exclusive, elite institution), "studied seediness," and "old colonial simplicity." Residents spatially and visually insulate themselves from uncomfortable questions of race and poverty and keep out of sight as many reminders of the social consequences of what has been referred to as "painless privilege" as possible.<sup>53</sup>

This example raises several insights of relevance to the exploration of dominant spatial behavior. For example, the preservation of highly valued spaces for the exclusive use of privileged folks is often predicated upon the exploitation of lesser valued spaces and the beings that exist within them. This disjuncture is represented in the NIMBY ("Not In My Back Yard") factor cited by environmental justice scholars and activists like Robert Bullard. The resources needed by the American politico-economic machine must come from somewhere, just as the pollution it creates must go somewhere. As Bullard decries, these burdens and benefits are quite inequitably distributed due to imbalances in the field of power, with "communities made up of low-income groups and people of color [paying] a heavy price: diminished health, lowered property values, and a reduced

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<sup>53</sup> James S. Duncan and Nancy G. Duncan, *Landscapes of Privilege: The Politics of the Aesthetic in an American Suburb* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 9-10.

quality of life.”<sup>54</sup> Further, the categorization of space as rural/natural frequently masks intensive human manipulation. A variety of artificial devices are commonly used to enhance the aesthetics, access, safety, and productivity of supposedly pristine spaces—the application of pesticides and herbicides, the introduction of foreign species and removal of native ones, the construction of roads and recreational amenities, etc. Such manipulation provides immediate comforts and benefits to certain groups by bending the character of these spaces toward egocentric and short-sighted desires. It also further separates communities of relative privilege from an awareness of the dual exploitation of land and Other.

The fabrication of these sorts of physical and psychological buffers around the lives and consciousness of many Americans helps preserve an attractive illusion in which individuals see themselves as quite healthily oriented to space, and their relations with the land as normal and innocuous. This illusion sustains a sense of unnatural innocence and prevents the dynamics of American repression from being felt and acknowledged. The theme of privilege can be understood as a guiding force behind spatial behavior in three main ways: a) through the categorization of certain types of people and spaces as privileged; b) through the social and politico-economic benefits or burdens that accrue from having or not having privilege; and c) through the privileging of certain manipulations of space based on perceptions of use value and identity. Over time, each of these levels has been independently normalized within deep culture, obfuscating their

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<sup>54</sup> Robert D. Bullard, “Introduction,” in *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution*, ed. Robert D. Bullard (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 2005), 6.

integrated connections and consequences. In turn, notions regarding use value have become detached from realities of hierarchy and exploitation, while categorizations such as urban/developed and rural/natural are conceived as rational and neutral. The disassociation of spatial behavior from these levels of privilege therefore supports faith in Exceptionalism by allowing abstract claims regarding freedom and equality to remain largely unexplored in the face of actual systems of profit, power, and prestige that are anything but free and equal. Since such exploration would require a painful, complicated, and long-term evaluation of cultural identity, repression rather than reflection remains the rule and not the exception of American life.

### *B. Property*

Of all the characteristics associated with and derivative of dominant spatial behavior, the ability to own property must be considered as paramount. Private, individual property ownership represents a basic underpinning of the American politico-economic and legal systems, and one which is extolled in the social imaginary as distinctive to the national character. Further, it signifies perhaps the primary and most consequential way that Americans relate to the spaces they inhabit. But while the ownership of property is typically thought of as a natural right and a basic freedom—in other words, a hallmark of enlightened civilization—a deeper examination of this behavioral theme suggests a different interpretation. In contrast to prevailing attitudes, property ownership can be more accurately understood as form of privilege and tool of assimilation. More a seductive articulation of feudal and colonial mindsets than a

fundamental advancement over them, notions of private property reproduce the Western prioritization of time and incentivize the individualistic atomization of society. Through the accompanying manipulation of greed and fear, individuals are encouraged to distrust communal organization and avoid reflection on their historical relationship with the land.

To understand how the theme of property functions in the American context, we must first look to its intellectual foundation in classical liberalism. Here we see the integration of two main arguments, namely, the justice argument and the utility argument.<sup>55</sup> Closely informed by the expectations communicated in the modern moral order, these arguments have usually been presented by mainstream politico-economic and philosophical thinkers in a complementary fashion.<sup>56</sup>

In terms of the justice argument, property ownership is defended as a particular expression of natural law and a basic human right, with accompanying moral significance. Linking the ownership of land directly to the right of individuals to possess their own faculties (a notion including “mind, body, and talents”), figures such as James Madison furthered the modernist tradition by transforming cultural particularities into

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<sup>55</sup> See George G. Brenkert and Tom L. Beauchamp, *The Oxford Handbook of Business Ethics* (New York: Oxford, 2010), 415-419; Ali Riza Çoban, *Protection of Property Rights Within the European Convention on Human Rights* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 35-78; and Thomas G. West, “The Economic Theory of the American Founding,” in *Rediscovering Political Economy*, eds. Joseph Postell and Bradley C.S. Watson (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), 161-162 .

<sup>56</sup> For example, Greg Forster argues in defense of classical liberalism: “Moreover, the efficiency case for capitalism and the original moral case are not alternatives; they are complementary. When asked why we shouldn't take money from the fortunate and give it to the less fortunate, we can reply both ‘because it doesn't work’ and ‘because stealing is wrong.’ Many thinkers—from Aquinas to Locke to our own time—have successfully availed themselves of both approaches.” “Sacred Enterprise,” *Claremont Review of Books* 9, no. 3 (2009), [http://www.claremont.org/publications/crb/id.1646/article\\_detail.asp](http://www.claremont.org/publications/crb/id.1646/article_detail.asp).



universal truths through the invoking of freedom.<sup>57</sup> The freedom to own property, whether actualized or potential, is understood as a keystone to the operation of a just society. In turn, infringements on the free pursuit and ownership of property are framed as fundamental injustices which must be prohibited and punished through the establishment of a rule of law. Property thus emerges in the cultural consciousness as a primary and generative force of social organization—a sentiment aptly reflected in Frédéric Bastiat’s contention that “property does not exist because there are laws, but laws exist because there is property.”<sup>58</sup>

Conversely, the ownership of property is promoted through the utility argument not due to its inherent worth, but rather because of the effective function it serves. This argument suggests that the security and prosperity of society is best secured through a system in which individuals are free to pursue, possess, and exchange property as they are able and see fit. Such a system is claimed as the most effective and efficient means by which individuals can not only obtain the goods necessary for survival, but also attain the state of flourishing they are naturally intended to pursue.<sup>59</sup> This multi-leveled schema informs the legal protection of property rights by emphasizing both the material and spiritual consequences of rights infringement. In this view, politico-economic and legal institutions must ensure the exercise of property rights is both possible and desirable not

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<sup>57</sup> See West, “The Economic Theory of the American Founding,” 163.

<sup>58</sup> Frédéric Bastiat, *Selected Essays on Political Economy*, ed. George B. de Huszar, trans. Seymour Cain (Irvington-on-Hudson: Foundation for Economic Education, 1964), 97.

<sup>59</sup> West explains, “There is, then, both a low (mere life) and a high (freedom and happiness) use of property.” “The Economic Theory of the American Founding,” 162.

because such rights are inherently natural or human, but rather because they provide unrivaled utility to individuals and societies alike. Although the utility argument tends to be more commonly advanced than the justice argument today, both arguments have remained in heavy circulation through the course of American history.

This historical circulation has made the justice and utility of individual property ownership seem as second nature to many Americans. Indeed, even in describing these arguments here I find myself unconsciously accepting them, silently affirming the “sense” that they seem to make as they cause my deep cultural formation to reverberate. The demystification of behavioral themes like property represents a challenging but hopeful step away from the repression upon which my own sense of unnatural innocence rests. It is important and necessary that I consistently remind myself that the infatuation with property did not simply arise organically and concurrently across the range of humanity. Rather, it was actively developed in a particular cultural and historical context, and bears the markings of that line of emergence.

While many figures participated in bringing about the emergence of this infatuation over time, perhaps none did so quite as robustly as the English philosopher John Locke. Much has been made of Locke’s influence on property rights discourse and the thinking of American Founders like Thomas Jefferson.<sup>60</sup> Even a brief overview of this

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<sup>60</sup> For a few relevant works, see generally Peter Anstey, ed., *The Philosophy of John Locke: New Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Kristin Shrader-Frechette, "Locke and Limits on Land Ownership," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 54, no. 2 (1993): 201-220; Gopal Sreenivasan, *The Limits of Lockean Rights in Property* (New York: Oxford University, 1995); James Tully, *A Discourse on Property: John Locke and His Adversaries*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1983); Jeremy Waldron, *God, Locke,*

influence helps shed light on the connections among property, spatial disorientation, and Exceptionalism.

Locke's thought on property emanates from the intersection between two of his most basic intellectual characteristics. First, as Jeremy Waldron notes, within his seventeenth-century English context Locke represented an "equality-radical" whose views on human nature placed him in a philosophical minority. In a society where "political correctness argued the other way," Locke "accorded basic equality the strongest grounding that a principle could have," albeit with some concessions over time.<sup>61</sup> Locke's convictions regarding equality were intimately related to a second intellectual characteristic, his thoroughly Protestant Christian worldview. Locke's philosophical positions on concepts such as natural law and freedom indicate his relatively unabashed indebtedness to Christian theological and scriptural precepts. Seminal works such as the *Two Treatises of Government* are, in the words of John Dunn, "saturated with Christian assumptions." Explaining this saturation, Dunn continues, "Locke claims to be considering the human condition at large in terms of reason but what he perceives in it is what he already knows (from Christian revelation) to be there."<sup>62</sup> This intersection is of critical importance, for it reveals an essential insight into the functioning of property in the modern moral order and its specific manifestation in the American social imaginary.

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*and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke's Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002).

<sup>61</sup> Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality*, 5-6.

<sup>62</sup> John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the 'Two Treatises of Government'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1969), 98-99.

As an example, we can consider the following passage taken from Locke's "Of Property," perhaps the most notorious chapter in the *Second Treatise*. He states:

God gave the world to men in common, but since He gave it them for their benefit the greatest conveniences of life they were capable to draw from it, it cannot be supposed He meant it should always remain common and uncultivated. *He gave it to the use of the industrious and rational (and labour was to be his title to it)*; not the fancy or covetousness of the quarrelsome and contentious... The law man was under was rather for appropriating. God commanded, and his wants forced him to labour. That was his property, which could not be taken from him wherever he had fixed it. And hence subduing or cultivating the earth and having dominion, we see, are joined together. The one gave title to the other. So that God, by commanding to subdue, gave authority so far to appropriate. And the condition of human life, which requires labour and materials to work on, necessarily introduce private possessions.<sup>63</sup>

As this passage demonstrates, in Locke's thought human equality represents an eminently rational, and thus universally true, phenomenon. However, equality conceived in this fashion cannot exist in a morally neutral space. Instead, it transmits a message encoded with a string of philosophical cognates, any one of which immediately and implicitly calls up the others to transmit a dense message. If equality is rational, then it must also be civilized, divine, true, and right. In this way, the concept of rationality operates in the thought of Locke and in the modernist tradition more widely in a similar fashion to the functionality of the term "Word" in the opening to the biblical gospel of John.<sup>64</sup>

As the message works in one direction, it also works in all the others. That which is "known" to be civilized, divine, true, and right must also embody and work in support

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<sup>63</sup> John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, originally published 1690 (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004), 20-21 (emphasis added).

<sup>64</sup> As the evangelist clearly intends, the term "Word" is inseparably connected in the text with the terms "God," "light," "life," "grace," "truth," etc. Thus, to reference one is to implicitly reference all the others. See John 1 (New American Bible translation).

of equality. Of course, the negotiation of this sort of knowledge is always mediated through the workings of deep culture. Hence even as Locke's explicit referencing of divine commandment has given way at times to more secularized allusions to natural order in contemporary culture, common knowledge about property retains the same basic structure. In this way of knowing, there is a natural law involving equality and freedom. This law is expressed most successfully through the individual possession of property, and the right to such possession is earned by those who best use land for the purposes of securing life and happiness. The question of god's involvement in ordaining this order may be open for debate; however, the nature and meaning of the order itself goes largely unquestioned. Such lack of reflection on assumed truths has allowed colonial systems of privilege to be validated and normalized through eras of both overt land grabbing and more subtle politico-economic oppression.

Andrew Fitzmaurice further illustrates the foundational role played by natural law principles in sustaining systems of privilege:

These principles are foundational for Western cultures; they are not just the intellectual propositions of philosophers. The ideas that ownership of property is based on use...and more broadly that we demonstrate that we are human through the exploitation of nature (or that we are not human if we fail to do so) are fundamental to European history. These ideas are not unique to Greek philosophy and Roman law; similar ideas are found throughout the Bible and through much of modern European thinking. The history of the legal arguments used to justify colonial dispossession follows the natural law heritage back through Vitoria, but it must be kept in mind that this history reflected broader movements in Western cultures.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Andrew Fitzmaurice, "The Genealogy of Terra Nullius," *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 129 (2007): 7.

The idea that anyone can exercise a natural and legal right to possess land simply using it effectively and efficiently can be difficult to reject at first glance. Such a perspective can seem fundamentally geared toward favoring egalitarian outcomes and establishing a social equilibrium of survival and happiness. However, the fatal flaw in this reasoning becomes clear when the implications of pressing the right to property are observed in real-world politico-economic and historical contexts.

The justice and utility arguments for individual property ownership have often worked to justify colonial dispossession by simultaneously making such ownership morally defensible in theory and asymmetrically privileged in practice. While in the US “all men” can be theoretically portrayed as “created equal,” certain types of people and uses of land have always been privileged over others in actuality.<sup>66</sup> The past and continued slavery and indentured servitude of non-White and poor White persons have been founded upon and administered through rational ideas regarding property as codified in law. In keeping with the modern moral order, a contrast has traditionally been drawn in American culture between proper civilized uses of land and improper primitive ones.

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<sup>66</sup> Indeed, Stephen A. Douglas argued (in favor of) this very point during his victorious 1858 US Senate campaign against Abraham Lincoln: “I believe that the Declaration of Independence, in the words, ‘all men are created equal,’ was intended to allude only to the people of the United States, to men of European birth or descent, being white men; that they were created equal, and hence that Great Britain had no right to deprive them of their political and religious privileges; but the signers of that paper did not intend to include the Indian or the negro in that Declaration; for if they had, would they not have been bound to abolish slavery in every State and colony from that day? Remember, too, that at the time the Declaration was put forth, every one of the thirteen colonies were slaveholding colonies; every man who signed that Declaration represented slaveholding constituents. Did those signers mean by that act to charge themselves and all their constituents with having violated the law of God, in holding the negro in an inferior condition to the white man?” Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, *The Political Debates Between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1912), 143.

This contrast is drawn in part through the prioritization of temporal concerns over spatial ones. This prioritization is made explicit in US property law, much of which is derived from the English common law system. As A.N. Yiannopoulos illustrates in *Introduction to the Law of the United States*:

The historical basis of common law property is that only the crown can own land. A landowner, strictly speaking, does not own land but a *time* in the land... This common law technique, giving a legal explanation to the present market value attaching to successive rights to hold property, attaches ownership not to the land itself but to an abstract entity, the estate, which is interposed between the tenant and the land. The estate is purely conceptual, yet it is treated by the law as if it were a real thing with an identity of its own. It may be said that the estate represents the fourth dimension of land: the ownership of land is divisible in respect of time according to a coherent set of rules, and slices of the ownership representing rights to successive holdings of the land are regarded as present estates co-existing at the same time. With this development, the law of property in common law jurisdictions ceased to be earthbound.<sup>67</sup>

Regulated by imaginary legal devices, spatial behavior becomes mediated through time and further removed from actual relationship with the land. This semblance of relationship is held in turn as the standard of proper and acceptable conduct. Such circular logic provides those in positions of relative privilege with extensive administrative control over how space is used and who benefits from its usage.

The contrast between civilized and primitive uses of land is also determined along the lines of individual versus communal property ownership. Prior to and into the industrial era, the preference for individual ownership was evidenced through the favoring of land holding by male-headed nuclear families pursuing Western-style

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<sup>67</sup> A. N. Yiannopoulos, "Property," in *Introduction to the Law of the United States*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., eds. David S. Clark and Tugrul Ansay (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2002), 221 (emphasis original).

agriculture and commerce. With the rise of corporate dominance the honoring of this preference has continued, with large capitalist flagships being recognized and treated as individual “persons” under the law. It is therefore unsurprising that the utility argument has become more prominent than the justice argument over time. For as notions of equal rights have proven largely contingent and disingenuous in a diversifying society, notions of functionality have been increasingly relied upon to validate the infatuation with property. In the meantime, disparity in actual property ownership along the lines of race, class, and gender has remained startlingly high, and has even risen in recent years.<sup>68</sup>

Such disparity reflects a distinction, initially outlined in the thought of Locke, Adam Smith, and other seminal modernist thinkers, between the equality of opportunity and the equality of outcome. This philosophical and moral distinction maintains that while societies should seek to provide equal opportunities for individuals to better the conditions of their survival and flourishing, they should reject the guarantee of equal outcomes as violations of freedom and impediments to efficiency. The influence of such a distinction is evident in the work of conservative scholars like Thomas G. West, who in writing about the role of property ownership in twenty-first century America can assert without any sense of irony, “An economic order in which some acquire more than others is the condition of greater prosperity of all.”<sup>69</sup> Although perhaps tenable among the

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<sup>68</sup> The unequal distribution of property among racial minorities, the poor, and women is widely documented. Indeed, for much of American history these groups were treated *as property* (either by law or custom) by those in positions of relative power, most often White men.

<sup>69</sup> West, “The Economic Theory of the American Founding,” 179. Penning a particularly intricate and unapologetic articulation of Exceptionalist thought, West argues that the Founders fully intended for



already prosperous, such an assertion might receive a somewhat cooler reception among those who do not enjoy the tangible benefits of property, power, and wealth. West's assertion would be laughable were it not so deeply engrained in the dominant culture, where commonplace beliefs in the basic equality of human persons are endorsed alongside assumptions of the inevitability, normativity, and even profitability of social and politico-economic inequality. In a culture where the values of individualism and self-help remain central to faith in Exceptionalism (as expressed through the pseudo-science of social Darwinism or the perpetual Horatio Alger myth), explanations of the stark disparity in American property ownership are regularly pursued through appeals to the superior labor, talent, or luck of the relatively affluent.<sup>70</sup> In contrast, claims of systemic discrimination are often dismissed as complaints of the lazy, inept or unlucky.

Considering these cultural dynamics, we do well to think about the theme of property in light of maxims promoted by two famous American statesmen: John Adams' "Power always follows property," and Thomas Jefferson's "The earth belongs in usufruct to the living."<sup>71</sup> Contrary to their promoters' intentions, these maxims are quite helpful in

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inequality to be the norm of American politico-economic life (especially in terms of property), and that in fact "Government today has strayed too far from the Founders' approach to economics" (180).

<sup>70</sup> For some analyses of how these values function in the dominant culture, see Antonette Jefferson, *Essays on Social Issues and How They Impact African Americans and Other People of Color* (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2010), especially 104-119; Ivan Light and Carolyn Rosenstein, *Race, Ethnicity, and Entrepreneurship in Urban America* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), especially 205-228; Chris Rabb, *Invisible Capital: How Unseen Forces Shape Entrepreneurial Opportunity* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2010), especially 51-82.

<sup>71</sup> See respectively John Clarke, *Land, Power, and Economics On the Frontier of Upper Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 2001), 448; and Judith N. Shklar, "The Boundaries of Democracy," in *American Social and Political Thought: A Reader*, ed. Andreas Hess (New York: New York University,

revealing the ways that individual property ownership nourishes spatial disorientation. Notions of property do tend to embrace the fundamental importance of land to human existence, if in a particularly problematic way. Further, property ownership has in some cases offered benefits and protections to otherwise historically marginalized individuals and communities. However, these positive consequences have typically come at the expense of forcing consideration of spatial issues into a zero-sum game of politico-economic power.<sup>72</sup> As land is primarily defined in terms ownership and utility (i.e as a “thing” to be owned and acted upon), the development of meaningful relationships with particular spaces becomes subordinated to efforts to maximize control, management, and production. Likewise, the characters of the spaces themselves—as distinctively unveiled in the periodic sequences of life, death, and rebirth that suspend whole networks of beings within a rhythmic cycle of time—are overlooked in favor of linear and often shortsighted conceptions of how the spaces might best be used. By atomizing society and promoting

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2002), 73. Like Adams and Jefferson, many of the seminal figures responsible for advancing individual property ownership in the US and beyond saw themselves as working in defense of human rights and freedom. Progenitors of the contemporary politico-economic system, these White men correctly gauged the intimate association between land and power. However, their anthropocentric, Eurocentric, and individualistic, and temporal biases led them to develop policies that were fundamentally oppressive to beings perceived as unlike them. They could therefore champion equality in word while simultaneously sabotaging it in deed, often without acknowledging any sense of contradiction.

<sup>72</sup> Over time the “gentlemen’s rules” of this game were codified into Western legal structures, enabling a continuous quest to control new territories. Andrew Fitzmaurice explains how this quest first targeted continental areas outside of Europe before moving into the earth’s polar regions and beyond: “This legal continuity points to the endurance of European expansion, which passed into the new frontier of space at precisely the historical moment that decolonization was gaining momentum. As European expansion moved to this new frontier it carried its library of political and legal arguments with it. These arguments, and specifically the natural law tradition, that had been used to debate the justice of colonization were now turned to space exploration. This should hardly come as a surprise because the ideas of the use and exploitation of nature that underpinned natural law ideas of property were at the heart of the motivation for European expansion. “The Genealogy of *Terra Nullius*,” *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 129 (2007), 5.

competition on an unequal playing field, property tends to negate the type of holistic, communal approaches to space that might yield more truthful, inclusive, and durable solutions to the eternal problems of survival and happiness.

The starkest exemplar of the how the theme of property subsidizes inequality and strengthens the bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism can be found in the genocide of American Indian communities. Both the justice and utility arguments in favor of property have been used over time to justify the theft of Indian lands. On the one hand, the humanity of Indian peoples has remained a matter of debate for much of American history. Many early invaders likened the indigenous inhabitants they encountered to animals without souls, a conceptualization that has quietly lingered within deep culture to the present day.<sup>73</sup> Since natural law has traditionally been understood to bestow property rights on human beings alone, the debate provided many White settlers with sufficient excuse to lay claim to spaces that were accordingly defined as *terra nullius*. In theory, such claims did not violate the dictates of justice because they did not infringe upon the rights of other fully human beings.

On the other hand, even when the equal humanity of Indian peoples has been acknowledged, perceptions of cultural inferiority have stepped in to carry on the validation of conquest. These perceptions have been demonstrated in maneuverings such

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<sup>73</sup> This conceptualization was famously promoted by Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, the early Spanish invader and classical humanist scholar who declared, “In wisdom, skill, virtue, and humanity, these people are as inferior to the Spaniards as children are to adults and women to men; there is as great a difference between them as there is between savagery and forbearance, between violence and moderation, almost—I am inclined to say—as between monkeys and men.” Qtd. in Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other* (New York: HarperCollins, 1984), 153.

as the 1887 General Allotment Act (also known as the Dawes Act, after its main champion Senator Henry L. Dawes). The Dawes Act sought to civilize Indian peoples by forcing them to relinquish traditional systems of dynamic communal interaction with particular places and move instead to a system of sedentary farming of small private plots by individual families. Reflecting a common American pattern, Dawes saw no contradiction between his self-proclaimed vocation to “[vindicate] the equality of the human race upon this continent in all political rights,” and his belief that to be a proper American citizen one must “wear civilized clothes...cultivate the ground, live in houses, ride in Studebaker wagons, send children to school, drink whiskey [and] own property.”<sup>74</sup> For Dawes as for many Americans before and since, the equal humanity of Indian peoples could only be affirmed and protected by efforts to secure their conversion (by persuasion, manipulation, or force) to the superior ways of Western culture as exemplified by individual property ownership.<sup>75</sup> And if conversion also resulted in easier access to desirable and wealth-producing spaces for Whites, so much the better.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Qtd. in Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1998), 151; and Lewis Hyde, *Common as Air: Revolution, Art, and Ownership* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010), 169.

<sup>75</sup> Tink Tinker illustrates the multifaceted nature of cultural genocide: “In order to ensure the success of the [“civilization”] project and to succeed also in reducing Indian land holdings and increasing the land holdings of White settlers, the liberal reformers in the government and in the churches built a policy platform with a number of planks. They first called for teaching Indians the private ownership of property and breaking up the reservation land holdings. Second, they called for the evangelization and education of Indian children. Most important to their strategy was their insistence that Indian national communities relinquish their status as sovereign nations and come under direct US governance as full citizens. This, of course, was the US attempt to administer the coup de grace to Indian cultures, values, and religious traditions.” *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), 13.

This common attitude has received justification in both religious and realist terms from the earliest days of American culture. The social imaginary frames conquest in terms of discovery and destiny by elevating images with explicit religious content such as promised land and city upon a hill. As Steven Newcomb notes, the influence of this framing can be found throughout the legal system, effectively advocating that just like “Abram and the Hebrews,” the American nation has been chosen since the beginning of creation “to ‘inherit’ *both* the land *and* the indigenous peoples.”<sup>77</sup> Widely felt if seldom verbalized, the perception of a divine mandate has guided behavior based around the management, cultivation, and subduing of the land and indigenous peoples alike. Alternatively, conquest has been portrayed in realist terms as beneficial to all involved. Ward Churchill relates how the realist justification has often been communicated in terms of “a foregone conclusion, that, ‘*however* unfortunate and regrettable the past, it has all worked out for the best’ for victim and victimizer alike, given the superlative nature of the civilization we now mutually inhabit.”<sup>78</sup> In other words, Indian peoples should be grateful for the gifts which have been bestowed upon them and which have allowed them to attain a higher state of survival and happiness.

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<sup>76</sup> For a brief summary of the devastating consequences of the General Allotment Act, see Vine Deloria Jr., *Spirit & Reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr., Reader*, eds. Barbara Deloria, Kristen Foehner, and Sam Scinta (Golden: Fulcrum, 1999), especially 191.

<sup>77</sup> Newcomb, *Pagans in the Promised Land*, 41 (emphasis original).

<sup>78</sup> Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1997), 4 (emphasis original).

Of course, religious and realist justifications of conquest are not necessarily unique to the American experience. K.D. Verma describes European colonialism generally as “an expression of the powerful urge to gain political and economic supremacy [that] had the blessings of ‘feudalized Christianity,’” while John Brewer and Susan Staves contend that colonialism can “be construed—in a purely secular sense—as a rescue of indigenous peoples from barbarism by conferring upon them the benefits of private property as understood by Europeans.”<sup>79</sup> What is distinctive about the American experience, however, is the extent to which the theme of property has directly and boldly guided spatial behavior into genocidal and ecocidal outcomes. The perceived lack of individual property ownership and Western-style uses of land among indigenous communities has been translated in the American context into a particularly potent tool of social dispossession and politico-economic domination. Examining this translation through the work of Locke, Robert A. Williams explains:

The *Second Treatise*'s legitimizing discourse of a civilized society of cultivators' superior claim to the “waste” and underutilized lands roamed over by savage tribes provided a more rigidly systematized defense of the natural law-grounded set of assumptions by which white society had traditionally justified dispossessing Indian society of the New world. The primary philosophical problem set out in Locke's famous chapter on *property* in his *Second Treatise* was a demonstration of “how men might come to have a property in several parts of that which God gave to mankind in common, and that without any express compact of all the commoners.” Thus, Locke's text constructed its methodically organized argument for dispossessing the Indian of the presumed great “common” that was America in indirect fashion, through abstraction. Locke sought to demonstrate, through a

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<sup>79</sup> See respectively K.D. Verma, “The Social and Political Vision of Sri Aurobindo,” in *Through a Glass Darkly: Essays in the Religious Imagination*, ed. John C. Hawley (New York: Fordham University, 1996), 208; and John Brewer and Susan Staves, “Introduction,” in *Early Modern Conceptions of Property*, eds. John Brewer and Susan Staves (New York: Routledge, 1996), 14.

series of carefully calculated contrasts between English and American Indian land use practices, how individual labor upon the commons removes “it out of the state of nature” and “begins the [private] property.” For Locke, the narrative tradition of tribalism’s normative deficiency provided the needed illustrations for his principal argument that “‘Tis labour indeed that puts the difference of value on everything.” In turn this “difference” was the source of a cultivator society’s privileges to deny the wasteful claims of tribalism to the underutilized “commons” of America.<sup>80</sup>

Despite the fact that the lifeways of Indian nations in many types of spaces demonstrated highly advanced agricultural and ecological knowledge, the perceived lack of individual property ownership prompted settlers to define these spaces as *terra nullius*—i.e. unused, uninhabited, and uncontrolled. This abstract and temporal redefinition legally negated concrete and spatial Indian claims and opened the land to control by Whites. The process of redefinition was further extended by the deliberate replacement of Indian place names with Western ones. While traditional Indian place names draw upon and reflect an array of relevant geographical, cultural, and ecological knowledge, their substitutes were often deliberately intended to mystify conquest by identifying the first White man to “discover” or settle a particular region.<sup>81</sup> The related acts of redefining and renaming places have therefore functioned as important extensions of the theme of property by establishing ownership over the knowledge of space.

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<sup>80</sup> Robert A. Williams, Jr., “Documents of Barbarism: The Contemporary Legacy of European Racism and Colonialism in the Narrative Traditions of Federal Indian Law,” in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., eds. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple University, 2000), 99.

<sup>81</sup> For more robust presentations of these ideas, see Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1996), 34; and Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University Of Chicago, 1992), especially 81-83.

Dominant spatial knowledge has customarily obscured the cultural complexity and social organization of Indian nations while validating the theft of land that has occurred through the European colonial project.<sup>82</sup> Based upon this knowledge, the right to own property has subsequently been offered back to dispossessed Indian individuals as an expression of the freedoms of enlightened civilization, conditional upon their rejection of nonanthropocentric ways of knowing and communal patterns of behavior.

The exemplar of American Indian genocide confirms that while property ownership is widely portrayed and accepted as a basic right in an abstract sense, it can be more accurately characterized as an intentionally limited privilege in the real world. As James R. Carret, a prominent public figure in Boston around the turn of the twentieth century, expressed over one hundred years ago:

Men must use land in order to live. In a civilized state they must have exclusive occupation of separate pieces of land in order to secure the proceeds of their own labor. The right of exclusive occupation is given and secured to individuals by the State, and is in fact a privilege. When in a community the land is all taken up, then anyone who wishes to obtain land to use can only do so by obtaining from some owner a transfer of his privilege in whole or in part, paying therefor [sic] with the proceeds of his labor. Then “land values” exist, as the common term is, and it is a convenient one. But to be accurate, land has no value. It is the privilege

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<sup>82</sup> Since long before the coalescence of anything resembling a “nation,” American cultural identity has been pervaded by a desire to control not only the land itself, but also the knowledge surrounding the land. Looking to an early example, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra writes: “That the Puritans saw their exile from England as a biblical exodus and the New World as the Promised Land, a New Canaan, points to the fact that, for all their claims to the contrary, the Puritans saw the occupation of space in America as an act of liberation, of expelling demons from the land. It is clear that the Puritans deliberately sought to take the holy out of the naming and colonization of spaces in New England. John Winthrop in his expeditionary errands enjoyed replacing Amerindian place-names with the names of his own friends and family, or even with the names of food he happened to have on hand (e.g., “Cheese Rock”). Yet this desacralization of local spaces was accompanied by the sacralization of the entire territory the Puritans colonized. In seeing new England as Canaan, they clearly understood the occupation of land as an epic struggle to rid the territories of both Canaanites and idolatry.” *Puritan Conquistadores: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1551-1700* (Stanford: Stanford University, 2006).



of exclusive occupation of particular pieces of land that has value, and it is for that privilege that men pay.<sup>83</sup>

Carret's perspective appears strikingly prescient considering role of property in the present day. Having become deeply embedded in American culture, the idea that "land has no value" outside of human ownership and use significantly shapes dominant patterns of spatial behavior. In addition, it constrains the possibilities for envisioning and implementing new patterns of behavior. The linking of land value to consumer demand suggests that contrary to the prevailing arguments, property ownership in America actually has little to do with either justice or utility—at least for marginalized folks.

For while all are promised opportunity in the social imaginary, relatively few are presented with the means or autonomy necessary to meaningfully pursue it everyday life. This contradiction between the theoretical and the concrete allows faith in Exceptionalism to flourish even while its tenets are being consistently disproven for many people at the existential level. Consequently, arguments suggesting that the unique qualities of the American nation have resulted in part from a lack of feudalism in its past are undermined by the ongoing presence of feudal dynamics in its present.<sup>84</sup> As has been the case throughout American history, elite figures still exercise disproportionate control over how land may be used, and who may use it. Power and wealth remain intimately tied to the control of land. The maxims advanced by Adams and Jefferson therefore remain

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<sup>83</sup> James R. Carret, qtd. in Henry Whitmore, "Real Estate Values in Boston," *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 5, no. 33 (1896): 13.

<sup>84</sup> See Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks, *It Didn't Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000). The lack of a feudal past represents a central tenet of Lipset and Marks' argument in favor of Exceptionalism.

quite pertinent, though their relevance can be interpreted differently depending on how one is oriented to the problem of space. As long as the repression of our actual being in time and space continues to obscure an ongoing history in which the ownership of property, knowledge, and life is limited to those who can be considered as properly human and properly American, claims of equality among “we the people” will remain as inherently valueless as the land is commonly perceived to be.

### *C. Positivism*

Considered as a guiding theme of spatial behavior, property exists in close relation with another theme, that of positivism. Positivism can be described as a form of rationality inherent to the modern moral order that incorporates and endorses notions of objectivity, scientific methodology, value-free control and coordination, and material and technological growth.<sup>85</sup> Evaluating the overall import of this theme, Deloria states:

The analytical error of contemporary society is that they have not understood, in religious terms, the meaning of what they have already accomplished scientifically by revealing the world of sensory perceptions. In seeking an ultimate answer to the meaning of existence, that is, in reading God’s mind as early scientists described their work, modern society has foreclosed the possibility of experiencing life in favor of explaining it. Even in explaining the world, however, Western peoples have misunderstood it.<sup>86</sup>

The pervasive exchange of experience for explanation represents a constitutive practice of the American disorientation to space. Although representative of a particular and

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<sup>85</sup> The definition of positivism presented in this section is based primarily on the work of Henry A. Giroux. See *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope*, especially 6-13.

<sup>86</sup> Deloria Jr., *God is Red*, 295.

limited way of knowing, positivistic explanations of the natural world nevertheless are generally formulated as universal and impartial expressions of enduring truth. These formulations offer justification and foundation for efforts to manage—and thereby possess—land and Other. The cycle of explanation, management, and possession recycles age-old dynamics common to the natural law tradition by confusing prescription with description, normalizing culturally and historically contingent phenomena as both given and inevitable, and reinforcing dominant power structures.

As a principal component of American deep culture, positivism encapsulates a set of directives which indicate and constrain the formulation of behavior.<sup>87</sup> Although difficult to precisely summarize, these directives embrace a variety of techniques that accentuate certain modes of information processing: the logical, the scientific, the technical, the quantifiable, the observable, the factual, the objective, the pragmatic, the predictable, and the efficient. The application of these techniques yields an illusion in which human society and the various elements on which it relies for survival and flourishing can be increasingly organized and administered. As Thomas McCarthy relates:

This [illusion] is based on the questionable thesis that human beings control their destinies rationally to the degree to which social techniques are applied, and that human destiny is capable of being rationally guided in proportion to the extent of cybernetic control and the application of these techniques.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Of course, the reach of positivism extends beyond spatial behavior into nearly every realm of conduct—from what students study in school to how government policies are formed.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (Cambridge: MIT, 1981), 11; also qtd. in Giroux, *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope*, 8.

Due to the pervasive influence of the illusion, behaviors which violate these technical directives tend to be culturally interpreted at best as foolish and unrealistic fantasies to be scoffed at, and at worst as threatening and un-American hazards to be stomped out.

It is for this reason that Giroux characterizes positivism as a form of “cultural hegemony,” and as “the fundamental dominant myth of our time.”<sup>89</sup> Restricting rationality to an exclusive and systematic process of hypothesis conjecture, experimental testing, interpretive analysis, and technological manipulation, the theme of positivism places human beings in a state above and beyond the natural world. This anthropocentric claim tends to be advanced from an existentialist rather than essentialist standpoint, as the alleged success of efforts to explain, manage, and possess particular spaces becomes a self-reinforcing validation and prime exemplar of the positivist argument.<sup>90</sup> Other possible ways of knowing and relating to such spaces are thus precluded, including especially those derived from the postulation that humans exist as *a part of*, rather than *apart from*, larger ecological life cycles. This preclusion of alternatives ensures a perpetuation of the assumption that human destiny can be increasingly controlled through the application of ever improving techniques to social institutions and the places in which

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<sup>89</sup> Giroux categorizes the most significant negative influences of positivism in three ways: “First, it fosters an undialectical and one-dimensional view of the world; second, it denies the world of politics and lacks a vision of the future; third, it denies the possibility that human beings can constitute their own reality and alter and change that reality in the face of domination.” *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope*, 9, 13.

<sup>90</sup> In Giroux’s formulation positivism is underlain by a “self-perpetuating” logic that shapes [its] mechanism and boundaries. This logic is situated in a structure of dominance and exists to meet the most fundamental needs of the existing power relations and their corresponding social formations.” *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope*, 15.

they exist. It also enables the control of people and places to be accepted as viable, rightful, and perhaps most importantly, value-free—allowing both the means by which control is produced and the people responsible for its production to escape concentrated scrutiny.<sup>91</sup>

As it has been leveraged within the social imaginary to corroborate Exceptionalist arguments, the theme of positivism has quietly become a primary mechanism for supporting social and politico-economic oppression. Drawing on the work of Antonio Gramsci, Giroux explains:

Gramsci was deeply concerned about what he saw as the changing modes of domination in the advanced industrial societies of the West. He claimed that with the rise of modern science and technology, social control was exercised less through the use of physical force (army, police, etc.) than through the distribution of an elaborate system of norms and imperatives. The latter were used to lend institutional authority a degree of unity and certainty and provide it with an apparent universality and legitimations.<sup>92</sup>

Over time these norms and imperatives have come to be “believed by the oppressed and oppressors alike, those who benefit from [them] as well as those who do not.”<sup>93</sup> However, Giroux is quick to discredit the seductive fallacy wherein positivism is strictly relegated to the realm of intellectual concepts. Positivism does not denote some quaint theory about

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<sup>91</sup> Giroux explains: “The central assumption by which the culture of positivism rationalizes its position on theory and knowledge is the notion of objectivity, the separation of values from knowledge and methodological inquiry alike. Not only are ‘facts’ looked upon as objective, but the researcher himself is seen as engaging in value free inquiry, far removed from the untidy world of beliefs and values. Thus, it appears that values, judgments, and normative-based inquiry are dismissed because they do not admit of either truth or falsity. It seems that empirical verification exacts a heavy price from those concerned about ‘the nature of truth.’ *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope*, 11.

<sup>92</sup> Giroux, *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope*, 6.

<sup>93</sup> Giroux, *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope*, 15.

theories that can simply be accepted or rejected; rather, as with all symbols of deep culture, it embodies as a real and powerful presence that regularly goes unrecognized as it guides spatial behavior and other types of conduct. He clarifies:

Functioning as both an ideology and a productive force in the interest of a ruling elite, the culture of positivism cannot be viewed as simply a set of beliefs, smoothly functioning so as to rationalize the existing society. It is more than that. The point here is that the culture of positivism is not just a set of ideas, disseminated by the culture industry; it is also a material force, a set of material practices that are embedded in the routines and experiences of our daily lives. In a sense, the daily rhythm of our lives is structured, in part, by the technical imperatives of a society that objectifies all it touches.<sup>94</sup>

By promoting the illusion of control through the normalization and validation of the dominant way of knowing and relating to space, the functioning of positivism typifies the Marxist concept of reification. Reification refers to the process by which abstract, conditional, human-manufactured ideas are brought out of their original context and established as natural, physical, or divine laws that can be objectively observed and reliably predicted.<sup>95</sup> Through this process, ideas become separated from the values, beliefs, and perspectives upon which they are founded, and are instead presented in the guise of pure truth. The result of this transfiguration is a widespread cultural myth which, in the words of Russell Jacoby, “works to preserve the status quo by presenting the human and social relationships of society as natural—and unchangeable—relations between things.” However, the true power of this myth can only be understood through

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<sup>94</sup> Giroux, *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope*, 11.

<sup>95</sup> Or in the words of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, reified ideas come to be perceived as “facts of nature, results of cosmic laws, or manifestations of divine will.” See *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor, 1967), 89.

its ability to mystify not only present social and natural process, but past ones as well.

Jacoby explains:

What is often ignored in expositions of the concept of reification is the psychological dimension: amnesia—a forgetting and repression of the human and social activity that makes and can remake society. The social loss of memory is a type of reification—better: it is *the* primal form of reification.<sup>96</sup>

As with the other behavioral themes presented in this chapter, the reification of positivism directly supports faith in Exceptionalism by nurturing a widespread social repression. This loss of meaningful ground on which to base cultural identity prepares the conditions necessary for an empty sense of unnatural innocence to thrive. Repression arises in part as the land is treated solely as a thing to be explained, managed, and possessed in the quest for control over human destiny.<sup>97</sup> Such treatment leaves little room in the collective consciousness for experiencing the natural world and reflecting on the consequences of conquest. Further, considering the deeply temporal nature of the concept of destiny, repression emerges directly out of the subordination of spatial concerns to what Robert G. David calls “the Western obsession with time.”<sup>98</sup> In the theme of

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<sup>96</sup> Russell Jacoby, *Social Amnesia: A Critique of Contemporary Psychology* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1997), 4 (emphasis original).

<sup>97</sup> I refer to the deeply temporal, individualistic, and human-centered notion of destiny that is predominant in the West. This notion of destiny is not shared by all cultures, however. For example, Kwame Gyekye and Kwasi Wiredu describe the concept of *nkrabea*, traditionally understood by the Akan people of western Africa in an empirical rather than transcendental sense. Gyekye defines *nkrabea* as “a concept of destiny that is totalistic, encompassing all aspects, temporal and nontemporal, though not in detail, of an individual’s mundane existence.” Likewise, Wiredu notes how this concept reflects a cultural perspective on being that is “strongly communalistic in outlook” and “intrinsically spatial.” See respectively Kwame Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*, revised ed. (Philadelphia, Temple University, 1995), 112; and Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1996), 127, 141.

positivism, the obsession with time finds an ideal outlet. Organized around and motivated by abstract theory, analytical specialization, and empirical validation, spatial behavior becomes divorced from the broad view of history that exists in the memories of discrete spaces and the lived experiences of the peoples who have long called them home. The result is a dangerous mix of fragmentation and amorality in thought and practice.

Identifying the “suprahistorical and supracultural” nature of the positivist perspective, Giroux declares:

Rather than comprehending the world holistically as a network of interconnections, the American people are taught to approach problems as if they existed in isolation, detached from the social and political forces that give them meaning. The central failing of this mode of thinking is that it creates a form of tunnel vision in which only a small segment of social reality is open to examination. More important, it leaves unquestioned those economic, political, and social structures that shape our daily lives. Divorced from history, these structures appear to have acquired their present character naturally, rather than having been constructed by historically specific interests.<sup>99</sup>

This perspective helps illuminate the commonly accepted but utterly perplexing practice of identifying massive environmental reshaping projects as fundamentally valuable and verifiably safe—even as actual historical events suggest otherwise. The emplacement of hydroelectric dams, strip mining operations, nuclear reactors, and oil drilling ventures is typically portrayed as a logical, controllable, and necessary way for America to live out its special mandate in the world. However, the short-term benefits of these projects are rarely weighed honestly against the larger costs to physical, mental, and ecological

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<sup>98</sup> Robert G. David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination 1818-1914* (New York: Manchester University, 2000), 14.

<sup>99</sup> Giroux, *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope*, 13.



health, or even politico-economic security. Manifestations of the tunnel vision cited by Giroux, such projects epitomize both the national hubris related to perceived scientific and technological dominance and the national ignorance related to tangible genocidal and ecocidal impacts. Thus, it is revealing that Barack Obama could claim to be “guided not by political ideology, but by scientific evidence” in citing the “need” for increased offshore oil drilling in March 2010, and then reference the mobilization of “the most advanced technology available” as reason for optimism in the cleanup of the “potentially unprecedented” Deep water Horizon disaster just one month later.<sup>100</sup> While the monumental effects of the Exxon-Valdez, Love Canal, Three Mile Island, and myriad other less prominent tragedies linger, their lessons slip quickly and silently into the cultural shadows.

What does not slip away, however, is the American nation’s compulsion to control its destiny by developing the gifts of its scientifically enlightened and technologically advanced civilization and bringing them to the wider world. In large part, the theme of positivism has functioned in collaborative fashion with the frontier wilderness image espoused by Frederick Jackson Turner. New spaces are continually being defined as untamed, unorganized, and unused, and therefore in need of explanation, management, and possession by a superior people. But as Frieda Knobloch relates, the

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<sup>100</sup> See respectively Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President on Energy Security” (address given at Andrews Air Force Base, MD, 31 March 2010), The White House Office of the Press Secretary, accessed 26 February 2012, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-energy-security-andrews-air-force-base-3312010>; and Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President on Oil Spill” (address given in Venice, LA, 2 May 2010), The White House Office of the Press Secretary, accessed 26 February 2012, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-oil-spill>.

mere fact that this collaboration endures does not, in and of itself, obviate the possibility of its transformation. She states:

To recognize Turner's work as relying on a fiction [still] widely held by scientists and nonscientists alike is not to throw human experience into the teeth of nihilism but to begin a process of reclaiming knowledge from the archive.<sup>101</sup>

Such reclamation work must necessarily involve the historical and ecological knowledge held in the land, a knowledge which too often points to the past and present dispossession of Indian peoples. As this dispossession has typically occurred synergistically with increased efforts at technical manipulation and control, an interrogation of positivism must also follow.

Yet the need for an honest and unflinching reflection on what Alfred North Whitehead terms the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness"<sup>102</sup> does not automatically imply

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<sup>101</sup> Knobloch continues: "The repatriation of Native American remains and artifacts long held in museum collections would be an example of such reclaimed knowledge. What was 'data' to the museum becomes something else entirely to the people to whom it belongs. In agricultural work, the imperial archive continues to absorb information about seeds and crops, and now germ plasma itself, in order to patent organisms as 'products' and sell them back to farmers. Counterarchivists like Gary Nabhan are also at work, reclaiming and restoring seeds threatened by the centripetal force of specimen collection, classification, and 'improvement.' The counterarchival fields of Native American beans or corn are not museums but living repositories of both social and agricultural memory that belong to the people who plant them, and they exceed in every way the narrow identification of a plant as a 'crop.' Indeed, the agricultures Nabhan writes about and works with show that the distinction between the wild and the cultivated is wholly inadequate to describe what happens between people and their plants when left to themselves outside agri/culture as such. Every aspect of the imperial archive of American agriculture must be reclaimed in the same way in order to interrupt the manufacture of agricultural 'progress' in its limited understanding of history and human life." See Frieda Knobloch, *The Culture of Wilderness*, 153.

<sup>102</sup> Lynn Ross-Bryant comments on this notion: "How has it happened that we have 'drained the light from the boughs' and thus lost track of our connection to nature? Alfred North Whitehead suggests that the development of scientific materialism and philosophical dualism in the seventeenth century significantly changed our way of seeing the world. Abstracting for the purposes of manipulation and understanding became the valued mode of perceptions, resulting in the 'fallacy of misplaced concreteness' whereby we treat as real and concrete what are actually abstract constructions. Abstraction left us with, 'one the one hand matter with its simple location in space and time, on the other hand mind, perceiving,

a complete rejection of Western science and its products. Deloria conveys and clarifies this sentiment:

In many ways technology serves us and makes our lives better. Behind and beneath technology, however, in scientific theories and doctrines, lurk a large number of misperceptions, badly directed emphases, and unresolved philosophical problems.<sup>103</sup>

Although the development of technology has allowed for greater comfort and ease in some areas of life, the benefits and burdens of this development have been distributed quite unevenly and without deep consideration. Further, it is interesting that only now is science beginning to come around to a partial appreciation of the complexity of natural systems, non-human ways of knowing and relating, and the consequences of environmental exploitation. Each new breakthrough seems to bring greater questions and troubles, expanding the scope of anxiety, distraction, and desire while providing little aid to the deeper search for meaning.

Built upon disturbing foundations, the positivist way of knowing has helped sustain and obscure systems of privilege and the notions of Exceptionalism on which they

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suffering, reasoning...’ We see the world through this kind of scientific materialism as objective, existing apart from us, and as subject to our manipulation and control. “The Silence of Nature,” *Religion and Literature* 22, no. 1 (1990): 81.

<sup>103</sup> Deloria continues by summarizing the etiology of these problems: “As Western civilization grew and took dominance over the world, it failed to resolve some basic issues. A view of the natural world as primarily physical matter with little spiritual content took hold and became the practical metaphysics for human affairs. During the European Middle Ages a basic split in perspective occurred when *reason* and *revelation*, the twin paths for finding truth in the minds of Western thinkers, were divided into sacred and secular and became equivalent but independent bodies of knowledge. Once reason became independent, its only referent point was the human mind and in particular the middle-class, educated, European mind. Every society needs educated people, but the primary responsibility of educated people is to bring wisdom back into the community and make it available to others so that the lives they are leading make sense.” See Vine Deloria Jr., *Red Earth, White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact* (Golden: Fulcrum, 1997), 4 (emphasis original).

rely.<sup>104</sup> This form of rationality—or perhaps better, irrationality—has prevented Americans from phasing out their disoriented patterns of spatial behavior in favor of adopting more authentic, holistic, and healthful types of conduct. Consequently, what remains in place of grounded and meaningful relationships with the land is a limited and contrived illusion of control through faith in the wonders of scientific progress.

#### *D. Progress*

Repeating what has by now become a familiar refrain in this chapter, the theme of progress paints a culturally and historically contingent way of relating to the world in universal and transcendent colors. This theme invokes the linear movement of history along a fixed track from barbaric primitivism to enlightened civilization. Informed by a variety of supposedly trustworthy measuring benchmarks, it also holds that Western societies have traveled furthest down this track, with America at the leading edge acting as both scout and engine. Functioning as a deep cultural symbol, the theme of progress guides spatial behavior in three main ways. First, progress affirms previous patterns of action as mostly wise, justifiable, and effective, for they are perceived as having brought the nation to its current advanced state. Second, it provides a seemingly rational and objective method by which secure and prosperous spaces (i.e. “civilized” lands) can be distinguished from spaces in need of greater management and development (i.e. “wild frontiers”). This method also allows friend to be separated from foe. Finally, the belief in

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<sup>104</sup> Or as Giroux articulates, this way of knowing “falls prey to a set of values that are both conservative and mystifying in their political orientation.” *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope*, 11.

progress instills confidence in the direction, capacity, and longevity of the American experiment. This belief enables Americans to find comfort through the storms of adversity and stagnation that threaten to slow the advance of the great city upon a hill, for it insists that their unique ability to shine a light over the darkest places on earth will be continuously restored through the discovery of ever improving pathways to technical innovation and civic righteousness.<sup>105</sup>

In the contemporary age, it is difficult—or perhaps impossible—to separate notions of progress from the realm of science and technology.<sup>106</sup> However, as Ronald Wright suggests, this bonded relationship has not always been the case. He explains:

Despite certain events of the twentieth century, most people in the Western cultural tradition still believe in the Victorian ideal of progress, a belief succinctly defined by the historian Sidney Pollard in 1968 as “the assumption that a pattern of change exists in the history of mankind...that it consists of irreversible changes in one direction only, and that this direction is towards improvement.” The very appearance on earth of creatures who can frame such a thought suggests that progress is a law of nature: the mammal is swifter than the reptile, the ape subtler than the ox, and man cleverest of all. Our technological culture measures human

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<sup>105</sup> This section draws on the work of Yvonne Burgess (among others), who explores “the underlying myth of modern Western culture, namely that history is Progress, that this Progress is measurable—economically, technologically, and in other ways; and especially our idea that we Westerners, inventors of the myth, have progressed more than any other culture on earth.” See *The Myth of Progress* (Glasgow: Wild Goose, 1996), 8.

<sup>106</sup> It is commonly assumed today that progress represents the inevitable product of scientific discovery and technological innovation. For example, this assumption is encapsulated in historian John M. Barry’s investigation of the 1927 Mississippi River flood. Citing a need to control what he calls the “wild and random” power of the river, Barry condemns the bureaucratic “corruption of science”: “Science...does not compromise. Instead, science forces ideas to compete in a dynamic process. This competition refines or replaces old hypotheses, gradually approaching a more perfect representation of the truth, although one can reach truth no more than one can reach infinity. But the Mississippi River Commission never became a scientific enterprise. It was a bureaucracy. The natural process of a bureaucracy, by contrast, tends to compromise competing ideas. The bureaucracy then adopts the compromise as truth and incorporates it into its being.” *Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and How It Changed America* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 90-91. In making this argument, Barry mimics neoliberal calls for deregulation and privatization in favor of “pure” capitalism.

progress by technology: the club is better than the fist, the arrow better than the club, the bullet better than the arrow. We came to this belief for empirical reasons: because it delivered. Pollard notes that the idea of material progress is a very recent one—“significant only in the past three hundred years or so”—coinciding closely with the rise of science and industry and the corresponding decline of traditional beliefs. We no longer give much thought to moral progress—a prime concern of earlier times—except to assume that it goes hand in hand with the material. Civilized people, we tend to think not only smell better but behave better than barbarians or savages. This notion has trouble standing up in the court of history [however]...<sup>107</sup>

Although Wright’s overall analysis builds on certain problematic assumptions regarding a hierarchy of being, it nevertheless helps expose the role of progress within the modern moral order. In particular, the connection between technological progress and moral virtue represents an intriguing claim for consideration.<sup>108</sup>

While early European invasions of the continent may not have held the harnessing of science and technology as an especially high priority, these devices were soon recognized as offering a potent means by which to gain control over the land.<sup>109</sup> Startled

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<sup>107</sup> Ronald Wright, *A Short History of Progress* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2004), 3-4.

<sup>108</sup> Giroux reflects on the evolution of this connection through the lens of positivism: “This form of rationality defined itself through the alleged unalterable and productive effects the developing forces of technology and science were having on the foundations of twentieth century progress. Whereas progress in the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was linked to the development of moral self-improvement and self-discipline in the interest of building a better society, progress in the twentieth century was stripped of its concern with ameliorating the human condition and became applicable only to the realm of material and technical growth. What was once considered humanly possible, a question involving values and human ends, was now reduced to the issue of what was technically possible. The application of scientific methodology to new forms of technology appeared as a social force generated by its own laws, laws governed by a rationality that appeared to exist above and beyond human control. *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope*, 8.

<sup>109</sup> Milan Zafirovski explains: “...early American Puritanism treated science and knowledge, just as the arts, as ‘good’ only to the extent that they were put in the holy service or servility of religion and theocratic government, yet as ‘evil’ when falling [sic] to perform that function and became autonomous or secular, and thus reenacted their treatment as the servants of theology and theocracy during the Dark Middle Ages. Consequently, Puritanism, and hence Puritan-dominated America, primarily used technology

to find themselves in unfamiliar places occupied by sophisticated peoples, White settlers identified in the theme of progress a twofold weapon of conquest. On the one hand, progress provided ideological justification for the dispossession of Indian peoples in both religious and secular terms. The absence of purportedly unsurpassed Western politico-economic and cultural patterns among these peoples was interpreted as a sign of divine discontent and indicator of racial inferiority. Initially, the absurdness of this interpretation needed to be baldly denied in the face of the complex social organization and sophisticated lifeways of Indian societies. However, such need was mitigated somewhat over time as these societies became destabilized through the deliberate spread of disease, warfare, and dislocation.<sup>110</sup> By separating the civilized from the barbaric and the primitive from the advanced, notions of progress supplied an intellectual platform on which conquest could be framed objectively and validated rationally.<sup>111</sup>

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and progress for its authoritarian purposes or, as some analysts put it, in the ‘image of itself.’” *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Authoritarianism: Puritanism Versus Democracy and the Free Civil Society* (New York: Springer, 2007), 163.

<sup>110</sup> Evidenced throughout the writings of early—and contemporary—commentators on the invasion of the Americas, the distortion of Indian social and politico-economic complexity is embodied especially clearly in the thought of none other than John Locke: “I think it will be but a modest computation to say, that of the products of the earth useful to the life of man nine tenths are the effects of labor: nay, if we will rightly estimate things as they come to our use, and case up the several expences about them, what in them is purely owing to nature, and what to labour, we shall find, that in most of them ninety-nine hundredths are wholly to be put on the account of labor. There cannot be a clearer demonstration of any thing than several Nations of the Americans are of this, who are rich in Land, and poor in all the comforts of life; whom Nature, having furnished as liberally as any other people with the materials of Plenty—i.e., a fruitful soil, apt to produce in abundance what might serve for food, raiment, and delight; yet, for want of improving it by labour, have not one hundredth part of the conveniences we enjoy; and a king of a large fruitful territory there feeds, lodges, and is clad worse than a day-labourer in the England.” *The Second Treatise of Government*, 24.

<sup>111</sup> However, Burgess notes that West’s own history betrays the irrationality of this platform: “There is, it seems to me, a delightful irony in the fact that Northern Europe’s recorded history begins with

On the other hand, the employment of scientific and technical devices against the land and its original inhabitants offered a severe yet effective practical instrument for the pursuit of conquest. Scrutinizing the case of colonial New England as an example, Robert Kagan explains how even as “Puritan divines were decrying their congregants’ sinful desire for ever more ‘elbow-room’ in their New World,” the seductive power of such an instrument gradually encouraged an escalation of efforts to possess more land and gain more comfortable lifestyles from it. He concludes:

The rich lands of North America also helped unleash liberal, materialist forces within Protestantism that overwhelmed the Puritan fathers’ original godly vision and brought New England onto the path on which British-American civilization was already traveling: toward individualism, progress, and modernity.<sup>112</sup>

Although the characterization of Puritan leaders having purely noble motives seems demonstrably absurd in light of their historical legacy, it is nevertheless telling that a prominent conservative historian like Kagan would assign the theme of progress such a foundational role in the development of American cultural identity.

The easy acceptance of progress has been facilitated through the emphasis on temporality that arose in West primarily through the influence of the Christian theological tradition. As with the other behavioral themes presented in this chapter, it is in the prioritization of temporal concerns that notions like progress gain much of their form,

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two Southern European imperial civilizations, classical Greece and Rome. In particular, it is ironic that my people, today’s middle-class Westerners, who have been running the world with such confidence in the name of human Progress and technology, are the racial and cultural descendants of the so-called ‘barbarians’ who smashed up the Western half of Rome’s affluent and ‘civilized’ empire.” *The Myth of Progress*, 27.

<sup>112</sup> Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America’s Foreign Policy from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 2007), 9.



function, and influence. The profoundly temporal nature of the Christian story of “salvation history” has been repeatedly and meticulously demonstrated by a variety of scholars, many of whom are represented here. In this story we are presented with an unambiguously linear view of history which, even from a liberal and non-literal hermeneutical standpoint, encompasses all of creation.<sup>113</sup> God creates the world and all that is in it from nothing. At some point in the timeline, humans stray from their intended nature as represented (either factually or symbolically, depending on one’s perspective) in Adam’s “fall.” However, humans are later redeemed as god takes flesh and dies for them, opening the doors to eternal life. God’s chosen people—a title transferred to Christians from their Hebrew predecessors—are thus called to continue following the divine will and spreading the story of salvation until the *eschaton*, or the end of the world. Although intense debate tends to surround the interpretation and application of the Christian story’s details, the functional transference of its basic underlying assumptions to the American social imaginary goes largely unnoticed and unquestioned.

Summarizing this wholesale transfer, Yvonne Burgess relates:

Our Western myth of progress goes back to the Hebrew Bible, which tells the story of a people moving forward through history. For Westerners, the Israelites were the original religious settler-pioneers. Christianized Europe took over the Jews’ idea of themselves as God’s Chosen People. This fired the crusades, and much later, Europe’s colonization and Christianization of the Americas and of

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<sup>113</sup> Although genuinely subversive theological and hermeneutical standpoints have been proposed, these proposals have always remained marginal to the dominant interpretation of the Christian story, especially in American culture. It is arguable that the story itself enforces such marginality, for the biblical presentation can only be bent so far before it becomes broken beyond recognition.

Africa... The same self-satisfied story of Creation, Fall, and Redemption has been applied to the history of our Western dealings with the rest of the world.”<sup>114</sup>

As basic Christian assumptions regarding progress and temporality have settled in the depths of American culture over time, overtly religious language and imagery has often been reclothed in more overtly secular garb. The essence of these assumptions lingers, however, continuing to authorize entrenched patterns of behavior. Burgess clarifies the frightening implications of this authorization:

“What makes this approach to history so frightening is that *its holders are raised above good and evil in the cause of Western-style progress* – the only remaining absolute. Even while we acknowledge the crimes of colonialism, we tie our minds in knots to justify them as part of an overall progress package. We pretend that the end (a life like ours) justifies the means (exploitation and degradation), in order to avoid the idea that the means might irremediably discredit the end. Although the language is now economic, I believe that the cultural attitude which allows—and indeed necessitates—this self-justification, is theological in origin. The religious doctrine has faded, but the mental paradigm remains intact.”<sup>115</sup>

When brought into sharper focus, Burgess’ choice to employ the concept of paradigm in this discussion becomes quite revealing. Initially developed in Thomas Kuhn’s work on the structure of scientific revolutions, the concept has subsequently been applied to a much wider range of disciplines and realms of thought. As Kuhn describes, paradigms reference the set of “received beliefs” that establish how the world is accepted to work within particular cultural contexts.<sup>116</sup> They further denote the conventional boundaries within which, and the recognized rules by which, life situations or observed

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<sup>114</sup> Burgess, *The Myth of Progress*, 14, 22.

<sup>115</sup> Burgess, *The Myth of Progress*, 23 (emphasis original).

<sup>116</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996), 4.

phenomena can be interrogated, conceptualized, and responded to. Rarely receiving conscious scrutiny, paradigms are typically acknowledged only to the extent of being accepted as the usual or normative way of the world. Significantly influencing thought and behavior, they remain operative for decades or even centuries. In this way, deep cultural symbols such as progress act as paradigms, determining certain expectations that are normally met in regard to social behavior.<sup>117</sup> This characterization is especially meaningful in light of Kuhn's original formulation, since progress is typically portrayed in the social imaginary as an eminently demonstrable scientific fact.

One expression of the paradigmatic nature of progress can be witnessed in perennial debates regarding the role of English as the American national language. Just as Christian theological terminology once set the accepted standards by which notions of nature and society could be understood and described in the West, so too does the dominance of English today constrain the possibilities for conceptualization and communication. And with the growth of American hegemony, such constraint has been introduced to wider spheres of peoples and cultures. Although English language skills have been widely promoted as a path to development and a better life both domestically

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<sup>117</sup> Tom Wessels explains: "In our current sense, a paradigm represents a core belief that dramatically structures our worldview. It is a lens through which all of our perceptions and thoughts are strongly filtered...In very powerful ways, we are shrouded and entrapped within the paradigms that we accept—and this acceptance is often an unconscious act. Reigning cultural paradigms can be passed from generation to generation, and if they aren't challenged, they are simply accepted as truth. To change one's paradigm is perhaps the most difficult of challenges, because it often requires turning one's world inside out. *The Myth of Progress: Toward a Sustainable Future* (Burlington: University of Vermont, 2006), xvi. Also see John L. Brooks III, "The Definition of Sociology and the Sociology of Definition: Durkheim's *Rules of Sociological Method* and High School Philosophy in France," in *Emile Durkheim: Critical Assessments of Leading Sociologists*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, vol. 2, ed. W.S. F. Pickering (New York: Routledge, 2001), especially 235-237.

and abroad, such promotion inherently works to privilege a certain cultural perspective and the possibilities—and impossibilities—inherent to it.<sup>118</sup>

As the deep theological roots of progress are acknowledged, the extent of its ability to inhibit communities from developing holistic and relational habits of spatial behavior becomes startlingly apparent. The idea of a universal, one-way path of development immediately and unequivocally manipulates a spatial metaphor in order to connote an utterly temporal message. Humanity is portrayed as stepping forward in a physical fashion; however, the real emphasis is placed on an imagined movement through history. This bait-and-switch dynamic insinuates an artificial binary between time and space, and offers the illusion that spatiality occupies a central place in politico-economic and cultural life while it is actually assigned the role of mere stand-in.<sup>119</sup> As Michel de Certeau relates, the subtle supremacy of temporal concerns cripples societies at a basic level as “the functionalist organization, by privileging progress (i.e., time), causes the condition of its own possibility—space itself—to be forgotten; space thus becomes the blind spot in a scientific and political technology.”<sup>120</sup> The disorientation yielded by such repression helps explain how concepts like democracy and freedom can be transformed in the American manifestation of the modern moral order from aspirations of genuine

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<sup>118</sup> See Roslyn Appleby, *ELT, Gender, and International Development: Myths of Progress in a Neocolonial World* (Tonawanda: Multilingual Matters, 2010), especially 177-180. Of course, the adoption and subversion of dominant languages can also serve as liberatory tools in some contexts.

<sup>119</sup> See Jonathan Boyarin, “Space, Time, and the Politics of Memory,” in *Remapping Memory: The Politics of TimeSpace*, ed. Jonathan Boyarin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1994), 7.

<sup>120</sup> Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California, 1984), 95.

liberation to be strived for to techniques of oppressive social control to be mandated.

Disconnected from a spatial grounding, abstract ideals lose the vital perspective of real-life difference and power relations. This purposeful naïveté regarding difference and power inequality continues to be concretely exposed in the struggles of marginalized folks.

Further, the fundamental reliance on linear and reductionistic models of history is typically complemented by a similar reliance on linear and reductionistic models of social and natural systems. Built around the framework of positivism, such models imply that progress can be both predicted and controlled through the application of scientific techniques to the natural world and its various inhabitants. Although these sorts of models have defined Western culture for several centuries, Tom Wessells notes that they has recently been challenged through the emergence of complex, or nonlinear, systems theories in certain intellectual discourses. In short, complex systems theories belie the claims to control and predictability inherent to linear models by acknowledging the layers of feedback and conditionality that exist in the real world.<sup>121</sup> While all explanatory models can be characterized as reductionistic to some extent, complex systems theories attempt to account for this significant limitation by rejecting the initial assumption (voiced by Giovanni Monstra) that “behind the complexity of nature...there is a very simple structure.”<sup>122</sup> In this way, illusions of control and predictability, and of proficient

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<sup>121</sup> See Tom Wessells, *The Myth of Progress*, especially 1-21.

and omniscient management, are precluded—or at least relatively tempered. What scholars like Wessells and Monastra typically overlook, however, is the fact that while a recognition of natural complexity represents a fairly recent and still quite marginal addition to Western discourses, it has existed at the heart of many indigenous lifeways and knowledge bases for thousands of years—if not longer.

Such a disconnect is made especially acute among American Indian communities where progress represents an utterly foreign concept. Considering the imposition and projection of progress onto such communities, Alfonso Ortiz declares:

I have yet to encounter a tribal tradition in which there is anything remotely resembling the notion of progress. It is a distortion, when people who deify a notion like progress, and regard it as inevitable, write about Indian people with the assumption that they too, are caught up in and with the notion of progress. Historians and anthropologists who write in this vein treat Indian tribal peoples as if they were also grinding, inevitably, inexorably, up the stepladder of progressive enlightenment and toward greater complexity. To insist on perceiving something that is not there is to distort the true experience of these people.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Monastra states: “Modern science has reduced the qualitative aspects of nature to quantitative modalities to better manipulate and dominate matter, following the old program of Francis Bacon. This has led to a situation that resembles more a nightmare than a dream: science is more and more becoming a ‘techno-science,’ where even the simple, practical knowledge of daily life is gradually being replaced by a profane lust for power over nature (a ‘promethean knowledge’ according to [Frithjof] Schuon). One example typical of the means to this end is the radical oversimplification of every complex reality, with the illusion that, behind the complexity of nature (“complexity” believed to be only seeming), there is a very simple structure. The underlying psychological motivation for this procedure is the vain hope of attaining control of physical reality, the limits of which would have to be acknowledged in the presence of an ‘irreducible complexity.’ Such complexity obviously poses a serious hindrance to a goal of control or large scale manipulation because there are so many interferences and interactions—too many to be understood in their global action and effectively managed.” “Foreward,” in *Science and the Myth of Progress*, ed. Mehrdad M. Zarandi (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2004), xii.

<sup>123</sup> Ortiz continues, “Clearly we have to get beyond the inherent dangers these attributes pose and return to a recognition of more modest notions that perhaps we Indian people who survived with the essences of our cultures intact really want to make contributions first and foremost to the continued survival and perpetuation of these cultures, rather than to something called ‘civilization,’ which is, after all, alien to our traditional cultures, and usually antagonistic to them as well.” Qtd. in Rupert Costo, “The

By framing expectations of spatial behavior in the universalized terms of progress, American culture impairs the ability of Indian communities and other folks to engage the land through meaningful and often long-standing patterns of relationship. Instead, land becomes something to be used solely through a limited scope of privileged practices, each of which must conform to the legal dictates of property ownership and the conceptual limits of positivistic rationalization. Even as this paradigm directly undermines traditional culture and reinflicts intergenerational trauma,<sup>124</sup> it is perceived as a support and exemplar of the nation's sanctified mission and greatest hope.

Viewed in this manner, the behavioral theme of progress brings us back to the cognitive image of a city upon a hill. Signifying an intangible and temporal vision of moral order rather than a material and accessible expression of embodied justice, the city upon a hill image symbolically restructures the land in the same way that the theme progress symbolically reshapes the moral imagination. The blind spot reliably perpetuated by such restructuring and reshaping is exhibited in the following quotation written by the philosopher and political theorist John Beattie Crozier around the turn of the twentieth century. Crozier succinctly encapsulates an Exceptionalist perspective on

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Indians Before Invasion," in *The Missions of California: A Legacy of Genocide*, eds. Rupert Costo and Jeannette H. Costo (San Francisco: Indian Historian, 1987), 26.

<sup>124</sup> For two in-depth analyses of intergenerational trauma among Indian peoples, see Eduardo Duran, *Healing the Soul Wound: Counseling with American Indians and other Native Peoples* (New York: Teacher's College, 2006); and Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart and Lemyra M. DeBruyn, "The American Indian Holocaust: Healing Historical Unresolved Grief," *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research* 8, no. 2 (1998): 56-78.

America's position along the path of civilizational progress, and one which is still widely operative today.

Although somewhat dated and lengthy, the quotation is nevertheless worthy of reproduction here:

But in America all is different. There, a natural equality of sentiment, springing out of and resting on a broad equality of material and social conditions, has been the heritage of the people from the earliest times... But it is to be observed that this broad natural equality of sentiment, rooted in equal material conditions, equal education, equal laws, equal opportunities, and equal access to all positions of honor or trust, had just sufficient inequality mixed with it,—in the shape of greater or less mental endowments, higher or lower degrees of culture, larger or smaller material possessions, and so on,—to keep it sweet and human; what at the same time it was all so gently graded, and marked by transitions so easy and natural, that no gap was anywhere to be discovered on which to found an order of privilege or caste.

Now, an equality like this, with the erectness, independence, energy, and initiative it brings with it, in men sprung from the loins of an imperial race, is a possession not for a nation only but for Civilization itself and for Humanity. It is a distinct raising of the entire body of people to a higher level, and so brings Civilization a stage nearer to its goal. It is the first successful attempt in recorded history to get a healthy natural equality which should reach down to the foundations of the State, and to the great masses of men; and in its results corresponds to what in other lands (excepting perhaps the elements of luxury along) has been attained by the few, the successful, and the ruling spirits. To lose it therefore, to barter it, or to give it away, would be in the language of Othello 'such deep damnation as nothing else could match,' and would be an irreparable loss to the world and to Civilization.<sup>125</sup>

Crozier's curious admiration for the supposedly natural and untroubled hierarchy of America omits recognition of the struggles faced by non-White, non-Western peoples

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<sup>125</sup> Crozier closes with a touch autobiographical flourish, stating, "Brought up myself in the backwoods of Canada, I can testify to the marvellous sense of exhilaration it brought with it to us boys as we roamed among the pine woods on the village outskirts, the sense of freedom as of mountain eagles, ready for any enterprise, with not shadow of castle to daunt the imagination or cramp and repress the spirit." John Beattie Crozier, *History of Intellectual Development: On the Lines of Modern Evolution*, vol. 3 (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), 295-297.



in its encroaching expansion. Further, his reminiscences of free and fearless childhood wanderings associate progress with another cognitive image famously invoked by one of his contemporaries: Frederick Jackson Turner and the penetration of a frontier wilderness.<sup>126</sup> Like Turner, Crozier articulates the anthropocentric, ego-focused, and masculinist perspective that has dominated American culture specifically and Western societies generally. This perspective maintains that all of creation is being steadily elevated to a higher state of being through the bold and inspired efforts of the chosen few who are blessed enough in gifts, aptitude, and determination to achieve it. Additionally, it exemplifies a “winners’ eye-view of progress” that, in the words of Burgess, “accepts ever increasing disparities of wealth and power as evidence of advances in human ‘civilization.’”<sup>127</sup> Such a view of progress can be seen functioning throughout the thought of major and seemingly disparate Western figures such as Karl Marx, Ronald Reagan, Adam Smith, and G.W.F. Hegel. For each of these figures, history is understood primarily as a steady upward advance over time of the human race. This often overlooked commonality upholds the integrity of deep culture theory by suggesting that genuine

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<sup>126</sup> For example, Jackson states: “Since the days when the fleet of Columbus sailed into the waters of the New World, America has been another name for opportunity, and the people of the United States have taken their tone from the incessant expansion which has not only been open but has even been forced upon them. He would be a rash prophet who should assert that the expansive character of American life has now entirely ceased. Movement has been its dominant fact, and, unless this training has no effect upon a people, the American energy will continually demand a wider field for its exercise. But never again will such gifts of free land offer themselves.” Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 37.

<sup>127</sup> Burgess writes, “It is worth stressing that this winners’ eye-view of Progress accepts ever-increasing disparities of wealth and power as evidence of advances in human ‘civilization.’ We *expect* yawning inequality and subordination of the majority to form the foundation of empires, and of what we regard as the greatest achievements of human culture, be these pyramids, palaces, astrological systems or whatever. We refuse to call the imposition of such privilege and injustice by their true names: socially and ethically regressive—even barbaric. *The Myth of Progress*, 31 (emphasis original).

differences in surface level thought and behavior can conceal the existence of shared assumptions at deeper levels of cultural formation.

By recognizing the theme of progress as particular type of deep cultural symbol, we can begin to appreciate how it has guided the treatment of both land and life. The consequences of such treatment have been mixed over time and space; but while proponents argue (convincingly, at times) in favor of the benefits of technical manipulation, those who have borne the tangible burdens of this manipulation give voice to its more dehumanizing and bizarre tendencies. These latter voices are typically stifled, however, before they can reach critical mass. For even when criticisms of the fruits of progress do access the level of mainstream consciousness, for example on issues such as environmental pollution or weapons of mass destruction, they are customarily presented as “aberrations” in an otherwise steady, predictable, and favorable rise of civilization.<sup>128</sup>

Likewise, while progress is commonly thought of today as relating primarily to industry, the continuing role of agriculture as a site of significant scientific and technological manipulation should not be overlooked. In fact, these two arenas cannot be truly separated in contemporary American life, existing as they do as symbiotic partners in the quest to design and manufacture ever cheaper, more convenient, and more desirable foods and other products.<sup>129</sup> To extend the work of Frieda Knobloch, the

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<sup>128</sup> See Wright, *A Short History of Progress*, 6.

<sup>129</sup> For three studies of the symbiotic relationship between agriculture and industry—or perhaps better stated, the industrialization of agriculture—see Raj Patel, *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2007); Michael Pollen, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A*

contemporary agricultural-industrial complex functions as a new manifestation of colonialism by “enforcing landownership through a new...occupation of lands once used differently” while claiming to bring “improvement [and] culture to a wilderness.”<sup>130</sup> In other words, by representing both a consequence and sponsor of the quest for progress, this complex serves as another building block for the city upon a hill.

So as I find myself contemplating the theme of progress while sitting in the midst of a snowy Colorado January, I am tempted to return to a question posed to the nation by its sitting president—merely rhetorically, of course—over twenty years ago: How stands the city on this winter night?<sup>131</sup> Considering this question from as much of a spatial perspective as I can muster from my social location, and keeping in mind the specific region in which I currently find myself, it is apparent that certain painful realities must be

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*Natural History of Four Meals* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006); and Vandana Shiva, *Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply* (Cambridge: South End, 2000).

<sup>130</sup> Knobloch, *The Culture of Wilderness*, 4-5. Although focused primarily on the context of the western US between 1862 and 1945, Knobloch’s incisive argument possesses a broader relevance. She states: “Agriculture as such is ‘the science and art of cultivating the soil.’ Cultivating, in turn (another seventeenth-century word), means to put labor into improving the land by tilling it. Agriculture—the culture of the fields—is inherently about culture as art and science (certain kinds of labor), and changing the land by ‘improving’ it, not simply about food production. The same attention should be given to the word ‘colonization.’ Of course we use it often to designate conquest by force and the exploitation of resources, and many civilizations have perpetrated such conquests. The word ‘colony,’ however, was derived specifically from the Latin word for farmer, at a time when European landowners were colonizing their own backcountry, enforcing their ownership by bringing new lands into cultivation, changing the land-use practices of peasants, and forcing many of them off the land. This was a violent and disruptive process. The two words work together: colonization is about enforcing landownership through a new, agricultural occupation of lands once used differently. Colonization is a good thing, according to its supporters, regardless of the bloodshed and disruption it creates: it brings about the ‘improvement’ of land newly under cultivation—it brings culture to a wilderness.”

<sup>131</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Farewell Address” (address given at the White House, Washington DC, 11 January 1989), in *American Presidents: Farewell Messages to the Nation, 1796-2001*, ed. Gleaves Whitney (Lanham: Lexington, 2003), 460.

dragged out of the depths of our collective repression. The western US has always served as a key motif of American progress. As the social imaginary tells, it was through the physical and emblematic expansion across this immense and untamed expanse that the city upon a hill was built.<sup>132</sup> However, as Howard G. Wilshire, Jane E. Nielson, and Richard W. Hazlett reveal, beyond this fabled past lies a real and forbidding future. They state:

The romantic myths related to “winning” the west tend to obscure both its basic objective of resource exploitation and the huge public expenditure that supported every aspect, bestowing fortunes on a few. Western resources supported US industrial growth and affluent lifestyle, but now they are highly depleted or gone, and the region is in danger of losing the ability to sustain even an even moderately comfortable future. Much of what we have done to these magnificent lands opened them to devastating erosion and pollution. Today, whole mountains are being dismantled to produce metals from barely mineralized zones. Entire regions may be devastated in the attempt to extract the last possible drops of petroleum. We soon could cut down the last remnants of ancient western forests, along with the possibility of ever again seeing their like. Large-scale farming has opened vulnerable western soils to erosion by water and wind, perhaps inviting another dust bowl era. Irrigating vast crop acreages has converted many of them to salt farms, perhaps resembling the conditions that spelled doom for the ancient Babylonian Empire.<sup>133</sup>

There seems to be little evidence to suggest that this distressing trajectory of the American West has diverged significantly from that of the rest of the country or, in light of the reach of colonialism and its newer expressions, the globe at large. Yet the belief that genuine ecological and social health can coexist with steady technological

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<sup>132</sup> For a compelling collection of essays on this topic, see Gary J. Hausladen, ed., *Western Places, American Myths: How We Think About the West* (Reno: University of Nevada, 2003).

<sup>133</sup> Wilshire, Nielson, and Hazlett, *The American West at Risk*, 3. Also see Wes Jackson, *Becoming Native to This Place* (New York: Counterpoint, 1994).

advancement and ever increasing financial profit has been preserved as an entirely rational and objective proposition in the dominant culture. Indeed, much of American spatial behavior remains wedded to the “common-sense idea [that] economic growth is key to environmental progress,” as George W. Bush asserted in 2002.<sup>134</sup> The entrenchment of this potent idea has contributed to the establishment of a cultural cycle in which more growth—in science and technology, and entrepreneurship and profit—is regarded as the proper response to the problems created by such growth in the first place.<sup>135</sup> For Americans, progress has thus become its own justification and end.

Does this “grand idea” truly represent the “footsteps of God himself,” as Victor Hugo once professed?<sup>136</sup> Or can it be more properly characterized as a crucial

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<sup>134</sup> Speaking on the topic of climate change, Bush stated: “America and the world share this common goal: we must foster economic growth in ways that protect our environment. We must encourage growth that will provide a better life for citizens, while protecting the land, the water, and the air that sustain life. In pursuit of this goal, my government has set two priorities: we must clean our air, and we must address the issue of global climate change. We must also act in a serious and responsible way, given the scientific uncertainties. While these uncertainties remain, we can begin now to address the human factors that contribute to climate change. Wise action now is an insurance policy against future risks. I have been working with my cabinet to meet these challenges with forward and creative thinking. I said, if need be, let's challenge the status quo. But let's always remember, let's do what is in the interest of the American people. Today, I'm confident that the environmental path that I announce will benefit the entire world. This new approach is based on this common sense idea: that economic growth is key to environmental progress, because it is growth that provides the resources for investment in clean technologies. This new approach will harness the power of markets, the creativity of entrepreneurs, and draw upon the best scientific research. And it will make possible a new partnership with the developing world to meet our common environmental and economic goals.” “Global Warming Speech” (address given at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Silver Springs, MD, 14 February 2002), “George Bush’s Global Warming Speech,” *The Guardian*, 14 February 2002, accessed 27 February 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2002/feb/14/usnews.globalwarming>.

<sup>135</sup> Or as Ronald Wright succinctly notes, “Material progress creates problems that are—or seem to be—soluble only by further progress.” *A Short History of Progress*, 7.

<sup>136</sup> Qtd. in Anne McClintock, “The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term ‘Post-colonialism,’” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University, 1994), 292. McClintock demonstrates how the theme of progress has

undercurrent in the American manifestation of the modern moral order, one which supports faith in Exceptionalism by undermining the development of authentic and holistic perspectives on space? While readers are encouraged to judge for themselves, this exploration obviously champions the latter of these two perspectives as significantly more plausible based on available evidence and grounded logic. In particular, the data and logic arising from many marginalized and embattled communities offers particularly compelling insights on how unjust systems of privilege are supported by the theme of progress. The nature and consequences of this behavioral theme should certainly be acknowledged in all their complexity; stated differently, any analysis must beware falling victim to the same seductive reductionism, universalizing, and linearity that it sponsors. But considering the despotic hold that progress has exercised over the spatial behavior of Americans for much of the national history, a rebalancing effort seems long overdue.

### *Conclusion*

It would be naïve or misguided to suggest that the behavioral themes presented in this chapter have only ever been applied with malevolent intentions, or that nothing of constructive value can be tied to their influence over time. The science-based search for

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infiltrated even the main academic field that has arisen to disarm and deconstruct it: “In 1855, the year of the first imperial Paris Exposition, Victor Hugo announced: ‘Progress is the footsteps of God himself.’ ‘Post-colonial studies’ has set itself against this imperial idea of linear time—the ‘grand idea of Progress and Perfectibility,’ as Baudelaire called it. Yet the *term* ‘post-colonial,’ like the exhibit itself, is haunted by the very figure of linear ‘development’ that it sets out to dismantle. Metaphorically, the term ‘post-colonialism’ marks history as a series of stages along an ephocal road from ‘the pre-colonial,’ to ‘the colonial,’ to ‘the post-colonial’—an unbidden, if disavowed, commitment to linear time and the idea of ‘development’...Metaphorically poised on the border between old and new, end and beginning, the term heralds the end of a world era, but within the same trope of linear progress that animated that era” (emphasis original).

cures to deadly diseases like cancer and AIDS, the struggle to augment property ownership and wealth among historically marginalized groups, and the work to cultivate more nutritious, higher yielding crops for future drought-plagued regions come to mind as potentially admirable connections to these themes. However, the vital issue being explored here involves not so much how privilege, property, positivism, and progress guide behavior toward “good” or “bad” outcomes on a surface, individual level, but moreso how they embody a type of collective and systemic disorientation active in the depths of the dominant culture. The current trend of focusing discourse on surface, individual behavior is too often hijacked by ideological, religious, or politico-economic bickering and finger-pointing, instigating further disintegration of self and society. But by focusing on the deeper, collective aspects of how we think and behave (especially with regard to space), we are presented an opportunity to break through the shell of our unnatural innocence and reflect more meaningfully on who we are. This opportunity calls us to shift our central frame of reference away from the real and perceived benefits rendered by the bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism to the few, and toward the burdens of damaging fragmentation, stifling oppression, and stagnating repression which must be paid by us all.

Certainly, the restoration of balance to spatial behavior represents no mean task. From their prominent and entrenched positions in the social imaginary, the behavioral themes in question exercise significant influence over what uses of and responses to space can be considered as proper and acceptable. In turn, this limited perspective directs and constrains how we envision our history as Americans and our place as human beings

in the larger scope of creation. The claim that these symbols do not exist independently, but rather as cooperative and interconnected components of a larger systemic whole, seems particularly important. For by looking at privilege, property, positivism, and progress in a more holistic and collective fashion, we are enabled to more clearly identify how they contour other vital processes—in particular (and in keeping with the alliterative precedent) those involving profit, prestige, power. Such identification exposes spatial disorientation as a real and powerful phenomenon related to existing structures of privilege and patterns of injustice, rather than some inconsequential or archaic blip on the national radar. It also reflects by the witness and memory of those entities usually excluded from the current discourse: marginalized human groups, devastated animal and plant life, and the land itself.

While it is one thing to describe the imbalanced state of American spatial behavior, it is a different thing entirely to offer truly practical and distinct prescriptions for moving ahead. Further, the very notion of “moving ahead” is itself utterly obese, filled to bursting with a temporal bias arising straight out of Western modernity. Into the murkiness of these issues, Burgess attempts to shine a light:

I believe that true progress for Western society would mean recovering a sense of personal and communal dignity, identity and interdependence...Such true progress would need to be based on completely different ways of living and working, ways which dispensed with inherited patterns of authority and oppression, whereas up till now, throughout our apparent progress, we have perpetuated the structures inherited from feudalism. Often we have broadened their social base through political reform or revolution. But we have not done away with our underlying models of authority or land ownership or gender relations or exclusivity, as principles of social organization—for to do any of that would mean ‘turning the clock back.’ Yet it seems to me that some kind of radical ‘turning the clock back’ is the only true way *forward* for our society: forward out



of feudalism and feudalism's modern forms – the oppressive, exploitative relations both within our society, and between ourselves and other societies, as well as our relations with trees and plants, and with the earth itself. We need to move *forward into survival*, not through more control, management, information, and so on, but through *letting go of our need to control*. We need to learn to accept the variety and unpredictability of life as it is in itself, and to respect people as they are in themselves, in their variety and unpredictability. I believe that if we carry on refusing to take these lessons on board, history will teach them to us sooner or later.<sup>137</sup>

By attempting to subvert the very ingredients upon which the modern moral order is built, Burgess offers a helpful and succinct way of visualizing how new sources of meaning for society and culture might be discovered and new types of relationships among peoples and places might be constructed. But as astute and inspiring as these thoughts may be, they can nevertheless still be accused of betraying a certain lack of concreteness and an inadequate appreciation for the resilience of deep culture.

As the next chapter illustrates, this resilience is demonstrated through the emergence of three main American responses to the problem of space. In spite of these distinct responses—or perhaps due in part to them—the cognitive images and behavioral themes that have historically dictated how we understand and act in relation to the land remain largely unchallenged and even unrecognized today. Consequently, the “fair virgin” lauded by Thomas Morton more than three centuries ago still lies prone in the moral imagination, waiting to be further “well-employed by art and industry” through the touch of its proper American “lover.” But this lover is jealous—not unlike the deity he worships—and in his unwillingness to tolerate other perspectives or partners, he must

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<sup>137</sup> Burgess, *The Myth of Progress*, 39 (emphasis original).

repress much of the knowledge about who he truly is, what he has done, and where he is going.

4. Diversions or Subversions? Negotiating Culture through the Problem of Space

I have never been an uncritical admirer of the great American public. I came from here, I know its limitations, carelessness, wastefulness, and greed. I have spent years studying the history of our disorderly subjugation of this most splendid of continents and estimating the consequences of an exploitation that ignored consequences. Especially on issues involving public lands, I have often seen voters making almost criminally irresponsible choices, and their representatives pushing bills that sadly confuse private (read “corporate”) interests with public interest. But ever since I was old enough to be cynical I have been visiting national parks, and they are a cure for cynicism, an exhilarating rest from the competitive avarice we call the American Way. They were cooked in the same alembic as other land laws—the Homestead Act, Preemption Act, Timber and Stone Act, Mining Act of 1872—but they came out as something different. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst. Without them, millions of American lives, including mine, would have been poorer. The *world* would have been poorer.<sup>1</sup>

– Wallace Stegner  
From *Marking the Sparrow’s Fall* (1992)

“Absolutely American.” Placed in context, such phrases offer fascinating windows into the deeper pools of meaning that underlie disputes over questions of cultural identity. Looking through these windows, we find a vantage point from which to view a society’s prevailing values and operative assumptions. Furthermore, as we observe what items are stressed, rebuffed or omitted, we gain a momentary glimpse of

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<sup>1</sup> Wallace Stegner, *Marking the Sparrow’s Fall: The Making of the American West* (New York: Henry Holt, 1992), 135-136 (emphasis original). For a significant and relevant take on the work of Stegner, see Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *Why I Can’t Read Wallace Stegner and Other Essays: A Tribal Voice* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1996).

how these values and assumptions are contested and negotiated. Within a single nation, what is claimed as authentic in one community can be marked as fraudulent in another. The propensity for division and discord can be particularly heightened in societies built upon structures of politico-economic competition, as the US indisputably is. However, the mere appearance of ruptures on the surface of a society does not inevitably signify the existence of more profound cultural rifts, just as seeming national serenity does not guarantee that revolution is not around the corner.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, even social agents espousing diametrically opposed viewpoints can operate from a shared and mutually unrecognized deep cultural formation.

Commencing with an acknowledgement of such possibilities, this chapter examines three seemingly disparate responses to the natural world that are present and active within contemporary American culture.<sup>3</sup> Although the responses are presented here as separate categories for the purposes of examination and deconstruction, their actual functioning can be more accurately portrayed along a spectrum of spatial cognition and behavior. In other words, while I employ the categories of dominion, stewardship, and deep ecology to denote three common and somewhat distinct ways of conceptualizing

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<sup>2</sup> For example, in the months leading up to the January 2010 Egypt uprising against Hosni Mubarak's dictatorship, the country was consistently declared "stable" by foreign politico-economic analysts. See "Egyptian Financial Crisis Looms," *Al Jazeera*, 31 January 2011, accessed 4 February 2011, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/01/20111319341644600.html>; and "Fresh Anti-Govt Protests in Egypt," *Al Jazeera*, 26 January 2011, accessed 4 February 2011, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/01/201112663450547321.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Although environmental views in the US have been classified in a variety of ways, this presentation is most closely related to two similar tripartite systems. The first was proposed by Ian G. Barbour in his work entitled *Technology, Environment, and Human Values* (New York: Praeger, 1980); the second by Joseph M. Petulla in *American Environmentalism: Values, Tactics, Priorities* (College Station: Texas A&M, 1980).

and enacting relations with the natural world, I also recognize that these categories may shift fluidly in the real world. Additionally, they can even coexist quite peacefully in everyday process, with individuals displaying an ideological promiscuity depending on their situational interests and positioning. This presentation is therefore intended to be received more as a critical and calculated analysis than an illustrative or impartial survey.<sup>4</sup> A variety of insights gleaned from more intensive and thorough resources are integrated in an attempt to discover veiled connections among the major categories. The discovery of such connections allows us to better understand the nature and influence of deep culture, especially as it is implicated in and revealed through the bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism.

The overriding question to be interrogated involves whether the specific responses of dominion, stewardship, and deep ecology should be renounced as trivial diversions from the generally disoriented American approach to the problem of space, or whether they should be embraced as earnest subversions of this approach. Do these responses draw attention away from our sense of unnatural innocence under false pretenses, thereby helping to secrete and sustain it? Or rather, do they challenge this sense in meaningful ways, thereby serving to alter its character and consequences? As part of this interrogation, two main correlated issues are considered. First, each response is evaluated

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<sup>4</sup> An informative example of the survey approach can be found in Riyan J.G. van den Born's essay entitled "Implicit Philosophy: Images of the Relationship between Humans and Nature in the Dutch Population," in *Visions of Nature: A Scientific Exploration of People's Implicit Philosophies Regarding Nature in Germany, The Netherlands, and the United Kingdom*, eds. Riyan J.G. van den Born, Rob H.J. Lenders, and Wouter T. de Groot (Piscataway: Transaction, 2006), 61-84. Although derived from the cultural context of the Netherlands, many of van den Born's insights are widely applicable across the West.

in terms of how it functions as a site of negotiation for the symbols of deep culture. Of particular interest are the ways in which dominant cognitive images and behavioral themes related to the land are reflected—whether are they reinscribed or rejected, treated passively or actively, implicitly presupposed or openly acknowledged. A second consideration involves associations with faith in Exceptionalism. Taking into account their outward distinctions, the three responses to the natural world are assessed as to how they tend to either support or resist the master narrative, prevailing systems of privilege, and the general Western approach to space, thereby perpetuating or undermining the Exceptionalist faith.

The emergence of different responses to the natural world, different ways of negotiating the dominant arrangement of spatial symbols, tends to support the conceptualization of deep culture as an extremely influential but ultimately non-determinative force. However, I argue that we must take care not to automatically equate the emergence of outwardly distinctive responses to the natural world with a weakening of the exploitative regimes and oppressive circulations of power that characterize the contemporary American colonial system. As Anne McClintock explains, such systems have always existed in the midst of contesting interpretations of dominant values and norms:

As I see it, imperial power emerged from a constellation of processes, taking haphazard shape from myriad encounters with alternative forms of authority, knowledge, and power... Imperialism was a situation under constant contest, producing historical effects that were neither predetermined, uncontested, nor

ineradicable—in the context, it cannot be forgotten, of extreme imbalances of power.<sup>5</sup>

In fact, colonial systems have often gained strength by assimilating and managing such contestation. From this perspective, the enduring significance of spatial disorientation is exposed from yet another angle.

In order for faith in Exceptionalism to remain persuasive and operative, a single precise and rigid approach to space need not govern uncontested. Nor must our reliance on the land be dismissed outright, even if we could possibly be convinced of it. Instead, all that is required for Exceptionalist thought and practice to rule the day is that our search for meaning be disproportionately focused on temporal concerns, and our relationships with places be primarily characterized by a vague but consistent fragmentation, ambivalence, and separation. As long as an unnaturally innocent confidence in our cultural integrity and historical destiny is maintained, it will continue to eclipse any sort of reflective, grounded relationship with the land and its memory. Similarly, it will darken any hope of escaping our repression of who, how, and why we have come to be what we are, and of exploring new sources of meaning and forms of relationship.

In the face of such critical need, the challenge of discerning between authenticity and façade becomes paramount. Yet even as this discernment is zealously pursued, room for complexity and subjectivity must be left in its processes and outcomes. The analysis

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<sup>5</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 16.

presented here represents an attempt to honor such a challenge and contribute to larger dialogical efforts. These efforts hold potential for promoting greater recognition of and reflection upon spatial disorientation—both in terms of how it is concealed in support of Exceptionalism, and how it might be challenged by more just and balanced alternatives.

#### *A. Dominion*

Consistent with wider American dealings with space and time, the response of dominion is firmly embedded in Western cultural mores and Christian theological values. In fact, the name and motivating idea behind this response are lifted verbatim from a passage of biblical scripture. Looking to the first creation story presented at the beginning of the book of Genesis, we find the following divine command being pronounced:

Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have *dominion* over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground. God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him, male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying: "Be fertile and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Have *dominion* over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth"... And so it happened.<sup>6</sup>

Read literally, this passage clearly establishes "man" as the highest expression of creation and a special representative of god's power and sovereignty on earth. Moreover, the implication is conveyed that humans are not only "blessed" to hold such dominion, but also that they bear a divine mandate to colonize and "subdue" all places and the beings found therein. As this and the other biblical creation story found in Genesis 2 seem to communicate, the relationships human beings enter into with particular spaces and other

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<sup>6</sup> Genesis 1: 26-28, 30 (New American Bible translation) (emphases added).



types of beings are of only incidental importance to their overall development as rulers of creation.<sup>7</sup>

Although the proper interpretation of this biblical mandate remains a consistent site of contestation, the influence it exercises over spatial cognition and behavior is both profound and verifiable.<sup>8</sup> Beyond its countless appearances in the pulpits of American churches over time, the response of dominion has seamlessly transitioned into even the most supposedly secular of institutions—the rule of law. This transition is demonstrated perhaps most forcefully in the doctrine of Discovery, a foundational legal premise upon which the land tenure of the US rests. Tracing this doctrine as far back as the time of the Crusades, Robert J. Miller notes that it was initially developed by “European, Christian countries to control their own actions and conflicts regarding exploration, trade, and

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<sup>7</sup> For example, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (an educational arm of the Roman Catholic church) baldly states in its commentary on Genesis 1:26: “Man is here presented as the climax of God’s creative activity; he resembles God primarily because of the dominion God gives him over the rest of creation.” Likewise, about Genesis 2:4b-25 it asserts: “Here God is depicted as creating man before the rest of his creatures, which are made for man’s sake.” *The New American Bible* (New York: Oxford University, 2005), 43. Although the language of the commentary in these sections is softened somewhat in the 2010 revised edition, its meanings remain fundamentally equivalent.

<sup>8</sup> Scott A. Dunham addresses the contestation of interpretation: “Now, to be sure, an ecological reading of Genesis 1:26-28 has not dominated the interpretation of this text in the history of Jewish or Christian thought until recently. Nevertheless, ecofeminist theologians such as Rosemary Radford Ruether and Anne Primavesi have attempted to draw out a correspondence between dominion (and more generally the place of the human being in a theology of creation) and the anthropocentric, androcentric, and patriarchal structures that they argue contribute to a negative understanding of nature. In their estimation, to attempt to form an environmentally sensitive ethic founded upon traditional concepts of dominion faces the problem of also have to overcome such negative structures. Because understandings of God often are tied to these oppressive structures of thought and practice, it is argued that revision of traditional understandings of God is required in order to find a way in which Christianity can contribute to the removal of these destructive structures in contemporary society. In this way, it is argued, the Christian doctrine of God is tied to the anthropocentric ideas that have contributed to the ecological crisis about which [Lynn] White wrote. The alternative to this problematic legacy is a theological ethic founded upon ecologically positive ideas.” *The Trinity and Creation in Augustine: An Ecological Analysis* (Albany: State University of New York, 2008), 5-6.

colonization in non-European countries...<sup>9</sup> By undertaking mutually recognized legal rituals such as the planting of a flag, European invaders could claim for their respective nations exclusive rights to economic relations and enforceable license to negotiate for possession of the land. The fact these rituals were utterly foreign and meaningless to indigenous inhabitants made little substantive difference. Discovery was therefore built first and foremost upon a preoccupation with power, originally the European balance of power, even as it was affected by events in faraway lands.

The consolidation of politico-economic authority in North America following the American War for Independence necessarily instigated shifts in the interpretation and application of the doctrine, articulated perhaps most clearly during the reign of John Marshall over the Supreme Court. Yet, these shifts had less to do with a reimagining of the doctrine's fundamental premises than with the newly emerging political climate surrounding the American quest for nation-building. In citing the tenets of Discovery in the 1823 *Johnson v. M'Intosh* decision, Marshall decreed that the government exercised "ultimate dominion" over the land while the original indigenous inhabitants retained only a "right of occupancy."<sup>10</sup> This decision further established the right of "civilized" White

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<sup>9</sup> Robert J. Miller, *Native America, Discovered and Conquered: Thomas Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, and Manifest Destiny* (Westport: Praeger, 2006), 12.

<sup>10</sup> Marshall writes: "While the different nations of Europe respected the rights of the natives, as occupants, they asserted ultimate dominion to be in themselves; and claimed and exercised, as a consequence of this ultimate dominion, a power to grant the soil, while yet in the possession of the natives. These grants have been understood by all, to convey a title to the grantees, subject only to the Indian right of occupancy. The history of America, from its discovery to the present day, proves, we think, the universal recognition of these principles." See *Johnson and Graham's Lessee v. William M'Intosh*, 21 US 543 (1823).

settlers to secure this dominion “either by purchase or by conquest,” effectively issuing legal validation for a process of expansion by genocide that would continue into the present day.<sup>11</sup> And as scholars such as Miller, Robert A. Williams, and Steven T. Newcomb describe, this validation was directly inspired by Christian notions of creation and their biblical sources.

Explaining the significance of this inspiration, Newcomb states:

Thus...behind the “right of discovery” or doctrine of discovery are the two Old Testament directives—“subdue” the earth, and “have dominion” over every living thing. It follows, then, that these two biblical directives also serve as the context of the legal categories “ultimate dominion” and “Indian title” of “occupancy” (otherwise known as “aboriginal title”), written into U.S. law by the Supreme Court in the *Johnson v. M’Intosh* ruling on the basis of the doctrine of discovery. The Old Testament context is the dimension of federal Indian law that the U.S. government has successfully kept hidden from view under the guise of “the law.” This means is that every time the Supreme Court has invoked the Johnson ruling, or the doctrine of discovery, it has simultaneously, even if unconsciously, invoked the Old Testament background of what I call the doctrine of Christian discovery. The Court most recently cited the discovery doctrine in 2005, in footnote number one of *City of Sherrill v. Oneida Indian Nation of New York*.<sup>12</sup>

In light of this long legacy, the reach of the dominionist response comes into sharper perspective. Far from being rejected as some antiquated superstition by our purportedly modern, enlightened, and secularized society, this thoroughly Western approach to space

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<sup>11</sup> Marshall goes on to state: “The United States, then, have unequivocally acceded to that great and broad rule by which its civilized inhabitants now hold the country. They hold, and assert in themselves, the title by which it was acquired. They maintain, as all other have maintained, that discovery gave an exclusive right to extinguish Indian title of occupancy, either by purchase or by conquest, and gave also a right to such a degree of sovereignty, as the circumstances of the people would allow for them to exercise.” See *Johnson v. M’Intosh*.

<sup>12</sup> Steven T. Newcomb, “Law in the Shadow of the Bible,” *Kumeyaay.com*, 8 February 2008, accessed 9 February 2011, <http://www.kumeyaay.com/kumeyaay-news/news-archive/1062-law-in-the-shadow-of-the-bible.html>. Also see Steven T. Newcomb, “Five Hundred Years of Injustice: The Legacy of Fifteenth Century Religious Practice,” *Shaman’s Drum* 29 (Fall 1992): 18-20.

remains a pillar of the very system of laws upon which the society is built.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, even as more progressive approaches have emerged as challengers to this arrangement, the systemic inertia commanded by this approach has ensured its continuing influence.

Such inertia is complemented as the tenets of dominion are adopted and reconstituted by contemporary and explicitly anti-environmentalist alliances composed primarily of far-right Christian activists, corporate entities (especially those from within the so-called “wise use” movement), and conservative-leaning government officials. The substantial politico-economic clout of these new alliances has been demonstrated in recent history, most overtly through their participation in the regimes of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, and George W. Bush.<sup>14</sup> Informed by Christian theological notions about providence and the eschaton, these alliances tend to reject claims regarding the

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<sup>13</sup> The concept of Dominion can be understood as functioning on multiple levels; as Lewis Petrinovich explains, it simultaneously “refers to a sovereign entity in one sense of the word, and a rule of authority in another.” *Darwinian Dominion: Animal Welfare and Human Interests* (Cambridge: MIT, 1999), viii.

<sup>14</sup> Bryan L. Moore summarizes: “‘Dominion Theology’ is a relatively recent extremist interpretation of Genesis that leads practitioners to warrant the corporate domination of the planet (or vice versa). Dominion Theologists and Christian Reconstructionists (a kindred fundamentalist group) hold an extreme hostility toward environmentalism in all of its forms. Stephanie Hendricks writes that practitioners of this hyper-literal reading of the Bible believe that ‘the Second Coming of Christ, and the ascent of all Christians into heaven, hinges on the exhaustion of our natural resources’ and that ‘global environmental annihilation is a divine requirement for Christ’s return.’ Though the membership is small, the Dominionists are no mere fringe group; they have succeeded in influencing national environmental policy, especially in the Reagan and Bush II administrations.” *Ecology and Literature: Ecocentric Personification from Antiquity to the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 210n5. Also see Nadra Hashim, “Consecrating the Green Movement,” in *Church-State Issues in America Today*, eds. Ann W. Duncan and Steven L. Jones (Westport: Praeger, 2008), 197-246; and Stephenie Hendricks, *Divine Destruction: Wise Use, Dominion Theology, and the Making of American Environmental Policy* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2005), especially 41-60.

need to protect and preserve earth's limited resources. Instead, two related positions are advocated.

On the one hand it is proposed that the earth represents a relatively infinite supply of resources, and that human innovation and divine intervention hold the potential to mitigate any potential shortages that might arise.<sup>15</sup> Fittingly, the term "Frontier Economics" was coined by economist Kenneth Boulding in order to describe this explicitly anti-conservationist view.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, should the exhaustion of resources occur, it is portrayed as both a sign of and necessary component to the fulfillment of human development and end of the world.<sup>17</sup> In either case, the responsibility of Western peoples lies in extending their control over the earth and other beings rather than cultivating more holistic attitudes or ecologically-friendly practices.

The Exceptional role of god's chosen people in history—along with the dominant patterns

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<sup>15</sup> This proposal is reflected in Benedict XVI's 2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*: "Technology enables us to exercise dominion over matter, to reduce risks, to save labor: in technology, seen as the product of his genius, man recognizes himself and forges his own humanity. Technology is the objective side of human action whose origin and *raison d'être* is found in the subjective element: the worker himself. For this reason, technology is never merely technology. It reveals man and his aspirations toward development, it expresses the inner tension that impels him gradually to overcome material limitations. Technology, in this sense, is a response to God's command to till and keep the land (cf. Gn 2:15) that he has entrusted to humanity, and it must serve to reinforce the covenant between human beings and the environment, a covenant that should mirror God's creative love." Encyclical letter on Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth, 29 June 2009, The Vatican, accessed 16 February 2011, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html)

<sup>16</sup> See generally Kenneth E. Boulding, "The Economics of the Coming Spaceship Earth," in *Environmental Quality in a Growing Economy*, ed. Henry E. Jarrett (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1966), 3-14.

<sup>17</sup> See Hendricks, *Divine Destruction*, 49-51. Citing fairly recent polls indicating that a majority of Americans believe literally in the prophecies presented in the biblical book of Revelation, Hendricks argues that the persuasiveness of this portrayal should not to be underestimated.

of spatial cognition and behavior that support and extend it—remains largely unquestioned as truth in this perspective. In fact, the new dominionist alliances often openly decry the secularization of American society, a trend which they see as threatening and masking the Christian foundations of the nation.

The credo of these alliances is summarized by unabashed dominionist Alan M. Gottlieb:

We wise users are the real environmentalists. We are the real stewards of the land. We're the farmers who have tilled this land and the ranchers who have managed this land and we've done it successfully for generations. We're the miners and the loggers who depend for our livelihood on this land. We're the people who have fed, clothed, sheltered, and fueled everybody. These critics who call themselves environmentalists, they're actually elitists. They visit the environment. We work in it. They live in glass towers in New York City and marble buildings in Washington, DC. They don't know the difference between productivity and bureaucracy. They're part of the problem. They're killing America's jobs. They're aligned with big government. And they're out of touch. They're trashing the economy. We create productive harmony between man and nature – jobs *and* the environment. We live by a Civilization Ethic. So we're the real environmentalists.<sup>18</sup>

In one sense at least, such allegations should not be taken lightly. Criticisms regarding the lightweight, elitist, and hypocritical tendencies of mainstream American environmentalist discourse have been leveled from a number of other corners as well, often with convincing results.<sup>19</sup> However, the suggestion that Western-style farming, ranching, mining, and logging have been pursued “successfully for generations” in this landscape

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<sup>18</sup> Alan M. Gottlieb, “Introduction,” in *Ecology Wars: Environmentalism as if People Mattered*, by Ron Arnold (Bellevue: Free Enterprise, 1993), 8.

<sup>19</sup> For example, such criticisms have been at the foundation of the environmental justice movement, which seeks to situate environmental concerns within fields of power that include social hierarchies and historical oppressions.

contrasts sharply with various measurements of ecological and social health. It is also directly challenged by cultural perspectives integrating different conceptions of achievement and growth.

In the long view, the claims of the so-called “Civilization Ethic” attached to dominionism embody a relatively straightforward rehashing of deep cultural assumptions spread as part and parcel of the civilizing and christianizing mission of European colonialism. Illuminating the extent and import of this spread, Roger S. Gottlieb contends that “Much of the world’s religion, philosophy, law, education, commerce, and common sense have for some time given human beings “dominion” (Genesis) over the earth. People have asserted that the distinctive human capacities for language [especially written language], ‘reason,’ or property ownership signify that we alone have rights, or ultimate moral worth.”<sup>20</sup> But while we must not underestimate the widespread influence of dominionist assumptions throughout many societies today, we must also acknowledge two related caveats. First, these assumptions remain disputed in significant cultural pockets across the globe; and second, such disputes reveal the real and destructive consequences that typically ensue from their influence. These caveats raise vital questions about who is able to enjoy the rights of dominion and is what granted ultimate moral worth. Further, they have served as fodder for significant voices of critique which have come forward to challenge this way of responding to the natural world.

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<sup>20</sup> Roger S. Gottlieb, “Spiritual Deep Ecology and World Religions: A Shared Fate, A Shared Task,” in *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground*, eds. David L. Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb (Albany: State University of New York, 2001), 18-19.

The contemporary wave of anti-dominion criticism can be traced back to the publication of Lynn White's seminal 1967 essay entitled "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis." A medieval historian by training, White suggested that "man's unnatural treatment of nature and its sad results" could be linked directly to the particular theological perspective that came to dominate Christian thought and practice over the course of nearly two millennia.<sup>21</sup> From White's perspective, the power of this perspective remained demonstrable even as the complexity and diversity of traditions were taken into account. Identifying Christianity as "the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen," the author noted that it stood in "absolute contrast" to the many other world religions in which human beings were not elevated to a place of quasi-divine transcendence over the natural world. Further, by setting up "a dualism of man and nature [and insisting] that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper end," Christian theological doctrine became directly implicated in the establishment of exceedingly

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<sup>21</sup> Lynn White Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155, number 3767 (1967): 1203. Reflecting on the work of White, Lincoln Allison states: "It could be argued that Christian attitudes to nature have effectively been dominion-oriented and Judaic in origin. In influential essays published in the 1960's, 'On Christian Arrogance Toward Nature' and 'The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis', Lynn White Jr. revived the argument that Christianity has been the historical enemy of nature. White's thesis has met with considerable agreement and enthusiasm, though there is no acknowledgement in it of the long German lineage of such analyses. For half a millennium now 'Christians' have destroyed stable 'native' economies and cultures, burned forests and short-sightedly ripped up the earth's surface in search of profit from minerals and large-scale crops. As I write, this process is continuing at a greater pace than ever in Brazil. Absurd extremes of Christian disapproval of nature can be quoted: Pius IX refused to allow the formation of a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Rome because this would imply that human beings have duties towards animals. The *New Catholic Encyclopaedia* states boldly that 'experimentation on living animals is 'lawful and good', even though animals may suffer severe pain in the process.'" *Ecology and Utility: The Philosophical Dilemmas of Planetary Management* (Cranbury: Associated University, 1991), 35.



fragmented and harmful patterns of ecological behavior.<sup>22</sup> To White, the implicit acceptance of such fundamental dualism and exploitative license forecasted all the conditions necessary for widespread spatial disorientation and concomitant environmental disaster. Further, as modern science came to incorporate many of these same beliefs into its framework of supposedly objective and rational inquiry, disaster was accelerated even while its underlying causes were systematically consigned to the rubble of premodern superstition.<sup>23</sup>

Although White's thesis has been brought under fire consistently by dominionists and other conservative groups, it has nevertheless helped spark new efforts to reconsider traditional American patterns of spatial thought and behavior. One of the most forceful of these efforts has arisen from within ecofeminist communities. To ecofeminists like Rosemary Radford Reuther, the concept and practice of humanity's domination over the earth exists as inseparable from the historical domination of women by men. Moreover, these two forms of exploitation are depicted as cooperating in the upholding of existing

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<sup>22</sup> White unapologetically asserts: "Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. As early as the 2nd century both Tertullian and Saint Irenaeus of Lyons were insisting that when God shaped Adam he was foreshadowing the image of the incarnate Christ, the Second Adam. Man shares, in great measure, God's transcendence of nature. Christianity, in absolute contrast to ancient paganism and Asia's religions...not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper end." "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," 1205.

<sup>23</sup> White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," 1206. Of course, White also went on to suggest that Francis of Assisi be designated as a "patron saint for ecologists" (1206-1207), a suggestion rebuffed by Vine Deloria Jr. See *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*, 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed. (Golden: Fulcrum, 2003), 82.

systems of privilege.<sup>24</sup> Reuther argues that dominionism cannot be fully understood apart from a robust critique of gender dynamics:

To fail to see this connection between the domination of woman and domination of nature, and to speak of “anthropocentrism” as if this were a generic universal attributable equally to all human beings in all classes, races, and culture and both genders equally is a fundamentally analytical error that prevents a clear understanding of both the problem and the ways to begin to overcome it. All humans do not dominate nature equally, view themselves as over nature or benefit from such domination. Rather, elite males, in different ways across cultures, create hierarchies over subjugated humans and nonhumans: men over women, whites over blacks, ruling class over slaves, serfs and workers. These structures of domination between humans mediate the domination of elite males over nonhuman nature. Women are subjugated to confine them to the labor of reproduction, childcare, and work that turns the raw materials of nature into consumer and market goods, while being denied access to the education, culture, control of property and political power of the male elite, identified with the “human” transcendence over nature. This means women’s inferiority to men is modeled after the inferiorization of nonhuman nature to men. The term *man* is an androcentric false generic which really means the elite male as normal human, with women as lesser human or subhuman, identified as standing between mind and body, human and animal, closer to the lower pole in this dualism than the male.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ynestra King describes the cooperation of these exploitations: “While Judaeo-Christian scripture sometimes accords nature goodness insofar as it is a creature of God, more often these scriptures assert the absolute difference between God and creation. Genesis tells us that only humans are made ‘in the image of God’ and, hence, are given dominion over the rest of creation. In the patriarchal culture of Jews and Christians, this idea of human dominion over creation was conceived as *male* dominion. In early modern times, the view of the special status of humanity in general, and males in particular, was secularized. Today, even nonreligious modern people take it for granted that there is a natural hierarchy at the top of which stands humankind. Modern Western humanity presumes that only humans are the source of truth, value, and meaning; nature is merely an object whose sole value lies in its usefulness for man. Nature must be channeled and repressed for the purpose of human control, security, and survival. In industrial society, men are trained and disciplined in ways that repress the ‘useless’ and ‘counterproductive’ aspects of nature at work in them, including feelings, emotions, and other ‘womanly’ sensibilities. Power over the human organism is a crucial ingredient of the technological domination of the rest of nature.” “The Ecology of Feminism and the Feminism of Ecology,” in *Readings in Ecology and Feminist Theology*, eds. Mary Heather MacKinnon and Moni McIntyre (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1995), 128 (emphasis original).

<sup>25</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Deep Ecology, Ecofeminism, and the Bible” in *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground*, eds. David Landis Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb (Albany: State University of New York, 2001), 230 (emphasis original).

Of course, just as representatives of the ecofeminist movement have challenged male environmentalists to integrate issues of gender into their analyses, other voices have arisen to confront the White blindness of both groups in turn. A diverse assemblage of ecowomanists, critical race theorists, environmental justice advocates, and indigenous scholars have compellingly demonstrated how mainstream ecological debates continue to neglect communities of color and the poor while relying on exclusivistic Western frames of thought. Across their diversity, these indispensable though woefully underappreciated critiques share a dedication to denouncing and decentering the assumption that human beings—and especially *White male* human beings—should subdue the earth through environmentally destructive or indifferent practices. They also share a recognition of the profound woundedness and resolve these practices have wrought in the land and those beings treated as Other.<sup>26</sup>

Especially in light of these vital critiques, it seems clear the response of dominion reiterates the dominant culture's fundamental disorientation to space in a particularly superficial and disturbing way. More pointedly, this response diverts consideration away from disorientation by pressing an extreme and unabashed reiteration of unnatural innocence. By promoting an indiscriminate manipulation of land and inequitable control

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<sup>26</sup> One of the most powerful and haunting expressions of this recognition can be found in Alice Walker's essay "Only Justice Can Stop a Curse." As the integrity of Walker's short piece necessitates a full reading in my opinion, I will not quote any portion of it here. See *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 338-342. For a related discussion, see Shamara Shantu Riley, "Ecology is a Sistah's Issue Too: The Politics of Emergent Afrocentric Ecowomanism," in *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (New York: Routledge, 1996), 347 (emphasis original).

of resources for the benefit of a self-selected chosen people, dominionists both confessed and covert seek to acquire the ideological validation and politico-economic capital necessary to expand their vision of a city upon a hill. This validation and capital is gained largely upon the backs of the evidently non-chosen, those left to fend for themselves outside the city walls: indigenous peoples forced to violate traditional spatial relationships in order to provide cash crops to global markets; communities of color left deal disproportionately with the lingering effects of industrial pollution and colonization; the poor constrained by lack of land tenure and inadequate access to sources of food, water, and shelter.

Consequently, we can notice a conspicuous parallel by thinking of the dominionist response to the natural world as somewhat akin to the reaction of Christian warriors to the chaos of the Albigensian Crusade. This reaction is encapsulated in a phrase reportedly uttered by Arnaud Amaury, a Cistercian monk and the pope's special representative, in reply to a question regarding the conduct of the crusading warriors: "Caedite eos. Novit enim Dominus qui sunt eius." Its translation? "Kill them all. For God knows those that are His."<sup>27</sup> In light of the cavalier dominionist attitude to the holistic

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<sup>27</sup> Whether this phrase was uttered in the precise manner presented in some accounts—or whether it represents an apt but fictional characterization of events—remains a relatively unimportant question. What is important, however, is the context and meaning it accurately signifies. Zbigniew Herbert explains: "Pierre de Vaux-de-Cernay, a Cistercian monk and chronicler of the expedition against the Albigensians, wrote that in St. Magdalen alone seven thousand people were killed, which is probably an exaggeration. Historians estimate, however, that some thirty thousand (innocent) people were killed in Béziers. What makes this figure even more terrifying is that inhabitants were put to the sword without discrimination. The papal legate, Arnaud Amaury, when asked during the battle what was to be done with the Catholics who must have been among those massacred, said: 'Kill everyone. God will recognize his own.' This famous response is probably apocryphal, since it is quoted by a fourteenth-century chronicler, Caesarius of

health and well-being of ecosystems and their array of participating lifeforms, such a parallel seems apropos.<sup>28</sup> And yet, when from another angle the dominionist call for a more unrestrained embrace of Western cultural mores and Christian theological values can at least be judged as honest and forthcoming—if not redeeming. In issuing this call, dominionists seek to expose underlying influences on thought and behavior which they regard as concealed or repressed in the dominant culture. In this way, we may concede a measure of insightfulness to their perspective even while rejecting its promoted cosmology and aspirations.

### *B. Stewardship*

Lynn White Jr.'s strong critique of Christianity and dominionism eventually drew its own criticism as an exemplar of what Fred Van Dyke labels “an overall trend in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s to discover single root causes for the environmental crisis.”<sup>29</sup>

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Heisterbach. It is likely that Arnaud Amaury—blockhead rather than a cynic—uttered only the first sentence. Nevertheless, this dictum provides an excellent commentary on the events.” “Albigensians, Inquisitors, and Troubadours,” in *Zbigniew Herbert: The Collected Prose 1948-1998*, ed. Alissa Valles (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 106.

<sup>28</sup> The appropriateness of this parallel is heightened further when one considers how easily the Amaury-attributed declaration entered into the American cultural vocabulary. Richard Abels notes: “In its punchier paraphrase, ‘Kill ‘em all and let God sort them out,’ the Cistercian abbot’s Solomonic judgment was adopted as the official motto by Green Berets and Ranger units in Vietnam in what was clearly—I hope—an exercise in military black humor.” “Cultural Representation and the Practice of War in the Middle Ages,” in *Journal of Medieval Military History*, eds. Clifford J. Rogers, Kelly DeVries, and John France (Rochester: Boydell, 2008), 14. Of course, the phrase has circulated much more widely since that time, becoming something of a bellicose refrain on t-shirts, bumper stickers, and the like.

<sup>29</sup> Though Van Dyke is correct to point out the complex roots of ecological problems, his conclusions remain rather suspect: The views [of White] became a staple in any discussions of ecological ethics. The Judeo-Christian tradition was vilified in all things environmental, from discussions of landscape architecture to pollution and species extinctions to literary criticism. White’s essay was part of an overall trend in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s to discover single root causes for the environmental crisis, with

Nevertheless, it marked a tonal shift in American discussions about land and place. For perhaps the first time since the era of Romanticism, the primary idea of human beings as unrepentant subduers of the earth has begun to be met with substantial cultural uneasiness. This uneasiness has been influenced in part by a contextual interplay of the behavioral themes of positivism and progress. With an increasing number of scientific studies suggesting a startling decline in natural resources and environmental health, the march of American politico-economic expansion has been presented with what is considered—at least by some—as a threat worthy of notice. Such a threat has induced certain communities to explore adjustments in their collective response to the natural world. However, as closer analysis seems to indicate, in many cases these adjustments have involved fairly unobtrusive realignments of existing deep cultural symbols rather than a radical reimagining of the possibilities of spatial relationship.

The most common sort of realignment has targeted the concept of dominion itself. But rather than rejecting the foundations of this concept in order to explore other, more holistic and grounded conceptualizations of creation, many cultural commentators (e.g. scholars, politico-economic elites, religious leaders, etc.) have instead advocated for a reinterpretation of its traditional meanings. Returning to the biblical text from which the concept is drawn, commentators such as Robin Attfield have suggested that the charge of

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other such efforts variously blaming common property institutions, capitalism, or colonialism. None of these explanations were able to stick when placed under serious intellectual scrutiny, but White's ideas proved the most popular and enjoyed a vigorous and extended life in environmental circles long after they had been discredited in academic ones. *Between Heaven and Earth: Christian Perspectives on Environmental Protection* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 16.

dominion bestowed upon humans can be more properly understood as a godly duty rather than an unencumbered license. Describing this suggestion, Peter Hay relates:

Attfield's interpretation of "dominion over nature" is that humankind is to be a "steward" over creation, "charged by God with responsibility for its care." The task is to ensure that God's handiwork is maintained in good health, drawing sustenance and even profit from it whilst managing it sustainably and looking to the interests of its living components. This act of stewardship is the highest of the responsibilities God has placed upon his "designated manager"—humankind. To wantonly destroy nature may not be sacrilege, but it is a slight upon God's craftsmanship and a renunciation of the most important responsibility with which we have been charged. And the ecological crisis has come about because there has been a gradual weakening of the stewardship ethic, with protective obligations to nature becoming devalued.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast to the more historically prevalent dominionist view of space as resource repository and site for conquest and exploitation, the response of stewardship tends to place human beings in the role of benign caretaker. This response calls for society to watch over and control the land through a civilized exercise of reason and an application of scientific techniques, so that it can be sustained according to divine providence for continued human enjoyment and use. Although human dominion over the land and other beings remains relevant from this perspective, its exercise is portrayed as falling somewhere between enlightened trusteeship and benevolent autocracy. Laudably, the stewardship response explicitly rejects the propensity for wanton disregard and unadulterated anthropocentrism characteristic of its dominionist counterpart. However, in spite of this divergence it simultaneously preserves a number of the deep cultural symbols that promote spatial disorientation.

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<sup>30</sup> Peter Hay, *Main Currents in Western Environmental Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2002), 106.

For example, although both dominionism and stewardship appear in wide range of forms, arrangements, and applications, certain shared tendencies remain rather invariable. First, humans—and more specifically, civilized Christian males—are placed at the pinnacle of a hierarchy of being which is revealed through both divine revelation and rational contemplation.<sup>31</sup> Second, the natural world is identified as a gift provided primarily for the care and well-being of human society and valued chiefly in terms of its instrumentality.<sup>32</sup> Finally, “man” is conceptualized in the role of manager over creation, controlling and shaping it in a co-creative effort with the god whom he represents.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Frederick Ferré explains, “Stewardship is still steeped in hierarchy and paternalism. It takes for granted that we *know* what is right. Stewardship assumes that we both perceive and understand the intricate web of life that is complexly organized into ecosystems—of which humans are constituent parts. Nor has stewardship yielded up one iota of patriarchy’s illusion of dominion or superiority and smug self-assurance about its own goodness and good intentions. Stewardship is an ethic for those who will be good ‘husbands’ of what is entrusted to them. The old patriarchal tradition, in which males used to own their wives, own their children, continues today as we ‘own’ cars and animals and trees and farms, and nations ‘own’ continents and even the two hundred miles of adjacent ocean and all that is in it. Stewardship leaves these illusions of hierarchy, ownership, and dominion safe in our heads and hearts.” *Ethics and Environmental Policy: Theory Meets Practice* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1994), 27.

<sup>32</sup> Discussing the idea of creation as gift, Michael W. Petty promotes a liberal Christian interpretation of the stewardship response: “Creation is distinct from God and not God’s direct self-expression. Creation is different from God but this does not render it an object of indifference, either to God or to human beings. For us, creation is important because it is a *gift*, that which God has entrusted to *our care* and not given over to our complete possession. Our vocation is inseparably bound to the stewardship of the gift. For God, creation is important precisely because it is the genuine *other* which God loves and to which God has committed Godself irrevocably in the Incarnation. Adopting a sane attitude toward nature means following a path that passes between the *contemptus mundi* tradition and the tendency to romanticize nature as the direct expression of God and thus to worship the creature rather than the creator (Romans 1:25). In short, nature must be seen as *creation*. It is neither something to be escaped or left behind on the way to God nor is it something to be sacralized (in however subtle a way) in an animistic or pantheistic sense. As creation, nature is that which has been brought about by God as that in and through which God accomplishes God’s purposes. *A Faith That Loves the Earth: The Ecological Theology of Karl Rahner* (Lanham, ME: University of America, 1996), 180 (emphasis original).

<sup>33</sup> Roderick Nash evaluates stewardship’s emphasis on co-creation: “Lynn White’s theology stood out for its ethical egalitarianism. The more common approach of those who would make American religion environmentally responsible was to reinterpret traditional doctrine in light of the idea of stewardship. Rereading the Old Testament they found a directive to protect rather than a license to exploit nature. The



While protecting the land from unreasonable exploitation, this manager must secure the needs of politico-economic progress against the constraints of environmental limits and resource availability.

Although the stewardship response assigns ultimate ownership of the natural world to the divinity (or in more secular articulations, to a notion of cosmic evolution), it clearly distinguishes human beings as its rightful administrators.<sup>34</sup> In doing so, it allows for another noteworthy effect. While promoting the right of chosen, civilized society to manipulate particular spaces under the guises of rational management, appeals to stewardship create distance between this society and the natural consequences of its manipulation. Specifically, these appeals often attribute much of the fault of ecological

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'dominion' granted in Genesis 1:28 did not connote despotism, they said, but trusteeship. As God's most favored beings, humans were charged with overseeing the welfare of the rest of creation—in a sense, completing creation. This halfway doctrine allowed for human superiority in the Christian hierarchy, acknowledged that God had 'given' nature to humans, but used the concepts as reasons for protecting the natural world from exploitation. For biblical support the stewardship contingent went to Genesis 2:15, according to which God placed the first man in the Garden of Eden 'to till it and keep it.' This, they contended, constituted a directive to humankind to take care of or serve the rest of God's creation. Through their understanding of the creation myth, the stewards reinvested the environment with a sacredness once associated with animism and pantheism. Abuse of nature became, once again, sacrilegious. Of course, abuse of nature also could endanger human existence, and the stewardship doctrine has been termed little more than enlightened self-interest. From a theological perspective, God could be thought of as punishing humans through the impact of neglected nature on human life. But the bottom line of stewardship was that the world belonged to God. Nature was holy. Therefore it was not only prudent but right to respect the environment. In a sense the myriad forms of life, as well as the earth itself, had rights that originated from their being the work of the deity" See "The Greening of Religion," *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment*, ed. Roger S. Gottlieb (New York: Routledge, 1996), 201.

<sup>34</sup> Stewardship advocates typically differentiate their beliefs by placing themselves between (and against) pantheism and materialism. Exemplifying this viewpoint, Norman L. Geisler contends: "The doctrine of creation has several important implications for ecology. While the world is not God, as pantheists say, neither is it ours, as materialists imply. Arising from this are two important aspects of a Christian ecology: divine ownership and human stewardship. As the lyricist Maltbie D. Babcock put it, 'This is my Father's world.' God owns it, and humankind is supposed to keep it for him." *Christian Ethics: Contemporary Issues and Options*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 322-323.

destruction and its penalties to the Other, those unenlightened and backward folks who fail to accept their designated role as stewards in the overall (Western Christian designated) order of the cosmos.<sup>35</sup> When pressed, those voicing appeals to stewardship concede that Americans have at least been no worse than peoples of other backgrounds at observing responsible environmental management—even while insisting that such failure has always represented a deviation from innate American cultural norms.<sup>36</sup> Such endorsements of plausible deniability represent the stewardship response at its worst and function to buttress the sense of unnatural innocence that pervades American cultural consciousness.

Unfortunately, these sorts of endorsements have become a commonly recurring motif among religious and politico-economic elites. As an example, let us consider the

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<sup>35</sup> This tendency to blame the Other is routinely exposed in high-level discussions of global climate change, where huge disparities exist between the expectations that the US and other wealthy Western nations place upon themselves, and the expectations they place upon poorer non-Western nations. The gross injustice embodied in such disparity is compounded by the fact that climate change is predominantly a result of Western industrialism and consumerism. Thus far neither Americans nor Europeans have indicated a real willingness to sacrifice their ecologically harmful habits, or to provide meaningful support to those peoples who are already disproportionately bearing the costs of those habits.

<sup>36</sup> The view that indigenous peoples have been at least as environmentally destructive as their Western counterparts has been promoted by scholars such as Sheperd Krech. Writing in *The Ecological Indian*, Krech argues that traditional Indian cultures cannot be accurately characterized as ecologically sensitive or scientifically aware, and that attempts to do so ignore a history of wasteful and superstitious practices. His presentation heavily relies upon evidence gleaned from the accounts of White invaders, however, and consistently downplays the deep culture conflicts that defined this era of colonial expansion. In a seeming contradiction, while Krech purports to oppose efforts to “strip [Indians] of all agency in their lives” (216), he simultaneously belittles Indian self-representations by suggesting that claims to long-standing traditions of environmental knowledge and interdependence “generally [have] deeper roots in European self-criticism than in indigenous realities” (227). See Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999). For a noteworthy response to Krech, see Richard O. Clemmer, “Native Americans: The First Conservationists? An Examination of Shepherd Krech III’s Hypothesis with Respect to the Western Shoshone,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 65, no. 4 (2009): 555-574.

following viewpoint asserted by Norman L. Geisler, a self-described “prolific author, veteran speaker, lecturer, philosopher, apologist, evangelist, and theologian”:<sup>37</sup>

It is not the Christian worldview that encourages the abuse of nature, but the materialist view. Those who see nature’s resources as unlimited and humankind as the ultimate authority in the use of them are the exploitative ones. As observed earlier, some humanists even speak of “raping” nature. Christianity, by contrast, believes that God is the owner of natural resources. We are over the natural world, but we are also called to protect and serve it. The biblical command to control it does not mean to corrupt it. Our power over nature does not confer the right to pollute it. On the contrary, the Christian has the responsibility to care for and keep the natural world.<sup>38</sup>

While Geisler’s particular brand of apologetics cannot be said to be representative of the gamut of American Christian communities, the objection he raises is a familiar one.

Claiming that “Ecology is good stewardship,” and that “true” believers recognize a higher standard of environmental responsibility, Geisler sounds a refrain that is certainly not unique to the conservative Christian arena.<sup>39</sup> The persistent call to stewardship enjoys widespread recognition in a variety of religious circles, and tends to absolve subscribers from the blame for ecological degradation and its related exploitations. Further, even when superficially disconnected from religious discourses, such a perspective privileges a

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<sup>37</sup> Norman L. Geisler, “Home,” Dr. Norman L. Geisler, accessed 1 March 2012, <http://www.normangeisler.net>. Geisler continues his modest self-description by stating, “To those who ask, ‘Who is Norm Geisler?’ some have suggested, ‘Well, imagine a cross between Thomas Aquinas and Billy Graham and you’re not too far off.’”

<sup>38</sup> Geisler does qualify this statement somewhat, however, by noting that “While *Christianity* is not responsible for the present ecological crisis, it must be admitted that to a significant degree *Christendom* is.” Yet the question of how exactly this distinction can be made is left largely unaddressed. *Christian Ethics*, 314 (emphasis original).

<sup>39</sup> See Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 326.

particular conception of moral order and cosmological formation in which notions of time and progress—rather than space and relationality—are heavily accentuated.

In the American cultural context, stewardship is therefore rendered as an easy bedfellow to Exceptionalism. This sympathetic affiliation allows distasteful yet bona fide historical trends of genocide and ecocide to be whitewashed beneath professions of the longstanding love and care of Americans for their land. Illustrations of this affiliation have been commonplace in dominant politico-economic rhetoric for some time, on both sides of the supposed conservative-liberal divide. For example, I submit the following remarks offered by the last three Democratic presidents: Barack Obama, Bill Clinton, and Jimmy Carter, respectively.

- “Throughout our history, there's been a tension between those who've sought to conserve our natural resources for the benefit of future generations, and those who have sought to profit from these resources. But I'm here to tell you this is a false choice. With smart, sustainable policies, we can grow our economy today and preserve the environment for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren. That is what we must do. For you know, you know that our long-term prosperity depends upon the faithful stewardship of the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land that we sow. That's a sacred trust, the importance of which cannot be measured merely by the acres we protect, the miles of rivers we preserve, the energy we draw from public lands. It's a child wandering amidst ancient redwoods, a love for science stirred as she looks skyward. It's a young man running his hand along the walls at Ellis Island, where his grandmother once carried her every possession and the hope of a new life. It's a family hiking along canyons carved by ancient floods, or mountains shaped by shifting continents -- finding peace in the beauty of the natural world. These are experiences that enrich our lives and remind us of the blessings that we share.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President to Commemorate the 160<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Department of the Interior” (address given in Washington DC, 3 March 2009), The White House Office of the Press Secretary, accessed 1 March 2012, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-commemorate-160th-anniversary-department-interior>. Later that same month, Obama remarked similarly: “As Americans, we possess few blessings greater than the vast and varied landscapes that stretch the breadth of our continent. Our lands have always provided great bounty—food and shelter for the first

- “It is our landscape, our culture, and our values together that make us Americans. Stewardship of our land is a major part of the stewardship of the American dream since the dream grew out of this very soil. Robert Frost wrote, “The land was ours before we were the land’s.” This continent is our home, and we must preserve it for our children, their children, and all generations beyond.” And relatedly, “We have agreed for a long time as a people that the stewardship of our natural environment is a big part of maintaining the American Dream. With the first Earth Day, twenty-five years ago, Americans came together to say no to dirty air, toxic food, polluted water; and say yes to leaving our children a nation as unspoiled as their dreams. We recognize together that our business in creating jobs was not undermined and, in fact, could be enhanced by protecting the environment.”<sup>41</sup>
  
- Our Nation is one of great strength. God has blessed us in many ways – with a form of government now more than 200 years old, when individual human beings, no matter how different they might be from one another, could stand and speak as they choose, develop those qualities of individuality and difference that, put together, give us a strong America. He’s given us good land over which we exercise stewardship, passing it down to our sons and daughters to keep in a productive state. And when I assess what is the very important differences, or difference, between our country and others that’s most valuable, where we have the clearest advantage over all other nations on Earth, it is in the productivity of our land and the productivity of the American farmer.<sup>42</sup>

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Americans, for settlers and pioneers; the raw materials that grew our industry; the energy that powers our economy. What these gifts require in return is our wise and responsible stewardship. As our greatest conservationist President, Teddy Roosevelt, put it almost a century ago, ‘I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us.’ See “Remarks by the President at Signing of the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act of 2009” (address given in Washington DC, 30 March 2009), The White House Office of the Press Secretary, accessed 1 March 2012, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-signing-omnibus-public-lands-management-act-2009-33009>.

<sup>41</sup> William J. Clinton, “Remarks on the 25<sup>th</sup> Observance of Earth Day” (address given in Havre de Grace, MD, 21 April 1995), in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: William J. Clinton, 1995*, Book 1: January 1 to June 30, 1995 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1996), 556; and William J. Clinton, “Remarks to American Legion Boys Nation” (address given in Washington DC, 24 July 1995), in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: William J. Clinton, 1995*, Book 2: July 1 to December 3, 1995 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1997), 1136.

<sup>42</sup> Jimmy Carter, “Remarks at Growers Cooperative Warehouse, Inc” (address given in Wilson, NC, 5 August 1978), in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1978*, Book 2: June 30 to December 31, 1978 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1979), 1391.

Although only snippets in themselves, such passages begin to demonstrate the place of stewardship among the contours of a much broader and deeper cultural disorientation. Unlike the dominionist response against which it has emerged in reactionary fashion, the stewardship response has openly embraced individual ecological responsibility as both a religious and secular good. However, in so doing it has largely adopted the same cognitive images and behavioral themes that have historically dominated thought and action related to the land. As the preceding quotations reveal, visions involving the building of a city upon a hill, the enjoyment of a promised land, the settling of *terra nullius*, and the management of frontier wilderness coexist quite comfortably with the response of stewardship. Although these visions may be tempered as boasts of vicious penetration and exploitation are exchanged for petitions regarding conscientious administration and employment, the messages they communicate linger basically unmolested. Politico-economic progress, especially through the application of positivistic techniques and the protection of property rights, remains the supreme objective of spatial behavior in the stewardship approach. Likewise, humans retain a privileged position in an accepted order creation, with distinctions in cultural perspective, racial background, and politico-economic organization serving to subdivide the social hierarchy.

While the stewardship response can seem to embody a rather compassionate and sensible response to the natural world on its surface, deeper analyses indicate its continued reliance on problematic and oppressive spatial biases.<sup>43</sup> Although this response

deviates appreciably from its dominionist counterpart in tone and style, one would be hard-pressed to identify it as a truly distinct way of finding meaning and forming relationship with regard to space. Or to adopt the positivistic language of hierarchical classification which informs them both, while dominionism and stewardship can be categorized as separate species of responses to the natural world, they undoubtedly occupy the same overall genus of spatial disorientation. Allowing for differences in emphasis, this genus is marked by a shared view of cosmic hierarchy, a common privileging of basic Western cultural mores and Christian theological values, and collective acceptance of the master narrative about America.

But while dominionist adherents are generally forthcoming about their acceptance of such exclusivist assumptions, stewardship advocates tend to portray the origins and significance of their belief system a much more rarefied and universal light. Even the term stewardship itself, which bears undeniable Christian references, has quietly come to occupy an authoritative place in the Exceptionalist lexicon that obscures its theological

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<sup>43</sup> Even the comments of the stewardship response's most vocal proponents seem to support such a conclusion. For example, J. Baird Callicott argues that the actualization of this response "would permit benign management of the earth and all its creatures for the mutual benefit of man and nature" in a way that is compatible "with the present civilized, and perhaps humanized, condition of mankind." Interestingly, although Callicott's presentation is explicitly designed to "[widen] the scope of environmental ethics to include the ecological teachings embedded in non-Western worldviews" (publisher's note), the author nevertheless feels compelled to offer a special endorsement of stewardship: "The ecocentric environmental ethic associated with stewardship is thus the most effective, practical, and acceptable environmental ethic consistent with the Judeo-Christian worldview. Further, since it is a possible interpretation of the role intended for man by God in both of the creation myths of Genesis, stewardship seems the most plausible interpretation of the overall gist of the text as it has come down to us in its present composite form. As a philosopher who has struggled for most of two decades to develop a theoretically well-formed, adequate, practicable, and persuasive nonanthropocentric environmental ethic, I would like to intrude on the impersonal voice of this discussion to say that the Judeo-Christian stewardship environmental ethic is especially commendable." See *Earth's Insights: A Multicultural Survey of Ecological Ethics from the Mediterranean to the Australian Outback* (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), 20-21.

and scriptural roots.<sup>44</sup> The common usage of this term allows for a general acknowledgment of the participation of Americans in dual domination of land and Other. Yet it consistently depicts this participation as an unfortunate deviation from, rather than a conventional demonstration of, the baseline of American politico-economic and social character. This tendency suggests that stewardship actually communicates less about the responsibility of privileged Americans to care for the land, and more about their desire to care for themselves.

Primarily serving to assuage the popular conscience, stewardship does little to help communities discover more meaningful ways of envisioning and cultivating relationships with the places they inhabit. Cutting to the heart of the matter in his customary style, Vine Deloria Jr. summarizes this dynamic as represented in the “Liturgy of the Earth,” a ecologically-themed religious service developed by the National Cathedral in Washington DC:

Even in this attempt to bring religious sensitivity to the problem of ecological destruction, one can see the shallow understanding of the basis of the religious attitude that has been largely responsible for the crisis. No effort is made to begin a new theory of the meaning of creation. Indeed, the popular attitude of stewardship is invoked, as if it had not relationship to the cause of the ecological crisis whatsoever. Perhaps the best summary of the attitude inherent in the liturgy is, “Please, God, help us cut the cost, and we’ll try to find a new life-style what won’t be quite as destructive.” The response is inadequate because it has not reached any fundamental problem; it is only a patch job over a serious theological problem. But at least in this liturgy we humans are bad and nature is good—a marked advance over earlier conceptions.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> For an expressly conservative but revealing perspective on the biblical foundations of stewardship, see Mike Whitmore, *Accountable to God: Biblical Stewardship* (Mustang: Tate, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> Deloria, *God is Red*, 83.



Arising out of and embodying a “unique blend of the spiritual and the civic,”<sup>46</sup> this liturgical attitude is evocative of a deep cultural formation that sacrifices the potential awareness of hard truths for the established comfort of inadequate beliefs. It further exposes the powerful psychological need to cling to myopic views of historical teleology and to fear genuine efforts at spatial reflection.

Although stewardship does not necessarily represent a new way of responding to the problem of space, it has nevertheless been emerging as a persuasive means by which an increasing number of Americans attempt to reconcile their abstract and traditional concerns about time—concerns which center on the perceived movement of a chosen people along an arc of salvational and civilizational progress—with their growing awareness of the concrete and pressing consequences of their existence in space. For this reason, stewardship has been widely heralded as the natural and distinctive ecological posture of the nation. However, even support from friends in high places has been unable to completely conceal the ultimate limitations of this response, instigating the rise of a third major category.

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<sup>46</sup> This phrase is taken directly from the mission statement of the National Cathedral. The statement reads in full: “Washington National Cathedral is a church for national purposes called to embody God’s love and to welcome people of all faiths and perspectives. A unique blend of the spiritual and the civic, this Episcopal Cathedral is a voice for generous-spirited Christianity and a catalyst for reconciliation and interfaith dialogue to promote respect and understanding. We invite all people to share in our commitment to create a more hopeful and just world.” “Mission,” Washington National Cathedral, accessed 17 February 2011, <http://www.nationalcathedral.org/about/mission.shtml>.

### *C. Deep Ecology*

In contrast to the essentially shared etiology of dominion and stewardship, the response of deep ecology seems to view the natural world in a different light. If dominionists celebrate the separation of humans from the rest of creation as a divine blessing and license, while stewardship advocates maintain recognition of this separation while restricting it to a godly trust and responsibility, deep ecologists distinguish themselves by claiming an absolute rejection of separation. As stewardship represents an intellectual critique of dominion, deep ecology embodies an ideological retort to stewardship. Indeed, it was through Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess's postulation of two main divisions in the twentieth century Western ecology movement—a "shallow" and a "deep"—that this latter response found its title and initial articulation.<sup>47</sup> According to Naess, the shallow stewardship perspective is permeated by an intrinsic "arrogance" stemming from its reliance on "the idea of superiority which underlies the thought that we exist to watch over nature like a highly respected middleman between the Creator and the Creation."<sup>48</sup> Deep ecology is proposed as an improvement on this perspective due to its supposed integration of an innovative, broader, and more flexible set of spatial propositions.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> See Arne Naess, "The Shallow and the Deep Ecology Movement," in *Environmental Ethics: The Big Questions*, ed. David R. Keller (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 230-234.

<sup>48</sup> Qtd. in Daniel B. Botkin, *New Man's Garden: Thoreau and a New Vision for Civilization and Nature* (Washington DC: Island, 2001), 39-40.

<sup>49</sup> Illustrating this divergence, Frank Schalow writes: "Deep ecology attends to a stewardship (of nature) that aims to cultivate a sense of 'harmony and balance,' and hence need not be restricted by the

The breadth and flexibility of the deep ecology movement has represented both a point of pride and an object of criticism over the course of its ideological development.<sup>50</sup> Yet even while acknowledging the fairly loose assortment of philosophical, social, and politico-economic viewpoints associated with this movement, we can nonetheless distinguish a common backbone of thought. A number of definitive inventories have been proposed since Naess's promulgation of seven basic principles in 1973.<sup>51</sup> However, considering my exploratory focus on the ways in which deep ecology has come to be distinctively modified in the American context, the inventory presented by Eric Katz, Andrew Light, and David Rothenberg seems particularly relevant and forthright. Posing

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desire to fulfill human ends. Shallow ecology, on the other hand, might be interested in cultivating precisely such strategies (e.g., recycling soda cans), and thereby views the conservation of the earth's resources, including water, as serving the means of our own survival...Indeed, shallow ecology, insofar as its interests are primarily human centered, answers to the rule of expediency, and this ecological movement favors short-term goals. Deep ecology, on the other hand, because its interests are not exclusively anthropocentric, embraces the motivation of stewardship, and this ecological movement gravitates toward long-term ends pertaining to what happens with and on the earth subsequent to the span of individual lives or even generations. A shallow ecologist might calculate the dangers of the breakdown in the ozone layer in terms of immediate risk of skin cancer, but a deep ecologist might weigh a similar danger in terms of a long-range problem of the polar ice caps melting, of averting crises that could undermine the possibility of preserving the earth for centuries to come." *The Incarnality of Being: The Earth, Animals, and the Body in Heidegger's Thought* (Albany: State University of New York, 2006), 98.

<sup>50</sup> See Michael E. Colby, *The Evolution of Paradigms of Environmental Management in Development, Policy, Planning, and Research Working Papers* (New York: Strategic Planning and Review Dept., World Bank, 1989); Phillip F. Cramer, *Deep Environmental Politics: The Role of Radical Environmentalism in Crafting American Environmental Policy* (Westport: Praeger, 1998), especially 1-43; and David Schlosberg, *Environmental Justice and the New Pluralism* (New York: Oxford University, 1999), especially 20-42.

<sup>51</sup> Naess lists these principles as follows: 1) Rejection of the human-in-environment image in favor of the relational, total-field image; 2) Biospherical egalitarianism; 3) Principles of diversity and symbiosis; 4) Anti-class posture; 5) Fight against pollution and resource depletion; 6) Complexity, not complication; and 7) Local Autonomy and decentralization. See "The Shallow and the Deep Ecology Movement," 3-7.

the question, “What is common to all justifiable deep ecology positions,” the authors propose “six points” of emphasis:

1. The rejection of strong anthropocentrism. (Anthropocentrism is the idea that human life is the center of all value. The philosophy of deep ecology calls into question this dominant idea of the Western ethical tradition.)
2. A consideration of ecocentrism as a replacement for anthropocentrism. Ecocentrism is the idea that the ecosphere and ecological systems are the focus of value. It is a holistic view of value, for entire systems are thought to be valuable, rather than individual humans for individual natural entities (such as animals).
3. Identification with all forms of life. An individual who identifies with all forms of life in the system of nature has an appreciation that the interests of all other living beings are intimately connected to his or her own interests.
4. The sense that caring for the environment is part of individual human self-realization. The interests of nature should not be seen as opposed to the interests of humanity. We expand our concern outward to embrace a greater part of the natural world, and thus we become more fully realized beings.
5. A critique of instrumental rationality (the mode of thinking that makes efficiency and quantifiable results the goal of all activity). The philosophy of deep ecology, on the other hand, emphasizes alternative modes of thinking, such as spiritual enlightenment or artistic expression, that emphasize life-enhancing qualitative values.
6. Personal development of a total worldview. Deep ecology is not primarily a social philosophy. It usually assumes that there is an individual human being doing the thinking for himself or herself, trying to determine an honest and personal way of assessing how to conceive of a way in which nature can matter to each of us, one at a time. Social action comes later, when individuals, with their own ecosophies, get together to change things.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Eric Katz, Andrew Light, and David Rothenberg, “Introduction to Deep Ecology as Philosophy,” in *Beneath the Surface: Critical Essays in the Philosophy of Deep Ecology*, eds. Eric Katz, Andrew Light, and David Rothenberg (Cambridge, MIT, 2000), xiii.

As these points of emphasis indicate, the response of deep ecology observes several significant breaks with the dominion and stewardship responses. Most notably, the exchange of hierarchical anthropocentrism for more holistic and relational ecocentric perspectives enables dramatic shifts in the formulation of spatial behavior—at least at the level of theory. Many deep ecology advocates direct heavy outward suspicion and scorn toward dominant interpretations of themes such as positivism and progress and the destructive structures to which these themes are tied. For example, in their influential 1985 work *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*, Bill Devall and George Sessions note:

The shift from ‘people’ to ‘personnel’ (and ‘consumers’) to which modern scientific management principles are to be applied for more efficient production of commodities is but the flip side of the mentality and consciousness that sees Nature as but a resource to be managed and manipulated for the benefit of those in power.<sup>53</sup>

Further, as privilege is transferred away from humans and onto the land in this approach, the concept of property ownership is usually rebuffed as an unfortunate and backward legacy of traditional spatial approaches in need of eradication. Comparing such

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<sup>53</sup> Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (Lanham: Gibbs Smith, 1985), 56. Robert H. Nelson expands on the stance of Devall and Sessions: “By following the precepts of ‘modern scientific management,’ as Devall and Sessions explain, ‘people’ become ‘personnel,’ whose role in life is to be manipulated by scientific controllers in the interest of ‘more efficient production of commodities.’ The ‘experts’ in the progressive design are ‘in the business of managing people’ according to technocratic plans. The end result is a world in which men and women are alienated not only ‘from the rest of Nature but also...from themselves and each other.’ It was not due to any original sin in the Garden of Eden, but rather in the never-ending pursuit of material progress and economic efficiency, that human beings have become alienated from their true selves. The progressive design for the scientific management of American society, in short, threatens not only human freedom but also the ‘freedom’ of the plant and animal species of the world and other parts of wild nature.” *The New Holy Wars: Economic Religion vs. Environmental Religion in Contemporary America* (University Park, Penn State University, 2010), 313.

eradication to the abolishment of human slavery, prototypical American Deep Ecologist Aldo Leopold called for a shift “in the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it.”<sup>54</sup>

Further illustrating the emphasis on holism as expressed in the work of these seminal deep ecologists, Connie Bullis explains:

The reliance on identification with the whole has long been one of the “ultimate norms” purported by deep ecologists. The whole of the Earth, perhaps the whole of the universe, is the focus of identification. This identification transcends the individual self and becomes the Self that is all-encompassing. This identification erases boundaries. Unique diverse parts are valued because they are parts of the whole, contributing to the whole. The Earth and all of the parts become part of one’s expanded Self. This expanded Self becomes the basis for protecting wild places and specific parts of the Earth. In protecting such places, one is protecting one’s Self. Devall and Sessions cite the “Cathedral Forest Wilderness Declaration in explaining this. The rationale for environmental advocacy is that “what we do to the earth we do to ourselves. If we destroy our remaining wild places, we will ultimately destroy our identity with the earth.” In other words, “in a profound mature sense, one sees that such preservation is in one’s self/Self interest.” The true merging of individual and whole identities is evident in Devall and Sessions’s “paraphrasing” of Aldo Leopold: “I dreamed I was thinking like a mountain but when I awoke I did not know if I was a man thinking like a mountain or a mountain thinking like a man.” Similarly, Devall and Sessions quote John Rodman: “Man is...a microcosm of the cosmos who takes very personally the wounds inflicted on his/her androgynous body.”<sup>55</sup>

What Bullis is attempting to describe in this passage is a different way of envisioning and treating the land, one that deviates from historical cultural norms. It would seem logical that a dedication to ecological holism, relationality, and preservation would be

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<sup>54</sup> Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, originally published 1949 (New York: Ballantine, 1966), 240. For relevant commentary on Leopold’s attitude toward the themes of privilege and property, see Cramer, *Deep Environmental Politics*, 39-41.

<sup>55</sup> Connie Bullis, “Retalking Environmental Discourses from a Feminist Perspective: The Radical Potential of Ecofeminism,” in *The Symbolic Earth: Discourse and Our Creation of the Environment*, eds. James G. Cantrill and Christine L. Oravec (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1996), 131.

antithetical to perpetuation of spatial disorientation and would therefore undermine faith in Exceptionalism. Surely such faith in the American nation's mandate to spread its special gifts across the globe could not find a more fervent antagonist than it meets in the deep ecology approach.

Or could it? Once again, we are faced with questions which call for a deeper and more historically-reflective investigation of cultural dynamics. And immediately upon embarking upon such an investigation, we encounter a curious problematic. While obvious connections between the deep ecology response and certain dominant cognitive images and behavioral themes can be rather easily dismissed, connections with others seem harder to deny. This muddled disposition can be attributed in part to the flexibility of deep cultural symbols in communicating traditional messages via means, structures, and documents that are constantly being contested on the surface level, and in part to the abiding power of social repression in making the import and reach of spatial disorientation so difficult to fully comprehend.

On the one hand, the deep ecology response rejects the exploitation of land through scientific techniques and the conventional notion of progress as development held within the city upon a hill image. It further upends the anthropocentric and fragmented view of creation that has typically defined Western culture. This much seems clear. On the other hand, the influence of images such as frontier wilderness and *terra nullius* upon this response shed doubt on its subversive nature. Far from rejecting these latter images, the deep ecology response integrates them at a foundational level. Certainly, it does not interpret these images in keeping with the dominant prescriptive

message of penetration, control, and permeation. Yet the basic *descriptive* historical account held therein—that America represented a largely unpopulated and undeveloped “pure” wilderness before European invasion—is intrinsically tied to its characteristic preservationist and ecocentric outlook. Such an account may not be entirely erroneous, as the transformation and destruction of the natural world has undoubtedly taken on a different character through increasing Western technical manipulation. However, it does distort and negate the complexity of alternative ecological and social histories, thereby replicating the appropriative and totalistic aspects of colonial systems.<sup>56</sup>

Freya Mathews illustrates deep ecology’s integration of these cognitive images, and the consequences of their integration:

From a postcolonial point of view, [the deep ecological] valorization of wilderness can be problematic. Wilderness-oriented deep ecologists often point to hunter-gatherer cultures as exemplars of the deep ecology ideal of non-interference in nature, on the assumption that these ‘first peoples’ took their living directly from the natural world, without disturbing the ecology of their environment in any more significant ways than non-human species do. However, this assumption has been challenged and rejected by many of the first peoples themselves. It is now clear that native Australians, for instance, managed their lands in an unquestionably interventionist way by use of fire regimes, and that to suggest that the land was in a ‘state of nature’ at the time of European invasion is to perpetuate the pernicious colonial assumption that Australia was ‘*terra nullius*’—a true wilderness.<sup>57</sup>

Analogous circumstances have arisen with regard to American Indian peoples. These circumstances have been exasperated as deep ecology has been influenced by another

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<sup>56</sup> A consequence which, of course, directly contradicts Naess’ sixth principle (“Complexity, not complication”).

<sup>57</sup> Freya Mathews, “Deep Ecology,” in *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Dale Jamieson (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), 228.



cognitive image in the American context, that of the promised land. In the dominant, biblically-based presentation of this image, Americans are portrayed as moving through and conquering the wilderness en route to colonizing the promised land. But in the deep ecology response, the wilderness *is* the promised land. Interpreting this image in distinctive fashion, subscribers contend that it is only in the wilderness that humans can pursue what Devall and Sessions call “‘the real work,’ the work of really looking at ourselves, of becoming more real.”<sup>58</sup>

Hence, for deep ecology the promise of human progress is still held in “wild” spaces—not through technical manipulation as in the modern conception of moral order, but rather through an individualized spiritual awakening to the self/Self. Though the preservation of wilderness supersedes the construction of a city upon a hill in this response, progress remains conceptualized as a historical mission of substantial politico-economic and spiritual magnitude. This conceptualization yields two related insights. First, in spite of its plain dismissal of Christianity and other major religious perspectives as anti-environment, deep ecology itself serves many functions which can be best characterized as religious in nature.<sup>59</sup> Individuals are provided with a distinctive way to

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<sup>58</sup> Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, 7.

<sup>59</sup> Krista Corner discusses the religious import carried within the idealized conception of wilderness: “What is the wilderness ideal? Certainly the shifting historical meanings attributed to ‘wilderness’ have been thoroughly investigated by American scholars. Less has been written, however, about the wilderness as *ideal*, or its influences on western narrative or environmental politics in particular. In common political and literary parlance, the ideal holds that large tracts of undomesticated land provide an antidote for modernity, a site where people can return to their deepest, wildest selves. Wilderness is a refuge that must be guarded in order to maintain the biodiversity of planetary life forms *and* what believers might call human dignity and spirituality. In a representative remark in 1960, Wallace Stegner said that

find meaning in their personal existence, clear moral guidelines on how to live, and a sense of mystery reintroduced into a world pervaded by scientific explanation.<sup>60</sup> Further, Robert H. Nelson argues that while deep ecology advocates “typically make little if any explicit reference to a god,” their basic belief system remains fundamentally “derived (to a much greater degree than many of [them] are aware) from Christian sources.”<sup>61</sup>

Considered in this light, the quest to achieve transformation and salvation through the natural world may not represent such a novel modification of the White presence in America after all. Such a tradition extends back to the Puritan undertaking of their “errand into the wilderness,” and its underlying motivations have continued to hold cultural currency over the ebb and flow of American environmental thinking. It is for this

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without the preservation of wilderness, humans have no reprieve from the ‘Brave New World of a completely man-controlled environment.’ Years later Stegner clarified another of the ideal’s dimensions: ‘Looking a long way is not a social experience,’ he said. ‘It’s an aesthetic or even religious one.’ Wilderness, in American nature discourse, is a nonhuman, extraindustrial, spiritual topography of humbling otherness, where biodiversity and the sacred coexist, a reminder that ‘man’ is not all-powerful.” *Landscapes of the New West: Gender and Geography in Contemporary Women’s Writing* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1999), 127-128.

<sup>60</sup> For a more developed argument regarding the religious nature of environmentalism (especially in its more extreme forms), see Thomas R. Dunlap, *Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest* (Seattle: University of Washington, 2004). Also see Bron Taylor, “Resacralizing Earth: Pagan Environmentalism and the Restoration of Turtle Island,” in *American Sacred Space*, eds. David Chidester and Edward T. Linenthal (Bloomington: Indiana University: 1995), 97-151.

<sup>61</sup> See Nelson, *The New Holy Wars*, xiii. Considering economic and environmental thinking in the United States in terms of religious secularization theory, Nelson writes: “Whereas economic religion and environmental religion typically make little if any explicit reference to a god, both are derived (to a much greater degree than many of their followers are aware) from Christian sources (as originally derived from and subsequently blended with Jewish sources. Indeed, allowing for the outward differences in vocabulary and metaphor, the underlying messages are sometimes little altered from the original Christian statements. Economic religion and environmental religion may be talking about a Christian God; they may be describing the character and thinking of this God; they may be locating the original source of sin in the world; they may be describing God’s commands; and they may be prophesying a final, divinely determined outcome of history, but all this is left implicit. For many people skeptical of institutional Christian religion but seeking greater religious meaning in their lives, that is no doubt part of the attraction of secular religion.”

reason that wilderness has been described as “one of the most important symbols of the memory within our culture,” a memory in which the American experiment is conceptualized as a historical quest for self-realization through exposure to (and triumph over) the Other.<sup>62</sup> Hence, the symbolic power of wilderness cannot be separated from its ability to commodify the natural world for exclusive consumption by dominant groups. Yet despite its integral role in the formation of cultural identity, such commodification is rarely recognized as being as much an outsider to this place as the White settlers who introduced it.

Similar to notions of promised land, Christ, and perhaps even religion itself,<sup>63</sup> wilderness represents an ideological imposition which has significantly shaped spatial cognition and behavior from the outset of invasion. Deep ecology’s reliance on this imposed trope is commonly identified by a range of anti-Exceptionalist voices as evidence of an inadequate awareness of historical and cultural difference. Attention is also drawn to the related development of curious politico-economic tendencies including a nagging naiveté (typified by a resilient Malthusian bent) and a curious passivity in

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<sup>62</sup> See David R. Williams, “Critics in the Wilderness: Literary Theory and the Spiritual Roots of the American Wilderness Tradition,” *Weber: The Contemporary West* 11, no. 3 (1994), accessed 1 March 2011, <http://weberjournal.weber.edu/archive/archive%20B%20Vol.%2011-16.1/Vol.%2011.3/11.3Williams.htm>.

<sup>63</sup> Numerous indigenous scholars note that the concept of “religion” (as it has arisen out of Western academic and cultural discourses) is at best problematic, and at worst utterly meaningless, when applied to traditional non-Western worldviews and lifeways. For a concise yet robust examination of this topic, see Andrea Smith, et al., “Roundtable Discussion: Native/First Nation Theology (With Response),” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 22, no. 2 (2006): 85-121.

relation to issues of social change.<sup>64</sup> At least in its most troublesome incarnations, the deep ecology response mirrors the American emphasis on multiculturalism by downplaying cultural distinctiveness in favor of promoting society as an undifferentiated whole composed of individuals with identical needs and goals.<sup>65</sup> This promotion would be problematic enough even if the commodification the natural world did not tend to exclude the participation of certain types of people.

Illuminating the often obscured process of exclusion, Greta Gaard maintains that deep ecology's "fetishization of wilderness" establishes a dualistic separation between culture and nature that is deeply phallogentric, profoundly ethnocentric, and highly individualistic in nature.<sup>66</sup> Likewise, Fabienne Bayet-Charlton demonstrates how the notion of wilderness represents "yet another form of paternalism and dispossession" which "continue[s] to conceptually remove Aboriginal people from the... landscape."<sup>67</sup> These points of critique are made especially manifest when deep ecological claims are juxtaposed with the lived experiences emanating from marginalized communities within discrete fields of power. Analyzing such claims in relation to two relevant exemplars—communities of women and of American Indians—we are obliged to question the extent to

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<sup>64</sup> See Carolyn Merchant, *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 102-105.

<sup>65</sup> The term "undifferentiated whole" is attributed to social ecofeminist Janet Biehl. Qtd. in Greta Gaard, *Ecological Politics: Ecofeminists and the Greens* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1998), 149.

<sup>66</sup> Gaard, *Ecological Politics*, 149-150

<sup>67</sup> Fabienne Bayet-Charlton, "Overturning the Doctrine: Indigenous People and the Wilderness: Being Aboriginal in the Environmental Movement," in *Blacklines: Contemporary Critical Writing by Indigenous Australians*, ed. Michelle Grossman (Melbourne: Melbourne University, 2003), 171.

which this response represents an legitimate threat to the dominant feedback loop of privilege.<sup>68</sup>

Through deeper reflection, we can recognize a failure to sufficiently displace the longstanding cultural tradition of conceptualizing women and the land a similar oppressive fashion. Gaard illustrates how:

[the] conception of wilderness as ‘sacred space’ in which to heal from the alienation of mechanized society becomes particularly relevant in a context where women and nature are portrayed as wild and chaotic, a portrayal that has been used to justify the domination of both women and the wilderness.<sup>69</sup>

By “[denying] reason to women and logic to wilderness at the same time it requires women and wilderness to provide the space for healing,” deep ecology tends to replicate the dominant cycle in which men’s capacities, needs, and integrity are affirmed while those the natural world and of women are undermined or minimized.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, it generally devalues the concrete ways that women of various cultural backgrounds already find meaning and cultivate relationship in many spaces worldwide, even while praising them for being closer to nature in an abstract sense.<sup>71</sup> Noting such inconsistencies, Gaard concludes that this response “leaves women with nowhere to stand.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Painting marginalized groups with overgeneralized or essentialized brushstrokes can yield intellectually sloppy and practically dangerous portraits. In other words, there is a certain inherent problematic to speaking about diverse communities in singular terms. I therefore draw attention to these particular exemplars in order to demonstrate how the complex realities of women and American Indians are typically reduced to the point of evanescence by deep ecology advocates. Further, I draw on the work of ecofeminist, ecowomanist, and indigenous scholars in order to identify important common experiences of oppression and hierarchy.

<sup>69</sup> Gaard, *Ecological Politics*, 150.

<sup>70</sup> Gaard, *Ecological Politics*, 150.

This penchant for devaluing the lifeways and histories of marginalized communities takes on further disruptive implications with regard to Indian nations. As in American culture more widely, such nations have consistently served a number of complex and paradoxical purposes for deep ecologists; they have been variously designated as inspiration and scapegoat, model for reform and foil for self-aggrandizement, and idealized ancestors and backward imposters. Even as the foundational influence of generalized indigenous cultural views has been openly recognized by many deep ecology proponents, significant tensions have emerged between these proponents and actual Indian communities with respect to several environmental conflicts.<sup>73</sup> Without going into significant detail about the variety of

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<sup>71</sup> Mathews argues, "This cult of wilderness is also questionable from a feminist point of view. Feminists might ask why deep ecologists do not regard the subsistence traditions of settled horticultural communities as furnishing experiential sources of ecological selfhood. To work with nature via the domestic activities of growing food and husbanding animals is to enter into a relationship with nature arguably as profound as that of the hunter-gatherer. For the farmer or gardener becomes a nurturer of non-human life, as well as a consumer of it, and is likely to develop a profound identification with the plants and animals that she has tended. She is also likely to become deeply invested in the land she cultivates, especially since she embodies it by virtue of the fact that she consumes its produce. In light of this, we might wonder whether the valorization of the wild at the expense of the domestic in deep ecology simply reflects a masculine urge to escape from society, particularly from the domestic sphere, with its confining feminine associations. The fact that subsistence practices throughout prehistory and the less-developed world today are predominantly the province of women tends to suggest the case that in excluding these practices as a source of ecological selfhood, male deep ecologists (where most deep ecologists, whether self-appointed or appointed by those who take it upon themselves to make such appointments, *are* male) are privileging their own masculine experience and the lifestyle ideals to which it gives rise." "Deep Ecology," 229.

<sup>72</sup> Gaard, *Ecological Politics*, 149.

<sup>73</sup> Arne Naess unambiguously acknowledges this indebtedness: "From the start of the deep ecology movement in the industrial, materially rich societies, an obvious question was raised: are there or have there been cultures with a more ecologically responsible relationship between the human and the nonhuman worlds? In the United States various North American Indian cultures were studied with special care and furnished a clear answer: yes." "Cultural Diversity and the Deep Ecology Movement," in *The*

conflicts, John A. Grim summarizes the main tensions along three main lines: “the politicization of land as ‘wilderness,’ the charge of ecological abuse by indigenous peoples, and the adaptation of indigenous symbols and rituals into environmental religiosity.”<sup>74</sup> Interestingly, all three of these tensions can be plainly observed in relation to an entity which is widely considered by deep ecologists to embody the height of American civilizational advancement: the national park system.

As the introductory quote to this chapter suggests, the national park system is revered by scores of Americans with deep ecological leanings (and also some without) as an illustration of the nation’s true greatness. Even for many who otherwise publically reject Exceptionalist rhetoric, such reverence remains persuasive and pervasive. National parks, monuments, and forests are broadly regarded as among the last precious bastions of pristine wilderness on an increasingly human-shaped continent. Yet as the memories of many indigenous communities hold, many if not all of these spaces have known specific and mutually supportive relationships with human communities for thousands of years.<sup>75</sup>

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*Selected Works of Arne Naess*, vol. 10, ed. Harold Glasser and Alan Drengson (Dordrecht: Springer, 2005), 264.

<sup>74</sup> John A. Grim, “Indigenous Traditions and Deep Ecology,” in *Deep Ecology and World Religions: New Essays on Sacred Ground*, eds. David Landis Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb (Albany: State University of New York, 2001), 44.

<sup>75</sup> See generally Robert H. Keller and Michael F. Turek, *American Indians and National Parks* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1999); and Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University, 1999).

Such memories call into question the very concept of wilderness and its implied hyperseparation between the human and natural worlds—an abstract theorization which has historically had no place in traditional Indian cultures.<sup>76</sup> They also cast considerable doubt upon the belief that such spaces can only be preserved by preventing or at least heavily restricting human contact. For many deep ecology advocates, the spatial relations exercised by indigenous peoples around the globe tend to be classified as a type of “deep stewardship”—preferable to the prevailing Western approach, but still essentially anthropocentric in formation, destructive in consequence, and substandard in premise.<sup>77</sup> As a result, these advocates have typically offered significant resistance to the struggles of Indian communities to exercise traditional life ways in their native lands, as with the Seminole in the *Pahayokee* (Everglades), the Hopi along the *Öngtupka* (Grand Canyon), and the Lakota among others inside *Paha Sapa* (the Black Hills) and at *Mato Tipila* (Devil’s Tower).<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Gaard, *Ecological Politics*, 150. Also see Grim, “Indigenous Traditions and Deep Ecology,” especially 43-47; and Vine Deloria Jr., “American Indians and the Wilderness,” in *Return of the Wild: The Future of Our Natural Lands*, ed. Ted Kerasote (Washington DC: Island, 2001), especially 25-29.

<sup>77</sup> For example, see David Orton, “The Wild Path Forward: Left Biocentrism, First Nations, Park Issues and Forestry; Canadian View,” *Green Web Bulletin* 44 (2005), accessed 2 March 2012, [http://home.ca.inter.net/~greenweb/Wild\\_Path.html](http://home.ca.inter.net/~greenweb/Wild_Path.html).

<sup>78</sup> Spence explains: “The American wilderness ideal, as it has developed over the last century, necessarily includes a number of strange notions about native peoples and national parks. In the rare instances that park literature even mentions Indians, they tend to assume the unthreatening guise of ‘first visitors.’ Just like tourists today, it seems that these ancient nature lovers did not really use or occupy future park areas. Apparently, they possessed an innate appreciate for wilderness as a place where, to paraphrase the 1964 Wilderness Act, humans are visitors who do not remain. Amazingly, if we follow this reasoning to its logical extreme, the park service has managed to protect the only areas on the North American continent that Indians did not use on a regular basis. Of course, this all sounds absurd, but scholar and park officials alike have long asserted that native peoples avoided national park areas because these places were not conducive to use or occupation. Yet nothing could be further from the truth. The foothills, mountains, and



Still, the pejorative labeling of indigenous spatial relations as deep stewardship has rarely prevented deep ecology advocates from appropriating generically “Indian” cultural and spiritual beliefs, and the rituals, spaces, and objects that pertain to them, as their own. As scholars like Philip J. Deloria and Shari M. Huhndorf make clear, the individual appropriation of these communal identity markers has served to simultaneously validate and mystify the White dispossession of Indian lands and eradication of Indian nations.<sup>79</sup> Just as the land has been stolen and commodified, so too have Indian cultural and spiritual traditions. This ongoing exploitation can be witnessed on nearly any trip in the vicinity of a national park, especially in the US Southwest, as advertisements for “Authentic Indian Handicrafts”, “Ancestral Native American Adventure Tours,” and “Shamanic Spiritual Guides” roll by on the landscape. It can be further observed in the exercise of New Age “ceremonies” and other activities claimed as “sacred” by non-Indians, from rock climbing to nude sunbathing, in places considered as federal property by the government but recognized as particularly powerful or important by Indian communities.<sup>80</sup> As Vine Deloria Jr. notes, efforts to “inculcate ‘reverence’ for

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canyons of most western parks provided shelter from winter storms and summer heat, sustained seasonal herds of important game animals, and served as the locale for tribal gatherings and important religious celebrations. In short, native peoples make extensive use of these areas – often well into the twentieth century. To the degree that such practices ceased, the lack of use was the result of policies to keep Indians away from these areas. Unfortunately, subsequent denials of native claims on parks have served only to perpetuate the legacy of native dispossession.” *Dispossessing the Wilderness*, 5-6.

<sup>79</sup> See generally Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University, 1999); and Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2001).

<sup>80</sup> An excellent portrayal of these types of conflicts can be found in the 2001 film entitled *In the Light of Reverence*, directed by Christopher McLeod.

the land” and encourage personal growth by removing Indian cultural and spiritual perspectives from their communal contexts and imposing the Western concept of wilderness upon them routinely prove not only ultimately futile, but also dangerously oppressive.<sup>81</sup>

In spite of deep ecology’s lofty ideological aspirations to widen fields of identification and embrace subversive forms of thought and behavior, it can actually be said to reify the deep cultural theme of privilege in everyday practice.<sup>82</sup> The

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<sup>81</sup> Analyzing the US Supreme Court’s decision in the case of *Lyng v. Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association*, Deloria states: “According to the popular definitions of wilderness, its primary value is as an area in its pristine natural state, because this represents some intangible and difficult to define spiritual aspect of nature that has a superior value to commercial use of the land. In a sense we have a generalized secular use, albeit one that represents a recognition of intangible values no matter how shallow they might be emotionally, not holding a greater value than a specific religious use of the same region. The question here is whether the Indian argument is to be considered inferior to the wilderness argument because of a racial distinction. Unfortunately, at the circuit court level and later with the Supreme Court, the close parallel in motive and perspective was neither recognized nor understood. This neglect should be a warning to Indians and non-Indians alike that the popular belief prevailing that non-Indians can somehow inculcate ‘reverence’ for the land into their intellectual and emotional perspectives is blatantly false. Inherent in the very definition of ‘wilderness’ is contained the gulf between the understandings of the two cultures. Indians do not see the natural world as a wilderness. In contrast, Europeans and Euroamericans see a big difference between lands they have ‘settled’ and lands they have left alone. As long as this difference is believed to be real by non-Indians, it will be impossible to close the perceptual gap, and the substance of the two views will remain in conflict.” “Trouble in High Places: Erosion of American Indian Rights to Religious Freedom in the United States,” in *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. Annette M. Jaimes, (Cambridge: South End, 1999), 280-281.

<sup>82</sup> Discussing the problematic manifestation of privilege in deep ecology from a philosophical standpoint, Eccc de Jonge states: “If deep ecologists aim to shift the focus from morally considering individuals to considering the whole, to the relationships that obtain between species rather than to individuals themselves, but at the same time hold us morally responsible for the domination of nature, then it is hard to defeat the claim that deep ecology is misanthropic and seeks to place the earth first. Not only is a huge burden placed on us—in which defeating anthropocentrism suggests a defeat of everything that is good for human beings—but we are led to the paradox wherein ‘if we favor humans, we seem to abandon nonanthropocentric holism; if we favor the nonhuman world, we approach the misanthropic position that Deep Ecologists want to deny’. As Des Jardins points out, the main problem with deep ecology rests on its overgeneralization of its critique of human centeredness, anthropocentrism, and the dominant worldview. From this point of view, not all humans, nor all human perspectives are equally at fault for environmental problems. When Deep Ecologists critique ‘the’ dominant worldview, they fail to acknowledge that many humans are not part of that dominance. Thus, Deep Ecologists are too

consequences of this his reification are disproportionately borne by the many Indian communities and other communities of color that struggle daily against environmentally-related issues of poverty, illness, and discrimination. Environmental justice advocates and other like-minded observers give such disproportionate treatment an unambiguous name: racism. Robin Morris Collin and Robert Collin illustrate the biases inherent to deep ecology and the broader environmental movement:

There is no “separate but equal” in nature, no “separate but equal” way to solve the issue of sustainability. There are no allowable sacrifice zones, human or otherwise, in our ecological interconnectedness, and there is no exit. Racist views and practices, both individually and institutionally, produce at least two outcomes in the environmental movement. First, whites ignore or discount the distinctively different orientations of people of color to nature and the environment as less important than those presented by whites. For example, when asked to define environment and nature, people of color across many ranges of ethnicity include a broad range of phenomena: the creations of nature, living and dead, contemporary and future, flora and fauna, where we live, work, learn, and play. The conservation-based environmental movement focuses instead on so-called wilderness, wild places, and wild things. Second, there is an unproductive racial confrontation as marginalized urban communities and communities of color are forced to challenge the predominantly white, male, upper-class elite who dominate the environmental movement and government regulators.<sup>83</sup>

Ynestra King further affirms these biases in her stark critique of Kirkpatrick Sale and the bioregional ideal:

I am troubled by the underlying anti-intellectualism and anti-urbanism (and occasional anticommunism) in the “back to nature” movements. And what about the weak and the strong (physically, socially, and economically) within a

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broad in their critique and, thus, overly broad in their positive program.” *Spinoza and Deep Ecology: Challenging Traditional Approaches to Environmentalism* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 29-30.

<sup>83</sup> Robin Morris Collin and Robert Collin, “Environmental Reparations,” in *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution*, ed. Robert D. Bullard (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 2005), 212.

bioregion? As long as they walk softly on the earth it's O.K. if they stomp hard on one another—as long as the stomper and stompee are in the same bioregion?...Deep ecology ignores the structures of entrenched economic and political power within society, concentrating exclusively on self-realization and cultural transformation, thereby insisting that human beings conform to the laws of nature as understood by deep ecologists.<sup>84</sup>

Such analyses make it difficult not to see deep ecology as accommodating to dominant systems of privilege. In tangible effect if not in figurative conjecture, the projection of wilderness functions in a curiously familiar way to the theme of property, constraining how and by whom land may be properly and acceptably used. Likewise, the effective neglect of power dynamics virtually ensures a continuation of inequitable ecological practices. These functions offer further credible evidence of how deep ecology diverts attention away from—at least in some ways and at some times—an uninterrupted disorientation to space.

Especially when the preservation of wilderness is celebrated as a quintessentially “American” activity, it can offer substantial ideological support to prevailing expressions of cultural identity. This support can essentially be distinguished as a mode of ecological nationalism. K. Sivaramakrishnan and Gunnel Cederlöf define ecological nationalism as “a condition where both cosmopolitan and nativist versions of nature devotion converge and express themselves as a form of nation-pride in order to become part of processes of legitimizing and consolidating a nation.”<sup>85</sup> As spaces are defined and governed as

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<sup>84</sup> Ynestra King, “What is Ecofeminism?” *The Nation* 245, no. 20 (1987): 730.

<sup>85</sup> K. Sivaramakrishnan and Gunnel Cederlöf, “Introduction: Ecological Nationalisms: Claiming Nature for Making History,” in *Ecological Nationalisms: Nature, Livelihoods, and Identities in South Asia*,

national or state parks, protected wilderness areas, or public open lands, they can serve as material representations of the privileged symbolic forms that emerge from deep culture. Artificially managed, carefully monitored, and purposefully accounted, these spaces suggest that all the land looked just as master narrative says it did before European settlement—empty, pristine, untamed...and yet primed for the development and inhabitation of an enlightened people. The suggestive meaning need not pass conscious recognition in order to impact how people view their place in the land and history.

Consequently, while the deep ecology response to the natural world can be characterized as more outwardly progressive, novel, and thoughtful than the responses of dominion and stewardship, it too must be called out for a deeper reliance on cognitive-behavioral patterns that legitimize and extend notions of Exceptionalism. In particular, the sense of unnatural innocence that pervades much deep ecological thought and practice requires keen wariness. For while advocates of deep ecology often claim to be introducing an enlightened and universal path to individual well-being and social advancement, many observers embedded in historically marginalized communities see only an unbroken trajectory of paternalism and dispossession.

Though we may not feel compelled to go as far as social ecologist Murray Bookchin in identifying all deep ecology sympathizers as “racist, survivalist, macho

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eds. Gunnel Cederlöf and K. Sivaramakrishnan (Seattle: University of Washington, 2006), 6. The authors continue, “This concept of ecological nationalism links cultural and political aspirations with programs of nature conservation or environmental protection, while noting their expression in, and through, a rhetoric of rights that includes civil, human, and intellectual property rights.”

Daniel Boone's who feed on the human disasters and the suffering of humankind,"<sup>86</sup> we must nevertheless be honest in assessing the blind spots in their perspective. From one standpoint this response can be seen as integrating an insightful recognition of the failings of the dominion and stewardship approaches. By attempting to model different, healthier, and more meaningful interactions with the natural world, deep ecologists offer a rejoinder to the confused neglect of space that defines American culture. "Any real understanding of the land means atuning [sic] oneself to the land, to a specific bioregion, and developing a sense of place" assert Devall and Sessions, and in light of prevailing trends the wisdom of this assertion seems manifest.<sup>87</sup> Yet deeper analyses indicate that such attunement cannot be done ahistorically, outside the scope of community, or without recognition of power relations and difference. It is through these matters that the deep ecology response falls short of energizing a genuinely subversive movement—not only due to its ideological reliance upon some problematic deep cultural symbols of space, but also because of its lack of a coherent strategy for politico-economic and social transformation related to existing systems of privilege.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Qtd. in Cramer, *Deep Environmental Politics*, 21.

<sup>87</sup> Devall and Sessions, *Deep Ecology*, 158.

<sup>88</sup> While generally promoting the various academic "developments" whose emergence seemed to support the deep ecology perspective, Carolyn Merchant nevertheless highlighted the need for a practical change strategy over three decades ago: "What all these developments point to is the possibility of a new world view that could guide twenty-first-century citizens in an ecologically sustainable way of life. The mechanistic frame work that legitimated the industrial revolution with its side effects of resource depletion and pollution may be losing its efficacy as a frame work. A nonmechanistic science and an ecological ethic, however, must support a new economic order grounded in the recycling of renewable resources, the conservation of nonrenewable resources, and the restoration of sustainable ecosystems that fulfill basic

In sum, it seems ironically fitting to close this section on the position of deep ecology in the American cultural context by presenting the following extended thoughts of an Asian Indian scholar, Ramachandra Guha. Offering a particularly relevant and incisive “third world critique” and etic perspective, Guha proposes that this response to the natural world be understood as providing relatively powerful and conventional support to Exceptionalism—though such support can often be inadvertent or overlooked :

How radical, finally, are the deep ecologists? Notwithstanding their self-image and strident rhetoric (in which the label “shallow ecology” has an opprobrium similar to that reserved for the “social democratic” by Marxist-Leninists), even within the American context their radicalism is limited and it manifests itself quite differently elsewhere.

To my mind, deep ecology is best viewed as a radical trend within the wilderness preservation movement. Although advancing philosophical rather than aesthetic arguments and encouraging political militancy rather than negotiation, its practical emphasis—viz., preservation of unspoilt nature—is virtually identical. For the mainstream movement, the function of wilderness is to provide a temporary antidote to modern civilization. As a special institution within an industrialized society, the national park “provides an opportunity for respite, contrast, contemplation, and affirmation of values for those who live most of their lives in the workaday world.” Indeed, the rapid increase in visitations to the national parks in postwar America is a direct consequence of economic expansion. The emergence of a popular interest in wilderness sites, the historian Samuel Hays points out, was “not a throwback to the primitive, but an integral part of the modern standard of living as people sought to add new ‘amenity’ and ‘aesthetic’ goals and desires to their earlier preoccupation with necessities and conveniences.”

Here, the enjoyment of nature is an integral part of consumer society. The private automobile (and the life style it has spawned) is in many respects the ultimate ecological villain, and an untouched wilderness the prototype of ecological harmony; yet, for most Americans it is perfectly consistent to drive a thousand miles to spend a holiday in a national park. They possess a vast, beautiful, and

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human physical and spiritual needs. Perhaps Gaia will then be healed.” *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: HarperCollins, 1980), xviii.

sparsely populated continent and are also able to draw upon the natural resources of large portions of the globe by virtue of their economic and political dominance. In consequence, America can simultaneously enjoy the material benefits of an expanding economy and the aesthetic benefits of unspoilt nature. The two poles of “wilderness” and “civilization” mutually coexist in an internally coherent whole, and philosophers of both poles are assigned a prominent place in this culture. Paradoxically as it may seem, it is no accident that Star Wars technology and deep ecology both find their fullest expression in that leading sector of Western civilization, California.

Deep ecology runs parallel to the consumer society without seriously questioning its ecological and socio-political basis. In its celebration of an American wilderness, it also displays an uncomfortable convergence with the prevailing climate of nationalism in the American wilderness movement. For spokesmen such as the historian Roderick Nash, the national park system is America’s distinctive cultural contribution to the world, reflective not merely of its economic but of its philosophical and ecological maturity as well. In what Walter Lippman called the American century, the “American invention of national parks” must be exported worldwide. Betraying an economic determinism that would make even a Marxist shudder, Nash believes that environmental preservation is a “full stomach” phenomenon that is confined to the rich, urban, and sophisticated. Nonetheless, he hopes that “the less developed nations may eventually evolve economically and intellectually to the point where nature preservation is more than a business.

The error which Nash makes (and which deep ecology in some respects encourages) is to equate environmental protection with the protection of wilderness. This is a distinctively American notion, borne out of a unique social and environmental history.<sup>89</sup>

### *Conclusion*

In evaluating the analysis of three responses to the natural world that are present and active within contemporary American culture, this chapter ends much as it began.

More precisely, it returns to the question of what can be accurately characterized as

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<sup>89</sup> Ramachandra Guha, “Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique,” in *Environmentalism: Critical Concepts*, eds. David Pepper, Frank Webster, and George Revill (New York: Routledge, 2003), 64-65.



absolutely or distinctively American in terms of spatial thought and practice. Each of these three responses—dominion, stewardship, and deep ecology—could hardly be more different externally with respect to motivations, methods, and objectives. Yet to its respective proponents, each is also understood as possessing critical messages regarding the greatness of the nation—both positive and negative—and vital strategies for its expansion. In simplified terms, the three responses can be described as different blueprints describing how the nation has and has not lived up to its calling in the past, and how it can answer this calling most effectively in the future. But while the language of these blueprints is spatial in form, the meanings held within them all remain in various ways profoundly temporal in approach and substance. Like varieties of patriotic color, the three responses share a deep American hue even while reflecting distinct tones of red, White, and blue on the surface. This common complexion is rendered especially vivid when the responses are viewed in relation to contexts of history and power, or considered in relation to responses arising out of other types of deep cultural formations.<sup>90</sup>

Yet this analysis does not suggest that all American responses to the natural world are simply, to borrow from the Exceptionalist vocabulary, “created equal.” Especially in the response of deep ecology (and to a lesser degree, stewardship), well-intentioned efforts to forge more thoughtful, meaningful, and sustainable ways of thinking and acting

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<sup>90</sup> As my theoretical synthesis and case studies suggest, I contend that traditional indigenous responses to the problem of space expose dominant spatial disorientation far more effectively than the responses of dominion, stewardship, and deep ecology. Traditional cultures should not be idealized or decontextualized—especially in light of colonial legacies—but neither should the consequences of deep culture difference. To do so would represent an insult those communities whose actual, on-the-ground struggles for justice remain directly related to ways such difference has materialized in imbalanced fields of power.

can be witnessed. Such efforts have cogent if uneven lessons to teach about the negotiation of deep culture, and should not be dismissed lightly or thoughtlessly. Ironically even advocates of dominionism, in their unflinching and perverse defense of exploitation, help us better understand cultural dynamics as they contest what they see as false claims of secularization that prevent the nation from fully upholding its Exceptional mandate. The ability and willingness to unhesitatingly sift through the assumptions beneath such ideological perspectives and critically distinguish fact from fiction represents a crucial capacity. Without this capacity, no meaningful reflection on identity and history is possible.

In concluding this chapter I therefore find myself persuaded to acknowledge the limitations imposed by attempting to strictly characterize these three responses as *either* subverting *or* diverting from the fundamental American disorientation to space. Instead, as particular negotiations of deep culture they can be more fruitfully depicted as doing both simultaneously. Each response contests certain basic contradictions present on the surface of the dominant culture to differing degrees. However, ultimately each also reinscribes deeply ingrained spatial images and themes and distracts from the essentially problematic and incoherent approach to the problem of space that underlies them all in crucial ways.<sup>91</sup> Such reinscription and distraction protects systems of privilege by

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<sup>91</sup> Highlighting the psychological fragmentation that underlies the American approach to space, G. Jon Roush questions: “Why has environmentalism so often been seen as a dangerous, antisocial, even un-American, activity? True, some radical and violent things have been done in the name of the environment, but most people involved in the movement are solid Americans, trying to earn a living and stay true to solid American values. Why are other people predisposed to assume that environmental activists would prefer to live in caves and eat nuts and berries, dragging the entire economy down with them? Some reasons are

ensuring that debate regarding the land rarely succeeds in expanding beyond prevailing patterns of thought and behavior or in escaping the domination of White male voices. With oppressive circulations of power enjoying such strong protections against breach, immense amounts of determined and creative energy are required to even begin considering truly innovative and healing ways to break the bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism. And when such consideration does occur, it tends to quickly coopted, diluted, or exhausted by the inertia of the politico-economic and social status quo.

Accounting for this tendency in relation to social change movements more broadly, Henry A. Giroux reminds us:

This is not meant to suggest that there are no contradictions and challenges to the system. They exist, but all too often the contradictions result in challenges that lack a clear-cut political focus. Put another way, challenges to the system often function as a cathartic force rather than as a legitimate form of protest; not infrequently, they end up serving to maintain the very conditions and consciousness that spurred them in the first place. Within such a posture, there is little room for the development of an active, critical historical consciousness.<sup>92</sup>

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obvious. Extremists make good, and so they get more column inches than their more moderate peers. Beyond that, environmental values shine the light on some contradictions in American culture. For example, Americans have valued the frontier both as a place of wild nature and as a place to make fortunes by exploiting that nature. Americans love the land, and they also love to exploit its bounty for their own benefit. We have live with that contradiction by emphasizing one side or the other as suits the occasion. When environmentalists suggest that the land-loving side is always preferable, they tip the balance uncomfortably and provoke defense mechanisms from denial to name-calling to worse.” “Introduction,” in *Voices from the Environmental Movement: Perspectives for a New Era*, ed. Donald Snow (Washington DC: The Conservation Fund, 1992), 8.

<sup>92</sup> Henry A. Giroux, *Theory and Resistance in Education* (Westport: Bergin and Garvey, 2001), 12.

Without sufficient development of a grounded historical consciousness that unflinchingly confronts our widespread repression, attempts to radically reshape spatial relations in the US are bound to be inconsistent and stagnant. Such inconsistency and stagnation may say less about the collective wisdom and agency of Americans as a people (though we must be willing to consider our shortcomings in these areas as well), and more about the resilient, mystifying, and potent influence of deep culture. The reality of spatial disorientation is dire and complex—but it is not utterly hopeless.

As the case studies presented in the following chapters illustrate, it would be inaccurate to portray spatial disorientation as a sort of cognitive-behavioral steamroller bound to flatten any natural or social landscape in its path. Pockets of powerful resistance and awareness continue to emerge, especially among and under the leadership of diverse communities that have known both intellectually and experientially the deceptiveness of the master narrative. Further, intriguing transformative possibilities are presented by the growing trend of alliance-building. This trend demonstrates the opportunities and challenges that emerge as social groups with inconsistent cultural perspectives, historical characters, and relations to power come together in order to present a united front against destruction and domination. The search for “pure” American responses to the natural world that do not convey some sense of unnatural innocence represents a fool’s errand at this point in history. However, we would be equally foolish to ignore any perspectives in which this unnatural innocence is openly identified as a source of cognitive-behavioral dissonance, or any places in which the faith in Exceptionalism it engenders is dynamically opposed as an obstruction to justice.

5. Case Study: *Newe Sogobia* and the Western Shoshone

I have said this a thousand times, I am not taking money for this land. This land has no value, there is no price for it. In Western Shoshone culture, the earth is our mother. We cannot sell it. Taking our land is not only a cultural genocide, it is also a spiritual genocide. The United States is attempting to steal our religion and our [culture]... Why does the United States want this land? So they can sell it to large inter-national corporate interests, including mining companies, so they can test more nuclear weapons, so they can write the Indians off? The United States should not be allowed to steal the land so they can test more weapons that kill people. In fact, weapons that kill all life, including the plants and the animals. The United States also should not be allowed to steal the land so they can sell it to companies in order to obtain more gold and in the process ruin the water and kill the plant and animal life. This should not be allowed. Today, the government has attempted to steal our mother earth—but this will not stop our fight to keep our land. We will not stand by to watch the United States steal our religion. We will not stand for the United States to commit spiritual genocide. For today what happens to us, tomorrow will happen to you. Although George W. Bush, Sen. Reid, and Rep. Gibbons believe that they can now sell this land to private interests, we will fight to stop it. This bill changes nothing. We are here to protect our mother earth. That is our responsibility. Our obligation will not be deterred by thieves.<sup>1</sup>

- Carrie Dann  
From her response to the signing of US House Resolution 884 (2004)

Beginning with the exploration of *Newe Sogobia* (“Land of the People”) and the Western Shoshone of the Nevada region found in this chapter, the following case studies are presented for the purposes of connecting my theoretical synthesis to, and analyzing it

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<sup>1</sup> Carrie Dann, “Statement by Carrie Dann on George W. Bush signing into ‘law’ House Resolution 884,” HOME: Healing Ourselves and Mother Earth, 7 July 2004, accessed 1 April 2011, <http://www.h-o-m-e.org/Shoshone/Shoshone%20Docs/Distribution.Dann.htm>.

in light of, specific lived experience in a range of contexts. In light of the menace posed by abstract theorizing that remains disconnected from the grounded needs, limits, and struggles of actual beings, I examine these struggles over American Indian lands in order to illustrate the complex bond between spatial disorientation and faith in Exceptionalism. While the relevant details and dynamics of each case are examined from a number of angles, special emphasis is placed upon underlying symbols and meanings. Integrating yet moving beyond the politico-economic, social, and environmental dimensions, I consider the insights gained from reflecting on the struggles as deep culture conflicts over the problem of space.

As this purpose is introduced, it is worth previewing some conclusions at the outset so as to be even more plain about my approach to these particular cases. First, to relegate any of these land struggles to straightforward disputes between polarized Indian and non-Indian interests would constitute, in my reading, an oversimplified and misleading approach. Even if some theoretical benefit could be gleaned from such essentialization, I do not believe the case facts would support it. Differences in desire, motivation, and perspective can be seen both among and within the variety of communal and individual actors represented in each case, suggesting the need for more complex interpretations. What the facts at hand do indicate to a significant degree, however—even when viewed across context—is the presence of active, predictable, and disoriented patterns of spatial cognition and behavior in the dominant culture. Although the influence of prevailing cognitive images (promised land, *terra nullius*, frontier wilderness, and city upon a hill) and behavioral themes (privilege, property, positivism, and progress) is rarely

given conscious acknowledgement by the actors involved in the cases, their activity as potent cultural undercurrents is consistently and conclusively exposed as the same actors are witnessed to “swim” in word and deed with or against them. Such influence crosscuts various identity categories as it functions to support existing systems of privilege and legitimize the master narrative. Yet it does not proceed unproblematically, or without contestation.

If we seek to reach the heart of struggles over Indian lands, we must therefore seek to clearly understand the role of deep culture in shaping thought and behavior related to space, and to accurately parse out how this role is manifested contextually. To be aided in this thorny task, we can follow the lead of cultural studies discourse by looking and listening most intently to the witness of communities in positions of relative marginalization and disempowerment.<sup>2</sup> It is no coincidence that these positions are often filled by indigenous peoples throughout the globe, and the particular examples presented here are no exception to this rule. Although the Indian communities represented in these

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<sup>2</sup> Neil Campbell and Alasdair Kean helpfully describes the rationale behind this methodological preference: “The power of discourse can contribute significantly to the formation of powerful notions of ‘Americanness’ or national identity ...by adopting marginal perspectives one can provide alternative ways of seeing, suggest, different identities and new forms of resistance. Cultural studies seeks to listen to these marginal voices and to the perspectives they bring to the debates about power, authority, and meaning. These latter forces are connected to a term used throughout this book—*hegemony*. This is a term that helps explain the way that power works within culture that is in itself ‘free and democratic,’ like America. Hegemony refers to the ways in which a dominant class ‘doesn’t merely rule but leads a society through the exertion of moral and intellectual leadership’ so that a consensus is established in which all classes appear to support and subscribe to its ideologies and cultural meanings, incorporating them into the existing power structure. Hegemony’s embracing of consensus means that any opposition can be ‘contained and channeled into ideologically safe harbours’ not through imposition, but through negotiation. So subordinate groups are not ignored, but given a certain ‘place,’ a position within the embrace of the dominant group, and their views articulated to a degree within the master-narrative.” *American Cultural Studies: An Introduction to American Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2006), 15-16 (emphasis original).

cases do not always share a unified voice or single perspective, within each of them persist illuminating and deeply embedded cultural ways of conceptualizing and relating to the land. Further, the traditional cultural responses to space voiced by Indian folks are frequently positioned in stark contrast to the responses emanating from their White counterparts. Whereas distinctions can be noted among the motivations and methods of dominant actors in the cases (often along the general lines of dominion, stewardship, and deep ecology), these distinctions tend to appear as rather superficial when viewed through comparative lenses of history and power.

Yet even while respecting expressions of difference and instances of contingency, it is vital that we also distinguish points of convergence and arrangements of alliance. Our work must be focused both within and amidst the distinct sites of struggle. Since we are interested in substantiating the existence of widespread spatial disorientation and illustrating its symbiotic association with faith in Exceptionalism, we must consider the ways in which dominant patterns of spatial thought and behavior are replicated through symbolic interaction and systemic oppression. But we must also identify and assess moments in which those patterns seem to be disrupted if we hope to learn how to cultivate genuine opportunities for cultural and politico-economic transformation. These case studies of struggles over Indian lands are thus offered as complex and grounded exemplars of both how inconsistencies and injustices are repressed in the forging of a



sense of unnatural innocence, and how this repression and its consequences might be resisted and healthfully reversed.<sup>3</sup>

*Synergy of People and Place Disrupted*

As the Western Shoshone scholar Stephen J. Crum writes, “Long before the coming of the whites, the *Newe* had developed their own distinctive way of life, characterized by the concept of living in harmony with the natural environment.”<sup>4</sup> Maintaining proper relations with the land, and in particular the homeland called *Newe Sogobia*,<sup>5</sup> were of paramount importance (For a map of *Newe Sogobia*, see Appendix A). In spite of the generally arid conditions and spare terrain of *Newe Sogobia*, various sophisticated subsistence strategies were developed in order to ensure the thriving of the people. These strategies were mediated through social and politico-economic structures based upon the peaceful coexistence of several communities of small extended family groups. Shoshone communities tended to recognize complex cultural practices which enabled resources to be efficiently shared, and maximized production while minimizing

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<sup>3</sup> In the case studies that follow, I integrate description and analysis of the conflicts through thematically-organized sections. Although the deep cultural symbols at play are not always explicitly named, readers are encouraged to interpret their influence as a constant subtext.

<sup>4</sup> Steven J. Crum, *The Road on which We Came: A History of the Western Shoshone* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1994), 12.

<sup>5</sup> The term *Newe*, which translates as “people,” refers to the traditional name by which the Western Shoshone call themselves. *Newe Sogobia*, then, may be approximated as “the land of the people.” In contrast, while the exact etiology of the term Shoshone is largely a mystery, it is almost certainly of White invention. Following Crum, I employ latter term in this paper despite its problematic origins, in part because “it has been widely used and accepted by both Indians and non-Indians after contact.” *The Road on which We Came*, x.

labor. One such resource was the nut of the piñon pine tree, described by Crum as “without a doubt the most important overall plant food source for the Newe.”<sup>6</sup>

As one of the few plant foods readily available in the region, the annual harvest and processing of piñon nuts provided the Western Shoshone with an easily storable source of nutrition. Piñon nuts therefore represented a foundational component of an overall wholesome and diverse diet which included rabbit, antelope, duck, and various foodstuff and medicinal herbs, seeds, roots, and plants. Not surprisingly, these nuts also figured prominently in the cultural and spiritual life of the people. As Crum relates, Western Shoshone oral tradition holds that the people “were placed in their homeland by the Creator (*Uteen Taikwahni*), whose complexion was the same color as that of the natives,” and that piñon nuts were brought to the region from the north through the intervention of figures like Coyote, Crow, and Crane.<sup>7</sup> Such narratives helped shape a sense of identity, provide a significant basis for deep cultural formation, and guide relations with the land.

Further, as the location of harvests varied from year to year, these events offered regular opportunities for social interaction. Harvest times brought various communities together to socialize, exchange information and goods, and perform important ritual practices. As a sort of lynchpin of Western Shoshone cultural and spiritual imagination, politico-economic strategy, and social structure, the piñon pine literally and symbolically

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<sup>6</sup> Crum, *The Road on which We Came*, 3-4.

<sup>7</sup> Crum, *The Road on which We Came*, 1, 5-6.

embodied a crucial link between people and place. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it also became a central feature in the ongoing struggle of the Western Shoshone to prevent *Newe Sogobia* from being usurped into the burgeoning American colonial project. In order to understand this connection, we must first look to the beginning of intercultural contact.

Although evidence indicates that the Western Shoshone were involved in trade networks that indirectly implicated Whites from at least the 1600's, prolonged and substantial direct contact did not occur until the mid-1800's.<sup>8</sup> Four interconnected events impacted this shift: a) the signing of the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, in which Mexico ceded the Great Basin region to the US; b) the discovery of gold in California; c) the beginning of permanent White settlement of the region; and d) the opening of official relations between the US and the Western Shoshone.<sup>9</sup> Passing through *Newe Sogobia* to reach the gold fields, many Whites failed to acknowledge their presence on another nation's territory. The Western Shoshone and other Indian groups were often perceived (in accordance with the master narrative and its implicit recognition of moral order) as inferior races, and were treated accordingly. For example, Crum notes that Whites "used

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<sup>8</sup> For two early—and somewhat problematic—studies related to Plains trade networks, see Francis Haines, "The Northward Spread of Horses among the Plains Indians," *American Anthropologist* 40, no. 3 (1938): 429-437; and Clark Wissler, "The Influence of the Horse in the Development of Plains Culture," *American Anthropologist* 16, no. 1 (1914): 1-25. Although some Western Shoshone may have acquired horses as early as the 1600's through the intervention of other Indian nations (like the Eastern Shoshone and Comanche), there is little evidence to suggest prolonged direct Western Shoshone contact with Whites prior to the early 1800's.

<sup>9</sup> See Crum, *The Road on which We Came*, 17-26. For more research on the prevalence of sexual violence perpetuated by White men against Indian women in the gold rush era, see Albert L. Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University, 1988), especially 182-192.

the Indians for target practice and sexually abused the women.”<sup>10</sup> Large numbers of “49’ers” who had been unlucky in the search for gold eventually began to settle in this region with little regard for the variety of indigenous inhabitants or the natural balances of its sensitive ecosystem. Numerous Indians were killed outright or forced into starvation in the face of vanishing resources, without remorse or recompense from their new and unwanted neighbors.

The Western Shoshone did not suffer these imposed burdens in silence. When the egocentric intentions and lack of respect of White invaders became clear, Indian communities chose to respond with an assortment of tactics including sporadic guerilla warfare and the reacquisition of territory claimed by Whites.<sup>11</sup> To these communities, the advance of White settlement represented a direct threat to all life in the region, and nothing short of an illegal invasion of another nation’s homeland. Assessments of ecological and cultural devastation were informed and validated not only by the everyday disturbances of large-scale mining and ranching initiatives, but also by the more condensed trauma of events such as the 1863 Bear River Massacre. In this incident, a regiment of California militiamen under the direction of Colonel Patrick Edward Connor (and with the “silent consent” of President Abraham Lincoln) attacked a group of sleeping Northwestern Shoshone in what is today southern Idaho.<sup>12</sup> Celebrating the mass

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<sup>10</sup> Crum, *The Road on which We Came*, 18.

<sup>11</sup> Crum, *The Road on which We Came*, 18

<sup>12</sup> See generally Kass Fleisher, *The Bear River Massacre and the Making of History* (Albany: State University of New York, 2004).

slaughter, rape, and pillaging that followed, Utah Territorial Governor James Doty eagerly declared that the massacre “struck terror into the heart” of the Shoshone, who “now acknowledge the Americans [as] masters of this country.”<sup>13</sup> Doty, a strong proponent making western land accessible to White mining, had previously been appointed by Lincoln to the post of Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the territory.

Doty’s sentiments reflected a broader perspective shared by many White settlers. For these individuals the choice to move westward was understood as not only a god-given right, but also as a divine imperative. Identifying themselves as an Exceptional chosen people, many settlers believed it was right and necessary that progress be brought to what they saw as an empty and unproductive space. The West was generally regarded as a wild frontier in need of order and management, which was sporadically occupied by backward heathens in need of civilization and salvation.<sup>14</sup> Its settlement by White folks was further regarded as a legal entitlement under the established contours of the doctrine of Discovery and the statutes of property that built upon it. Although the US lacked the practical capability to provide full military and politico-economic support in the initial historical moments of the westward advance, it did actively seek to assist settlement

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<sup>13</sup> Qtd. in Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2006), 267.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Edward Buendía and Nancy Ares describe how this symbolic representation specifically validated the belief of Mormon settlers that the region had been set aside by god for their occupation: “A discourse of the “Other” was already at work in [Mormon] social frameworks prior to encountering the Indian people of the Salt Valley region. The Book of Mormon stated that Mormons would encounter within the land of Zion a group of people, termed ‘Lamanites,’ that were at one time enlightened people who had fallen from the grace of God. These people, the Mormon scripture held, were given dark skin as a result of their fallen spiritual status, and were awaiting spiritual renewal. The Ute, Shoshone, and others were enveloped in this discourse.” *Geographies of Difference: The Social Production of the East Side, West Side, and Central City School* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 47-48.

whenever possible. For example, throughout the 1850's government officials were authorized to deliberate with Western Shoshone communities on behalf of the settlers and offer minor concessions and gifts in order to prevent the feared outbreak of widespread violent conflict. In the words of one official, the purpose of this Indian outreach was to "soften their hatred toward the whites."<sup>15</sup> However, such tokens could do little to remedy the basic grievances voiced by these communities, which consistently revolved around relations with the land.

With the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, the US could not afford to have a smoldering crisis on its western front. In order to finance the war effort the government required an efficient means by which to transport precious metals out of California and what was soon to become Nevada. The most direct route to the East, approved by the Pacific Railway Act of 1862, crossed directly through the heart of *Newe Sogobia*. However, as Western Shoshone communities responded to ever growing threats to their survival—a reality which was perverted by the mainstream perception of Indian peoples generally and the Western Shoshone in particular as excessively "warlike"—the security of this route could not be guaranteed to the government's satisfaction.<sup>16</sup> Negotiations

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<sup>15</sup> Qtd. in Crum, *The Road on which We Came*, 19.

<sup>16</sup> These stereotypes were widely disseminated through media like the tellingly entitled *Universal Cyclopedia*, a massive tome produced at the turn of the twentieth century by (as stated on its title page) "a large corps of editors, assisted by eminent European and American specialists." For example, one of these so-called specialists—famed soldier, explorer, and geologist John Wesley Powell—noted in his entry for "Shoshonean Indians": "The more northerly and eastern Shoshoni were horse and buffalo Indians, and in character and warlike prowess compared favorably with most western tribes. Those of the Snake river and to the south in Nevada represented a lower type, since most of this country was barren and comparatively

with these communities were therefore commenced in 1862, a process which culminated in the signing of the Treaty of Ruby Valley on October 1, 1863. This “Treaty of Peace and Friendship” officially recognized Western Shoshone ownership of a sizeable portion of *Newe Sogobia* (approximately 24.5 million acres), but it came at a price. In exchange for this recognition, its corollary usage rights, and twenty years of annuity payments, the Indian representatives agreed to several stipulations. These stipulations involved assurances that:

- All violent activity against White settlers would be ceased (Article I);
- Routes and methods of travel across Indian lands, the functioning of telegraph lines, and the building of military forts would not be impeded (Articles II and III);
- Mining of “gold and silver, or other minerals” would be permitted, along with the taking of timber (Article IV); and
- Communities would move to one of several reservation areas set aside within *Newe Sogobia* “whenever the President of the United states shall deem it expedient for them to abandon the roaming life, which they now lead, and become herdsmen or agriculturalists” (Article IV).

(For the complete text of the Treaty of Ruby Valley, see Appendix B)

Of course, as with many if not most of the treaties negotiated by the US with Indian nations in this era, the government’s promises were never fulfilled. Only one reservation area was established, and annuity payments fell short of agreed amounts.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the key aspect that was renegeed upon was the undeniable recognition of Western

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devoid of large game.” Vol. 10, ed. Charles Kendall Adams (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1900), 508.

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed exposition of these shortcomings, see Crum, *The Road on which We Came*, 31-41.

Shoshone ownership of the land. This recognition was clearly articulated in the text of the treaty and confirmed by public statements in the aftermath of its signing. For example, one official was quoted in a local newspaper, the *Reese River Reveille*, as stating that “the treaty is in no instance considered as extinguishing Indian title to the land described in their limits.”<sup>18</sup> The lack of ambiguity present in the government’s perspective in 1863, however, would slowly give way to a much different perspective over the next hundred years. This shift occurred in inverse proportion to the growth of US power in the region. In other words, as the ability of the government to control the land and its indigenous inhabitants increased, its recognition (in both word and action) of Western Shoshone ownership decreased accordingly.

The gamut of dominant spatial cognitions and behaviors can be seen at work in this historical process of colonization. Due in part to the arid nature of the landscape, technical manipulation through “efficient” Western methods of mining, farming, irrigation, etc. was quickly acknowledged as the chief path to integrating the region both literally and metaphorically into the American city upon a hill.<sup>19</sup> This path explicitly privileged certain unsustainable uses of land and forcefully imposed a hierarchy of being that had no direct reference to the actual places being settled. However, such incongruity

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<sup>18</sup> Qtd. in Crum, *The Road on which We Came*, 26.

<sup>19</sup> Exemplifying this perspective in his univocally titled book *Our Native Land*, George T. Ferris wrote in 1882: “Nevada, though it has fewer inhabitants than any other State...probably ranks first among the silver-mining States of the country...The ore is worked in two ways, by wet and by dry crushing, the former being by far more profitable, but unfortunately in many cases less practicable, than the latter. Still, silver-mining, even yet, is experimental, and the application of science to the solution of its problems has not yet achieved the great results we have reason to expect in the future, from the improvement already manifested.” (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1882), 204.



was buried beneath the desire to bring organization and enlightenment to—and gain profit and comfort from—this purportedly vacant and “unfinished” land. Over time this desire was memorialized in a range of cultural documents that reinforced the rosy and heroic account of settlement promoted by the master narrative.

One such document worthy of special mention is Walter Van Tilburg Clark’s song “The Sweet Promised Land of Nevada.” Observing with ostensible irony that “the Lord” had forgotten to finish creating the region before taking a day of rest, this first member of the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame describes how “no green thing will venture to grow” on the land and how the “only creatures that can multiply” in it are “the rattler, the jack, and the little bar-fly.” Yet in spite of this evidently inhospitable and uninhabited environment, the songwriter professes how it and he were meant for each other. Alluding to the biblical Exodus story in the chorus, Clark establishes himself and his descendants as the chosen people of this “last land.” He leaves off with a tribute to the teleological destiny of colonization that completes his omission of indigenous peoples:

So this is the land that old Moses would see,  
So this is the land of the vine and the tree,  
So this is the land for My children and Me,  
The sweet promised land of Nevada – O-o-o-o-oh,  
The sweet promised land of Nevada.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Clark originally penned the lyrics to “The Sweet Promised Land of Nevada” in 1945. For two mainstream homages that illustrate the context described here, see Jackson J. Benson, *The Ox-Bow Man: A Biography of Walter Van Tilburg Clark* (Reno: University of Nevada, 2004), 390-392; and Russell R. Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1987), 399-400.

## *The Usurpation of Newe Sogobia*

Although the US government showed little interest in *Newe Sogobia* in the years following the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, a significant change in attitude began occurring around the mid-1900's. This change was precipitated by a confluence of events. First, White settlement in the region began to approach a critical mass. Although Western Shoshone and Whites had coexisted in the region (albeit somewhat tensely) for decades, land conflicts began to escalate around the onset of the Great Depression.<sup>21</sup> Second, in 1951 US Atomic Energy Commission began testing nuclear weapons at their Nevada Test Site, located in the heart of Western Shoshone homeland on the Nellis Gunnery Range (for a map of this and other related nuclear sites, see Appendix C). With Cold War threats to Exceptionalism moving toward their zenith, such tests were deemed of highest importance to national security and could stand no impediment. Finally, new discoveries and emerging technologies allowed a new wave of mining to be pursued. The region had been mined for silver from at least the 1860's, but new operations focused on precious metals and other valued substances were initiated in the mid-1960's to take advantage of previously unknown deposits such as the Carlin and Cortez trends and developing processes such as open pit mining and heap-leaching. These operations continued to expand up to the present day, especially following the discovery of another significant deposit in 2003.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ward Churchill, *Struggle for the Land: Native North American Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide, and Colonization* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2002), 173-174.

Considering this confluence of events, possession of *Newe Sogobia* suddenly became a topic of considerable interest to the US. Fortunately (or unfortunately, depending on one's perspective), promotion of the master narrative had already enabled certain politico-economic devices to be put into place which would facilitate the process of gaining possession. Perhaps the two most powerful devices included the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934 and the Indian Claims Commission (ICC), instituted in 1946.

The IRA, also known as the Wheeler-Howard Act or the Indian New Deal, represented a sort of reversal of the Dawes Act which had guided federal Indian policy since 1887. The brainchild of Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Commissioner John Collier, the IRA claimed to return to Indian tribes<sup>23</sup> a measure of self-government and control over land bases. However, in order to fully take advantage of such provisions, tribes were required to adopt Western-style constitutions and electoral processes. In effect, these

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<sup>22</sup> Located directly within *Newe Sogobia*, Barrick Gold's Cortez Hills mine boasts proven and probable mineral reserves of 14.5 million ounces according to 2010 calculations. At the current (7 March 2012) gold price of approximately \$1,680 per ounce, the reserves are worth over \$24 billion. Barrick has faced various legal challenges from Western Shoshone communities over its environmentally and culturally devastating practices, especially its use of controversial heap-leach extraction near Mt. Tenabo. To date, US courts have ruled against the Indian plaintiffs in each instance. See "Cortez," Global Infomine, August 2010, accessed 2 March 2012, <http://www.infomine.com/minesite/minesite.asp?site=cortez>; Adella Harding, "BLM, Barrick Win in Cortez Hills Case," *Elko Daily Free Press*, 5 January 2012, accessed 2 March 2012, [http://elkodaily.com/mining/blm-barrick-win-in-cortez-hills-case/article\\_7d0529ca-37e2-11e1-8d15-0019bb2963f4.html](http://elkodaily.com/mining/blm-barrick-win-in-cortez-hills-case/article_7d0529ca-37e2-11e1-8d15-0019bb2963f4.html); *Te-Moak v. US*, 608 F.3d 592 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2010); and Simon Walker, "Cortez Hills: The Latest Chapter," *Mining Magazine* (January/February 2009), accessed 18 November 2009, <http://www.miningmagazine.com/mine-of-the-month/cortez-hills--the-latest-chapter>.

<sup>23</sup> Following Akim Reinhardt, I acknowledge the problematic and pejorative nature of the term "tribe" as applied to indigenous nations. However, as the term does possess a specific legal connotation within US federal Indian law, I utilize it sparingly and only when referring to the official legal status of the community in question. See *Ruling Pine Ridge: Oglala Lakota Politics from the IRA to Wounded Knee*. (Lubbock: Texas Tech University, 2009), xxv-xxvi.

requirements instigated rifts within many Indian communities between those who remained faithful to established lifeways and land relations (often called “traditionals”), and those who favored greater assimilation of Western cultural mores and Christian theological values. Whether intended by Collier or not, such consequences mirrored the type of “divide and conquer” strategy which had been employed by invaders against Indian nations for centuries. As Crum notes, the Western Shoshone were not immune to the divisive effects of the IRA.

Thus when a lawyer from the East named Ernest Wilkinson appeared to the Temoak band in 1946 desiring to represent them in front of the ICC, a confusing array of events followed. The ICC was designed to resolve land claim issues by providing Indian nations with a monetary payment in exchange for ostensibly clearing US title to their traditional lands. It did not provide for any return of land, nor acknowledgment of title or occupancy never abrogated. In the view of many traditionals the right to exercise unimpeded relations with land, which were of paramount importance, had been clearly established by the Treaty of Ruby Valley and could not be furthered by appeal to the ICC. Some other Western Shoshone, however, saw a potential to alleviate poverty through the acquisition of “more money for immediate use to purchase practical goods, including cattle, farm equipment, and more land.”<sup>24</sup> Wilkinson and his colleagues, who had helped design and implement the original ICC legislation, manipulated this divide by

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<sup>24</sup> Crum, *The Road on which We Came*, 124.

portraying the ICC arena as a place where the interests of both sides could finally be fulfilled.

By advancing this portrayal, the White lawyers attempted to induce a process of historical mystification and spatial disorientation among Western Shoshone communities by appealing to alleged inviolability of the American rule of law (and of the dominant conception of moral order more generally). Rather than resolving the circumstances of oppression that had resulted from the theft of land, however, the only interests that were genuinely served through the legal proceedings were those of the lawyers and the government. Hindsight suggests that this inequitable outcome was intended by design. Although Wilkinson explicitly told the Temoak council that his firm would “represent their interests” to the ICC, the actual claim filed by Wilkinson’s partner Robert W. Barker in 1951 alleged that:

the Western Shoshone had lost not only their treaty lands, but also their aboriginal land extending into Death Valley, California. Barker put the date of the loss at 1872 (only nine years after the Treaty of Ruby Valley), and he included in the twenty-four million acre claim some sixteen million acres that the Shoshones insist were not occupied by anyone but Indian bands, and that were never in question.<sup>25</sup>

Such an allegation was never approved by the Temoak band or any other Western Shoshone entity, though it was accepted as fact by the ICC.

Additionally, while the services of Wilkinson’s firm had only been officially retained by the Temoak band, the ICC agreed to allow the claim to be presented for the entire “Western Shoshone Identifiable Group.” This decision rendered the various

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<sup>25</sup> Churchill, *Struggle for the Land*, 175-176.

communities as an undifferentiated body incapable of participating in the destiny of either themselves or their homeland. From a legal standpoint, the claim was interpreted to negate whatever title to property might have resided in the 1863 Treaty and to validate US possession of the territory. Expanding upon this process, Glenn T. Morris writes,

In 1962, the commission conceded that it “was unable to discover any formal extinguishment of Western Shoshone to lands in Nevada, and could not establish a date of taking, but nonetheless rules that the lands were taken at some point in the past. It did rule that approximately two million acres of Newe land in California was taken on March 3, 1853 [contrary to the Treaty of Ruby Valley, which would have supplanted any such taking], but without documenting what specific Act of Congress extinguished the title. Without the consent of the Western Shoshone Nation, on February 11, 1966, Wilkinson and the US lawyers arbitrarily stipulated that the date of valuation for government extinguishment of Western Shoshone title to over 22 million acres of land in Nevada occurred on July 1, 1872. This lawyers’ agreement, entered without the knowledge or consent of the Shoshone people, served as the ultimate loophole through which the US would allege that the Newe had lost their land.”<sup>26</sup>

Even after Wilkinson’s contract to represent the Temoak band expired and was not renewed, the BIA unilaterally decided to extend the contract “on the Indians’ behalf” through the end of the claims process.<sup>27</sup>

The ICC eventually decided in 1972 to award the Western Shoshone approximately \$21 million for their loss of traditional lands, an amount which was based upon 1872 land prices of 15 cents an acre. The award was increased to \$26 million in 1979—about 6% of the land’s current value of “more than \$41 billion.”<sup>28</sup> In the thirty

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<sup>26</sup> Qtd. in Churchill, *Struggle for the Land*, 176-177.

<sup>27</sup> Churchill, *Struggle for the Land*, 177.

<sup>28</sup> See Andrea Smith, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (Cambridge: South End, 2005), 49.

years following this decision, the overall Western Shoshone response was fairly unequivocal: not one cent of federal money was accepted. However, the process had already set in motion a chain of thought and events which, regardless of the inherent injustice and manipulation involved, provided an ideological veneer thick enough for the government to press its case. Thus, the US Congress met in 2003 to consider House Resolution 884, which was designed to force the distribution of ICC-awarded monies to the Western Shoshone regardless of their desires, the legislation was promoted as representing progress for both the Indian nation and the land itself.

For example, then Representative (and eventual Governor) Jim Gibbons of Nevada noted during the congressional deliberations that “what we are trying to do with this bill is to allow for the justice to meet the needs of Western Shoshone people in the State of Nevada.”<sup>29</sup> Inherent to his stance was the contention that “it is time to look favorably upon this part of our cultural history.”<sup>30</sup> In Gibbons’ version of history, the US could usurp *Newe Sogobia* in order to put the land to proper civilized use and then pay bottom dollar for it afterward to help its indigenous inhabitants assimilate into the dominant culture. And after all, why would they not desire greater integration into the Exceptional entity called the American nation? Gibbons supported this sentiment by asserting that “about 90 percent” of the Western Shoshone population supported the

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<sup>29</sup> *Western Shoshone Claims Distribution Act and Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Land Exchange Act of 2003: Legislative Hearing on H.R. 884 and H.R. 1409, Before the Comm. on Resources, 108<sup>th</sup> Cong. 100 (2003)* (statement of Jim Gibbons, Representative from the State of Nevada).

<sup>30</sup> *Western Shoshone Claims Distribution Act*, 97 (Gibbons).

distribution, although was unable to offer a source for this figure.<sup>31</sup> The bill also gained backing from the leadership of some tribal bands, who alleged to speak for the people but were of course well positioned to benefit from the proposed distribution. Perhaps unsurprisingly, House Resolution 884 passed through Congress and was signed into law by George W. Bush on July 7, 2004.

The questionable existence of popular support for the ICC distribution was laid plain by the attitudes—both expressed and silent—of many Western Shoshone people. Such attitudes were captured in the following statements of Raymond Yowell and Glenn Holly, as reported by Ward Churchill. Illustrating the interrelated nature of agency and spatiality in the traditional Western Shoshone perspective, Yowell maintained:

We entered into the Treaty of Ruby Valley as co-equal sovereign nations... The land to the traditional Shoshone is sacred. It is the basis of our lives. To take away the land is to take away the lives of the people.

Echoing this sentiment, Holly emphasized:

Nothing happened in 1872. No land was ‘taken’ by the government. We never lost that land, we never left that land, and we’re not selling it. In our religion, it’s forbidden to take money for land. What’s really happening is that the US government through this Claims Commission, is stealing the land from us right now.<sup>32</sup>

Further, for every Yowell and Holly, there were at least an equal amount of folks who simply chose to indicate their attitude of dissatisfaction and disillusionment by boycotting what was perceived as an innately unfair and deceitful process.

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<sup>31</sup> *Western Shoshone Claims Distribution Act*, 26 (Gibbons).

<sup>32</sup> Qtd. in Churchill, *Struggle for the Land*, 177-178.



What is remarkable about such attitudes of resistance is that despite the widespread experience of poverty, many Western Shoshone remained steadfast in their refusal to choose money over land. And even for many of those who chose to receive payments (and were able prove the requisite one-quarter blood status), the distribution of ICC monies was not perceived as an example of justice served but rather as a necessary concession to hardship, lack of recourse, and loss of land.<sup>33</sup> Certainly, the longing for an increased standard of living and greater access to educational and employment opportunities persisted in many communities. Yet for these communities, true justice would not be realized until balance was restored through free relationships with the land. The values and priorities attached to this perspective did not fit easily within the confines of the master narrative, establishing a deep culture clash over the problem of space whose roots reached back to the arrival of the first White invaders. Played out among unequal circulations of power, traditional Indian ways of understanding and relating to space remained almost entirely unseen and unheard in dominant legal and politico-economic processes.

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<sup>33</sup> As of March 2011, about 5,000 successful applications had been reported by the BIA. See Adella Harding, "Shoshone Get Claims Money," *Elko Daily Free Press*, 4 March 2011, accessed 6 April 2011, [http://elkodaily.com/news/local/article\\_86daf73e-46f9-11e0-9574-001cc4c03286.html](http://elkodaily.com/news/local/article_86daf73e-46f9-11e0-9574-001cc4c03286.html).

## *Declaring War on Piñon Pine*

During the same period in which the general theft of *Newe Sogobia* was occurring, a complementary and more intimate crime was also being perpetuated. Beginning around 1960, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) instituted a strategy of replacing certain plant species with others deemed more useful or desirable from its standpoint. Although the strategy was implemented in many places across the country during this era, it particularly implicated *Newe Sogobia* due to the BLM's control over large swaths of "public domain" land in the Nevada region.<sup>34</sup> It was also profoundly impactful to the special relationship between Western Shoshone communities and piñon pine strands.

In a comprehensive study of this phenomenon, Richard O. Clemmer terms the BLM strategy as "ripoff resource replacement." He explains:

In this strategy indigenous plant species are literally ripped off the land. Sage, piñon, and juniper are removed by chaining, plowing, or spraying, and replaced with...other grasses or forbs suitable for either wildlife or livestock. The purpose of the chaining, plowing, and spraying projects is in the words of one chaining advocate, "to decrease less desirable plants and increase desirable species." The rationale is that "there is a high demand for the forage products and low demand for the tree products obtained from the piñon-juniper type." Thus, "trees are being removed or reduced on large areas in an attempt to increase forage production for livestock and, in some places, for big game."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Currently, 67% of Nevada's land base, or approximately 48 million acres, is classified by the government as under BLM jurisdiction. This figure has held fairly consistent for several decades. See "About BLM Nevada" US Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management, 16 November 2009, accessed 19 November 2009, <http://www.blm.gov/nv/st/en.html>.

<sup>35</sup> Richard O. Clemmer, "The Piñon-Pine: Old Ally or New Pest? Western Shoshone Indians vs. the Bureau of Land Management in Nevada" *Environmental Review* 9, no. 2 (1985): 138. Clemmer describes how vegetation was removed through the particularly blunt and destructive practice of chaining: "Chaining, which is similar to cabling, was begun in the early 1960's and was developed to a high art by

Calculated through the lenses of dominant cognitive images and behavioral themes, the BLM's ripoff resource replacement strategy was grounded in two related presumptions. First, bureau officials assumed that by clearing space for what they considered to be more desirable species, several manifestations of progress would be effectively served. Not only would the land be made more useful to ranchers, but the environment would be better ordered overall as large animals like deer and cattle were benefitted. This first presumption was predicated upon the second. Drawing on scientific assessments of the regional landscape, the BLM concluded that woodland had been encroaching over several decades upon many areas naturally intended to be grassland. In this view, the strategy of replacement was interpreted as a restoration of original conditions rather than a fundamental reshaping of the ecosystem. Although the BLM could produce no hard evidence in support of this abstract theorization, it nevertheless clung to its publicized rationale and went ahead with the strategy.

In the end, both presumptions were shown to be unsound. As Clemmer reveals, chaining did not improve deer habitat. In fact, deer were actually observed to prefer unchained plots. Further, many of the replaced species, and especially piñon pine, were quick to retake cleared plots. These "undesirable" species simply proved to be better

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the Ely, Nevada, office of the Bureau of Land Management in the late 1960's. Chaining is used to uproot not only stands of piñon-juniper, but also big sage. The 'Ely Chain' is a 90-pound-per-link ship's anchor chain 150 feet long with 18-inch pieces of iron rail welded onto each link. The chain is hitched to two crawler caterpillars and is dragged across the piñon-juniper stand. The chain tears up the vegetation by its roots; the area is then seeded, and the chain is dragged across the area again in the opposite direction to complete the uprooting job and to cover the seed" (139).

adapted to local growing conditions than their replacements, discrediting the BLM's scientific conjecture.<sup>36</sup> Conducting a longitudinal study of ripoff resource replacement decades after its implementation, researchers Ronald M. Lanner and Thomas R. VanDevender confirmed in 1998, "Notwithstanding any merits that are perceived to follow from woodland eradication, no persuasive evidence has yet been brought forth to support the idea that piñon pines have been engaged in a regional invasion, or migration, into historic grasslands or shrublands."<sup>37</sup> Considering such confirmation, we are forced to ponder why the BLM would choose to undertake such an expensive and time-consuming strategy when its basic premises were at best uncertain.

A deeper analysis of the goals and consequences of this strategy yields a few possible answers to this question. First, we must recognize the possibility that the BLM bureaucracy may simply have acted incompetently by failing to properly investigate its hypotheses in keeping with the rigorous demands of scientific inquiry. Though this possibility is instructive in part, it is nevertheless limited in that it fails to integrate the full context of history and power in which the strategy was pursued. A more complete perspective might therefore be grounded in the Latin adage of *cui bono*: Who benefited from the program, and who was harmed?

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<sup>36</sup> Clemmer, "The Piñon-Pine," 140. Also see Ronald M. Lanner, *The Piñon Pine: A Natural and Cultural History* (Reno: University of Nevada, 1981), 136-140.

<sup>37</sup> Ronald M. Lanner and Thomas R. VanDevender, "The Recent History of Piñon Pines in the American Southwest," *Ecology and Biogeography of Pinus*, ed. David M. Richardson (New York: Cambridge University, 1998) 179

Certainly, White ranchers were privileged as one of the major beneficiaries. The chaining of piñon pine significantly increased the amount and quality of land suitable for grazing livestock such as sheep, goats, horses, and cattle. This fact was not lost on the ranchers themselves. In fact, during one of the most prolific periods of ripoff resource replacement (1966 to 1973), nearly half of the BLM's clearing work was expressly requested by ranchers, who also paid a large portion of the costs.<sup>38</sup> The willingness of the BLM to bend to the wills of these ranchers speaks to the politico-economic clout wielded by the industry in the eastern counties of the state at this time. Although ranchers accounted for less than 1 percent of the regional population in 1970, they were nevertheless able to disproportionately influence the remaking of large portions of the environment, perhaps up to a third of a million acres.<sup>39</sup>

Who else benefited from the strategy? Perhaps the only other direct beneficiaries of the program were the BLM employees whose paychecks were tied to the clearing of the land. Hunters gained no real advantage, as big game was for the most part adversely affected. Nor obviously did the Western Shoshone, who vehemently opposed the chaining of piñon pine from the start. And in light of the destruction brought to the land

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<sup>38</sup> Clemmer, "The Piñon-Pine," 140.

<sup>39</sup> Clemmer notes that 927 livestock operators were active in Nevada in 1970. However, most of the piñon pine chainings—along with most of the Western Shoshone population—was concentrated in the state's eastern counties. In 1970, the population of these counties (Elko, White Pine, Lincoln, Clark, Nye, Eureka, and Lander) was 308,966. Even if Las Vegas is left out (1970 population 125,787) and it is assumed that all 927 ranchers lived in these counties alone, they would have still only accounted for 0.5 percent of the regional population in that year. "The Piñon-Pine," 140-141. Also see Lanner, *The Piñon Pine*, 133.

and its range of indigenous species, one would be hard pressed to argue that the space was improved in any substantial sense.

Considering the divergent approaches to piñon pine in this space, Clemmer explains, “To the aboriginal Western Shoshone its value depended on its productive health; to the non-Indian miners and [livestock owners] its value required its death.”<sup>40</sup> From the standpoint of BLM and US government more widely, the value of piñon pine was evaluated in strictly limited and largely abstract terms—since the land was considered to be largely wild, vacant, and unproductive anyway, the removal of the trees would ensure some profit could be wrung from it and progress brought to it. However, even this narrow perspective further constricted as only certain types of spatial behavior were deemed proper and acceptable. Ranching, largely a Western invention, was considered an acceptable livelihood and use of the land. On the contrary, traditional Indian practices such as the collection and processing of piñon nuts were regarded as both inefficient and inferior. Regardless of the fact that these practices had allowed human, plant, and animal life to thrive in the region’s specialized conditions for centuries, they were nevertheless deemed lesser forms of politico-economic organization than the prevailing standard of “civilization.” The non-human world was also enveloped by such Western-centric standards of appraisal, as the clearing of piñon pine was justified in the name of supporting “superior” forms of life such as deer and cattle.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Clemmer, “The Piñon-Pine,” 137.

<sup>41</sup> Clemmer, “The Piñon-Pine,” 139.

With deep culture conflict expressed tangibly through the destruction of piñon pine, the Western Shoshone were directly harmed while the US government received an indirect boon. It is important to recall that the height of the ripoff replacement era coincided with the most intense period of conflict regarding the Western Shoshone ICC case. Although Article IV of the Treaty of Ruby Valley stipulated that “Mills may be erected and timber taken for their use, as also for building and other purposes in any part of the country claimed by said bands,” the destruction of piñon pine nevertheless represented a patently illegal challenge to Western Shoshone control of the territory. The Treaty established certain usufruct rights which the US could exercise *in Western Shoshone lands*, yet the actions of the BLM suggested the exact opposite interpretation. Consequently, the Indian nation was forced to press its rights through a hostile legal system built upon the same master narrative that allowed the government to claim ultimate jurisdiction over a self-defined promised land. In the meantime, since piñon pine represented a vital aspect of cultural identity, social organization, and politico-economic process, its destruction dealt a powerful blow to the people.

With dominant actors preferring to define the conflict in unnaturally innocent terms, there can be little doubt that the repression of spatial disorientation was both operative, and at some level, embraced. The most significant evidence in support of this assertion involves the fact that the nearly all of the affected Indian communities publicized their opposition to the program, and their rationale for opposing it, quite vociferously. There could be no mistaking the Western Shoshone perspective that the ripoff resource replacement strategy was harming not only the land, but also the

indigenous communities who lived in relation with it. When numerous appeals to local government officials went largely unheeded, the case was taken to the national stage through the 1974 premiere of a feature film documentary called “Broken Treaty at Battle Mountain.” The film raised awareness of the Western Shoshone case among a wider audience, which in turn brought greater scrutiny on the government policies. As pressure mounted from the film’s success, ongoing local efforts, and related legal struggles, some BLM officials began to rethink the replacement strategy and extend a grudging acknowledgment of cultural and legal rights being pressed by local Indian communities.<sup>42</sup> Piñon pine chainings remained an official BLM practice after 1974; however, after this time their implementation tended to be pursued on a much more selective basis and smaller scale.

The conflict over ripoff resource replacement acted as a microcosm of the larger struggle between the Western Shoshone and the US. Clemmer summarizes:

Embedded in the controversy were some very basic issues: treaty rights and land ownership; the ecological soundness of trying to replace trees with grasses; the effectiveness of the eradication process; and the moral and ethical rights of ecosystems as opposed to the monetary dictates of economic systems.<sup>43</sup>

These issues also exemplified the sorts of contradictions and inconsistencies characteristic to the psychosocial functionality (or rather disfunctionality) of colonizer

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<sup>42</sup> Clemmer records that “the Bureau of Land Management finally capitulated to the obvious fact: not only were piñon pines on the ‘public domain’ part of the Western Shoshones’ cultural heritage, but also they might actually still be under the legal ownership of Western Shoshones. “The Piñon-Pine,” 146.

<sup>43</sup> Clemmer, “The Piñon-Pine,” 131.



societies.<sup>44</sup> For example, the BLM clearly attempted to portray the piñon pine as an invasive outsider which required destruction in order for the proper inhabitants of the land to flourish. These attempts were made in spite of the relatively obvious fact that the trees actually represented a keystone species of the region. After all, some of the trees that were chained were found to be between 200 and 300 years old.<sup>45</sup> Such obvious blunders suggest that local government officials may have simply projected their own artificial presence in *Newe Sogobia* onto the ecological debate, and like their early “pioneer” ancestors, reacted to repressed feelings of guilt and fear by attempting to exert control through a remaking of the landscape.

### *Nuclear Wasteland*

The remaking of *Newe Sogobia* has extended far beyond the destruction of piñon pine. Since the mid-1900’s, much of this land has been transformed into a sprawling complex of military bases and training grounds to which the Western Shoshone (or any other non-approved personnel, for that matter) have no access. Part of this complex includes over 750,000 acres designated as a nuclear weapons testing facility and unironically described by the federal government as a “unique national resource.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> For important expositions of the colonizer mindset in the context of the Americas, see generally Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1997); Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University Of Chicago, 1992); and George E. “Tink” Tinker, “Thief, Slave Trader, and Murderer: Christopher Columbus and Caribbean Population Decline.” *Wicazo Sa Review* 23, no. 1 (2008): 25-50.

<sup>45</sup> Clemmer, “The Piñon-Pine,” 139.

Originally run by the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), the Nevada Test Site currently rests under the jurisdiction of the US Department of Energy (DOE). During the period of 1951 to 1992, this “proving ground” witnessed the detonation of 1,021 nuclear devices, including 220 above-ground detonations in the first three years alone.<sup>47</sup> Occurring entirely within the boundaries of Western Shoshone land, this explosive history is described by Churchill as having transformed “the peaceful and pastoral Newes, who had never engaged in an armed conflict with the US, into ‘the most bombed nation on earth.’”<sup>48</sup>

Such an inauspicious designation brought gruesome consequences. Describing the relationship between the nuclear testing establishment in Nevada and local peoples,

Valerie Kuletz states:

For the Native inhabitants of these places, military/scientific occupation meant, at best, low-paid jobs to help build, maintain, and clean the emerging cities. At worst, Indians and other local populations were ignored completely – rendered invisible by a mixture of racism and a perception of desert lands as vast, uninhabitable wastelands. Worse than this, Indians and other local people may have been regarded as expendable subjects for radiation experiments—a gruesome possibility that has only recently been acknowledged with the release of previously confidential reports documenting the deliberate radiation releases from

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<sup>46</sup> “Nevada Test Site,” National Nuclear Security Administration Nevada Site Office, 17 November 2009, accessed 20 November 2009, <http://www.nv.doe.gov/nts/default.htm>.

<sup>47</sup> See US Department of Energy Nevada Operations Office, *United States Nuclear Tests: July 1945 through September 1992* (Las Vegas: US Department of Energy, 2000), xviii, accessed 20 November 2009, [http://www.nv.doe.gov/library/publications/historical/DOENV\\_209\\_REV15.pdf](http://www.nv.doe.gov/library/publications/historical/DOENV_209_REV15.pdf). Some observers suggest this official government total of 1,021 detonations obscured the full range of tests pursued. For example, Churchill notes that a “subcritical plutonium device” was detonated at the Nevada Test Site as late as 1997. *Struggle for the Land*, 183.

<sup>48</sup> Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide*, 326n 117. Although the etymology of this term is somewhat unclear, Churchill attributes it to Western Shoshone Chief Raymond Yowell.

laboratories and undisclosed, secret nuclear tests, exposing downwind populations to fallout.<sup>49</sup>

Strengthening such claims, Winona LaDuke cites evidence indicating that the AEC and DOE would “deliberately wait for the clouds to blow north and east before conducting above-ground tests... [meaning] that the Shoshones would get a larger dosage.<sup>50</sup> The nuclear tests distributed approximately 12 billion curies of radiation into the atmosphere and contaminated groundwater tables with radioactive substance levels up to 3,000 times the maximum “safe” level.<sup>51</sup> The destruction wrought by such spatial behavior complemented the other ecological “enhancements” being pursued by the government in this period.

Of course, the health of both Western Shoshone communities and their land was significantly impacted by the range of harmful actions perpetrated in their homeland. Physically, rates of cancer (especially leukemia and thyroid cancer), birth defects, and other diseases tended to be both abnormally high and vastly underestimated by the government.<sup>52</sup> Psychologically, the trauma brought on by a range of stressors exacerbated physical ailments and affected communities in complex ways. In addition to experiencing

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<sup>49</sup> Valerie Kuletz, *The Tainted Desert: Environmental and Social Ruin in the American West* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 43.

<sup>50</sup> Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Cambridge: South End, 1999), 99.

<sup>51</sup> Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide*, 326-327.

<sup>52</sup> See Valerie Kuletz, “Invisible Spaces, Violent Places: Cold War Nuclear and Militarized Landscapes,” in *Violent Environments*, eds. Nancy Lee Peluso and Michael Watts (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2001); and Eric Frohberg et al, “The Assessment of Radiation Exposures in Native American Communities from Nuclear Weapons Testing in Nevada,” *Risk Analysis* 21, no. 1(2000): 101-111.

the toxification of groundwater and the disruption of fragile ecosystems, Indian communities were forced to remain eternally vigilant in the face of ongoing and new threats to life, culture, and land. Such hypervigilance represents just one of the many symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that manifested as a result of historical trauma among the Western Shoshone and within many other Indian nations.<sup>53</sup> These long-term physical and psychological issues persist into the present day.

Beyond the horrific aftermath of nuclear testing, the indigenous keepers of *Newe Sogobia* also faced trying ordeals in the potential development of the MX nuclear missile system and the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository. As Churchill derisively notes, The MX represented “an entirely offensive weapon which was, of course, dubbed the “Peacekeeper.”<sup>54</sup> Designed to counter Soviet first strike capabilities with high yield, multiple warhead devices, the MX system was envisioned as a mobile platform which would have “brought approximately 20,000 additional non-Indians onto Newe land, [created] another 10,000 miles of paved roads, and [drawn] down 3.15 billion gallons of water from an already overtaxed water table.”<sup>55</sup> Likewise, the Yucca Mountain facility was promoted as necessary and safe central depository for the country’s nuclear waste. It too, however, portended similar disastrous consequences. Over 90,000 shipments of nuclear waste from all over the country would have been brought to *Newe Sogobia* and

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<sup>53</sup> See Karina Walters et al, “Dis-placement and Dis-ease: Land, Place, and Health among American Indians and Alaskan Natives,” in *Communities, Neighborhoods, and Health: Expanding the Boundaries of Place*, eds. Linda M. Burton et al (New York: Springer, 2011), 163-199.

<sup>54</sup> Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide*, 332n\*.

<sup>55</sup> Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide*, 184.

stored within the mountain, a cultural site of critical significance for the Western Shoshone and Paiute Nations. Although storage programs for nuclear waste are inherently controversial topics no matter how they are designed or emplaced, the track record of the US in this arena is particularly bleak. In particular, Indian communities were coerced to bear a significantly disproportionate portion of the burdens resulting from the government's faith in positivistic designations of "safety" over the past centuries.<sup>56</sup>

The Yucca Mountain project embodied this dynamic by integrating cost-saving but less reliable technologies, adopting a storage site "undercut by no less than 32 geological fault lines," and utilizing a radiation safety standard far below typical regulatory levels.<sup>57</sup> The project further required statistical projections of more than 10,000 years to accommodate for the expected lifespan of the waste material, projections admitted by the USDOE to be "inherently uncertain."<sup>58</sup> Bolstered in part by official characterizations of the site as "unpopulated land owned by the Federal Government"—characterizations consistently refuted by the Western Shoshone among others—the project

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<sup>56</sup> For a relevant analysis of this issue, see Kristin Shrader-Frechette, "Environmental Justice and Native Americans: The Mescalero Apache and Monitored Retrievable Storage," *Natural Resources Law Journal* 36, no. 4 (1996): 943-954.

<sup>57</sup> See respectively Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide*, 339; and LaDuke, *All Our Relations*, 109. LaDuke notes that while the radiation standard for Yucca Mountain was set at 100 millirems per year—a level equivalent to a 1 in 286 lifetime risk of cancer—governmental regulatory levels for pollutants have typically been set between a 1 in 10,000 and a 1 in 1,000,000 lifetime risk of cancer.

<sup>58</sup> US Department of Energy Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, *Yucca Mountain Science and Engineering Report: Technical Information Supporting Site Recommendation Consideration*, Revision 1 (Washington DC: US Department of Energy, 2002), xxviii, accessed 16 April 2011, <http://energy.gov/sites/prod/files/edg/media/SER.PDF>.

remained on track well into the 2000's.<sup>59</sup> It seems that in the rush to enmesh Exceptionalism through the physical construction of a city upon a hill, less than sufficient thought had been put toward what to do with the multitude of dangerous refuse created along the way. Instead of intergenerational and nonanthropocentric thinking, it was simply assumed that the immediate benefits of progress could be offset by future technological advancements.

The signature of spatial disorientation can be seen throughout the MX missile and Yucca Mountain projects. This signature emerges plainly as the Western Shoshone approach to space is weighed against the dominant American one, but as Kuletz suggests:

One need not even compare different cultures, however, to see that contradictory signifying practices and conflicting narratives exist concerning Yucca Mountain. In addition to capturing an Indian landscape, a wider focus reveals how very similar lands are used for different cultural purposes, sometimes contradictory ones, even within the same culture... Land that is signified as a zone of preservation or as a national treasure (sacred in a secular sense) is often also signified as a zone of sacrifice. The juxtaposition reveals both the arbitrary nature of the sign (exemplified by contradictory signification strategies) and the purposeful nature of political boundaries. It also reveals contradictions present in Euroamerican culture, where wilderness and "empty" space are both sacred *and* expendable.<sup>60</sup>

The treatment of *Newe Sogobia* has historically hinged upon its designation as a frontier wilderness and *terra nullius* which, as property of the US government, can be managed

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<sup>59</sup> US Department of Energy Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, *Viability Assessment of a Repository at Yucca Mountain: Overview* (Washington DC: US Department of Energy, 2002), 2, 10, accessed 16 April 2011, [http://www.energy.gov/media/Viability\\_Overview\\_b\\_1.pdf](http://www.energy.gov/media/Viability_Overview_b_1.pdf). The government's characterizations of Yucca Mountain are succinctly contradicted in Corbin Harney, "Yucca Mountain: No Place for Nuclear Waste," Nuclear Information and Resource Center, October 2000, accessed 21 November 2009, <http://www.nirs.org/radwaste/yucca/yuccaltrbycorbin102400.htm>.

<sup>60</sup> Kuletz, *The Tainted Desert*, 138-139.

through scientific manipulation and sacrificed in the pursuit of progress. Yet Yucca Mountain sits just northeast of the border to Death Valley National Park, a “land of startling and stark beauty” which is off-limits to both intensive development and Indian inhabitation.<sup>61</sup> Both places offer support to Exceptionalism, one by its destruction and one by its preservation. The distinction between these two places is an entirely politico-economic one that demonstrates how spatial concerns are distorted to best serve the temporal pursuits of power, profit, and prestige.

Especially when viewed in light of its oppressive and destructive consequences, such contradiction can be considered in itself as a powerful sign signifying the disorienting contours of deep cultural influence. But while such signification can be observed even in the absence of comparative cultural analysis, the role of traditional culture in fomenting Western Shoshone resistance over the course of this particular land struggle should not be underestimated.

For example, impacted in part by grounded Western Shoshone leadership and activism, both the MX missile and Yucca Mountain programs were abandoned in the face of technical hindrances and growing public opposition by 2005 and 2009, respectively. In spite of these victories, the government’s various nuclear activities in Nevada remain noteworthy recent embodiments of the master narrative in action. By portraying the harnessing of the power of the atom as a necessary step toward national security, elites

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<sup>61</sup> “Death Valley National Park Virtual Museum Exhibit: Overview,” US National Parks Service Museum Management Program, accessed 20 December 2011, [http://www.nps.gov/history/museum/exhibits/death\\_valley/index.html](http://www.nps.gov/history/museum/exhibits/death_valley/index.html).

within the politico-economic and military-industrial spheres could effectively frame blatant injustice to the Western Shoshone (and others) in terms palatable to the mainstream population.<sup>62</sup> Further, nuclear tests were situated within the larger story of Cold War, wherein the expansion of the American city upon a hill was being threatened by the nefarious aspirations of the Soviet “Evil Empire.” A different type of projection was at work here in addition to the psychological type; the attempted conversion of Nevada into a nuclear wasteland represented a projection of US power against not only overseas adversaries and perceived internal threats like the Western Shoshone, but over the land itself. Remaining steadfast in its refusal to back down from its defense of *Newe Sogobia*, this supposedly inferior Indian nation destabilized such projection and drew public attention to the unnaturally innocent assumptions that undergirded it.

#### *The Case of Mary and Carrie Dann*

It is ironic—or perhaps strangely fitting—that against the backdrop of the mighty American military and nuclear power complex two poor sisters rose up to become embodiments of the Western Shoshone struggle and the larger multifaceted quest to promote more holistic and healthful approaches problem of space. Having experienced

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<sup>62</sup> This framing has been advanced by the deliberate manipulation of media, especially film propaganda. Patricia Mellencamp writes: “Cinema and our perverse pleasures are technologies which accompany, document, and restage imperialism as narrative and visual spectacle in, for example, the Western and US government’s nuclear experiments, which were rehearsed, performed, and released as educational/promotional films in the late 1940’s and early 1950’s. These military films made for the public reassured us that radiation would not harm us if we would take minimal precautions. Film was an instrument of nuclear policy, turning the destruction of the Bikini Atoll, along with the displacement of its ‘natives,’ into an aesthetic spectacle, eradicating the islanders just as narrative conventions erase film’s conditions of production in the name of illusion or commodity fetish.” *Indiscretions: Avant-Garde Film, Video, and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1990), 104-105.



nuclear bombings, the destruction of relatives both human and non-human, and the deliberate undermining of their culture, these sisters chose to take a stand against continued genocide and destruction. In many ways, the story of Mary and Carrie Dann stands out as an antithesis of the Christopher Columbus story that begins the master narrative about America. For unlike Columbus, who used various deceptive devices to conceal the violent possession of lands and bodies that ensured his own selfish benefit, the Danns endured great personal sacrifice in an effort to overturn the oppression and repression related to spatial disorientation. In response, the sisters were characterized by the US government as misguided at best—and criminal at worst. Whereas Columbus and other European “explorers” and “pioneers” have been largely celebrated as heroes in spite of their dubious dealings (to put it mildly), the Danns have been both ignored and demonized in dominant portrayals. Popularly cast as ignorant and imprudent agitation, the fight has been carried on by Mary in the physical absence of her sister Carrie, who passed on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2005.

The Dann’s ordeal began in 1974, when they were charged with trespassing by a BLM ranger after being found herding their cattle without a permit on land considered to be “public domain.” Clemmer notes:

Of course, to the BLM, the fact that the Danns happened to be Western Shoshone Indians and combined traditional subsistence techniques with modern ranching on land which they and their ancestors had used for centuries was of no particular consequence...It was time to require the Danns to either obtain grazing permits or get their stock off the Government’s land.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Clemmer, “The Piñon-Pine,” 146.

Despite being threatened with monetary penalties and imprisonment, the Danns refused to capitulate to BLM demands and chose instead to meet the government in court. The sisters mounted a defense strategy based on the theory that since the land was technically still owned by the Western Shoshone, they could not be found guilty of trespassing on their own land. John O'Connell, head attorney for the Danns, described the strategy thusly:

We have asked the government over and over again in court to show evidence of how it obtained title to Shoshone land. They start groping around and can't find a damn thing. In fact, the relevant documents show the US never wanted the Nevada desert until recently.<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless, the Danns were eventually found guilty of trespassing by the district court and levied a fine of \$1000.

The question of legal title remained in litigation through a series of trials at the district and appellate levels until 1983, when the Ninth Circuit Court ruled that the 1979 ICC settlement had not, in fact, extinguished Western Shoshone aboriginal title. As Churchill explains, this argument effectively:

demolished the articulated basis—that a title transfer had been effected more than a century earlier—for the [ICC's] award amount. It also pointed to the fact that the [ICC] had comported itself illegally in the Western Shoshone case insofar as the Indian Claims Commission Act explicitly disallowed the commissioners (never mind attorneys representing the Indians) from extinguishing previously unextinguished land titles.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Qtd. in Churchill, *Struggle for the Land*, 178.

<sup>65</sup> Churchill, *Struggle for the Land*, 179.

The ruling was later overturned when the government appealed to the US Supreme Court, which found that while *collective* Western Shoshone possession of the land had indeed been legally usurped the Danns' *individual* aboriginal rights to land title might still be extant.<sup>66</sup> This unresolved issue was then remanded to the lower courts.

In spite of the Supreme Court ruling, the Danns continued to press their defense of the Western Shoshone nation—even to the detriment of their personal gain. Although the Ninth Circuit upheld some aspects of the Danns' individual property title claims in 1989, it ultimately required that these claims be regulated in a similar fashion to those of other (non-Indian) private individuals. In their decision, the judges noted:

We would have thought that the Supreme Court's decision would have shifted the focus of this case away from tribal aboriginal title and placed it squarely on individual aboriginal title. The Danns continue, however, to rely heavily on Western Shoshone aboriginal title. A great deal of their argument on this appeal is devoted to an attack on the claims proceedings and to an attempt to limit the effect that the claims award must be given under the Supreme Court's decision in this case.”<sup>67</sup>

The surprise and scorn conveyed in this and other similar documents points to a deeper conflict at the heart of the legal proceedings. While the Danns refused to dilute their spatial and communal orientation and capitulate to the government's proposed conceptualization of the case, the courts (as embodiments of the rule of law) were simply incapable of recognizing the basis of this orientation. Formed by different cultural assumptions and historical narratives, the two parties were like ships passing in the night—

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<sup>66</sup> See *United States v. Dann*, 470 U.S. 39 (Supreme Court 1985).

<sup>67</sup> *US v. Mary Dann; Carrie Dann*, 873 F.2d 1189 (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1989).

with the caveat that the politico-economic bulk of the latter ship could produce enough wake to effectively capsize the former. The deep nature of the conflict was further reflected and reinforced in 1990 when the Supreme Court declined to hear a second appeal, this time brought by the Danns.<sup>68</sup>

Although this denial cut off one line of attack against the government, the Danns and their kin kept up their assault on injustice. For example, shortly after the 1990 rebuff a new case was brought to the Reno district court by the Western Shoshone. Building on previous decisions, attorneys for the Indian nation argued that if collective aboriginal land title had only been extinguished through the 1979 ICC settlement—as various US courts had held—then the Western Shoshone were entitled to billions of dollars in mining and trespass fees garnered in the years since the signing of the Treaty of Ruby Valley. This argument highlighted the immense sums of gold and other materials that had been ripped from the bosom of *Newe Sogobia*, without even one cent in royalties being transferred to the land's indigenous inhabitants. The case was rejected by the Reno court on technical grounds upon its initial application; however, as scholars like Jerry Mander note, it “may yet re-emerge.”<sup>69</sup>

Although US courts demonstrated their unwillingness to stray from the master narrative in dealing with Indian land struggles, some international judicial bodies proved

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<sup>68</sup> For more in-depth descriptions of the Danns' legal struggles, see Churchill, *Struggle for the Land*, 178-181; Clemmer, “The Piñon-Pine,” 145-147; Kristine L. Foot, “*United States v. Dann*: What it Portends for Ownership of Millions of Acres in the Western United States,” *Public Land Law Review* 5 (1984): 183-191; and Jerry Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred: The Failure of Technology and the Survival of Indian Nations* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1991), especially 303-318.

<sup>69</sup> Mander, *In the Absence of the Sacred*, 316-317.

slightly more amenable. Issuing judgment on cases brought by the Western Shoshone, two such bodies—the Organization of American States’ Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), and the United Nation’s Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)—found the US in violation of several legal precepts.

In 2001, the IACHR issued its preliminary report in the first ever international decision on US-Indian relations. Affirming that basic human rights statutes had been infringed, it determined that the US had “failed to ensure the Danns’ right to property under conditions of equality,” and was therefore required to “provide [them] with an effective remedy.” It also criticized the validity of the ICC process and called upon the US to “review its laws, procedures, and practices” related to the treatment of indigenous land claims.<sup>70</sup> Responding to a request for urgent action in that same year, CERD noted “the persistence of the discriminatory effects of the legacy of practices of slavery, segregation, and destructive policies with regard to Native Americans.” More specifically, it expressed “concern with regard to information on plans for the expansion of mining and nuclear waste storage on Western Shoshone ancestral land, for placing their land to auction for private sale, and other actions...” In light of these breaches, CERD pressed the US to guarantee “effective participation by indigenous communities” and provide “recognition and compensation for loss.”<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Mary and Carrie Dann v. United States, Case 11.140, Inter-Am. C.H.R., Report No. 75/02 (2002), paragraph 173. For an analysis of this decision, see Inbal Sansani, “American Indian Land Rights in the Inter-American System: *Dann v. United States*,” *Human Rights Brief* 10, no. 2 (2003): 1-5.

<sup>71</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, “Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: United States of America,” U.N. Doc.

These decisions represented momentous victories for the Western Shoshone and other indigenous nations, and signaled an unprecedented show of support for alternative approaches to the problem of space.<sup>72</sup> Yet the lack of enforcement mechanisms within their issuing bodies ensured that the US would not immediately be held to task. Such a fundamental limitation prevented the victories from becoming material as well as symbolic; indeed, none of the recommendations issued by the IACHR or CERD were enacted.<sup>73</sup> While the international judicial decisions brought increased scrutiny upon US Indian policy and its underlying spatial disorientation, they ultimately did little to directly affect meaningful transformation.

The overall timeline of the Danna's case—both nationally and internationally—supports attorney Tom Luebben's contention that the government sought to “simply wear

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CERD/C/59/Misc.17/Rev.3 (2001), paragraphs 5 and 21, respectively. For the initial Western Shoshone petition, see Deborah Schaaf et al., “A mended Request for Urgent Action under Early Warning Procedure to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination by the Yomba Shoshone Tribe and Ely Shoshone Tribe of the Western Shoshone People in relation to the United States of America,” 1 July 2000, accessed 2 March 2012, <http://www.wsdp.org/uploads/5/3/9/0/5390400/wscerdamendedrequest.pdf>.

<sup>72</sup> For additional exposition, see Thomas E. Luebben and Cathy Nelson, “The Indian Wars: Efforts to Resolve Western Shoshone Land and Treaty Issues and to Distribute the Indian Claims Commission Judgment Fund,” *Natural Resources Journal* 42, no. 4 (2002): 801-833; Dinah Shelton, “Environmental Rights and Brazil's Obligations in the Inter-American Human Rights System,” *George Washington International Law Review*, 40, no. 3: 733-777; and Jennifer Wolowick, “The US Supreme Court, the Western Shoshone, and the Fight for Human Rights in the International Arena,” in *Human Rights in Global Light: Selected Papers, Poems, and Prayers, SFSU Annual Human Rights Summits 2004-2007*, Treganza Museum Anthropology Papers 24-25 (2007-2008), ed. Mariana Leal Ferreira (San Francisco: San Francisco State University, 2008), 61-65.

<sup>73</sup> For example, CERD clearly (but toothlessly) reiterated in 2006: “The Committee expresses concern about the lack of action taken by the State party to follow up on its previous concluding observations, in relation to the situation of the Western Shoshone peoples. Although these are indeed long-standing issues, as stressed by the State party in its letter, they warrant immediate and effective action from the State party.” Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, “Early Warning and Urgent Action Procedure: Decision 1(68) United States of America,” U.N. Doc. CERD/C/USA/DEC/1 (2006) Paragraph 5.

out the Indians over decades of struggle.”<sup>74</sup> By actively working to bog down procedures in legalistic and bureaucratic mazes built around thoroughly contingent assumptions regarding property rights, progress, and the nature and proper use of land, dominant actors were able to exploit their various social and politico-economic advantages. It is understandable, then, that these actors expressed surprise over the Danns’ consistent prioritization of collective relations with the land over individual ownership of property. Considering the influence of prevailing cognitive images and behavioral themes, this prioritization of space over time was received largely as a strange and dangerous expression of Otherness that did not compute in the dominant cultural logic. This reception was reinforced by the functioning of a rule of law which, while being intrinsically biased toward certain values and mores, was widely accepted as both fair and objective by the same folks charged with enforcing it.

One must wonder to what extent the intentional and preferred strategy of rendering opponents psychologically, physically, spiritually, and financially exhausted represented a maladaptive response to repressed knowledge. For by precluding any chance for genuine dialogue to occur, the obvious contradictions and oppressions attached to American cultural identity continued to elude the pain of large-scale conscious acknowledgement and remained blanketed by a more comfortable sense of unnatural innocence. In this way, spatial disorientation infiltrated decision-making on both the individual and systemic levels. It was thus well-positioned to ensure that

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<sup>74</sup> Qtd. in Churchill, *Struggle for the Land*, 180.

Exceptionalism, along with its corresponding feedback loop of privilege, remained strong and undesecrated.

*Conclusion: The Underpinnings of Domination*

In *Newe Sogobia*, resistance continues. Most recently, this resistance has targeted the plans of the world's largest gold mining company, Barrick Gold, to expand operations onto another site of particular cultural vitality for the Western Shoshone, Mt. Tenabo. Despite fierce opposition to these plans, the BLM approved the next round of feasibility studies in March 2011.<sup>75</sup> Further, the Yucca Mountain proposal continues to spark legislative and judicial debate at both the federal and state levels—especially as alternative plans have been rejected—suggesting it is far from a dead issue. These latest developments in the long-standing and seemingly intractable struggle over Western Shoshone land undercut the common belief that conflicts with Indian nations represent unfortunate but decisive aspects of the American past. They instead demonstrate that the dual domination of land and Other in the US not only continues, but that it remains deeply embedded in both the material and symbolic landscapes.

Considering the ongoing Western Shoshone struggle from this perspective, it is evident that the problem of space has lost none of its consequence. In fact, if anything it has become even more critical. For Carrie Dann and many others like her, the

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<sup>75</sup> See Meg Hewings, "Caretakers of the Land," *The Dominion* 16 November 2008, accessed 7 April 2011, <http://www.dominionpaper.ca/articles/2218>; and Colin McClelland, "Barrick Gold Says Restrictions on Nevada Mining Lifted," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, 16 March 2011, accessed 7 April 2011, <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-03-16/barrick-gold-says-restrictions-on-nevada-mining-lifted.html>.



increasingly desperate context of oppression and exploitation surrounding *Newe Sogobia* calls for master narrative to be plainly named and openly challenged. Though this strategy has yielded limited results in terms of shifting the fields of power, it has helped sustain cultural and ecological integrity to some extent. It has also helped call attention to the influence of deep cultural symbols such as frontier wilderness, *terra nullius*, property, and progress—effectively de-normalizing and de-legitimizing them in meaningful ways. By acting as a foil to prevailing patterns of spatial cognition and behavior, the traditional cultural perspectives active within these Indian communities reveal the presence of real and deeply-embedded differences that shape the contours of the conflict.

The bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism is further confirmed through deductive and inductive analyses of the case. Deductively, this theoretical device provides a reliably meaningful way to understand how particular aspects of the struggle unfolded, and how new developments continue to emerge. It also provides a technical language that authentically replicates the themes and explanations unswervingly referenced by the most marginalized actors at various points along the way—a critical marker of value for any proposed device. Inductively, the details of case events point to the consistent influence of an underlying set of dominant deep cultural symbols. When instances of participation involving dominant actors such as government officials and White settlers are deconstructed, they convincingly point to an overarching disorientation of spatial cognition and behavior. It seems clear that the approach of dominant actors to the struggle for *Newe Sogobia* has actually had little to do with the character of the land

and its relationships with various beings, and much to do with their own beliefs in the proper historical trajectory of the American nation.

Of course, such confirmation does not imply that the reliance of Exceptionalism upon spatial disorientation can be explicated entirely clearly or with eminently predictable results. The negotiation of deep culture in real life is often messy and sometimes unexpected, as exemplified in multifaceted situations such as the current freeze on the Yucca Mountain project. We must assiduously avoid falling into the trap of becoming overconfident about our ability to explain either natural or social systems, and leave room for the vagaries of agency, chance, and complexity. Yet by recognizing deep culture conflict we gain a vital advantage in understanding what is behind, and at stake in, struggles over Indian lands. This advantage is further explored through the next chapter's focus on Crandon Mine and the Sokaogon Ojibwe.

6. Case Study: Crandon Mine and the Sokaogon Ojibwe

What impressed the general public about the Crandon project was its size. “Everything about it is big: big money, big minerals, big corporation, potentially big economic benefit or big environmental problem,” observed a reporter for the *Milwaukee Journal*... The project manager in Crandon from 1977-1984 was Robert Russell, a native of North Carolina, who had worked as an exploration geologist in British Columbia, the Yukon Territory, and Alaska. The father of twelve children, the six youngest still at home, Russell built a six-bedroom house on the shores of Lake Julia outside of Rhineland, and set out to manage a team that grew to thirty-eight people. Working for Exxon never strained his ethics. “I’ve never had any conflicts with my beliefs and my work,” he said. “Because Exxon is a very good company to work for, I’ve never had to do anything I didn’t believe in because of working here.” Russell looked forward to directing the most advanced mine in the world. Far from despoiling the north woods, the mine would not damage the landscape at all. “That’s definite,” he said.<sup>1</sup>

– Michael O’Brien  
From *Exxon and the Crandon Mine Controversy* (2008)

On October 28, 2003, two American Indian communities—the Sokaogon Ojibwe<sup>2</sup> and the Forest County Potawatomi—purchased 5,000 acres of land near the city of Crandon, Wisconsin for a price of \$16.5 million. This purchase represented the culmination of nearly 30 years of conflict over a proposed mining project which would

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<sup>1</sup> Michael O’Brien, *Exxon and the Crandon Mine Controversy: The People vs. Giant Companies, A True Story of People Winning!* (Middleton: Badger, 2008), 29-30.

<sup>2</sup> Following the way the people of Mole Lake typically refer to themselves (and the way they are typically referred to in the literature), I use the term Ojibwe to identify the community’s general cultural identity though it is probably of European derivation. Another term preferred in many communities is Anishinaabe, which is of Indian derivation and is often translated as “the people” or “the original people.”

have been located on the site. Considering both the stakes and the stakeholders implicated in this conflict, the circumstances of the eventual outcome can be modestly described as unlikely.<sup>3</sup> In securing control of the Crandon Mine site, the Indian communities and their allies effectively stymied the will of three entities with recourse to vastly greater financial resources and established political clout: the transnational resource corporations Exxon and BHP Billiton, and the government of the state of Wisconsin. Further, these groups were able to mold and expand a climate of mining opposition so intense as to help garner the state consistently poor ratings in mining industry exploratory studies and corporate surveys, including the lowest rating of all regions on earth in the Fraser Institute's 2002-2003 Investment Attractiveness Index.<sup>4</sup>

The Crandon Mine Saga began in earnest with the discovery of a zinc-copper-sulfide deposit—one the ten largest in North America—by the Exxon Corporation in 1975. At the time, Exxon represented the largest resource corporation in the world.<sup>5</sup> The location of this deposit at the headwaters of the Wolf River placed it:

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<sup>3</sup> Al Gedicks notes, "Most of the media and even many mainstream state environmental groups had already written off opposition to Exxon's proposed mine near Crandon as a lost cause. By any objective measure, the tribe's chances of success against the world's largest corporation were not good. The Sokaogon band was the smallest tribe in Wisconsin, with just over 200 members and a tiny land base of approximately 1,900 acres. The tribe's annual budget was \$1,200; the value of Exxon's energy reserves alone exceeded \$1.3 trillion!" "Activist Sociology: Personal Reflections," *Sociological Imagination* 33, no. 1 (1996), accessed 26 April 2011, <http://comm-org.wisc.edu/si/gedicks.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Liv Fredrickson, *Survey of Mining Companies: 2002/2003*, ed. Kristin McCahon (Vancouver: The Fraser Institute, 2002), 9, accessed 2 March 2012, <http://www.fraserinstitute.org/research-news/research/publications/Survey-of-Mining-Companies--2002-2003>.

<sup>5</sup> Debra McNutt and Zoltan Grossman, "Crandon Mine Victory in Wisconsin Won by a Historic Alliance," International Indian Treaty Council, accessed 8 April 2011, [http://www.treatycouncil.org/new\\_page\\_524411121111.htm](http://www.treatycouncil.org/new_page_524411121111.htm).

one mile upstream of the wild rice beds of the Mole Lake [Sokaogon] Reservation, five miles downwind of the Forest County Potawatomi Reservation, and 40 miles...upstream of the Menominee Nation.<sup>6</sup>

Further, this location fell within the bounds of traditional Ojibwe lands, most of which are characterized by the US government as having been ceded during the mid- to late-nineteenth century (For a map of this location and other mine sites, see Appendices D and E). The exact mine site was claimed to have been “sold” to the US in 1842, although the Sokaogon secured usufruct rights by treaty in 1855.

During the early 1980’s, Exxon began pursuing a strategy of active project development by completing studies of potential mine impacts on the region and submitting formal permit applications to the state of Wisconsin. As part of this process the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), working in conjunction with Exxon, released a *Final Environmental Impact Statement* in 1986 detailing a range of benefits, risks, and other consequences of the proposed mine project.<sup>7</sup> In terms of ecological consequences, the findings of the WDNR indicated that the Exxon proposal would be liable to yield appreciable impacts resulting from:

the generation of sulfuric acid wastes, [the] use of toxic chemicals in ore processing (including up to twenty tons of cyanide a month), and [the reduction

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<sup>6</sup> Zoltan Grossman and Al Gedicks, “Native Resistance to Multinational Mining Corporations in Wisconsin,” *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (2001), accessed 8 April 2011, <http://www.culturalsurvival.org/ourpublications/csq/article/native-resistance-multinational-mining-corporations-wisconsin>.

<sup>7</sup> See State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Public Service Commission, *Final Environmental Impact Statement, Exxon Coal and Minerals Co. Zinc-Copper Mine, Crandon, Wisconsin* (Madison: Department of Natural Resources, 1986): 201, accessed 2 March 2012, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/EcoNatRes/EcoNatRes-id?type=header&id=EcoNatRes.FinalEIR86>.

of] groundwater tables in the area because of the constant dewatering of the proposed underground mine.<sup>8</sup>

The report further noted that the project would likely generate in excess of 44 million tons of wastes over its thirty-year lifespan,<sup>9</sup> an amount later characterized by authors Al Gedicks and Zoltan Grossman as the “equivalent of eight Great Pyramids of Egypt.”<sup>10</sup> Yet in spite such findings and the questions of risk and reward they implied, the general perspective shared by Exxon executives and many state politico-economic elites during this period was not “whether there was going to be a mine, only when.”<sup>11</sup>

Among other consequences considered in the WDNR statement were a variety of uncertain economic, social, and cultural impacts on the local level. In terms of regional economic gains, the WDNR estimated that the mine project would create 662 local jobs in the first three years and thereby generate \$12 million in “disposable annual wage and salary income.”<sup>12</sup> Although such changes were forecasted to have only a “minor impact”

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<sup>8</sup> Al Gedicks, “Resource Wars against Native Peoples,” in *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution*, ed. Robert D. Bullard (San Francisco: Sierra Club: 2005), 182.

<sup>9</sup> WDNR Public Service Commission, *Final Environmental Impact Statement*, ii.

<sup>10</sup> Al Gedicks and Zoltan Grossman, “Defending a Common Home: Native/non-Native Alliances Against Mining Corporations in Wisconsin,” Wisconsin Resources Protection Council, 26 April 2010, accessed 2 March 2012, <http://www.wrpc.net/articles/defending-a-common-home-native-non-native-alliances-against-mining-corporations-in-wisconsin>.

<sup>11</sup> Al Gedicks relates: “From Exxon’s perspective, there was never any question of whether there was going to be a mine, only when. The attitude goes to the core of the colonization process and the expendability of native peoples: ‘Simply stated, the difference between the economics of the ‘old colonialism’ with its reliance on territorial conquest and manpower, and the ‘new colonialism,’ with its reliance on technologically-oriented resource extraction and transportation to the metropolitan centers, is the expendable relationship of the subject peoples to multinational corporations,’ observe Robert Davis and Mark Zannis in their 1973 book, *The Genocide Machine in Canada.*” *The New Resource Wars: Native and Environmental Struggles against Multinational Corporations* (Boston: South End, 1993), 61.

on local retail sales,<sup>13</sup> other predicted benefits included state and regional revenue increases derived from the payment of property (\$1.89 million annually), corporate income (\$91 million total) and net proceeds (\$118 million total) taxes, as well as other “mining-impact fund” payments by Exxon.<sup>14</sup> Of course, all of these estimates were contingent upon the predicted value and lifespan of the mine vis-à-vis its calculated extractive potential and metal market price speculation. In terms of social and cultural transformations, the WDNR noted a range of potential impacts both wide and deep stemming from significant demographic and occupational shifts, infrastructure realities and needs, and ecological changes (especially in relation to tourism and recreation).

Finally, included in the WDNR report was a modest subsection entitled “Impacts to Native American Tribes,” which anticipated some of the ways in which mine implementation might affect regional Indian peoples. This report noted that local Indian communities might benefit economically in several ways, due to direct cash payouts from mine production, new employment opportunities, and augmented revenues for local business and gaming endeavors. However, perhaps in quiet recognition of historical oppression and cultural difference, it also raised the possibility of external and internal conflict being instigated by the mine. The report states:

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<sup>12</sup> WDNR Public Service Commission, *Final Environmental Impact Statement*, 174, 179.

<sup>13</sup> WDNR Public Service Commission, *Final Environmental Impact Statement*, 179.

<sup>14</sup> WDNR Public Service Commission, *Final Environmental Impact Statement*, 186-190. These predictions refer to 1982-1985 dollars, depending on the study in question.

Both the Forest County Potawatomi and the Sokaogon Chippewa [Ojibwe] tribal members retain a close affinity with the land and waters on the reservation. Their traditional cultural beliefs, religious ceremonies, and practices reflect this unity. Because of these beliefs, ceremonies and traditions, the Native American people consider themselves very rich to be a part of the natural diversity. Issues of traditional versus new values, money economy versus subsistency, taking from the land or being part of it would involve personal decisions as well as tribal concerns. Issues related to the project could become the chief divisive issue among the tribal members. The concerns would be difficult to quantify or remedy, but would be carried with the tribe even after the mine had closed.<sup>15</sup>

Interestingly, the divisive fissures envisioned by the document never arose within these communities in the substantial way they did among other Indian nations being pressured by land struggles in other contexts, as with Western Shoshone, Seminole, or Skull Valley Goshute.<sup>16</sup> On the contrary, the Sokaogon community and its Indian partners eventually came to act as a united core around which a sophisticated movement of resistance to the mine would coalesce.

#### *Deep Cultural Dissonance: Sokaogon vs. Exxon*

In contrast to some other American Indian communities who endured forced relocations and significant cultural disintegration over centuries of White encroachment and expropriation, the Sokaogon largely retained a continuity of society and culture in (albeit a miniscule portion of) its traditional lands. For example, the community maintained that it had gathered wild rice on the site of its reservation for over one

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<sup>15</sup> WDNR Public Service Commission, *Final Environmental Impact Statement*, 201.

<sup>16</sup> For descriptions of the latter two cases, see respectively Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Cambridge: South End, 1999), 24-45 and 104-108.



thousand years.<sup>17</sup> Thus, what was most immediately at stake for the Sokaogon community in the Crandon conflict was the survival of its wild rice lake. But while this place held significant politico-economic and subsistence value for the Sokaogon, the total sum of its import was hardly characterized in terms of simple positivistic measurement. Instead, the lake was recognized as the very heart of the community within traditional narratives.

Calling the act of gathering wild rice “one of the quintessential elements of being Ojibwe,” Winona LaDuke, a scholar and activist from the White Earth (Minnesota) community, explains this connection:

In the earliest teachings of Anishinaabeg history, there is a reference to wild rice, known as the food that grows on the water, the food the ancestors were told to find... Wild rice is a centerpiece of our community’s sustenance. Wild rice offers amino acids, vitamins, fiber, and other essential elements, making it one of the most nutritious grains known to exist. The wealth of rice has ensured that we have not starved over many a cold winter. It is this profound and historic relationship that is remembered in the wild rice harvest on the White Earth and other reservations—a food that is uniquely ours, a food used in our daily lives, our ceremonies, and our thanksgiving feasts.<sup>18</sup>

The rice itself is called *manoomin*, a name which recalls oral histories regarding the gift of the creator and signifies the intimate and evocative relationships between Ojibwe communities and their lands.<sup>19</sup> The holistic connection between the rice, the people, and

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<sup>17</sup> Sarah M. Mandelco, “Surviving a State’s Challenge to the EPA’s Grant of ‘Treatment as State’ Status Under the Clean Water Act: One Tribe’s Story: State of Wisconsin v. EPA and Sokaogon Chippewa Community,” *Wisconsin Environmental Law Journal* 8, no. 2 (2002): 199.

<sup>18</sup> Winona LaDuke, *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming* (Cambridge: South End, 2005), 168-169.

<sup>19</sup> See LaDuke, *Recovering the Sacred*, 168.

the land represents a basic theme that runs through many descriptions of Ojibwe cultural identity.

This theme was repeated among the Sokaogon. To this particular Ojibwe community, the wild rice lake acted as an important force of deep cultural cohesion that was inherently tied to the maintenance of lifeways, social structures, and collective identity. This significance was revealed through the words of Fred Ackley, a community leader and tribal judge, which described the specific circumstances of the founding of the Mole Lake reservation:

The government asked our chief why he wanted this reservation in this spot. Our chief walked over and gave him a handful of wild rice and he said, “This is the food of Indian people. This is why I want my reservation here on this lake. There are six or seven other lakes in this area where my people have been harvesting food for a long time.” So he wanted his reservation right here on this lake for the wild rice. Through the hard times that we’ve had to live as Indian people here in Mole Lake, we realized that money and everything else that the white people had, didn’t count. Because what the Great Spirit gave us was the food for our people—subsistence to go on another year, to have another offspring, to bury another elder. Also he taught us how to pray for that every year. We’ve been doing that every year here in Mole Lake. We still pray for everything we get. We do it our way.<sup>20</sup>

The recounting of communal memory and distinctiveness began to demonstrate the transparent and focused orientation to space cultivated through the traditional Sokaogon (and more widely, Ojibwe) deep cultural formation. It further served to expose the far more ambiguous and contradictory perspective undergirding the Crandon Mine project.

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<sup>20</sup> Qtd in Al Gedicks, “War on Subsistence: Exxon Minerals/Rio Algom vs. WATER (Watershed Alliance to End Environmental Racism),” originally published in *Life and Death Matters: Human Rights and the Environment at the End of the Millennium*, ed. Barbara Rose Johnston, (Walnut Creek: Alta Mira, 1997), 128-148, Wisconsin Resources Protection Council, revised and updated August 1999, accessed 8 April 2011, <http://www.wrpc.net/articles/war-on-subsistence-exxon-mineralsrio-algom-vs-water-watershed-alliance-to-end-environmental-racism>.

Quite literally the lifeblood of the Sokaogon, the wild rice lake was protected as matter of utter survival. The threat posed by a functioning Crandon Mine necessitated that the community either fight to prevent the project from coming to fruition, or face a long and intense process of deep cultural realignment in which the nature of its very being was likely to be fundamentally and forever altered. Due to the introduction of pollutants (such as sulfuric acid) into the regional hydrosystem and the reduction of ground water tables, the Indian community and other groups contended that the mine would seriously undermine the ecological health of the region generally and of Mole Lake in particular. And while the local human community was not being overtly targeted by the project, its overall wellbeing was feared to be in stark jeopardy as well.

Resistance to the mine was perceived by opponents as a nothing less than a fight against the two-headed fiend of ecocide and genocide. Such concern was documented in a lengthy record of statements made throughout the conflict. But while White environmentalists, sportfishers, and residents were somewhat slow to accept this realization, its import was immediately felt among the Sokaogon. Summarizing the community's reaction, member Wayne LaBine stated, "The threat of annihilation has been hanging over this community since 1975. The mental stress and mental anguish are unbearable at times."<sup>21</sup> Such testimonies indicate that even the *anticipation* of further targeted ecological destruction, when considered in light of the particular Sokaogon

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<sup>21</sup> Qtd. in Gedicks, "War on Subsistence." In similar fashion, LaBine declared elsewhere, "We can't move from here...[Non Indians] around us can move. We can't do that...This is our land, our water, our life. You can't put a price on life. We have to leave this place as good or better than we have it now for the sake of our children." Qtd. in O'Brien, *Exxon and the Crandon Mine Controversy*, 4.

experience of American colonial expansion, functioned to initiate tangible and detrimental psychospiritual trauma among the people. Further, the choice of the word “annihilation” here is quite revealing. The degree of trauma to which LaBine refers can only be fully appreciated in light of the Sokaogon approach to the problem of space. Reflecting this approach, efforts to resist the mine project were justified not only because the loss of the wild rice lake would destabilize human participation in the local community of life, but also because the lake itself and the rice it consistently bestowed were regarded as conscious and integral parts of that community.

Rather than understanding the lake simply as a resource or cultural symbol, the Sokaogon counted it as a relative in its own right deserving of health and survival and requiring of support and protection. LaDuke illustrates this perspective in terms of Ojibwe culture more widely:

According to our way of living and our way of looking at the world, most of the world is animate. This is reflected in our language, *Ojibwemowin*, in which most nouns are animate... Looking at the world and seeing that most things are alive, we have come to believe, based on this perception, that they have spirit. They have standing on their own. Therefore, when I harvest wild rice on our reservation up north, I always offer *asemah*, tobacco, because when you take something, you must always give thanks to its spirit for giving itself to you, for it has a choice whether to give itself to you or not.<sup>22</sup>

Recognition of this distinctive and radically holistic spatial perspective adds important layers of complexity to the Crandon conflict. Not only does it shed light on the cultural basis behind the strategic rationale openly acknowledged by the Indian communities, but

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<sup>22</sup> Winona LaDuke, “Voices from White Earth: Gaa-waabaagibanikaag,” in *People, Land, and Community: Collected E.F. Schumacher Society Lectures*, ed. Hildegard Hannum (New Haven: Yale University, 1997), 26.

it also exposes the cultural assumptions more quietly at work beneath the strategy of the dominant actors. For while the various consequences implicated by the mine project were treated by the Sokaogon as critical threats to communal survival, they were typically characterized by Exxon as simple resource trade-offs within a cost-benefit calculation of the worthwhile price of progress.<sup>23</sup>

First, while Exxon's prioritization of scientific and economic indicators in the pursuit of progress should not be surprising in light of its thoroughly positivist and capitalist foundations, the extent to which it dismissed other considerations remains noteworthy. In addition to clearly privileging certain uses of land, an obvious hierarchy of being was assumed and acted upon. The WDNR report minces no words in divulging Exxon's intentions in taking the project forward: "If Exxon would receive the necessary permits, Exxon's decision to proceed would depend on the *economic feasibility* (return on investment) of the mine over its expected life."<sup>24</sup> Taken by itself, this one sentence description may seem quite commonplace considering the politico-economic context. However, when it is considered that this phrase occurs within a 115 page exposition of the myriad potential ecological, economic, social, and cultural impacts of the mine, it becomes clear that Exxon's perspective could have incorporated any number of other features in addition to the profit they would generate. Instead, concerns of temporal

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<sup>23</sup> For a relevant analysis of another conflict between indigenous spatial perspectives and their more temporal Western counterparts, see Terrence M. Loomis' examination of development among the Maori in "Indigenous Populations and Sustainable Development: Building on Indigenous Approaches to Holistic, Self-Determined Development," *World Development* 28, no. 5 (2000): 893-910.

<sup>24</sup> WDNR Public Service Commission, *Final Environmental Impact Statement*, 171 (emphasis added).

progress were consistently and overwhelmingly prioritized over issues of spatial integrity.

The reception of such prioritization as normal in the private sector carried over to the public sector as well. The WDNR's decades-long willingness to move the project forward in spite of its acknowledgment of widespread impacts suggests a widespread acquiescence and complicity on the part of key governmental actors. Such interpretations are compounded in light of the intimate connections which existed among state officials and their corporate counterparts. Many of Wisconsin's legal statutes regarding issues such as groundwater protection and regulatory standards had been powerfully shaped by mining industry influence over time, while many lawmakers at various levels had emerged from prominent business communities (and vice versa). For example, it is worth noting that James Klausner, one of Governor Tommy Thompson's chief aides during the height of the Crandon conflict and Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Administration from 1986-1996, had previously served as Exxon's leading lobbyist to the state government.<sup>25</sup> On both sides of the supposed business-government divide, the Crandon project was generally understood as both rationally necessary and divinely ordained. For as Northwest Mining Association executive director Laura Skaer noted, "Unfortunately the minerals are where God put them."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See Al Gedicks, "Digging for the Facts about Sulfide Mining," Wisconsin Stewardship Network, 24 July 1996, accessed 26 April 2011, <http://www.wsn.org/DIGGING.html>; and O'Brien, *Exxon and the Crandon Mine Controversy*, especially 19-23.

<sup>26</sup> Qtd. in O'Brien, *Exxon and the Crandon Mine Controversy*, 165.

Second, despite a wealth of evidence to the contrary, Exxon persisted in promoting the Crandon project as both human and ecologically friendly and sound. In the original permit application submitted in 1986, for example, the corporation claimed that “without exception, no long-term effects on human health were identified” by its own studies, and that “there is nothing in the facilities design to suggest that the low [environmental] risk operation will be compromised.”<sup>27</sup> Yet, this same application called for a massive artificial redesign of the landscape, including the creation of a tailings pond which would have represented the “largest toxic waste dump in Wisconsin history.”<sup>28</sup> After conducting its own assessment of the project description, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conceded that leaks from such dumps would “inevitably occur.”<sup>29</sup> Claims that regional drinking water would be left relatively unaffected were likewise contradicted in 2002 by the WDNR, which “concluded that potentially polluted groundwater from the mine may travel twenty-two times faster and reach pollution levels five times higher” than the corporation had alleged.<sup>30</sup>

Finally, despite the fact that the corporation’s own studies had concluded that subsistence activities on the Mole Lake reservation might be “rendered less than

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<sup>27</sup> Exxon Corporation, *Crandon Project: Mining Permit Application*, vol. 1 (Rhinelander: Exxon Corporation, 1986), 5-52-5-53, accessed 14 April 2011, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/EcoNatRes.MinePerAp01>.

<sup>28</sup> Gedicks, “War on Subsistence.”

<sup>29</sup> Gedicks, “War on Subsistence.”

<sup>30</sup> Gedicks and Grossman, “Defending a Common Home.”

effective” due to impacts on water quality,<sup>31</sup> by 1994 the *New York Times* was reporting that the corporation had spent “millions of dollars to prove to the state and the [Indian communities] that the mine would not leak” harmful pollutants or significantly impact the regional ecosystem.<sup>32</sup> This tactic was reflective of a larger intentional strategy on the part of Exxon to sway public opinion in favor of the state’s desire to quickly grant necessary mine permits. As Gedicks notes, the corporation sought to “convince people that the mine was inevitable and that environmental opposition was unthinkable against such a ‘clean’ mine.”<sup>33</sup>

For example, shortly after the release of the *New York Times* article, a consulting firm on the Exxon payroll (Foth and Van Dyke and Associates) released a summary report which laid out this strategy in no uncertain terms. In an introductory letter to the summary addressed to “the Residents of Forest County and the State of Wisconsin,” firm president Jerome Goodrich Jr. played explicitly on the influential theme of positivism, stating:

This summary describes the nature of the mine project and conditions in the local environment as they exist today. The information in the documents is the result of an extremely thorough scientific study—probably the most thorough study ever conducted for a development project in Wisconsin. Over the past 18 months, the study has involved some 100,000 hours of work by more than 100 engineers,

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<sup>31</sup> Gedicks, “War on Subsistence.”

<sup>32</sup> Keith Schneider, “Concerned about Pollution from Proposed Mine, Wisconsin Tribe Takes on a Giant,” *The New York Times*, 26 December 1994, accessed 8 April 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/12/26/us/concerned-about-pollution-from-proposed-mine-wisconsin-tribe-takes-on-a-giant.html>.

<sup>33</sup> Al Gedicks, “Liberation Sociology and Advocacy for the Sokaogon Ojibwe,” *Organization and Environment* 17, no. 4 (2004): 456.



scientists, and other professionals. The goal of all this work is to enable us to build a mine that benefits everyone and is a source of local pride.<sup>34</sup>

The report went on to predict that the mine project would: a) reverse a statistically anticipated decrease in the regional human population over the course of its life; b) generally have few other human and ecological effects in what was described mainly as an empty expanse and “seasonal” vacation spot; and c) bring a different sort of productivity to a region with “limited” productive agricultural potential.<sup>35</sup> Yet it also seemed to hedge Exxon’s bets by suggesting that any ecological destruction which did occur would be relatively unmeaningful, since “the kinds of forest, wetland, lake and stream habitats in the area are generally common across the northern one-third of Wisconsin” in any case.<sup>36</sup>

In other words, by drawing an effective frontier line across the northern portion of the state, Exxon (and, to a lesser extent, the state government) established a dichotomy between civilization and wilderness on the one hand, and progress and stagnation on the other. Bearing striking similarities to aspects of the treatment of *Newe Sogobia*, this strategy aligned Exceptionalist politico-economic goals with spatial cognitions and behaviors which portended serious consequences to both the land and its most

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<sup>34</sup> Jerome D. Goodrich Jr., “Letter,” in *Summary, Project Description and Environmental Baseline Data for the Proposed Crandon Project, Crandon, Wisconsin*, by Foth and Van Dyke and Associates (Green Bay: Foth and Van Dyke, 1995), accessed 14 April 2011, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/EcoNatRes.Summary95>.

<sup>35</sup> Foth and Van Dyke and Associates, *Summary, Project Description and Environmental Baseline Data for the Proposed Crandon Project, Crandon, Wisconsin* (Green Bay: Foth and Van Dyke, 1995), 51-53, accessed 14 April 2011, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/EcoNatRes.Summary95>.

<sup>36</sup> Foth and Van Dyke, *Summary, Project Description and Environmental Baseline Data*, 46.

marginalized inhabitants. The size and potential profitability of the ore deposit allowed the region to be publically marketed as a sort of promised land which, through faithful management and dedicated manipulation, could be transformed to serve the ultimate interests of all involved. Yet behind the scenes there was never any doubt that certain beings would be more privileged than others in this transformation, and that some might need to be ignored altogether for what was perceived to be the greater good. Supported by deep culture, such assumptions allowed the company's financial motives to be validated—at least internally and initially—in seemingly moral terms.

Thoroughly convinced of the authority of its stance, Exxon was therefore content to legitimize its vast superiority in reach and resources and presume it would be able to persuasively dictate the discourse surrounding Crandon Mine. And at least initially, such assumptions proved correct as the corporation enlisted state elites such as Governor Thompson to advocate for its proposal as both economically and ecologically advantageous. The Sokaogon and other Indian communities, however, were not so inclined to uncritically accept Exxon's point of view. Refuting Exxon's claims with a critical eye to wider contexts, Sokaogon chairperson Arlyn Ackley stated in 1993:

Exxon claimed it would be an 'environmentally safe' mine in the [19]70's. They claimed it wouldn't harm our sacred wild rice beds or water resources. We had to spend our own money on tests to prove their project would in fact contaminate our subsistence harvest areas and lower the water level of Rice Lake. Exxon's claims of environmentally safe mining were unfounded. I think these companies are willing to lie. Their history is one of pollution, destruction, and death, Just last month, more than 70 Yanomami Indians were massacred by miners in the Amazon forest. As far as we are concerned, Exxon and Rio Algom are of the same mind set. Let it be known here and now that these companies are prepared to

plunder and destroy our people and lands for their insatiable greed. They may be more polite in North America, but they are no less deadly to Native people.<sup>37</sup>

Concurring with her fellow community elder's declaration, Frances Van Zile put it more succinctly: "these people (from the mining company) don't care about us. They don't care if we live or die. All they want is that copper and zinc."<sup>38</sup>

Such vocal opposition both explains, and is explained by, Exxon's choice to preclude dialogue by continually pushing for rapid timetables through a seasoned application of politico-economic pressure. For example, in 1981 the corporation put forth a proposal to construct a test mine—before any official permits had been granted or public hearings held. While skirting any serious consideration of ecological impacts, the emplacement of the test shaft would likely have generated "overwhelming bureaucratic momentum" in favor of the project.<sup>39</sup> Prior even to this set of dealings, the corporation attempted to secure influence over the Sokaogon community by secretly writing a check to the tribal chairperson for \$20,000 in exchange for the right to prospect, and eventually mine, on any area of the reservation. This tactic effectively bypassed involvement of the greater Sokaogon leadership and the community at large, mimicking a pattern of behavior which had been used by the US government and private companies for decades in order to gain control over Indian territories and the resources found therein. When the entire

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<sup>37</sup> Qtd in Gedicks, "War on Subsistence."

<sup>38</sup> Grossman and Gedicks, "Native Resistance."

<sup>39</sup> Gedicks, "Liberation Sociology," 457.

Sokaogon tribal council discovered the secret deal two weeks later, however, they “tore up the check” and began to work in earnest to secure their rightful control of the land.<sup>40</sup>

Further, beyond attending to the structuring of cash payouts from mine production, very little attention was paid by Exxon to the spectrum of concerns voiced by the Sokaogon and other Indian communities.<sup>41</sup> As early as 1985, questionnaires circulated by the WDNR and Exxon within the Mole Lake community plainly indicated the presence of widespread and reasonable fears related to potential ecological degradation and impacts on traditional lifeways. Community members also reported “a feeling of helplessness” over the mine project and control of their own fate.<sup>42</sup> Certainly, such feelings were compounded by the utter lack of cultural competency and contextual awareness demonstrated by the corporation, as exemplified in its identification of the Sokaogon’s wild rice beds in early prospecting surveys as a “bunch of lake weeds.”<sup>43</sup> At

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<sup>40</sup> Michael Dorgan, “Indians Claim They Own Land Bearing Exxon Ore,” *The Capital Times*, 16 July 1977, 2.

<sup>41</sup> The lack of attention paid to Indian concerns also extended into other relatively marginalized communities, such as those of poor rural Whites. This deliberate exclusion of key voices and vital questions was ironically facilitated by the very process of consensus building that was heralded by corporate and governmental elites alike as the epitome of democratic governance. O’Brien highlights this irony: “The three tribes nearest the Crandon Mine were not at the consensus table, nor were they invited. ‘I, personally, did not have much interaction with the tribes,’ said the DNR’s Linda Bochert. Why weren’t the tribes involved? Representative Mary Lou Munts was asked. Her brief response was that tribal governments ‘have the independent nation psychology. It is hard for them to be part of a group to achieve consensus’...The main question of the local citizens and environmentalists—whether mining should in fact be taking place—was totally excluded from the agenda for discussions. But by assuming that mining would take place and negotiations would cover only the question of mitigation, the conveners were either consciously or unconsciously acting in favor of the mining companies...What is so politically problematic about the ‘consensus process’ is the illusion it gives of always being an open, democratic, and fair process.” *Exxon and the Crandon Mine Controversy*, 21, 23.

<sup>42</sup> WDNR Public Service Commission, *Final Environmental Impact Statement*, 205.

the outset of the project, Exxon explicitly anticipated in a statement to the WDNR the possibility that the Sokaogon might simply “have to accommodate new pressures” and accept their proposed financial compensation as a recompense for potential losses.<sup>44</sup> Yet later statements issued by the corporation utterly disregarded the obvious depth of unease in Indian communities (and effectively blamed the victims) by absurdly claiming that the communities had yet to “[express] any interest in participating” in ongoing studies regarding the mine project.<sup>45</sup>

In light of such analysis two related questions arise. Did Exxon, as a corporate “person” under the law, deliberately seek to work with governmental elites to deceive and coerce Indian groups and other stakeholders? Or conversely, were dominant actors simply incapable of “seeing” and integrating more holistic, grounded, and historically-aware perspectives on space due to their deep cultural formation? Interestingly, the details of the case suggest that both possibilities may exist simultaneously.

### *Defying a Context of Oppression*

The seeds of the Crandon Mine resistance movement were planted soon after Exxon began to develop its mine proposal in earnest. Hiring the firm COACT Research Inc. to complete an independent study of Exxon’s proposal, the Sokaogon community

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<sup>43</sup> Grossman and Gedicks, “Native Resistance.”

<sup>44</sup> Qtd in Gedicks, “Liberation Sociology,” 454. This statement was found in the unpublished “Technical Project Plan for the Crandon Mine” submitted by Exxon to the WDNR.

<sup>45</sup> Foth and Van Dyke, *Summary, Project Description and Environmental Baseline Data*, 31.

was able to determine the existence of several important omissions and flaws. For example, the COACT study contradicted Exxon's claims that it possessed an environmentally-friendly track record, and that the Crandon Mine did not pose a serious ecological threat to Indian lands. These findings, which were later corroborated by a separate examination undertaken by the Wisconsin Indian Legal Services (WILS), provided an evidentiary backing which the Indian communities could utilize in applying legal pressure to the state to deny necessary mining permits.<sup>46</sup> They also helped to give credence to Indian efforts to gain wider support for the cause.<sup>47</sup>

In November 1986, Exxon formally withdrew its permit application for mine implementation, citing "depressed minerals prices" as the reason for withdrawal.<sup>48</sup> The corporation returned to the project in 1993, however, partnering with Canadian-based Rio Algom Mining to form the Crandon Mining Company (CMC).<sup>49</sup> The CMC's intentions were made clear in February 1994 when the company officially filed a Notice of Intent

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<sup>46</sup> Gedicks, "Liberation Sociology," 455-456.

<sup>47</sup> Al Gedicks notes "This group...helped document the hypocrisy of Exxon, which sought to project the public image of a socially and environmentally responsible corporation, by detailing Exxon's negative track record with other mining projects. This information provided the Sokaogon Chippewa with a way of gauging the reliability of Exxon's promises, based on the company's past performance record...The COACT study was designed to identify these project vulnerabilities so the Sokaogon could more effectively defend themselves against Exxon." Qtd. in O'Brien, *Exxon and the Crandon Mine Controversy*, 28.

<sup>48</sup> "Proposed Crandon Mine Information," State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 17 October 2008, accessed 8 April 2011, <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/es/science/Crandon>.

<sup>49</sup> Rio Algom was purchased by Billiton (which later became BHP Billiton) in 2000.

to collect the data necessary for a new permit application.<sup>50</sup> As Gedicks notes, however, by this time the regional climate had shifted significantly. He states:

Much had changed since Exxon first proposed the mine. The Mole Lake Ojibwe, Menominee, Potawatomi, and Mohican (Stockbridge-Munsee) nations had opened casinos, generating income that enabled them to fight more effectively against mining companies in the courts and in the arena of public opinion. The four tribes formed the Nii Win Intertribal Council...which immediately began hiring lawyers and technical experts to challenge Exxon and Rio Algom's mine permit application. The Oneida Nation, which is downstream from the mine site near Green Bay, also joined the opposition.<sup>51</sup>

Such changes would prove instrumental in the development of a resistance movement against the Crandon project. In addition to the establishment of alliances between Indian communities during this time, links between Indian and non-Indian groups were also in the process of being formed.

Such links would have been largely unthinkable throughout the previous decade, when serious clashes erupted among Indian spearfishers and White sportfishers in an era popularly known as the "Walleye Wars." This era arose in the wake of the 1983 Voigt Decision, in which a federal court upheld the rights of Ojibwe communities (as established through the treaties of 1837 and 1842) to hunt and fish both on and off their reservations without state regulation. Viewing this decision as unduly privileging Indian peoples and threatening fish populations—in spite of the realities that Indian "reserved rights" were clearly demarcated in the two historical treaties, and that Indian fishers consistently took far less of their allotted share of fish in comparison to other anglers—

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<sup>50</sup> "Proposed Crandon Mine Information."

<sup>51</sup> Gedicks, "Resource Wars," 182.

many White sportfishers responded vigorously and often violently.<sup>52</sup> Forming groups such as Protect America's Rights and Resources (PARR) and Stop Treaty Abuse (STA), White sportfishers protested Indian fishing expeditions, attempting to intimidate Indian spearfishers and at times even shooting at them.<sup>53</sup> Bumper stickers emblazoned with racist phrases such as "Save a Walleye—Spear an Indian," began to circulate, and it was not uncommon for insults such as "timber nigger," "welfare warrior," or "spearchucker" to be callously hurled at Indians (or those perceived to be Indians) by passing Whites.<sup>54</sup> Further, the efforts of these White supremacist groups were implicitly supported by state elites such as Governor Thompson, who worked to have Indian treaty rights legally abrogated. Even as Thompson traveled personally to the federal court to plead for an injunction against Indian spearfishing in 1989,<sup>55</sup> however, such rights proved too clearly demarcated by law to be easily extinguished by the judiciary.

Three other key moments on the mine resistance timeline might be briefly noted. Each of these moments represented a legal victory which significantly undercut the ability of the CMC (and its parent corporations Exxon and Rio Algom) to pursue its

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<sup>52</sup> "Spearfishing Controversy," Milwaukee Public Museum, accessed 8 April 2011, <http://www.mpm.edu/wirp/ICW-112.html>.

<sup>53</sup> "Spearfishing Controversy."

<sup>54</sup> Zoltan Grossman and Debra McNutt, "From Enemies to Allies," *ColorLines*, Spring 2001, 23, accessed 8 April 2011, <http://academic.evergreen.edu/g/grossmaz/From%20Enemies%20to%20Allies.pdf>. O'Brien concurs: "Racism was palpable. Verbal taunts included 'Save a walleye, spear a squaw;' 'Spear a pregnant squaw, save two walleyes,' 'Custer had the right idea,' 'Scalp 'em,' 'You're a conquered nation, go home to the reservation,' and 'diarrhea face.' A bar owner posted a sign, 'Help Wanted: Small Indians for mud flaps. Must be willing to travel.' Riot squads from metropolitan areas had to assure safety for Chippewa spear fisherman and their families." *Exxon and the Crandon Mine Controversy*, 74.

<sup>55</sup> "Spearfishing Controversy."



project strategy. First, in 1995 the Sokaogon were granted the authority to regulate water quality on their reservation. This authority, which was attained through the US EPA in an extension of the 1972 Clean Water Act, effectively allowed the Sokaogon community to prevent any potentially harmful discharges from entering upstream waters. By virtue of the community's location, this authority extended over the proposed mine site. Although the state of Wisconsin fought this bestowal of authority through legal appeals, the US Supreme Court eventually "upheld the right of the tribe to set water quality standards that are higher than those of the state."<sup>56</sup>

Second, on June 7, 1999 the Forest County Potawatomi and the state of Wisconsin, in conjunction with the EPA, signed an agreement approving the request of the Potawatomi to have their reservation lands redesignated to Class I air quality.<sup>57</sup> This agreement was reached after several years of opposition by the governments of the states of Wisconsin and Michigan and a consortium of regional businesses. Such redesignation meant that "almost no change from current air quality" in the reservation area would be permitted, and that all releases of particulate matter and other pollutants from new industrial growth impinging on such quality would be subject to strict regulation.<sup>58</sup> Since air modeling completed by the state of Wisconsin indicated that the proposed mine would

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<sup>56</sup> Gedicks, "Resource Wars," 183.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen L. Johnson, "Redesignation of the Forest County Potawatomi Community Reservation to a PSD Class I Area; Dispute Resolution with the State of Wisconsin," *Federal Register* 73, no. 83 (April 2008): 23111-23114., accessed 8 April 2011, <http://www.epa.gov/EPA-AIR/2008/April/Day-29/a8970.htm>.

<sup>58</sup> "EPA Issues 'Significant Deterioration' Regulations," US Environmental Protection Agency, 27 November 1974, accessed 8 April 2011, <http://www.epa.gov/history/topics/caa70/13.htm>.

violate the Potawatomi reservation's Class I standards, the Indian communities thus gained the leverage necessary to deny essential permits to the CMC.<sup>59</sup>

The third, and perhaps fatal, legal blow dealt to the Crandon Mine project occurred in April 1998 when the 1997 Wisconsin Act 171 was signed into law.<sup>60</sup> This piece of legislature effectively established a "mining moratorium" under which entities seeking to open a sulfide ore mine in the state were required to "provide examples of a mining operation in the US or Canada that have not resulted in significant environmental damage."<sup>61</sup> Specific guidelines were established in relation to the types of examples that might qualify for further examination by the state. Although the strength of these guidelines was somewhat diminished through the WDNR's subsequent refusal to establish administrative rules by which the statute's language might be interpreted,<sup>62</sup> the law nevertheless significantly impeded the agenda of mine proponents. Further, it drew attention to inconsistencies between the public claims made by Exxon and its partners and the actual record of ecological degradation they had established throughout the continent.

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<sup>59</sup> Gedicks, "Resource Wars," 183.

<sup>60</sup> See 1997 Wisconsin Act 171, Sect. 293.50, Wisconsin Statutes (22 April 1998), accessed 8 April 2011, <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/1997/data/acts/97Act171.pdf>.

<sup>61</sup> This law requires "an applicant to provide examples of a mining operation in the US or Canada that have not resulted in significant environmental pollution. The law includes specific qualifying criteria that must be satisfied in order for the example site, or sites, to be considered." "1997 Act 171: Mining Moratorium Law," State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 17 October 2008, accessed 8 April 2011, <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/es/science/crandon/review/moratorium.m.htm>.

<sup>62</sup> See Gedicks, "Resource Wars," 185; and "1997 Act 171: Mining Moratorium Law."

Due largely to the success of the Indian communities in cultivating public pressure and influencing legislative change, by the late 1990's management of the project was heavily in flux. These communities continued to weather desperate attempts by Exxon and its eventual successor, BHP Billiton, to swing momentum back toward the mine project. However, by October 2003 the Sokaogon and the Forest County Potawatomi had entered into an agreement with the latter corporation which enabled them to purchase "the land, assets, and mineral rights of the proposed Crandon Mine."<sup>63</sup> The two communities divided the financial burden among themselves, with the Ojibwe putting up \$8 million in borrowed funds, and the Potawatomi utilizing gaming revenues to cover the remainder. In 2006, BHP Billiton even agreed to donate the entire \$8 million portion paid by the Sokaogon back to the community in the form of a charitable trust upon its request—a fairly shocking development to many observers.<sup>64</sup>

### *The Complexities of Alliance-Building*

Considering the pervasive influence of the bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism, the realignment of power over time in this case can seem perplexing. However, a closer look at the strategy pursued by the Sokaogon reveals how the community was enabled to understand and negotiate dominant deep culture in such a way as to interrupt its typical patterns of operation in this particular historical context. This

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<sup>63</sup> Gedicks, "Resource Wars," 186. Also see "Proposed Crandon Mine Information."

<sup>64</sup> Robert Imrie, "Indian Tribe Gets \$8 Million Gift: Mining Company Sets up Trust for Mole Lake Chippewa with the Band's Final Payment for Proposed Mine Site," *The Capital Times*, 31 May 2006, accessed 2 March 2012, [http://host.madison.com/news/indian-tribe-gets-million-gift-mining-company-sets-up-trust/article\\_8adafe40-b82c-5cf5-91d0-3a0d15115eb3.html](http://host.madison.com/news/indian-tribe-gets-million-gift-mining-company-sets-up-trust/article_8adafe40-b82c-5cf5-91d0-3a0d15115eb3.html).

strategy involved both attempting to subvert dominant cognitive images and behavioral themes when possible, and (more often) adopting them for tactical advantage of them when necessary. Further, it entailed the building of an alliance among various groups recognizing distinct responses to the problem of space and acting from different positions in systems of privilege. The Sokaogon strategy, which successfully enabled alliance formation and collective action in the face of deep cultural forces which might have otherwise inhibited cohesion and collaboration, is deserving of special focus here. Following Tania Murray Li's presentation of an analytic of assemblage, I briefly consider six vital practices within this strategy: forging alignments, rendering technical, authorizing knowledge, managing failures and contradictions, anti-politics, and reassembling.<sup>65</sup> Such consideration helps reveal the possibilities surrounding and the complexities inherent to genuine if limited challenges to dominant patterns of thought and behavior.

*Forging Alignments:* Li describes this aspect of alliance-building as "the work of linking together the objectives of the various parties to an assemblage, both those who aspire to govern conduct and those whose conduct is to be conducted."<sup>66</sup> Key to the linking together of objectives among disparate stakeholders in the Crandon Mine case was the promulgation of a common ideology which placed the likelihood of ecological devastation at its center. For the Indian communities, the decision to unite around such an

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<sup>65</sup> Tanya Murray Li, "Practices of Assemblage and Community Forest Management," *Economy and Society* 36, no. 2 (2007): 263-265.

<sup>66</sup> Li, "Practices of Assemblage," 265.

ideology was facilitated by the existence of a similar deep cultural heritage, a shared history of common threats to survival, and a significant knowledge base about the ecological character of the region. Several nearby reservation communities had been affected by mining exploration and extraction efforts both previous to and contemporaneously with the time period in question. Consequently, these communities had been developing a keen consciousness regarding the need for effective resistance strategies against the encroachment of state and transnational actors operating from a standpoint of spatial disorientation. Organizations such as the Midwest Treaty Network arose directly out of this shared consciousness and tangibly embodied its principles. But while the forging of alignments within and among Indian communities occurred fairly quickly in spite of varied motivations and pressures, efforts to bring groups such as White sportfishers and environmentalists into the fold posed a greater degree of difficulty.

In order to persuade neighboring White communities to join the opposition alliance, Indian groups needed to first identify and articulate some common value or attitude whose saliency could overcome deeper differences and historical antagonisms. This common factor was found in the appreciation of the Wolf River watershed. For many White sportfishers, environmentalists, and Indian groups alike, the protection of this hydrosystem represented a pursuit of primary importance. Although this common appreciation would eventually provide a point of convergence by which alignments would come to be forged, the groups initially found themselves divided by starkly different approaches to the problem of space.

For example, while regional sportfishers tended to suggest that the protection of resources required active management and manipulation (which, of course, only people like them could most successfully direct), many local and national environmentalists preferred to share Exxon's designation of "wilderness" and called for the space to be preserved as "pristine."<sup>67</sup> These differences did not simply dissolve organically; on the contrary, initially some sportfishers *and* environmentalists rejected any sort of connected identity or collaborative action with Indian communities due in large part to lingering ignorance, resentment, and anger from past disputes. Despite the obvious mutual benefits that an alliance could provide, such issues still held significant psychological sway in the initial stages of the conflict, especially within local White communities. Consequently, the Indian communities initiated a series of intentional maneuvers designed to foster mutual recognition and identification among diverse groups and build meaningful (if only partial) bridges across cultural differences both shallow and deep.

Perhaps the most impactful of these actions involved the initiation of a series of state-wide "antimine speaking tours," organized through the WWEP, which sought to raise awareness of the various threats posed by the Crandon project. Without ignoring cultural diversity or historical violence, the presentations focused on the fact that since ecological degradation would impact all peoples, the formation of an opposition alliance

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<sup>67</sup> Though it tended to mystify long-standing indigenous relationships with the space, the image of pristine, untouched wilderness represented a potent ideological tool in the battle to sway public opinion and gain legal leverage against the mine project. For example, mine opponents skillfully promulgated this image in order to raise substantial doubt about Exxon's ability to preserve the quality of the regional hydrosystem, and to seek recourse in the protections of the 1972 Clean Water Act.

represented the most logical path to achieving common goals. After all, disagreements over the limitations of treaty spearfishing rights would be rendered null and void if water quality in the hydrosystem declined to the point where fish could not even survive. Further, the presentations demonstrated the skillful ability of Indian groups to lead the resistance movement in ways that would be deemed fair, acceptable, and effective by all parties involved.

Summing up the spirit of these speaking tours, Gedicks states:

Even at the height of the spearing clashes, the late Red Cliff Ojibwe activist Walter Bresette predicted a realization by non-Indian northerners that environmental and economic problems are more of a threat to their lifestyle than Indians who go out and spear fish. He said, “We have more in common with the anti-Indian people than we do with [those who favor the mine].”<sup>68</sup>

As Bresette anticipated, many local sportfishers and environmentalists did eventually come to realize the wisdom of an alliance with their Indian neighbors. The cultural privileges and politico-economic resources held by these largely White groups offered vital strength to the movement. They also allowed pressure to be placed on the state government to delay the project and demand greater accountability and transparency from Exxon and its successors. Whereas government officials had grown used to validating the neglect of Indian concerns by stereotyping them as minority issues (a stereotype rarely corrected at election polls), the diversity of the growing alliance movement demanded a different sort of attention.

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<sup>68</sup> Gedicks, “Resource Wars, 184.

In large part, it was Indian efforts to build networks and reveal commonalities that created a core attitude around which an opposition alliance could coalesce and which could secure a necessary supply of politico-economic and social capital. This core attitude, as expressed by Sokaogon activist Frances Van Zile on the steps of the state capital in 1994, reflected the ecological heart and inclusive spirit of the movement: “This isn’t an Indian issue, nor is it a white issue. It’s everybody’s issue. Everybody has to take care of that water.”<sup>69</sup> As the shared points of oppression portended by the mine project become more widely acknowledged, the contradictions and inequalities inherent to dominant patterns of spatial thought and behavior could be short-circuited and organized against.

*Rendering Technical:* Rendering technical involves:

extracting from the messiness of the social world, with all the processes that run through it, a set of relations that can be formulated as a diagram in which problem (a) plus intervention (b) will produce (c), a beneficial result.<sup>70</sup>

From the outset of the conflict, Indian leaders consistently endeavored to present a clear and carefully reasoned counter-narrative to Exxon’s master version of the Crandon Mine issue. From their perspective, it was not simply likely that Crandon mine would lead directly to serious ecological degradation, it was certain. These impacts would negatively affect all peoples who utilized the Wolf River watershed for any purpose. Thus, the only truly acceptable outcome was a total stoppage of the project. Although several different

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<sup>69</sup> Qtd in Gedicks, “War on Subsistence.”

<sup>70</sup> Li, “Practices of Assemblage,” 265.



carrots were offered to the Indian communities by representatives of Exxon, government officials, and state business elites (including gifts of cash and promises of economic opportunities), these communities were unwavering in their stance of total opposition. Reflecting this hardline stance, Fred Ackley was quoted by the New York Times as stating: "Talking with [Exxon] is participating in our own destruction...Our goal is to stop this project."<sup>71</sup> Likewise, Menominee tribal chairperson John Teller declared that his community also refused to compromise on the mine issue, stating: "The Wolf River is the lifeline of the Menominee people and central to our existence. We will let no harm come to the river."<sup>72</sup>

To use Li's language regarding the process of rendering technical, the basic diagram which emerged within the resistance alliance illustrated that the certainty of ecological devastation promised by the mine ("problem (a)") could be averted through the formation and action of a diverse and multifaceted opposition alliance which, under the leadership of Indian communities, supported political and legal efforts to undermine the project ("intervention (b)"). The Wolf River watershed and indeed the integrity of the entire region could therefore be protected vis-à-vis a variety of peoples, and uses, and perspectives ("beneficial result (c)"). This counter-narrative directly challenged Exxon's claims that the inevitability of mining necessitated the involvement of an efficient and

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<sup>71</sup> Schneider, "Concerned about Pollution."

<sup>72</sup> Qtd in Al Gedicks, "What You Should Know About the Proposed Crandon/Mole Lake Mine," Wisconsin Resources Protection Council, August 1999, accessed 8 April 2011, <http://www.wrpc.net/wyskcul.html>.

environmentally-friendly corporation (such as itself), so that maximum progress could be reaped.<sup>73</sup>

Of course, both narratives necessarily converted the complexities of the situation into a simplified and more easily digestible abstract. The most pertinent issue in the process of rendering technical thus involved the ability of each group to position itself in such a way as to make its explanation seem most plausible, most persuasively evidenced, and most attractive to a variety of stakeholders. For the Indian communities, a realistic assessment of positioning required them to consider the extent to which dominant cultural patterns and historical antagonisms could be disputed, and the extent to which they might need to be harnessed for practical gain.

Ironically, the spearfishing classes that had recently defined intercultural and interracial relations in the region provided Indian activists with more fertile ground in which to plant the seeds of the counter-narrative than might have been expected at the time. As Zoltan Grossman and Debra McNutt observe, these clashes had effectively served to “define the land and its resources as something both rural communities needed to defend in order to preserve their resource-based ways of life.”<sup>74</sup> Further, the battles

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<sup>73</sup> Packaging these claims in the emerging corporate watchword of “sustainability,” Exxon CEO Rex. W. Tillerson stated in the aftermath of the Crandon conflict, “Meeting the challenge of sustainability requires that we effectively address and engage on all these issues (environmental, economic, and social) while delivering on our primary responsibility to society—finding and providing the reliable supplies of energy needed for progress and development.” “Rising to the Sustainability Challenge: Letter to Our Stakeholders,” in *2009 Corporate Citizenship Report: Addressing the Sustainability Challenge*, by ExxonMobil (Irving: ExxonMobil, 2009), 1, accessed 2 March 2012, [http://www.exxonmobil.com/Corporate/Files/community\\_ccr\\_2009.pdf](http://www.exxonmobil.com/Corporate/Files/community_ccr_2009.pdf).

<sup>74</sup> Grossman and McNutt, “From Enemies to Allies,” 25.

over treaty rights in the courts had allowed both Indians and non-Indians to become well-versed in the established legal bases upon which grievances over space might be approached. As a result, when sportfishers and environmentalists heard the Indian perspective and the legally-based strategies of intervention it promoted, they could quickly appreciate it as a reasonable and viable path to collective action. From experience, these groups understood that Indian claims to land and water rights had strong legal precedent and might represent a significant barrier to mine development if pressed. They also held confidence in their own political-economic clout and legal expertise—developed over years of struggle against Indian rights in the region—and could see how these skills could represent a significant boon to anti-mine efforts. Rather than acting only as an impediment and point of disjuncture between the groups, the spearfishing clashes served to provide a common language and knowledge base which was activated by Indian efforts to render technical.

*Authorizing Knowledge:* This process involves “specifying the requisite body of knowledge; confirming enabling assumptions; [and] containing critiques.”<sup>75</sup> The formation of a successful opposition alliance hinged on the ability of Indian groups to present themselves, rather than Exxon, as the party which held the deepest and most accurate understanding of the space. As noted previously, a great deal of Exxon’s expenditures of time and money during the course of the conflict were spent on attempts to spread a corporate image based on a history of environmentally-friendly practices.

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<sup>75</sup> Li, “Practices of Assemblage,” 265.

Although research studies commissioned by the Sokaogon proved the falsity of such an image,<sup>76</sup> the corporation remained largely successful in propagating this image until the time of the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989. The widespread public fallout from this event over the ensuing years reduced the credibility of Exxon's claims and created a void of authority which the Indian communities were well poised to fill. Not only could these communities promote their "traditional" knowledge by citing a long-standing relationship with the territory in question, but they could also employ "scientific" knowledge by promoting the results of the COACT and WILS studies to present a credible alternative perspective.<sup>77</sup> While this perceived dichotomy between traditional and scientific knowledges exemplified dominant assumptions related to positivism and progress and played on two-sided stereotypes regarding Indian peoples,<sup>78</sup> it was nevertheless effectively channeled by the Sokaogon and Menominee in order to achieve White buy-in.

Additionally, the utilization of social, financial, and human capital functioned to shape the discursive formation in which the Crandon conflict would come to be thought about and discussed. First, in terms of social capital the Indian communities were able to spread awareness of their traditional spatial orientation via newly established interpersonal networks and regional leadership roles in order to establish themselves as the real experts on the land. Second, the availability of gaming revenues provided some

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<sup>76</sup> Gedicks, "Liberation Sociology," 456.

<sup>78</sup> Namely, as either (or both) "peaceful" and "noble" holders of ecological wisdom on the one hand, and "bloodthirsty, man-eating" destroyers of the environment on the other. See Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2001), 6.

of the financial backing necessary to support state-wide speaking engagements, legal interventions, and lobbying activities. Finally, by accessing different types of knowledges and public speaking skills, Indian activists were enabled to promulgate their alternative narrative in effective ways. Whereas previous to the Exxon Valdez incident groups such as White sportfishers could maintain an ecologically-sensitive appearance while refraining from actively supporting Indian-led anti-mine efforts, the ability to keep up such an appearance was quickly lost in the face of shifting public sentiment—at least for a time.<sup>79</sup> The existence of a compelling and timely alternative narrative, combined with active recruitment by Indian leaders, eased the transition of reluctant parties into the opposition alliance.

By the mid-1990's the Indian communities had firmly established themselves as authorities in relation to the Crandon project and had successfully disseminated an ideology which reflected multiple perspectives and goals. In various White communities, imagined representations of Indian spearfishers as ecological destroyers taking in unsustainable catch levels (images which had never been supported by the actual tallies) had largely been supplanted by Indian self-representations spread through speaking tours and face-to-face dialogue. These self-representations upset prevailing assumptions by situating Indian communities as ecological defenders whose claims were supported by (perceptions of) both traditional and scientific ways of knowing.

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<sup>79</sup> Gedicks and Grossman, "Defending a Common Home."

Surprised to find itself on the defensive, Exxon responded by diverting increasing amounts of attention and funding into public relations. This response was exemplified by its decision to install Rodney Harrill at the new CMC president in late 1996. Harrill, whose previous position had been as manager for global marketing at Exxon's Coal and Minerals department, brought experience on the front lines of various mining struggles in which the corporation had been embroiled. The new CMC president sought to convince both the regional public and state elites that the project had been "greatly mischaracterized;"<sup>80</sup> however, less than two years after his installation Exxon had sold its interests in Crandon Mine to Rio Algom. Unable to regain control of the knowledge base surrounding the project or its image in public discourse, the corporation lost the politico-economic leverage necessary to pursue its goals and had little choice but to abandon the project.

Finally, it is important to note how conceptions of gender influenced the process of authorizing knowledge surrounding the mine issue. On a surface level, it is clear that female voices claimed a much greater space within the resistance movement than among mine proponents. In fact, throughout my research I did not discover even a single instance where a woman played a significant role in the decision-making, strategizing, or public relations efforts of Exxon, BHP Billiton, or their major partners. This omission contrasts sharply with the widespread participation and leadership of women in the opposition alliance generally and the Indian communities in particular. Although the

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<sup>80</sup> Aaron D. Ward, "Crandon Defends Environmental Impact of New Mine," *American Metal Market* 105, no. 14 (1997): 6.

distinction in participation along gender lines is a complex topic, an examination of deep culture provides at least a partial explanation in this context. For example, in Ojibwe culture women have traditionally held high status and significant responsibilities as “Keepers of the Water.”<sup>81</sup> This title reflects the recognized position of women as “life-givers of the people,” a position which undercuts typical Western gender-based distinctions between female-controlled “private” (e.g. reproductive and household) spaces and male-controlled “public” (e.g. social, religious, and politico-economic) spaces.<sup>82</sup>

Part of the opposition alliance’s success also resulted from its skill in contesting the gendering of the space in question. As in *Newe Sogobia*, the Crandon Mine region was consistently feminized in the discourse of dominant actors as a resource repository to be rightfully penetrated, managed, and exploited by “mankind.” Such separation and subordination exemplified the gendered tones characteristic of larger Western Christian cultural patterns, wherein notions regarding proper associations between humans and the natural world tend to parallel notions regarding proper associations between men and women, Whites and non-Whites, able-bodied persons and persons with disabilities, etc.

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<sup>81</sup> Frances Van Zile illustrated this concept during a 1994 address: “The women are the ones who are the keepers of that water. I ask all women to stand up and support that and realize that if it wasn’t for the water none of us would be here today because when we first started out in life, we were born in that water in our mother’s womb. And I’ll bet you everybody here turned on that water today to do something with it. And that’s what they’re going to pollute. That’s what they’re going to destroy. Qtd in Gedicks, “War on Subsistence.”

<sup>82</sup> See generally Deborah McGregor, “Traditional Ecological Knowledge: An Anishnabe-Kwe Perspective,” *Atlantis* 29, no. 2 (2005): 103-109; and Penny Gonzalez, “Ojibwa Women and Marriage from Traditional to Modern Society,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 8, no. 1 (1992): 31-34.

But while the inequitable consequences of the feminization of *Newe Sogobia* fell (and continue to fall) primarily on the Western Shoshone—who, like other indigenous peoples throughout the globe continue to be consigned in the popular imagination to the role of a vanishing race anyway—the context in northern Wisconsin was somewhat different. In this space, the Sokaogon and other Indian communities were able to discredit aspects of Exxon’s androcentric approach by tapping into existing systems of privilege and exposing how the mine would radically reshape the spatial relations preferred by many different groups, including local White men. For relatively privileged folks, the perception that they might lose control over their destinies in this place and become controlled by an outside force was an unfamiliar and unacceptable proposition.

The predictable pull initially exercised by Exxon’s narrative was diminished as the Sokaogon presented an alternative which acknowledged and sought to protect the various relationships held with, and sustained by, this specific land. This alternative instigated a broadening and inclusive effect on the overall discourse regarding the mine. It increased the scope of socially acceptable reasons for which the space could be valued and used, and invited a wider and more diverse group of constituents to feel directly and inescapably implicated in its well-being. And importantly, as the body of authorized knowledge about the mine issue was modified, so too were the positions of the various actors within the fields of power in which the conflict was embedded.

*Managing Failures and Contradictions:* According to Li, the ability to “[present] failure as the outcome of rectifiable deficiencies; [smooth] out contradictions so that they



seem superficial rather than fundamental; [and devise] compromises”<sup>83</sup> represents a vital aspect of successful alliance-building. In addition to gaining control over the body of knowledge surrounding Crandon Mine, the Indian communities faced a major challenge in the need to reframe the mine’s potential financial profitability. Although it was argued that the project would actually have negative politico-economic impacts on the region by reducing recreational tourism, there was little doubt that it would simultaneously create jobs and encourage a temporary boom of in-migration. Such possibilities were of little concern to some relatively privileged, delocalized, and ideologically homogenous stakeholders such as national environmental groups. However, for many local residents in a relatively impoverished region of the state, promises of new fiscal opportunities proved difficult to simply discount. In some cases the weight of poverty even trumped a desire to prevent ecological degradation, and precluded support of the mine opposition movement. This sentiment was reflected in comments by the mayor of Crandon, Vern Kincaid, who declared in 1994, “If the mine is done in a way that makes it environmentally safe, then I’d say the majority of people here want it. It will be a good thing for our young people, who can stay around here to get a job instead of having to leave.”<sup>84</sup> While the mayor’s statement did not reflect the sentiments of all peoples in the region, it did expose the way in which politico-economic considerations represented a major contradiction which required the resistance movement’s attention.

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<sup>83</sup> Li, “Practices of Assemblage,” 265.

<sup>84</sup> Schneider, “Concerned about Pollution.”

Recognizing this requirement, the Indian communities took it upon themselves to develop creative alternative politico-economic strategies which did not involve massive resource extraction. For example, in 1996 the Sokaogon entered into talks with the Town of Nashville to discover how cooperative action might promote job creation.<sup>85</sup> Since part of the mine site and the entire reservation lay within the town's official boundaries, these talks represented an important step toward mutual action. Around the same time period the Sokaogon community was awarded a \$2.5 million federal grant for local development. This new source of financial capital, when combined with the already-existing networks of collaboration (i.e. social capital) nurtured by the community, facilitated the creation of the Northwood Nijji Enterprise Community. Organized by the Sokaogon and their Indian partners, the organization partnered with several regional townships (including Nashville), local businesses, and federal and state agencies.<sup>86</sup> As Gedicks and Grossman explain, these partnerships provided a "clear alternative to the unstable 'boom and bust' cycle" that mining would entail, enabled the creation of sustainable growth in employment, and promised nearly \$10 million in increased revenue to the region over the subsequent ten years. Further, they supplemented the opportunities provided by Indian gaming endeavors and "made the tribes the largest employers in Forest County."<sup>87</sup> While playing into certain dominant behavioral themes, such tactics

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<sup>85</sup> Grossman and Gedicks, "Native Resistance."

<sup>86</sup> The organization's website can be found at <http://www.nijji.org>.

<sup>87</sup> Grossman and Gedicks, "Native Resistance."

nevertheless embodied real and viable alternatives to mining and prevented the ecological aspect of the Crandon conflict from becoming overshadowed.

In order to further manage failures and contradictions, the opposition alliance also dealt with internal differences of background and opinion. As Gedicks explains, during the various regional spearfishing and mining clashes that occurred from mid-1970's to the late 1990's, one of the "most pejorative [terms] used... was the label of *outsider*."<sup>88</sup> Employed by a variety of groups to devalue the claims of their antagonists, this term implied both a lack of relevant knowledge and standing to weigh in on controversial local issues. Purposefully downplaying commonalities, stakeholders labeled others as outsiders in order to implicitly identify themselves as insiders, thereby distinguishing the authority of their spatial claims. In the course of the Crandon conflict, Exxon sought to deliberately manipulate this regional tendency in order to strengthen its own position. Drawing on a tactic it had successfully utilized elsewhere, the corporation attempted to create rifts in the opposition alliance along three main fault lines: race (Indian vs. non-Indian); class (rich vs. poor); and geography (urban vs. rural).<sup>89</sup> Specifically, Exxon's narrative portrayed opposition to the mine as an outsider issue being pushed by troublemaking Indian groups overflowing with casino money and a few urban elites utterly detached from local realities.

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<sup>88</sup> Gedicks, "Liberation Sociology," 458.

<sup>89</sup> Gedicks and Grossman, "Defending a Common Home."

The mitigation of difference and the establishment of an alternative narrative therefore required a reconfiguration of identity, at least at the surface level. The way in which this reconfiguration was pursued may be understood as an example of anti-politics.

*Anti-Politics:* Anti-politics involves:

reposing political questions as matters of technique; closing down debate about how and what to govern and the distributive effects of particular arrangements by reference to expertise; [and] encouraging citizens to engage in debate while limiting the agenda.<sup>90</sup>

Part of the strategy pursued by Indian communities in order to encourage governmentality in the opposition alliance was to rarely directly challenge deep cultural differences within the movement. After all, the range and variety of difference among movement participants was self-evident, and the existence of long-standing historical antagonisms fueled by such difference precluded any pretensions to homogeneity. Instead of attempting to conceal distinctions in deep culture, Indian activists sought to encourage reconfigurations in the ideological meanings which overlaid these identities so as to mobilize diversity to benefit, rather than impede, the development of unity.

The encouragement of reconfigured meanings was most impactful in the relations among Indian communities and those White groups which had previously adopted starkly racist “anti-Indian” stances to treaty conflicts. By directly engaging persons who had so fiercely opposed them in the past through speaking engagements and politico-economic partnerships, Indian representatives drew upon the specter of shared threats while simultaneously encouraging White persons to rethink patterns of privilege. In many

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<sup>90</sup> Li, “Practices of Assemblage,” 265.

cases, the White communities being engaged had “never heard a Native American speak publically” before.<sup>91</sup> Such direct engagement and mutual need encouraged White folks to consider their Indian neighbors as beings with full humanity, often for the first time. Consequently, the meaning of being “Indian” or “White” in the space in question began to shift in subtle yet significant ways. The tactic of avoiding direct challenges to deep cultural difference and historical antagonisms motivated White groups to move beyond the typical polarized identity models in which they understood themselves as either paternalistic benefactors or righteous rivals to Indian communities—at least temporarily. It also enhanced the influence of spatial considerations in determining what sorts of authority and knowledge would be could be trusted to frame the conflict.

Examining shifts in identity and meaning, George Lipsitz states:

The WWEP and the [Midwest Treaty Network] encouraged whites to imagine and enact anti-racist white identities that would not unwittingly reify and strengthen the forms of white privilege they [sought] to oppose. This struggle entailed the creation of new subject positions and social roles for whites but not necessarily as whites. Instead, whites were invited to become witnesses to white supremacist violence and nonviolent interveners against it, advocates for local self-determination and opponents of corporate greed and proponents of ecologically sound and sustainable economic development. Indigenous leader Walter Bresette encouraged white participants...to see themselves in struggle for their own sakes, not just to help Indians. Native Americans and their allies anticipated and attempted to preclude benevolent condescension, sympathy, or pity for [Indian] peoples from whites by asking them instead to inhabit identities in which struggling for social justice is a worthy goal for whites as a matter of self-interest and self-respect rather than an act of charity.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Gedicks, “Resource Wars,” 184.

<sup>92</sup> George Lipsitz, “Walleye Warriors and White Identities: Native Americans’ Treaty Rights, Composite Identities, and Social Movements,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31, no. 1 (2008): 109-110.

Engaging the relational and spatial aspects of forming identity and negotiating culture, the Sokaogon and their Indian partners challenged the stereotypical representations prevalent in local White communities. This challenge motivated a provisional emergence of new surface conceptions and meanings of Whiteness. Indian peoples were reconfigured as subjects in a common struggle for land, while the subjectivity of Whites was envisioned in new ways that did not necessarily require the utter domination of space or the related contrapositioning of a subhuman Other.

Directly confronting Exxon's three-layered conquer and divide strategy, the Indian communities presented the opposition alliance as a legitimately "rural-based multiracial, middle-class and working-class environmental movement, made up of many older people and youth."<sup>93</sup> It was also enhanced by other anti-political measures designed to quietly subvert governmental and corporate policies as much as possible from within rather than directly confronting them from without. First and foremost among these measures was the engagement of the prevailing rule of law. The achievement of protections under the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts legitimated Indian claims to ecological knowledge and authority, supported their cultural goals, validated the alternative narrative, and emboldened the opposition alliance. The same legal system that had codified spatial disorientation and anti-Indian prejudice was used by the Sokaogon and Potawatomi to strengthen their position. Further, the development of shared identity links and networks allowed Indian communities to undermine Exxon internally through

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<sup>93</sup> Gedicks and Grossman, "Defending a Common Home."

its own shareholder resolution mechanisms. As moral and financial suasion was applied to local stockholding groups (including several religious congregations), the corporation was forced to answer difficult questions related to justice and accountability.<sup>94</sup>

All these factors allowed for a reshaping of contextual power dynamics whereby Exxon, rather than its opponents, came to widely perceived as the “true” outsider in the conflict. In time, the shifts in meaning and identity were manifested tangibly in Exxon’s decision to abandon the project and the successful lobbying campaign related to the “mining moratorium” legislation.

*Reassembling:* Finally, reassembling is described as “grafting on new elements and reworking old ones; deploying existing discourses to new ends; [and] transposing the meanings of key terms.”<sup>95</sup> One of the key discourses deployed to new ends in this case revolved around notions of Exceptionalism. With spatial disorientation redirected in significant if indirect ways, a key element behind the legitimation and normalization of

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<sup>94</sup> Gedicks and Grossman explain: “The Mole Lake [Sokaogon Ojibwe] also developed ties with various church groups that held stock in several mining companies and who were willing to raise issues of social and corporate responsibility through shareholder resolutions. Shortly after Exxon announced its intention to seek mining permits at Crandon/Mole Lake, the Sinsinawa Dominican Sisters of Wisconsin, along with six other religious congregations, filed a shareholder resolution on behalf of the Mole Lake [community] and the other Native communities affected by Exxon’s proposed mining operations. The resolution also called on Exxon to disclose ‘the nature and reason(s) for any public opposition to our Company’s mining operations wherever they may occur.’ . . . While the resolution was defeated, the [Sokaogon] won enough votes to reintroduce it at the 1995 shareholders’ meeting and remain a thorn in Exxon’s side.” “Defending a Common Home.” Thus, while Exxon faced growing resistance from both the opposition movement and the state government, which was increasingly coming to see the project as politically non-viable, it also had to respond to the internal discord of its partial owners. When these pressures eventually forced Exxon to abandon the project, the opposition alliance immediately began applying the same tactics toward its new owners.

<sup>95</sup> Li, “Practices of Assemblage,” 265.

Exceptionalist discourse was diminished. In turn, prevailing processes of repression and systems of privilege also experienced points of disruption.

One such point of disruption occurred in September 1998, when the Town of Nashville board decided to renege on a mining agreement it had signed with Exxon two years earlier. Originally, this agreement had come into being after the corporation persuaded the town board to hold a series of private discussions in violation of local open meeting laws. Although a majority of township residents opposed the agreement, its clandestine acceptance by the board essentially paved the way for Exxon to secure necessary permits from the state.<sup>96</sup> Members of the opposition alliance took advantage of the ensuing public discontent, referencing the process of secret meetings and the prevalence of strong-arm maneuvering in order to raise public consciousness regarding the corporation's oppressive tactics and contradictory claims. Further, alliance members sought to strengthen bonds of identification and collaboration by exposing how Indian communities had faced similar situations for centuries, and by linking the Crandon situation to larger dynamics of colonialism and globalization. At a gathering of Nashville township residents during the height of these consciousness-raising efforts, Wisconsin Resources Protection Council spokesperson George Rock compared the town's situation to that of a "Third World country" and suggested that the largely impoverished White community would be treated no differently than neighboring Indian communities as long

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<sup>96</sup> Grossman and Gedicks, "Native Resistance."



as it remained “in the way” of the progress sought by Exxon and state governmental elites.<sup>97</sup>

This interpretation of events strongly resonated with town residents, and paved the way for structural changes to occur in local politico-economic circles. One of the most significant of these changes involved the formation of a multilevel partnership between the Town of Nashville and the nearby Sokaogon reservation community. One Sokaogon community member, Robert Van Zile, was even selected to the Town of Nashville board in its April 1997 election cycle, the first time an Indian person had ever successfully garnered a position of official leadership in the township.<sup>98</sup> The elections offered a stark demonstration of the townspeople’s rejection of Exxon’s narrative and its nefarious ties to historical patterns of injustice, as four of the five incumbent officers were ousted. With the makeup of the town board changed and strong public opposition being voiced, a decision was made to dissolve the Exxon agreement.

When the corporation naturally sued for breach of contract, the township countersued stating that the original agreement had “resulted from a conspiracy by the mining company and the town’s former attorneys to defraud the town of its zoning authority over the proposed mining operations.”<sup>99</sup> By playing politico-economic hardball

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<sup>97</sup> Qtd. in Zoltan Charles Grossman, “Unlikely Alliances: Treaty Conflicts and Environmental Cooperation between Native American and Rural White Communities” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2002), 399.

<sup>98</sup> Gedicks, “Liberation Sociology,” 466.

<sup>99</sup> Qtd in Gedicks, “Liberation Sociology,” 466.

and unilaterally withdrawing from the agreement, the township intentionally mimicked the approach which Exxon had taken toward them and which similar dominant actors had taken toward Indian nations for centuries. This tactic and the legal battle that followed drew attention to the hollowness of the corporation's claims to authority and legitimacy. Although a Wisconsin state appeals court upheld the original mining agreement in 2002, by that time the momentum of the conflict had swung decisively against realization of the mine project.

Another significant way in which reassembling occurred involved the use of new information technologies. Although technologies such as the Internet did not exist in any substantial form during the initial stages of resistance, members of the opposition alliance were quick to employ these emerging tools a strategic priority. The creation of websites dedicated to the Crandon Mine issue, along with the use of email to facilitate flows of communication regarding the resistance movement, served several purposes. First, such usage allowed the opposition alliance to disseminate their alternative narrative, circumvent the dominant system of corporate media, and attract new supporters. Second, it simultaneously enabled the efficient coordination of resistance efforts locally, and the effective development of links with other antimining, indigenous rights, and ecological protection movements across the globe. Finally, these technologies provided alliance members with access to a different type of shared space, one which required relatively modest financial means to access and which remained rather free from corporate and governmental censorship and control. Because most dominant actors had yet to fully appreciate the impact of the emerging technologies, access to this virtual space offered

the opposition movement a relatively unencumbered agency to confront dominant rhetoric and engage larger networks.

This agency was encapsulated in many statements from the period, including the following by the creator of EarthWINS Daily, one of a number of email newsletters which emerged in the mid-1990's. Organized around a theme of resisting ecological destruction and developing more holistic relationships with the land, newsletters like EarthWINS had far-reaching influence:

I sent [the newsletter] out daily all around the world for about three years because I could tell people about the Crandon issue. It helped form alliances with people in other countries, and politicians paid attention to emails coming from other states and countries, especially ones that said, "Since you are supporting the Crandon Mine, we are not going to spend our tourist dollars in your state."<sup>100</sup>

Although the use of information technologies represented only one aspect of the opposition alliance's overall strategy—and a particularly historically contingent one at that—its significance should not be underestimated.<sup>101</sup> In contrast to the stodgy and entrenched character of the Exxon corporate bureaucracy, the resistance movement was able to remain remarkably nimble and dynamic despite its growing size. This dexterity can be largely attributed to its expertise in using the new technologies to coordinate tactics and manage relationships. For example, even before the transfer between Exxon

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<sup>100</sup> Qtd in Jeffrey W. Riemer, "Grass-Roots Power Through Internet Technology: The Case of Crandon Mine," *Society and Natural Resources* 16, no. 10 (2003): 857.

<sup>101</sup> Exxon's experience with the public relations disasters of the Exxon Valdez spill and the failure of Crandon Mine reverberated across the industry, prompting widespread reevaluations of marketing through information technologies. One of the new marketing tactics to emerge has been "greenwashing," defined by Gil Friend as "the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service—even with the best of intentions." *The Truth about Green Business* (Upper Saddle River: Natural Logic, 2009), 78.

and BHP Billiton was finalized, the latter company had already become the target of a large-scale and synchronized effort to nonviolently disrupt the corporate hand-off of control over the mine site.

As comments made by Billiton corporate spokesperson Marc Gonsalves to the *Wausau Daily Herald* in 2000 indicate, the technological sophistication evidenced by the opposition alliance was eventually noticed: “We don’t like to be where we’re not wanted...A lot of people are talking about [the mine issue], and are kind enough to send an unending stream of e-mail. Obviously, we’ll look at the issue very carefully.”<sup>102</sup> Likewise, an anonymous mining official interviewed by sociologist Jeffrey W. Reimer noted the way in which control of the Internet had facilitated the resistance movement’s intricate social networking. Lamenting the corporate inability to control the flow of information regarding the mine project, the official stated:

If you were to get on the Internet and type “Crandon Mine,” you do not get our web site. You get all the other ones. If you go into any one of the groups, they are all linked. They are very good at using the Internet as a tool. And if I’m a person who just wants information, I get all of theirs first. Whatever the key phrases they use they are very good at it.<sup>103</sup>

As such comments indicate, information technologies represented one means by which the Indian communities and their allies were able to bypass the systems of privilege which shaped how, and by whom, the space of Crandon Mine could be conceptualized and related to.

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<sup>102</sup> Qtd. in Nikki Kallio, “New Mine Owners Face Opposition,” *Wausau Daily Herald*, 18 October 2000.

<sup>103</sup> Qtd in Reimer, “Grass-Roots Power,” 858.

The ability of the resistance movement to communicate through information technologies proved so considerable that by the final stages of the conflict, the initial indifference of politico-economic elites toward anti-mine sentiment had been replaced by a paradoxical combination of admiration, fear, and loathing. Members of the opposition alliance were characterized as “barbarians at the gates of cyberspace” whose efforts represented “an example of what is becoming a very real threat to the global mining industry.”<sup>104</sup>

*Conclusion: The Master’s Tools*

Although occurring on a much smaller scale, the Crandon Mine conflict stands apart from the case of *Newe Sogobia* due to its significantly different progression and outcome. The transfer of control over the mine site from the mighty Exxon corporation to the relatively marginalized Sokaogon community would seem patently absurd were it not a historical reality. Yet, as with all such realities, how the conflict’s story is remembered and framed holds vital importance. The eventual transfer of control did not simply “happen”; rather, it was brought about through a combination of the agency and strategy of the Indian communities and their allies on the one hand, and a confluence of

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<sup>104</sup> See respectively Bob Webster, “Barbarians at the Gates of Cyberspace,” *Mining Voice* 4, no. 1 (1998): 38-43; and Tracey Khanna, editorial comment, *Mining Environmental Management* 8, no. 3 (2000): 19. The comments of these authors reflected wider sentiments regarding opponents of development projects in Crandon and elsewhere—namely, that people who reject dominant patterns of spatial cognition and behavior should be considered as dangerously anti-civilization, anti-progress, and anti-American.

contextual details which, at least to some extent, set the terms and parameters of possibility on the other.<sup>105</sup>

We do well to give these contextual details proper consideration, for they offer helpful perspective on the case's atypical result. First, the presence of legal structures available for access, such as the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts and the body of (albeit significantly diluted) Indian treaty rights, represented a major factor in the creation of a successful opposition alliance. Not only did legal claims help build the credibility of the alternative narrative and secure the support of new members, but in the end these claims became actualized in the form of structural impediments to mine construction. Second, gaming revenues provided the Indian communities with the financial means to assist their efforts to secure control of the knowledge base and nurture a resistance movement. These revenues allowed for the funding of independent scientific study and long-term court battles, though they paled in comparison to the resources available to Exxon and the state government. While Indian gaming remains surrounded by strong stereotypes and divergence of opinion and should not be regarded as "an economic panacea for many tribes," its benefits to anti-mine efforts are undeniable in this case.<sup>106</sup> Finally, the strength

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<sup>105</sup> Although I certainly acknowledge that contextual details played a significant role in determining the possibilities of the Crandon conflict, I also contend that its outcome was enabled in large part by the struggles of real people to defend their communities and homes. I therefore see this case transcending a strict structuralist interpretation of social and politico-economic change, at least on a small scale. In other words, I believe it pushes back against the axiom voiced by Wendell Phillips (and famously affirmed by Theda Skocpol) that "Revolutions are not made; they come." For a classic example of the structuralist argument, see Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (New York: Cambridge University, 1979), especially 17.

of opposition alliance's position was aided by external factors such as the Exxon Valdez oil spill and a burgeoning environmental consciousness in the US and abroad. These factors could not have been entirely anticipated or controlled by any of the stakeholders involved, even if the opposition alliance did prove more adept at adapting to them.

As the case of Crandon Mine demonstrates the functioning of deeply embedded cognitive images and behavioral themes related to space, it also confirms the non-deterministic quality of these components. Lest we are tempted to interpret this case as an indicator of how the bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism is diminishing over time, it should be noted that mining struggles over Indian lands in Wisconsin remain anything but settled. For example, in March 2011 the WDNR granted an exploratory license to the mining corporation Gogebic Taconite to begin development of an open pit iron mine near the city of Ashland and the Bad River Ojibwe community.<sup>107</sup> Although still in its initial stages at the time of this writing, the project has

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<sup>106</sup> Gedicks, "Resource Wars," 185; and Grossman and Gedicks, "Native Resistance." Also see R. David Edmunds, "Native Americans and the United States, Canada, and Mexico," in *A Companion to American Indian History*, eds. Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 404-405; and C. Richard King, *Media Images and Representations: Contemporary Native American Issues* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2006), 48.

<sup>107</sup> In November 2011, Gogebic Taconite President claimed that a "silent majority" of people in the region supported the mine—though he did not cite any actual figures or acknowledge the strong vocal opposition coming from local Indian communities and their allies. Qtd. in Andrew Broman, "'Silent Majority' Backs Penokee Mine: Gogebic Taconite President," *Ashland Current*, 15 November 2011, accessed 14 December 2011, <http://www.ashlandcurrent.com/article/11/11/15/silent-majority-backs-penokee-mine-gogebic-taconite-president>. Also see Kevin Jacobsen, "DNR Grants Gogebic Taconite Exploration License," *Northland's Newscenter*, 18 March 2011, accessed 13 May 2011, <http://www.northlandsnewscenter.com/home/DNR-Grants-Gogebic-Taconite-Exploration-License-118263434.html>; and Andrew Weiland, "Mine Plans Raise Economic Hopes and Environmental Fears: GOP Bill Could Aid Iron Ore Proposal," *BizTimes*, 13 May 2011, accessed 13 May 2011, <http://www.biztimes.com/news/2011/5/13/mine-plans-raise-economic-hopes-and-environmental-fears>.

been consistently promoted by Gogebic Taconite and local governmental elites with nearly the same rationale adopted at Crandon.<sup>108</sup> Likewise, many members of the Bad River community have begun to speak out and organize in opposition to what they see as the oppressive nature of this manifestation of spatial disorientation.<sup>109</sup> In spite of the emplacement of mining moratorium legislation and regional shifts in meaning and identity just a few years earlier, the gravity of deep culture continues to considerably distort both memory and conduct, especially in a time of economic crisis.

In one sense, the strategy of the Sokaogon in the Crandon case exhibited a keen ability to take up what Audre Lorde refers to as the “master’s tools.”<sup>110</sup> This ability culminated in its own exemplification as the status of the mine area as property to be

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<sup>108</sup> For example, see Northstar Economics, *The Economic Impact of the Gogebic Taconite Mine*, 5 April 2011, accessed 28 April 2011, <http://www.gogebictaconite.com/News/GTAC%20Impact%20FINAL.pdf>; and “Northstar Economics: Proposed Gogebic Taconite Mine Will Create Thousands of Jobs and Generate Billions in Economic Benefits and Tax Revenues,” *WisBusiness*, 12 April 2011, accessed 28 April 2011, <http://wisbusiness.com/index.html?Article=233174>.

<sup>109</sup> During his 2011 “State of the Tribes Address,” Bad River chairman Mike Wiggins Jr. discussed the Gogebic Taconite project: “I’ve listened to talk of economics, jobs, infrastructure, and practicality as it relates to mining in northern Wisconsin and I’ve heard many give a ringing endorsement of such endeavors at any price—monetary or environmental. What has been remarkably absent is public discourse on the environment consequences and ultimately the risks that we already know to be associated with open pit mining...Perhaps it’s like Sigurd Olsen described forty-eight years ago when he encountered these practical men: they seemed to be so matter-of-fact about what they were doing, there seemed to be no question but that it was right. The tribes are compelled through a unified value system based in culture, and our worldview as it pertains to the environment, to see beyond the ringing endorsements and ultimately well beyond industrialization—especially industrialization with unquantified and undetermined environmental risks. The tribes recognize that threats to surface water, groundwater, air quality, and ultimately our Anishisinaabe way of life sound a call to action, a call to protect and preserve what we have for future generations. I’d like to add here that when I say future generations, I also mean the progeny of all the people from Wisconsin—tribal and non-tribal.” “WI State of the Tribes Address” (address given in Madison, WI, 12 April 2011), *News from Indian Country*, accessed 28 April 2011, [http://indiancountrynews.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=11446&Itemid=131](http://indiancountrynews.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=11446&Itemid=131).

<sup>110</sup> See Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (Berkeley: Crossing, 2007), 110-113.



owned was not directly challenged, but rather tactfully embraced as a strategy by which to secure its control. Though the “master’s house” was certainly not “dismantled” through this strategy, it did come to be effectively inhabited by a new occupant, so to speak. The formation and functioning of the opposition alliance in this context present intriguing possibilities for a future transformation of the bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism. Yet they also point to the necessity of recognizing entrenched systems of privilege and the cultural patterns that support them. These possibilities and necessities are further explored in the next chapter, which adds a third dimension to the insights offered by the struggles over *Newe Sogobia* and Crandon mine.

7. Case Study: San Onofre and the Acjachemen

Don't kid yourself, Winning is everything. Word came Thursday Dec. 18, 2008, from our Federal Government in Washington DC, Trestles is Saved. Saved for Good. The greedy profiteers who would pave away the soul of everything good, lost. No doubt, they'll gasp and stew and grasp at straws to pave their useless toll road to nowhere somewhere, but not through San Onofre State Beach Park they won't. To the 10's of 1000's of Trestles lovers and San Onofre lovers, and lovers of State Parks, lovers of wild places anywhere on this blue-green planet – YOU, who went to the wall for Trestles: Uppers, Lower, Cottons, Church, Sano down to Trails, the whole ball of sandy, rocky wax: San Mateo Creek, San Mateo Campground, San Mateo Watershed, Cristianitos Creek, Panhe Native American ancestral land, all together the last intact naturally perfect wet & wild coastal habitat left here. Yes the last. Is saved. Because you stood up for Good, and never sat down until we won. And we won. There was no middle ground. Winning was everything. It will be a merry Christmas at Trestles because of you. As for Trestles, and the rest of Sano's wet & wild Yosemite of Surfing, it will be what it's always been; naturally perfect. And it will stay that way. Thanks to you standing up for Good. So the next time you walk the trails down to Trestles, or park at Olman's—no matter where you are there, take a long look around. You're part of it. And it's a big part of you, forever. Good work.<sup>1</sup>

– Unknown

From the front page of the website [www.SaveTrestles.com](http://www.SaveTrestles.com) (2008)

As Winona LaDuke succinctly relates, “California was and continues to be one of the most diverse regions on the continent, containing some of the most amazing differences in Native America.”<sup>2</sup> This diversity manifested geographically, biologically,

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<sup>1</sup> “Save Trestles: Stop the Toll Road,” Save Trestles, accessed 11 May 2011, <http://www.savetrestles.com>.

and sociologically for centuries, as the region's wide coasts and lush valleys enabled a vast range of beings to pursue unique yet interrelated lifeways. Among the younger beings to emerge in this space, human beings represented no exception to this tendency.<sup>3</sup> Humans consistently organized themselves along the Pacific coast through a stunning variety of linguistic, cultural, social, and politico-economic patterns—both prior and subsequent to European invasion. However, with invasion came considerable reconfigurations to such patterns and, as LaDuke conveys, a widespread remaking of the land and its relations. The recent memory of this space tells a “story of imperialism and anthropology,” a story in which the “crush of industrialization and greed” instigated

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<sup>2</sup> LaDuke continues: “Of the six great linguistic ‘super-families’ of indigenous North America, five are spoken in California, and those five language families were expressed through 113 dialects. Within these there is still more complexity. In some communities, like the Yana, there are both male and female dialects...The Spaniards remade most of coastal California, enslaving indigenous communities to work of the Lord in 32 missions created for the perpetuation of this work. Father Junipero Serra accomplished a great deal with a whip and a sword, and when he was proposed in the late 1990’s for canonization, the indigenous community raised a great outcry that *slaveholders should not be saints*. By 1848, through the ministering of Serra and his compatriots in the Church, the so-called Mission Indians had been decimated by the diseases and cruelty of the Spaniards.” *Recovering the Sacred: The Power of Naming and Claiming* (Cambridge: South End, 2005), 68 (emphasis original).

<sup>3</sup> Within many indigenous cultural traditions, human beings are understood as among the youngest relatives within the continuous web of life sustained in a particular place. Again, LaDuke sheds lights on this particular type of spatial orientation and philosophical stance: “Native American teachings describe the relations all around—animals, fish, trees, and rocks—as our brothers, sisters, uncles, and grandpas. Our relations to each other, our prayers whispered across generations to our relatives, are what bind our cultures together. The protection, teachings, and gifts of our relatives have for generations preserved our families. These relations are honored in ceremony, song, story, and life that keep relations close—to buffalo, sturgeon, salmon, turtles, bears, wolves, and panthers. These are our older relatives—the ones who came before and taught us how to live. Their obliteration by dams, guns, and bounties is an immense loss to Native families and cultures. Their absence may mean that a people sing to a barren river, a caged bear, or buffalo far away. It is the struggle to preserve that which remains and the struggle to recover that characterizes much of Native environmentalism. It is these relationships that industrialism seeks to disrupt. Native communities will resist with great determination.” *All our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Cambridge: South End, 1999), 2. Also see Vine Deloria Jr., *Spirit & Reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr., Reader*, ed. Barbara Deloria, Kristen Foehner, and Sam Scinta (Golden: Fulcrum, 1999), especially 40-60.

gruesome trade-offs in the constitution and variety of life.<sup>4</sup> Although not unlike those told by many other places around the continent and globe, this story can be described as particularly intense and illuminating.

No where are these features made more apparent than in the southern part of what is today known as the “Golden State.” This region saw the first permanent site of European colonization on the West Coast, and now boasts a human population greater than the entire continent of Australia.<sup>5</sup> The vast transformations of the intervening years speak to the way in which the American approach to the problem of space influenced simultaneous environmental destruction and politico-economic injustice. Yet even as this land was alternately celebrated and decried as an acme of Western civilization, it remained a heated site of cultural contestation and negotiation. The case study presented in this chapter demonstrates the persistent influence of guiding cognitive images and behavioral themes even as it illustrates the important diversity and complexity which has characterized the life of this space.

For example, the conflict around which this case revolved—the proposed extension of the 241 Toll Road south through San Onofre State Beach to connect with Interstate 5—brought together an impressive range of stakeholders and interested parties. Repeating a

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<sup>4</sup> LaDuke, *Recovering the Sacred*, 68.

<sup>5</sup> Such statistics depend, of course, on how the boundaries of the region are defined. I consider “Southern California” to incorporate ten counties (listed in order of population size): Los Angeles, San Diego, Orange, Riverside, San Bernadino, Kern, Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Imperial. Under this definition, the population of the region was estimated by the US Census Bureau to stand in 2009 at 22,522,995. By contrast, the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated a total population for the country in September 2010 to be 22,407,700.

familiar pattern, those in favor of the proposal included a consortium of business and corporate entities, many state and local government officials, and the organization in charge of constructing and managing regional toll roads, the Transportation Corridor Agencies (TCA). Citing the importance of “creating an alternate route to relieve traffic congestion and improve mobility,” these groups framed the issue as a “ticking time bomb” which “[needed] to be addressed or it could grow to gridlock properties and damage the economies of the area.”<sup>6</sup> In opposition to the proposal emerged a sundry assemblage of environmentalists, surfers, a few liberal politicians, and of particular interest to this exploration, members of the local Acjachemen Indian community. Among these opponents the toll road extension was perceived to endanger the space’s unique ecological, historical, and social character, and to threaten cherished activities and lifeways. Although initially unorganized, the opposition groups came to be loosely allied under the Save San Onofre Coalition (the Coalition), a diverse assemblage of “individuals and groups that [included] four former state parks commissioners, local, regional, state, and national environmental organizations, cities, counties, and elected officials statewide.”<sup>7</sup>

While a tentative rejection of the toll road proposal was eventually secured, a deep cultural investigation of the Coalition’s functioning and strategy suggests that the

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<sup>6</sup> See “241 Completion Project,” Transportation Corridor Agencies, accessed 12 May 2011, [http://www.thetollroads.com/home/241\\_completion.htm](http://www.thetollroads.com/home/241_completion.htm).

<sup>7</sup> See “Environmentalists and Park Advocates Oppose \$1.1 Billion Federal Bailout for Orange County Toll Roads,” Surfrider Foundation, 15 October 2008, accessed 2 June 2011, <http://ww2.surfrider.org/savetrestles/files/TIFIA-EL.PDF>.

bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism remained both highly functional and insidiously deceptive in spite of increased attention to ecological concerns. Such attention to ecology can often align with the interests of marginalized groups; however, this case suggests that it can also allow for a reaffirmation of existing systems of privilege and an undermining of struggles for liberation and self-determination. The case further illustrates how environmental activism can be distorted by a sense of unnatural innocence even as it seeks the preservation of spaces defined as “pristine” or “sacred.” To examine these claims, we must first make ourselves familiar with the context of history and power in which this land struggle was situated.

*Transforming Spatial Relations by Sword, Cross, Ax, and Plow*

Prior to European invasion, life in the southern California region was both expansive and complex. Although later accounts would sing a strikingly different tune, initial reports penned by many early invaders noted substantial, peaceful, and highly organized Indian populations. One such invader and no admirer of indigenous peoples, Fray Francisco Garcés, exclaimed in his diary upon reaching what is today the city of San Diego, “Oh, what a vast heathendom! Oh! What lands so suitable for missions! Oh! What a heathendom so docile!”<sup>8</sup> Far from primitive subsistence groupings, the numerous small Indian communities which inhabited this land were enmeshed in considerably larger social and politico-economic networks administered through skilled diplomacy. These

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<sup>8</sup> Fray Francisco Garcés, “Garcés’s Diary from Tubac to San Gabriel, 1774,” in *Anza’s California Expeditions: Opening a Land Route to California*, vol. 2, ed. Herbert Eugene Bolton (Berkeley: University of California, 1930), 339-340.

networks enabled trade in knowledge and goods while helping establish a regional balance of power. Further, evidence indicates that pre-contact communities observed spatial practices (including various types of horticulture, irrigation, hunting, fishing, gathering, forest cultivation, and navigation via land and water), and creative pursuits (such as rock and metal working among other forms of craftsmanship and artistry) that were in some ways more advanced and attuned than their contemporary European analogues.<sup>9</sup>

The sophistication of pre-contact Indian societies in California and elsewhere has garnered increasing recognition in recent years from White “experts”—anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, etc. This belated recognition seems more vexing than ironic, however, in light of the long record of instrumental endorsements that these sorts of figures have historically offered to the contrary. Dominant cultural assumptions regarding the primitiveness of Indian societies have been built not only upon a desire to validate the genocidal implications of the settlement process and thereby assuage guilt, but also upon the symbolic and (supposedly) scientific support extended by trusted authorities for centuries. Recent shifts have brought the views of some White authority figures slightly closer to those of local Indian peoples, whose linguistic and cultural traditions have safeguarded communal memories and their meanings within specific places. Yet the long winter of American colonization has blanketed White and Indian communities alike, while the relentless frost of the master narrative has threatened to numb any alternative

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<sup>9</sup> See Rupert Costo, “The Indians Before Invasion,” in *The Missions of California: A Legacy of Genocide*, eds. Rupert Costo and Jeannette Henry Costo (San Francisco: Indian Historian, 1987), 9-29.

histories that become exposed. For many the biting chill of the ongoing colonial process has only intensified over space and time, a trend on which the current vogue of academic flip-flops has had little impact.

In the southern California, the icy consistency of European settlement emerged through a confluence of politico-economic, academic, military, and religious interests. For example, the two earliest colonial structures constructed in the region were El Presidio Real de San Diego (San Diego Presidio) and El Misión San Diego de Alcalá (Mission San Diego), both established in July 1769. Together, this military outpost and Christian church would function as the “base of operations for the Spanish colonization of California” and mark “the birthplace of Christianity in the far West.”<sup>10</sup> Several of the key figures involved in the establishment and functioning of this base of operations, most notably Junípero Serra and his disciple Francisco Palóu, were noted academic scholars as well as honored religious leaders.<sup>11</sup> The confluence of these various interests over the control of space continued through the Spanish period and into the independent Mexican reign which followed. However, its zenith was perhaps attained in the mid-to-late

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<sup>10</sup> See respectively “Early History of the California Coast: San Diego Presidio,” US National Parks Service Register of Historic Places, accessed 12 May 2011, <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/ca/ca2.htm>; and “Mission History,” Mission Basilica San Diego de Alcalá, accessed 12 May 2011, [http://www.missionsandiego.com/mission\\_history.htm](http://www.missionsandiego.com/mission_history.htm).

<sup>11</sup> Tink Tinker notes in his critical analysis of Serra: “He abandoned accomplished prominence as a theology professor to pursue a lingering medieval ideal of martyrdom as a ‘new world’ missionary, committed to asceticism and mendicancy.” Likewise, writing from an apologetic standpoint Abigail Hetzel Fitch remarks: “[Palóu’s] pure Castilian style, at once simple, and elegant, has been commented upon even by present-day critics. A refined scholar himself, he entertained the highest regard for the scholarship of others.” See respectively Tink Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 42; and Abigail Hetzel Fitch, *Junípero Serra; The Man and His Work* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg, 1914), 228.



nineteenth century, as the eyes of the burgeoning American empire turned westward in earnest under the guiding auspices of manifest destiny.

As Douglas Cazaux Sackman asserts, “The history of nature and conquest in California is ultimately the saga of legend becoming fact—ideas and projections getting worked into the land, and becoming hard reality.”<sup>12</sup> To many Americans, the California coast represented the epitome of frontier wilderness. Offering a continental culmination to westward expansion, the space boasted an attractive package of mild climate, sweeping vistas, and rich flora and fauna. It was therefore also quite easily interpreted as a promised land primed by a divine hand for the transformations of progress, and a *terra nullius* simply waiting for property claims to be laid. Although the presence of sophisticated Indian inhabitation might have complicated such claims, Sackman explains how the invaders’ disoriented approach to space enabled them to see only what they wanted to see:

Manifest Destiny was a device that needed wilderness to work. To people like [John L. O’Sullivan, the American journalist to whom the term “manifest destiny” is often attributed] wilderness was a country that was untouched by human beings, or at least untamed. But of course, California in 1846 was no wilderness. For several thousand years, the diverse peoples of California, numbering at least 300,000, had been there—using fire to modify the landscape, harvesting and assuring the growth of plants used for food or baskets, naming places and telling stories about them, and generally “tending the wild”... Americans looked upon this landscape, knee-deep in the humus of human history, and vigorously wiped the slate clean. By the mid-nineteenth century, they had practiced the art of simply equating Indians with nature and not counting them as human beings who had transformed the earth with their labor. If they had no agriculture and built no

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<sup>12</sup> Douglas Cazaux Sackman, “Nature and Conquest: After the Deluge of ’49,” in *A Companion to California History*, eds. William Deverell and David Igler (Malden: Blackwell, 2008), 175.

houses, then they had no claim to the land, in American eyes; and so American eyes had become blind to the manifest works of Indians.

By conceptualizing a hierarchical and anthropocentric division between humans and the natural world—and placing Indian persons on the nature side of the divide—White colonizers took quite easily to the related work of ecocide and genocide. Starting immediately with the first Spanish missionaries and conquistadors, invaders set out to “improve” both the land and its indigenous inhabitants. Intrusive European agricultural techniques accompanied the building of permanent settlements and the introduction of foreign species, driving out native animals and plants and extensively transforming the landscape.<sup>13</sup> The emplacement of these markers of Western civilization was made possible through the labor of local Indians, many of whom were enslaved in the mission system. As Tink Tinker demonstrates, missionaries like Serra characteristically approached the work of christianizing what they defined as savage and heathen peoples with “honest and genuine” intentions.<sup>14</sup> Deeply-embedded eurocentrism and christocentrism allowed these good intentions to persist even as missionaries saw their

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<sup>13</sup> Sackman explains, “Beginning in 1769, agents of the Spanish empire—Franciscan missionaries, leather-armored soldiers, and eager ranchers—had come into California with their own visions for the land and its peoples. They wanted to convert the Indians and bring them into the Christian realm, and part of what that meant was to start working for the Spanish to build new structures and plant new crops. They built missions, pueblos, and presidios along the coast, and began to grow wheat, grapes, hemp, and other crops. The missionaries brought in horses, hogs, and cattle, setting them loose to eat up the native grasses and forbs and generally increase and multiply. Indians both accommodates and resisted the Spanish intrusion into their territory and the social and environmental changes they wished to install. Sometimes whip-wielding priests would mysteriously die in the night, the victims of Indians who took justice into their own hands. Others burned down mission and then retreated to parts of California—the reedy and marshy Central Valley, the Sierra Nevada—where the Spanish exercised little power. They turned to acorns, deer, pine nuts, grass seeds or salmon for sustenance, as well as the occasional cow or sheep, and braved this new world which they were forced to share with the Spanish newcomers.” “Nature and Conquest,” 177.

<sup>14</sup> Tinker, *Missionary Conquest*, 42.

Indian subjects run away, become ill or maimed, or die in significant numbers as a result of the accompaniments of mission life—corporal punishment, famine, exhaustion, and the destruction of culture and community. Indian resistance to missionization in California also manifested through noncooperation, revolt, and violence, although depictions of such resistance remained remarkably absent from the master narrative.<sup>15</sup>

Instead, a sanitized version of California history was widely promoted as an exemplar of the grand American multicultural ethos. The shifting control of space through the Indian, Spanish, Californio, and American periods was typically been portrayed as a relatively painless and inevitable blending of cultures leading to an ever stronger social fabric and increasingly productive uses of land. What this Exceptionalist portrayal concealed, however, was the systemic perpetuation of violence, theft, and greed that marked the conquest of California from the 1700's. Each succeeding conquering group justified its occupation, implicitly and often explicitly, though appeals to a hierarchy of being that ordered both species and race—humans over the natural world and animals, and certain “races” of humans over others. Though often applied in an inconsistent and self-serving manner, these appeals reflected a clear preference for certain

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas Blackburn describes how indigenous perspectives were omitted from dominant historical accounts due to the abiding influence of Eurocentricism: “Although the mission system established by the Spanish in California has been a topic of considerable interest to both scholars and students alike for many years, and a great deal of information is available on certain specific aspects of mission life, it remains regrettably true that no phase of native history of comparable significance is more poorly represented in terms of primary documentation. With a few notable exceptions...the participants and observers of the tragic events of the mission period seem to have seen little of intrinsic value or interest in native culture *per se*, or indeed in the people themselves as human beings, rather than simply converts or laborers. Consequently, the kinds of data available for anthropological or historic analysis are limited, sparse, systematically biased, and usually fail to provide the type of in-depth perspective that can sometimes be extracted from such sources.” “The Chumash Revolt of 1824: A Native Account,” *Journal of California Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (1975): 223.

types of spatial behavior. Namely, those who “improved” the land most effectively represented its rightful owners.<sup>16</sup>

The Western obsession with “improving” space impacted the colonization of California in part by underwriting a widespread racial nationalism. I turn again to Sackman to illustrate how this underwriting directly promoted the domination of land and Other:

Racial nationalism—the belief that the United States was the divinely allotted domain where whites could live up to their potential, which they thought was greater than that of any other race—created blind spots that allowed the O’Sullivans to contemplate wresting an entire continent from other peoples and do so with a “clear conscience. Racial nationalists identified the United States with whites, who they connected with civilization and progress; all other races were identified with wilderness and stagnation at best, degeneration or ineluctable savagery at worst. If you believed in the legend of Manifest Destiny, then no one could possibly have the right to stand in the way, for white America’s right of way came from on high. The racial nationalists viewed the inhabitants of California—whether they were Californio or Indian—as wild people living on wild land. The so-called wilderness was seen as the raw material of nation building—a material no one had put to good use and to which no nation but the United States had a proper claim.<sup>17</sup>

As Sackman concludes, Americans believed that their conquest of the Pacific coast “would be manifested in a triumvirate of improvement—of people, of plants, and of the

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<sup>16</sup> Sackman illustrates: “California Indians became ‘diggers,’ subhuman beings who merely scratched the earth for grub. Americans at mid-century had to create a different kind of blind spot to erase the claims of Californios. When Richard Henry Dana visited in the 1830’s, he couldn’t help but see the Californio presence. He admitted that Californios were present but argued that progress and industry were absent. Gushing over the potential of California’s vast landscape, he concluded with an imperial reverie: ‘In the hands of an enterprising people, what a country this could be.’ In the course of Manifest Destiny’s operations, Mexicans were increasingly conceived of as a separate race from Americans, who conceived of themselves racially as Anglo-Saxons.” “Nature and Conquest,” 177.

<sup>17</sup> Sackman, “Nature and Conquest,” 177-178.

land itself.”<sup>18</sup> Conceptualizing improvement through the city upon a hill image, settlers were disconnected—biologically, metaphysically, and morally—from the places and other beings they encountered. At the same time, guiding themes such as property, positivism, and progress offered the means by which their disconnection was concretized and validated.

Thus in the California context, spatial disorientation bolstered faith in Exceptionalism by fueling an insatiable thirst for conquest. This thirst was quenched through an unholy union of selfish desire and (supposedly) sacrosanct belief, and an unmistakable prioritization of temporal concerns. The pursuit of historical linear advancement in profit, power, and prestige—for both individuals and the nation as a whole—represented the driving factor in White settlement, far outstripping any consideration of meaningful dialogical relationship with and in places. Such advancement was largely understood as an ultimate spiritual and politico-economic good, and one which would benefit Whites and non-Whites, and Americans and non-Americans, alike. In a particularly telling example of repression in action, a sense of unnatural innocence persisted even throughout and after the time of the California gold rush, an era whose consistent mythologization continues to obscure its reality as one of the most violent, exploitative, and avaricious moments in American history.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Sackman, “Nature and Conquest,” 178.

<sup>19</sup> William Devereil demonstrates the transformational influence of the gold rush era on California: “We must remember that although California is far more tied to the coming and raging of the Civil War than earlier commentators expected or assumed, it is the 1850’s that presents the great societal rupture on the ground out west. Regime change, the dawn of the American period, the onrushing miners and

The coincidence of the gold rush with Mexican Cession marked critical shifts in the nature and scope of conquest. Indian peoples actively and passively resisted enslavement, poverty, rape, disease, displacement, and land theft under the Spanish and Californio regimes, but the reliance of these regimes on the fruits of the land and indigenous labor contained the extent of exploitation to some degree. By contrast, the official establishment of American control in the mid-1800's infused the need for resistance with new ecocidal and genocidal import. Albert L. Hurtado indicates that this era saw the emergence of a radically "new population profile" marked by a huge influx of young White men, most of whom "had no long-term interest in California or its native people."<sup>20</sup> Evocative of the American colonial enterprise more widely, a main objective of the invaders was to attain wealth and comfort by allowing so-called civilizing forces to subdue a barbarous soil.<sup>21</sup> Under this objective Indians peoples (along with Chinese

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adventurers, the orgies of violence, licit and illicit land transfer: such is the stuff from which revolutions are made...California's revolution is in the tumult of the 1850's..." "The 1850's," in *A Companion to California History*, eds. William Devereill and David Igler (Malden: Blackwell, 2008), 167-168.

<sup>20</sup> Albert L. Hurtado notes, "The gold discovery alone would not necessarily have changed the Indians' place in California society, for the Spanish had customarily used Indian workers in mines as well as in the fields. Yet the gold rush forever altered the fundamental bases of Indian-white relations in California...The Hispanic customs and institutions that had formerly influenced relations with the Indians melted away as Anglo immigration mounted, and the newcomers felt little need to defer to traditions that they regarded as alien. Thus, the Hispanic world-view that included Indians within society was replaced by the Anglo notion that Indians ought to be expelled from frontier areas. By and large, the gold rush immigrants were single, young males, most of whom wished to become wealthy quickly and return to their homes in the East. The new mining population had no long-term interest in California or its native people. The ranchers of Mexican California may not have had at heart the best interests of Indians, but since they depended on native labor, they did not want to eradicate the Indian population." *Indian Survival on the California Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University, 1988), 100-101.

<sup>21</sup> Originally appearing in Daniel Defoe's *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, the phrase "barbarous soil" is incorporated by Kevin Starr and Richard J. Orsi into the title of their edited volume on the gold rush. Although the quality of the volume is somewhat uneven, Orsi (along with Michael Duty)

immigrants and other “non-Whites”) were alternately treated as a disposable workforce and a competitive rival in need of elimination. For Indian communities the shifts further disrupted traditional lifeways and patterns of social and politico-economic organization that were already significantly weakened. Between 1848 and 1880 the California Indian population decreased by an estimated 85 percent, while many remaining communities faced overwhelming social, politico-economic, and geographic discrimination.<sup>22</sup>

The violent and mutual rending of land and life—initiated by the early Spanish invaders and intensified in the American period—represented a central theme in the historical development of California, and one that undoubtedly helped forge its contemporary character. Described by one commentator, this character continues to exude the essence of manifest destiny as “the ultimate object of that endless quest to the West, toward...unrepentant ambition.”<sup>23</sup> Nowhere are the presence and consequences of

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shrewdly notes in its preface, “Perhaps never in the time-honored American tradition of frontiering did ‘civilization’ appear to sink so low as in gold-rush California.” In *Rooted in Barbarous Soil: People, Culture, and Community in Gold Rush California*, eds. Kevin Starr and Richard J. Orsi (Berkeley: University of California, 2000), vii.

<sup>22</sup> Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier*, 100-101.

<sup>23</sup> Chytry situates this phrase in context as follows: “In the final analysis ‘California’ belongs to world history as a major civilization in itself—distinct from the ‘United States of America’—because it is the most packed symbol of elements otherwise difficult to decipher in the unprecedented voyages of discovery and exploitation first launched by Europeans in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and forming the very beginnings of the globalization process. If California has been rightly labeled ‘a questing sort of state,’ it may well be because California symbolizes the ultimate object of that endless quest to the West, toward ‘Hesperia’ sought by mythical Aeneas as Virgilian founder of ancient Rome that in the 15<sup>th</sup> century came to be associated with island-hopping from the coast of west Africa across the Atlantic Ocean in hopes of reaching the fabled ‘Indies,’ themselves forming yet another body of islands from Zipangu (Japan) to Ceylon. Even after discovery around 1500 of the huge size of the continent that became known as South America, it was still felt that Columbus’ landfall among the Caribbean islands augured a further set of isles—rather than a North American ‘continent’—eventually working its way to the Indies and ‘Cathay’ proper. Along that extensive thalassic highway, the ‘Isle of California’ became a fixture of imagination and

unrepentant ambition made more apparent than in southern California region. Yet it is critical we complexify these generalized observations in light of the diverse negotiations of culture and power that inevitably occur, especially among the struggles of the most marginalized groups. Pointing to such complexity, Hurtado affirms both the agency of Indian communities and the contextual restrictions placed on that agency through the colonization process:

Indians were victimized; but they were not merely victims. They made choices about their futures based on their sense of history and their standards of justice. Accommodating, working, fighting, hiding out—in a word, surviving—they were the seed for today’s California Indians.<sup>24</sup>

To fully understand the ecological and social character of the space, we must recognize not only past and present patterns of exploitation but also the spectrum of accommodation and defiance these patterns engender.

One particular group that faced difficult choices along this spectrum during the various stages of colonial rule was the Acjachemen Indian nation. Occupying an a substantial area of coastal and inland territory, traditional Acjachemen land is positioned in an area that is today subdivided by the counties of San Diego and Orange—making it among the wealthiest population centers in the US.<sup>25</sup> Before European invasion, extended

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eventually of unrepentant ambition.” “California Civilization: Beyond the United States of America?” *Thesis Eleven* 85, no. 8 (2006): 28. While Chytry’s notion of “civilization” inadequately accounts for deep cultural similarities within America (and the West more broadly), his framing of California as a vital symbol of the quest for temporal progress remains insightful.

<sup>24</sup> Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier*, 123-124.

<sup>25</sup> See G. Scott Thomas, “Sacramento Ranks 10<sup>th</sup> Richest County in State,” *Sacramento Business Journal*, 22 April 2011, accessed 19 May 2011,



family groups settled in long-term, politically independent villages which “maintained ties to others through economic, religious, and social networks in the immediate region.” (for a map of traditional Acjachemen village sites, see Appendix F).<sup>26</sup> These communal ties were fundamentally disrupted with the reorganization of regional life around White settlements, the most significant of which were the Christian mission complexes. The California missions were designed with the dual purpose of extending White control of the land and bringing Christian civilization to its indigenous inhabitants. With this purpose in mind, it is unsurprising to note the existence of accounts in Acjachemen oral history which describe the “misgivings” of the people to missionization efforts “from the very beginning.”<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps the most famous of the missions, San Juan Capistrano, was originally founded by the Spanish Franciscans in 1775 to attend to the local Acjachemen population. In fact, the name “Juañeno” was originally given to the Acjachemen by the Spanish due to their association as the mission complex’s builders and target population.<sup>28</sup> As a center

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<http://www.bizjournals.com/sacramento/news/2011/04/22/sacramento-ranks-10th-richest-county.html>. In terms of total personal income, the counties of Orange and San Diego ranked fifth and seventh respectively among all US counties in 2009. Moving immediately north, Los Angeles County ranked first.

<sup>26</sup> Joan C. Brown, Stephen O’Neil, and James W. Steely, “Appendix H: Cultural Resources Report,” in *Cultural Resources Reconnaissance for the Village Entrance Project, Laguna Beach, California*, SWCA Cultural Resources Report Database No. 2006-200, April 2006, 6, accessed 24 May 2011, <http://www.lagunabeachcity.net/civica/filebank/blobdload.asp?BlobID=6523>.

<sup>27</sup> See Stephen Thomas O’Neil, “The Acjachemen in the Franciscan Mission System: Demographic Collapse and Social Change,” (MA Thesis, California State University-Fullerton, 2002), 162.

<sup>28</sup> This name persists in the official designation endorsed today by the tribal government: “Juañeno Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation.” However, I employ the term Acjachemen in this chapter out of respect for its traditional origins and because it tends to be preferred within the community.

of the Spanish system of forced conversion and slave labor and a major staging point for further colonization efforts to the north, it was at Mission San Juan Capistrano that Friar Geronimo Boscana recorded some of the earliest White perceptions regarding the Acjachemen still in existence. Comparing the Acjachemen to “a species of monkey” with a “corrupt... natural disposition,” Boscana noted that “these rude Indians were ignorant of the true God, without faith, without law, or king, and governed by their own natural ideas, or by tradition.”<sup>29</sup> He further described the relationship between the Indian communities and the land in the thinly veiled language of spatial disorientation:

No doubt these Indians passed a miserable life, ever idle, and more like the brutes, than rational beings. They neither cultivated the ground, nor planted any kind of grain; but lived upon the wild seeds of the field, the fruits of the forest, and upon the abundance of game. It is really surprising, that during a lapse of many ages, with their reason and experience, they had not advanced one iota in improving things that would have been useful and convenient for them... When we read of the ancients—of their having transplanted trees which were wild, thus increasing their abundance, and quality, and of their planting seeds, which improved by cultivation, we cannot but wonder that a knowledge so important was unknown here until the missionary fathers came amongst them, and introduced the planting of wheat, corn, beans, and other grains, that are now so abundant everywhere. I consider these Indians, in their endowments, like the soul of an infant, which is merely a will, accompanied with passions—an understanding not exercised, or without use; and for this reason, they did not comprehend the virtue of prudence, which is the result of time and reason—of the former, by experience, and the latter, by dissertation. Although ripe in years, they had no more experience than when in

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<sup>29</sup> See Reverend Father Friar Geronimo Boscana, *Chinigchinich; A Historical Account of the Origin, Customs, and Traditions of the Indians at the Missionary Establishment of St. Juan Capistrano, Alta California; Called The Acagchemem Nation*, translated by Alfred Robinson, in *Life in California: During a Residence of Several Years in that Territory, Comprising a Description of the Country and the Missionary Establishments, with Incidents, Observations, Etc., Etc.*, by Alfred Robinson (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1846), 335, 242. Of course, Boscana simultaneously contradicts several of his claims by stating that the Acjachemen observed a “monarchical” form of government (264), held various detailed beliefs about the “creation of the world” (242-257), and offered significant “moral instruction” to their children (270).

childhood--no reasoning powers, and therefore followed blindly in the footsteps of their predecessors.<sup>30</sup>

Boscana's thoughts were anything but unique. Whether explicitly voiced or silently assumed, the prevailing assumptions he reflected facilitated the theft of land and oppression of human persons in southern California for several centuries. But while the distorted and destructive racial content of such assumptions has come under increasing (if still insufficient) scrutiny in recent years, the problematic nature of their underlying approach to space has remained woefully underappreciated. Similarly, though the struggles and knowledges (especially those related to the environment) of Indian communities have received greater attention in a few Western academic and social corners of late, this attention has rarely translated into either meaningful awareness of difference or tangible opportunities for self-determination. These communities remain extensively hindered in their ability to control and complexify the discourse regarding who they are and what they want. In addition, they must daily refute the common cultural perception that Indian folks no longer exist—at least outside of movies, roadside craft stands, and casinos.<sup>31</sup> Even as the language and sentiment of commentators like Boscana are often dismissed today in polite liberal company, the deep cultural symbols of space which guided them—the cognitive images and behavioral themes that fueled the dual domination of land and Other in the first place—continue to enjoy unconscious and

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<sup>30</sup> Boscana, *Chinigchinich*, 285-286.

<sup>31</sup> Richard O. Clemmer-Smith, personal communication with the author, 21 August 2011.

unquestioned consent. This consent ensures that cycles of repression and violence are persistently renewed.

Renewal has been further ensured by the privileged operation of a Western governmental system and the selective application of an Exceptionalist rule of law. As Rebecca Robles, Robert García, and Angela Mooney D'Arcy explain,

The federal government has a history of separating California Indians from their lands. Between 1851 and 1852, eighteen treaties were negotiated with over 100 California Indian tribes. Under these treaties, California Indians were to retain 8.5 million acres (about one-seventh of the state of California) and receive educational, agricultural, technical, and other services in exchange for the 66.5 million acres they ceded. At the request of the California legislature, California's United States senators opposed ratification of the treaties. The United States Senate formally rejected the treaties and classified them as secret and sealed them in a vault. The lands that had been reserved by the Indians in the treaties were treated as part of the public domain. The Indians were not informed of the Senate's refusal to ratify the treaties. According to historian Robert Heizer, "[i]n the history of California Indians no other single event (that is non-event) had a more rapid destructive effect on their population and culture than... [this] about-face... [by] the Senate."<sup>32</sup>

Typical of the historical period of active Indian treaty-making, US dialogue with California Indian nations tended to serve more as a tool of placation in the midst of genocide than a good-faith effort to resolve existing land conflicts. Yet contrary to the notion that such duplicity and secrecy represent the remnants of a bygone era, more recent exemplars such as the California Indian Claims Cases suggest that old patterns continue to reemerge under new masks.

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<sup>32</sup> Rebecca Robles, Robert García, and Angela Mooney D'Arcy to Patrick Kruer and the California Coastal Commission, 21 January 2008, 7, accessed 28 May 2011, <http://www.cityprojectca.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2008/01/letter-coastal-commission-save-panhe-san-onofre.pdf>. As a note of clarification, Robert Heizer actually worked as an anthropologist, not a historian.

The California Indian Claims Cases reflected the letter and spirit of the Indian Claims Commission (ICC), which was established in 1948 to adjudicate issues of land tenure and property rights between Indian nations and the US government. The ICC's mandate signaled an emerging American cultural attitude. This attitude held that after centuries of discipline, instruction, and protection, Indian peoples were ready to be granted the privilege of being accepted into mainstream American society. The attitude's emergence was influenced in part by festering of ongoing land struggles and the significant participation of soldiers of Indian background in World War II. To reflect and facilitate their status "upgrade" Indian peoples were provided with financial compensation for lands "lost" over the course of American expansion. Groups that accepted the monies relinquished all legal rights to disputed lands in return, theoretically closing ongoing struggles. Operating under the assumption that lands stolen from Indian peoples had been put to more effective and favorable use anyway, compensation was also designed to finalize the process of legitimizing expansion and assimilate Indian cultural identity into the greater American melting pot. The question of whether assimilation was actually desired by the targeted population was largely ignored.

While the ICC process was problematic in all geographic areas, it proved especially ill-suited to handle the complex social structures and regional differences among Indian communities in California. From the initiation of proceedings in 1948, a full decade passed before a determination was made regarding whether the more than one hundred autonomous communal bands would be considered as separate or joint claimants. Three main cases were eventually consolidated around fairly arbitrary

groupings: the “Indians of California,” the Mission Indian Bands, and the Pitt River Band.<sup>33</sup> The Acjachemen were included within the Mission Indian Bands case, which proceeded fraught with inconsistencies and partiality. For example, the claims petitions filed on behalf of these bands significantly misrepresented their traditional patterns of politico-economic and spatial organization, in large part because the petitions were crafted almost exclusively by non-Indians working from bad assumptions.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, government policy required that all meetings between members of the Mission Bands and their attorneys be monitored by officials from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).<sup>35</sup> This devious arrangement constrained open communication and provided the government with a significant advantage.

On the recommendation of their White counsel, representatives of the Mission Bands voted to accept the US government’s offer for an out-of-court monetary settlement in 1964.<sup>36</sup> They were joined by the “Indians of California” group, although the Pit River Band vigorously refused to consent well into the 1980’s.<sup>37</sup> Enveloped in a context of

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<sup>33</sup> The California Indian Claims Cases entered consideration on July 19, 1948, but were not consolidated until October 6, 1958. For a more detailed account of the consolidation process, see Florence C. Shipek, “Mission Indians and Indians of California Land Claims,” *American Indian Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1989): 409, 412.

<sup>34</sup> See Shipek, “Mission Indians and Indians of California Land Claims,” especially 412-413.

<sup>35</sup> Shipek, “Mission Indians and Indians of California Land Claims,” 417-418.

<sup>36</sup> Shipek clarifies that “The majority voted to accept the settlement in spite of the fact that more than 75% of the meeting time was devoted to speakers against acceptance.” “Mission Indians and Indians of California Land Claims,” 418.

<sup>37</sup> See Omer C. Stewart, “Litigation and Its Effects,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 8, ed. William C. Sturtevant (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 708. Additionally, James S.

poverty, misinformation, and corruption, the settlement translated into a payout of \$633 to individuals determined by the government as legitimate band members—about 47 cents per acre.<sup>38</sup> The general timeline of the ICC process coincided with the implementation of another dubious and widely misunderstood governmental policy, that of Indian termination.

Termination complemented the ICC process by officially eliminating recognition of Indian national sovereignty. Although such recognition was already quite porous by 1953, the policy's institution provided another device by which the record of colonization and genocide could be formally erased. Ostensibly designed to ease assimilation and increase independence, termination covered over the government's complete failure at administering Indian services and enabled additional land thefts.<sup>39</sup> Individuals of Indian

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Olson and Heather Olson Beal note that “The Pit River nation of northern California had lost its land in the gold rush of 1849 and in the 1950’s demanded the return of 3,368,000 acres. In 1956 the Indian Claims Commission decided that the land had been taken illegally, and in 1963 the federal government awarded the Pit River nation 47 cents per acre. Members refused the money, insisting on the return of the land. In June 1970 more than 150 Pit Rivers, impatient with government policy, occupied portions of Lassen National Park and Pacific Gas and Electric Company land that they claimed as their own. The dispute was not resolved until 1986, when they accepted a cash settlement.” *The Ethnic Dimension in American History*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 322.

<sup>38</sup> Ward Churchill notes, “an award of \$29.1 million—approximately 47 cents per acre—was authorized as retroactive payment for virtually the entire state of California.” *Perversions of Justice: Indigenous Peoples and Angloamerican Law* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2003), 149n106. By comparison, the sale of the 150-acre Orange County Fairgrounds in Costa Mesa—on the north edge of traditional Acjachemen territory—was recently proposed for \$100 million—approximately \$666,666 per acre. This price was described by one expert (who was obviously unaware of the California Indian Claims Cases) as “the real estate steal of the century.” See Norberto Santana Jr., “So How Much is the OC Fairgrounds Really Worth?” *Voice of OC*, 4 February 2011, accessed 24 May 2011, [http://www.voiceofoc.org/countywide/this\\_just\\_in/article\\_760d30bc-306e-11e0-9378-001cc4c002e0.html](http://www.voiceofoc.org/countywide/this_just_in/article_760d30bc-306e-11e0-9378-001cc4c002e0.html).

<sup>39</sup> Edward D. Castillo explains, “After the war, as the United States spent millions of dollars rebuilding Germany and Japan, the government hoped to rid itself of its embarrassing failure to ‘rebuild’ Indian nations by simply withdrawing governmental aid to Indian people. This philosophy was expressed in

background were made ineligible for federal aid, while collective land holdings were converted into individual, tax-eligible properties. The policy had the further effect of widening rifts within and among some communities.<sup>40</sup> California peoples were among the first to be pressured into accepting termination despite widespread confusion and disapproval, due in part to the attractiveness of their spatial locations.<sup>41</sup> Many of these peoples were specifically targeted by the 1958 California Rancheria Act, which identified certain land holdings for immediate privatization and “improvement.”<sup>42</sup>

Not included in the Rancheria Act, the Acjachemen experienced termination in a different but equally consequential manner. As a largely unknown consequence of the

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the Hoover Commission survey of 1948. Indeed that year the Bureau of Indian Affairs declared its intention to ‘terminate’ all governmental services to all Indians and divide their tribal assets (land and resources) among individuals. This so-called policy was little more than a warmed-over version of the Allotment Act. Its implementation would detribalize native groups and put their property on tax rolls as well as repudiate the federal government’s moral commitment and responsibility to aid the people whose poverty and powerlessness it had created.” “The Impact of Euro-American Exploration and Settlement,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 8, ed. William C. Sturtevant (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1978), 122.

<sup>40</sup> See generally Heather Ponchetti Daly, “Fractured Relations at Home: The 1953 Termination Act’s Effect on Tribal Relations throughout Southern California Indian Country,” *American Indian Quarterly* 33, no. 4 (2009): 427-439.

<sup>41</sup> See Castillo, “The Impact of Euro-American Exploration and Settlement,” 122-126; and Roberta Ulrich, *American Indian Nations from Termination to Restoration, 1953-2006* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2010), 111-129.

<sup>42</sup> Carole Goldberg notes, “Originally enacted in 1958 and amended in 1964, the Rancheria Act authorized the Secretary of the Interior to divide and distribute the assets of certain California Indian rancherias and reservations after the vote of a majority of the members of each reservation.” “Members Only: Designing Citizenship Requirements for Indian Nations,” in *American Indian Constitutional Reform and the Rebuilding of Native Nations*, ed. Eric D. Lemont (Austin: University of Texas, 2006), 133n9. Under the Rancheria legislation, the government was required to conduct surveys, make several “improvements” to the land, and achieve informed consent before termination could occur. However, later inquiries found that the government failed in nearly all these tasks despite moving forward. Federal recognition of seventeen terminated communities was reestablished in 1983 after a Pomo woman named Tillie Hardwick successfully pursued a class action suit in the US District Court for the Northern District of California. See *Hardwick v. US*, C-79-1710 SW (N.D. Cal. 1983).



ICC settlement, federal recognition of the nation simply ceased in conjunction with the monetary payout. Acjachemen scholar M. Annette Jaimes describes how her people:

...were simply declared to be “extinct.” This policy was pursued despite the fact that substantial numbers of such Indians were known to exist, and that the government was at the time issuing settlement checks to them. The tribal rolls were simply ordered closed to *any* new additions, despite the fact that many of the people involved were still bearing children, and their population might well have been expanding. It was even suggested in some instances that children born after an arbitrary cut-off date should be identified as “Hispanic” or “Mexican” in order that they benefit from federal and state services to minority groups.<sup>43</sup>

Following the official end of the claims process, the Acjachemen continued to controvert their supposed extinction by struggling to reaffirm cultural identity and reestablish control of the land. Formally organizing in accordance with government determined tribal guidelines in 1979, they began petitioning to have official recognition restored in 1982. Although state recognition was secured in 1993, the petition was denied at the federal level in March 2011.<sup>44</sup> Among other findings noted in the determination of denial, the BIA argued that there was insufficient evidence to prove the US government had ever previously acknowledged the existence of the Acjachemen as a nation, and that all bona

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<sup>43</sup> M. Annette Jaimes, “Federal Indian Identification Policy: A Usurpation of Indigenous Sovereignty in North America,” in *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Cambridge: South End, 1999), 132 (emphasis original). Further illustrating the deceptive payout process, Ward Churchill concurs, “As each check was cashed, the signature on it was tallied as a ‘vote for termination’ (the only way an Indian could vote *not* to be terminated was thus to refuse his/her portion of the settlement). On this basis, it was claimed that the termination of the Juaneños and a number of other ‘Mission Bands’ in the Los Angeles/San Diego area had been ‘voluntary.’” *Perversions of Justice*, 149-150n106 (emphasis original).

<sup>44</sup> On state recognition, see Assembly Joint Resolution No. 48 Relative to the Juaneno Band of Mission Indians, Acjachemen Nation, California Assembly Joint Resolution 48, resolution chapter 121, 1993-1994 session, (1993). On federal recognition, see US Bureau of Indian Affairs, “Final Determination Against Acknowledgement of The Juaneño Band of Mission Indians Acjachemen Nation (Petitioner #84B),” 15 March 2011, accessed 24 May 2011, <http://www.bia.gov/idc/groups/xofa/documents/text/idc013299.pdf>.

fide Acjachemen ancestors had likely died out by the mid-1800's.<sup>45</sup> Belying these arguments by their mere presence, the Acjachmen have already begun to appeal the determination.<sup>46</sup>

Despite all claims to the contrary, the people persist. In the face the lands claims process, rapid population growth, extensive development, and federal termination, the Acjachemen have fought to overcome a steady stream of threats to unity and survival. The toll road proposal represented one particularly formidable example. This case demonstrates how the continuing Acjachemen endeavor to have their cultural identity affirmed cannot be understood apart from either their traditional connection with the land or the influence of American deep culture. The San Onofre struggle is not exclusively an Acjachemen story; rather, it is a story of diverse stakes and stakeholders in which the Indian community played only a supporting role. Yet its plotline cannot be fully appreciated apart from the context of history and power in which it occurred, nor its implications considered without regard for the systems of privilege which shaped its trajectory. Differences in race, class, and culture functioned powerfully and complexly to shape how the stakeholders responded to the space in question. Yet the case also demonstrates how spatial disorientation can visit harm upon many different types of communities, and how Exceptionalism can be manifested and strengthened even in

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<sup>45</sup> See BIA, "Final Determination," especially 10-12.

<sup>46</sup> See Jonathan Volzke, "Juaneños Plan Appeal of Federal Denial," *The Capistrano Dispatch*, 13 May 2011, accessed 24 May 2011, [http://www.thecapistranodispatch.com/view/full\\_story/13269703/article-Juane%C3%B1os-Plan-Appeal-of-Federal-Denial?instance=eye\\_on\\_sjc](http://www.thecapistranodispatch.com/view/full_story/13269703/article-Juane%C3%B1os-Plan-Appeal-of-Federal-Denial?instance=eye_on_sjc).

circumstances where dominant patterns of cognition and behavior are negotiated in somewhat unconventional ways.

*The Toll Road: Background and Spatial Character*

The toll road controversy began in earnest in the late 1990's when the TCA announced a plan to construct a 16 mile long, six lane tollway between Orange and San Diego counties. The organization was originally formed in 1986 to respond to the problem of traffic congestion in this region, which was experiencing explosive population growth. Reflecting the climate of politico-economic privatization in which it was birthed, it was intended to fund public works projects exclusively through private investment. The TCA would sell bonds to investors and use the capital to finance toll road construction and operation. In turn, the bonds would eventually be repaid through toll revenue and development fees. The organization therefore embodied a particularly mystifying confluence of the private and public sectors—of business and government—to the point where the TCA itself had trouble describing its precise institutional nature and authority.<sup>47</sup> Three toll roads were eventually created under its direction: the San Joaquin Hills (73), Eastern (241/261/133) and Foothill (241). Although managed by the TCA, the

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<sup>47</sup> In fact, the question of whether the TCA represented a private enterprise or a governmental entity was contested throughout the “Save San Onofre” struggle. At various points, the TCA even seemed to contradict itself, assuring citizens on the one hand that “Since the bonds [funding construction] will not be backed by the government, taxpayers would not be responsible for repaying debt if future toll revenues fall short,” and claiming on the other that the toll road would be “a public facility operated by a public agency that is governed by elected officials.” See respectively “Who Will Pay For the Road?” Transportation Corridor Agencies, accessed 25 March 2011, <http://www.relievetraffic.org>; and “Resolution F2006-3,” Transportation Corridor Agencies, accessed 25 March 2011, [https://www.thetollroads.com/home/about\\_news\\_reso.htm](https://www.thetollroads.com/home/about_news_reso.htm).

roads were considered property of the state of California.<sup>48</sup> Marketing material unambiguously declared a mission motivated by efficiency and profit: “From saving you time, to saving your sanity, The Toll Roads are all about savings.”<sup>49</sup>

The new proposal was envisioned as a southern extension of the existing 241 Toll Road (for a map of the proposed route, see Appendix G). Designed primarily to ease congestion along Interstate-5 (I-5), the 241 extension was promoted by the TCA as a necessary protection of progress for the nation’s largest economic zone (and the eleventh largest in the world), its most significant port of entry for imported goods, and one of its most lucrative tourist hubs.<sup>50</sup> The proposal was further framed at the individual level as way to maintain the privilege associated with life in the heart of the “Golden State,” due to its potential to decrease travel times, support further growth, and create jobs. Such promises helped the TCA garner substantial support among local business leaders, land developers, individual commuters, and labor unions. An especially powerful benefactor was also gained in California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. Adopting the language of Exceptionalism, Schwarzenegger framed development as a boon for both the people and the land:

I promised the people of California that, when I became Governor, we would boost our economy, protect our environment, and build a great future for our state.

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<sup>48</sup> See “About TCA: Background and History,” Transportation Corridor Agencies, accessed 12 May 2011, [http://www.thetollroads.com/home/about\\_history.htm](http://www.thetollroads.com/home/about_history.htm).

<sup>49</sup> See Transportation Corridor Agencies, “The Toll Roads” (map), accessed 12 May 2012, [https://www.thetollroads.com/assets/objects/other/TR\\_Map.pdf](https://www.thetollroads.com/assets/objects/other/TR_Map.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> See “Why Complete It?” Transportation Corridor Agencies, accessed 25 March 2011, <http://www.relievetraffic.org>.

Rebuilding our critical infrastructure is one of the single most important steps we can take to keep California strong and prosperous, make our air cleaner, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and protect the unique quality of life that makes California the greatest place to live on Earth... The SR-241 project gives us a chance to protect our parks and our coastline and reduce one of the most damaging environmental problems that plagues our state: traffic gridlock. I hope you will join me in supporting this major step forward for California.<sup>51</sup>

To preclude any environmental opposition, the TCA commissioned scientific experts to support their claim that the overall benefits of the toll road would outweigh any damage caused by the proposed route.<sup>52</sup> This route was designed to take the road from Rancho Santa Margarita to the east of San Juan Capistrano, and to connect with the I-5 south of San Clemente. It had been settled upon after consultation with the supervising officers of the Marine Corps base at Camp Pendleton, who were empowered to refuse any development in areas that might impede military training operations or interfere with national security concerns. As a result, the TCA argued that the most efficient and profitable path necessitated directing the tollway through an area of state park land in northern San Diego county.

Known as San Onofre State Beach, this 3,000 acre plot of land was leased to the state by the US Department of the Navy in 1971 for the purposes of establishing a public park and protected ecological area. Described by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR) as “a rare...scenic coastal-canyon park with high environmental

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<sup>51</sup> Arnold Scharzenegger to Patrick Kruer, 15 January 2008, accessed 4 June 2011, [https://www.thetollroads.com/home/newsletter/foothill\\_south/images/jan\\_08/gov\\_letter.pdf](https://www.thetollroads.com/home/newsletter/foothill_south/images/jan_08/gov_letter.pdf).

<sup>52</sup> This claim is fully developed in Transportation Corridor Agencies, *Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report for the South Orange County Transportation Infrastructure Improvement Project*, December 2005, accessed 26 May 2011, <https://www.thetollroads.com/home/finalseir.htm>.

values and recreation use,” the park comprised several campsites, beach areas, marshlands, and trails.<sup>53</sup> Curiously situated in the middle of the park was the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station (SONGS), a nuclear powerplant tasked with providing power to up to 1.4 million southern California households.<sup>54</sup> Notably, San Onofre was also home to two other places which would figure prominently in the development of an opposition movement to the toll road: the famous “Trestles” surf area and the ancient Acjachemen village of Panhe.

Both nationally and internationally, Trestles has long been recognized as one of the finest surfing areas in the continental US.<sup>55</sup> Composed of several individual breaks with distinct characteristics, it has been described as the site of “Southern California’s best wave” and “the best wave in the US for performance surfing.”<sup>56</sup> Behind descriptive

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<sup>53</sup> See “San Onofre SB: State Beach,” State of California Department of Parks and Recreation, accessed 26 May 2011, [http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=647](http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=647).

<sup>54</sup> See “Power Generation: San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station,” Southern California Edison, accessed 26 May 2011, <http://www.sce.com/PowerandEnvironment/PowerGeneration/SanOnofreNuclearGeneratingStation/songsfactsheet.htm>.

<sup>55</sup> Perceptions regarding the relative quality of distinct surf spots implicate a range of complex variables (including geographic region, type of break, consistency and size of waves, and subjective preference) and are often highly contested. Nevertheless, my research and personal communications have shown Trestles to be among the most universally respected and beloved spots, at least in the continental US. For examples in print, see Raul Guisado and Jeff Klaas, *Surfing California: A Complete Guide to the Best Breaks on the California Coast* (Guilford: Globe Pequot, 2005), 240-241; Chris Nelson and Demi Taylor, *Surfing the World* (Bath: Footprint Handbooks, 2006), 66-67; and Rod Sumpter, *100 Best Surf Spots in the World*, (Guilford: Globe Pequot, 2004), 58-59.

<sup>56</sup> See “Secretary of Commerce Upholds Coastal Commission Decision,” *Surfer Magazine*, 22 July 2010, accessed 27 May 2011, [http://www.surfermag.com/features/secretary\\_of\\_commerce\\_upholds\\_trestles\\_decision](http://www.surfermag.com/features/secretary_of_commerce_upholds_trestles_decision); and “ASP Prime 6.0 Lowers Pro Returns to Trestles May 3-7, 2011 With Increased \$250,000 Prize Purse,” Nike6, 7 April

accounts of wave quality, however, lie feelings of profound and even religious attachment to the space. In short, Trestles is perceived by many regional surfers as nothing less than “sacred” ground. Illustrating this phenomenon with deliberate language, the CDPR stated in 1997, “Trestles is such a vital surfing experience that for many, it is the paragon of surfing destinations and each visit is a pilgrimage.”<sup>57</sup> In popular culture, the significance of the space as a sort of promised land was recognized as early as 1963 when it was venerated by name in the Beach Boys song entitled “Surfin’ USA.”

The precise meaning and demonstrable authenticity of claims regarding religious attachment to Trestles warrant further consideration. But what is important to note at this point is the simple fact that such claims are made and, indeed, often taken for granted in the surfing world and beyond. Not unlike the broader celebrations of the land expressed through nationalist hymns, popular media, and political speeches, testimonies regarding the attachment of White surfers to the waves at San Onofre are rarely critically analyzed.<sup>58</sup> Nor, it should be noted, is their dedication to the sport of surfing itself—a

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2011, accessed 27 May 2011, <http://www.nike6lowerspro.com/2011/04/07/asp-prime-6-0-lowers-pro-returns-to-trestles-may-3-7-2011-with-increased-250000-prize-purse>.

<sup>57</sup> State of California Department of Parks and Recreation, “Mitigation Assessment of FTC-South Impacts on San Onofre State Beach,” August 1997, 2.

<sup>58</sup> The question of whether surfing qualifies as a “religion” remains debated and highly dependent on the criteria used to establish legitimacy in the category. While some observers criticize the notion of surfing as a replacement for traditional religions, groups such as Christian Surfers USA frame the activity as a complement to and expression of their participation in dominant institutions. Skepticism surrounding the claims of some surfers to spiritual connections with certain spaces must also be assessed in light of surfing’s traditional (but now shifting) identity as a counter-cultural activity. Regardless, the right of White surfers to go where they please within legal guidelines remains largely unquestioned. For a more in-depth perspective on the religious interpretation of surfing, see the work of Bron Taylor, especially *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (Berkeley: University of California, 2010), 103-126;

behavior with long and deeply meaningful roots in indigenous Polynesian cultures which was first observed by European invaders in Hawaii.

While White surfers first took notice of San Onofre the early twentieth century, the relationship of the Acjachemen with this space has been in play for far longer.<sup>59</sup> Historically, this relationship received specific embodiment at places like Panhe, an ancient village recognized as a politico-economic, cultural, and spiritual center of indigenous life and one of the largest pre-contact regional settlements. Summarizing the significance of Panhe to the Acjachemen and other local inhabitants, Robles, García, and D’Arcy explain,

Panhe bears a special meaning in Acjachemen—as well as non-Indian—life, culture, and history. Panhe is an ancient Acjachemen village and a current sacred site, ceremonial site, and burial site for the Acjachemen people. Panhe is one of the few remaining sacred sites where the people can still gather for ceremony in an area that is secluded and exists in a pristine, natural state. Many Acjachemen/Juaneño tribal members today can trace their lineage directly to the Village of Panhe, which is estimated to be at least 8,000 years old. Panhe is significant not only to Native Americans. Panhe is the site of the first baptism in California, and the first close contact between Spanish explorers, Catholic missionaries, and the Acjachemen in 1769.<sup>60</sup>

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and “Sea Spirituality, Surfing, and Aquatic Nature Religion,” in *Deep Blue: Critical Reflections on Nature, Religion, and Water*, eds. Sylvie Shaw and Andrew Francis (Sheffield, England, UK: Equinox, 2008), 213-233.

<sup>59</sup> Although the precise origins of surfing in San Onofre are unclear, the CDPR notes that the activity has been present in the area since at least 1933. See State of California Department of Parks and Recreation “San Onofre State Beach,” accessed 28 May 2011, <http://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/647/files/SanOnofreFinalWebLayout092710.pdf>. Additionally, while many indigenous groups along the California coast possess significant repositories of water-related skills and knowledges developed over centuries of use, they differ from their Polynesian counterparts in not recognizing stand-up surfing as a traditional practice.

<sup>60</sup> Robles, García, and D’Arcy to Kruer and the California Coastal Commission, 2-3.



The historical distinctiveness of the village site helped it garner recognition on the California Native American Heritage Commission's Sacred Lands Inventory and the National Register of Historic Places (as part of the San Mateo Archaeological District).<sup>61</sup> Yet under the TCA's proposal, it was to be included in the direct impact area for the toll road. Although exactly what this inclusion would mean in practical terms became a heavily disputed question, it nevertheless drew the attention of the Acjachemen and eventually other participants in the conflict as well.

### *Defining the Stakes*

Together, the phrases "Save San Onofre," "Save Trestles," and to a lesser degree, "Save Panhe" came to serve as rallying cries for the diverse movement which coalesced in opposition to the TCA's proposal. As in the case of Crandon Mine, the success of this movement can be attributed in part to its ability to engage existing systems of privilege and gain control over the discourse surrounding the conflict. By employing dominant cognitive images and behavioral themes in credible and creative ways, toll road opponents were able to persuasively argue that southern Californian civilization, as a particularly significant manifestation of the American city upon a hill, would actually experience greater harm than gain if the proposal was accepted. Unlike in the Crandon case, however, the demographic profile of the opposition movement (and especially its leadership) was composed primarily of non-poor, urban Whites. Among these stakeholders, the toll road proposal was regarded as much a violation of their ideological

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<sup>61</sup> Robles, García, and D'Arcy to Kruer and the California Coastal Commission, 4.

principles as a threat to their chosen lifestyles. Far from challenging the Exceptionalist rhetoric employed by toll road supporters, opposition leadership also framed debate around the question of what use of the space would contribute most potently to the region's—and nation's—greatness. While the Acjachemen community played an important role in shaping the outcome of the conflict, its motivations, objectives, and participation diverged from other proposal opponents in significant and telling ways.

With TCA targeting one of the most popular state parks in the California system and one of the few large undeveloped spaces remaining in the region, it is hardly surprising that significant scrutiny arose to meet its proposal. This scrutiny developed along several channels, each of which the TCA sought to counter through the conventional logic of spatial disorientation. Initially, this tactic proved quite effective in negating the somewhat spontaneous and haphazard reactions which the toll road prompted. As the impulsivity and disorganization of the opposition movement were transformed into more committed and cohesive action over time, however, the conventional logic began to lose its ideological luster. Personified in the Coalition, the opposition movement demonstrated a keen ability to negotiate deep culture and persuasively adapt its components to the context at hand. Composed of twelve environmental advocacy groups, the Coalition was forged in order to bring together the various stakeholders opposing the toll road proposal under a common unified umbrella.

Pivotal in formation of this movement were the efforts and guidance of the Surfrider Foundation, a nongovernmental organization dedicated to “the protection and

enjoyment of oceans, waves, and beaches through a powerful activist network.”<sup>62</sup>

Founded in southern California in 1984, Surfrider was originally established by a small group of White surfers to in order to confront local threats to their surfing home base at Malibu Point. The environmental organization then gained official US 501(c)(3) status as a recognized non-profit group and grew to monitor approximately eighty distinct chapters nationally and internationally. Built on a model of grassroots volunteer development, the organization’s stated long-term strategic plan combined a vision of “healthy coasts” with a core strategy of “engaged activism.”<sup>63</sup> At any one time, a range of campaigns were under pursuit by the various chapters with support and supervision from the head office in San Clemente. With this office located just a few miles from San Onofre, “Save Trestles” quickly became Surfrider’s self-styled “flagship campaign.”<sup>64</sup>

Realizing the scope of the toll road challenge, Surfrider was instrumental in motivating and organizing the collection of distinct groups that would become the Coalition. Included among the allied stakeholders were diverse environmental and community organizations such as the National Resources Defense Council, California

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<sup>62</sup> See “Mission,” Surfrider Foundation, accessed 12 May 2011, <http://www.surfrider.org/pages/mission>.

<sup>63</sup> See “Strategic Plan,” Surfrider Foundation, accessed 1 June 2011, <http://www.surfrider.org/pages/strategic-plan>.

<sup>64</sup> See “News Flash: Trestles Prevails with the Federal Government,” Surfrider Foundation, 18 December 2008, accessed 1 June 2011, <http://savetrestles.surfrider.org/2008/12/news-flash-trestles-prevails-with.html>. Interestingly, while stopping the toll road represented a priority for Surfrider from the proposal’s earliest stages, its articulation as the organization’s “flagship campaign” was only widely disseminated after the demise of the TCA proposal seemed imminent.

State Parks Foundation, Defenders of Wildlife, and Sierra Club.<sup>65</sup> The decision to combine resources, networks, and expertise allowed these organizations to face the TCA and its partners with far more vigor and gravity than any might have been able to muster individually. Further, it facilitated the construction and promulgation of a comprehensive argument that connected several interrelated issues and built upon the diverse purviews of the various members. This argument can be briefly summarized in terms of five main points of contention:

1. *Ecological Integrity*: According to the Coalition, the toll road proposal threatened “unmitigatable harm” to the region’s ecological character.<sup>66</sup> By bisecting the state park along its entire length, the toll road portended permanent and disastrous changes to sensitive wetland areas, coastal zones, and plant and wildlife habitats. Further, it imperiled the continuing existence of several rare or threatened species such as the coastal California gnatcatcher, Pacific pocket mouse, arroyo toad, southern steelhead, and tidewater goby. As a “‘hotspot’ of biological diversity” and one of the few remaining spaces along the California coast where people could enjoy a “relatively unobstructed wilderness experience,” San Onofre required protection against potential ecological degradation (for a map of protected wilderness areas along the proposed toll road route, see Appendix H).<sup>67</sup>
2. *Watershed Quality*: Run-off and erosion related to the toll road were framed as direct hazards to the “most pristine—and the only undammed—major coastal watershed in California south of Ventura.”<sup>68</sup> In particular, San Mateo Creek and San Onofre Creek were identified as vital, high integrity areas which would be affected by the inevitable introduction of oils, heavy metals, toxins, and litter.

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<sup>65</sup> Other organizations included the California Coastal Protection Network, Endangered Habitats League, Sea and Sage Audubon Society, Laguna Greenbelt Alliance, Audubon California, Orange County Coastkeeper, and WILD COAST-COSTASALVAJE.

<sup>66</sup> Save San Onofre Coalition to Patrick Kruer and the California Coastal Commission, “Re: Foothill Transportation Corridor-South (San Onofre State Beach): Opposition to Coastal Consistency Certification (CC-018-07),” 17 January 2008, 4, accessed 2 June 2011, <http://documents.coastal.ca.gov/reports/2008/2/W8b-2-2008-a4.pdf>.

<sup>67</sup> Save San Onofre Coalition to Kruer and the California Coastal Commission, 9, 18.

<sup>68</sup> Save San Onofre Coalition to Kruer and the California Coastal Commission, 8.

Further, changes to the natural sedimentation process held the potential to dramatically reshape the beaches and underwater terrain at Trestles. Since even minor reshaping can significantly impact wave size, shape, and quality, the future of surfing in the area represented a major concern—especially for the Surfrider Foundation and local surfers.<sup>69</sup>

3. *Recreation*: Although the TCA suggested that no campsites would need to be removed from the park, the Coalition argued that the placement of the toll road within 200 feet of the popular San Mateo campground would render it all but inoperable.<sup>70</sup> Coastal vistas would be blocked or fundamentally changed by the presence of the toll road, interfering with visitors' visual experience of nature. Further, the proposal was interpreted as setting a dangerous precedent, for it represented "the first time in California that state park lands were taken by a local governmental entity for a major infrastructure project."<sup>71</sup> From the Coalition's perspective, the toll road signified extensive changes to the character of not only San Onofre but potentially also many parks in the state. This claim was based on the CDPR's determination that approximately 60% of the park's acreage would likely have to be abandoned if the proposal were to be accepted.<sup>72</sup>
4. *Traffic Relief and Financing*: Directly contesting several of the TCA's main marketing points, the Coalition contended that: a) the toll road would not "substantially improve [traffic] congestion"; b) changes to the existing I-5 would provide greater benefits with less costs; c) the toll road would indeed require tax revenue to operate—as indicated by the TCA's 2008 request for a \$1.1 billion federal loan to refinance outstanding debt; and d) usage fees would prevent non-wealthy motorists from accessing the roads, effectively creating a two-tier road transportation system based on class.<sup>73</sup> These contentions cast doubt on the notion

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<sup>69</sup> See "The Foothill-South Toll Road: Fact vs. Fiction," Surfrider Foundation, accessed 2 June 2011, <http://ww2.surfrider.org/savetrestles/lies.asp>.

<sup>70</sup> Surfrider noted that the San Mateo campground serves more than 100,000 visitors annually, making it the most utilized campground in San Onofre. "The Foothill-South Toll Road: Fact vs. Fiction."

<sup>71</sup> Save San Onofre Coalition to Kruer and the California Coastal Commission, 6.

<sup>72</sup> See State of California Coastal Commission, *Revised Staff Report and Recommendation on Consistency Certification*, 5 February 2008, accessed 2 June 2011, <http://documents.coastal.ca.gov/reports/2008/2/W8b-2-2008.pdf>.

<sup>73</sup> See Save San Onofre Coalition to Mary E. Peters and Mark Sullivan, "Re: Opposition to \$1.1 Billion TIFIA Loan Sought by Orange County Toll Road Agencies," 14 October 2008, 1-10, accessed 2 June 2011, <http://ww2.surfrider.org/savetrestles/files/TIFIA-EL.PDF>; "The Foothill-South Toll Road: Fact vs. Fiction"; and Save San Onofre Coalition to Kruer and the California Coastal Commission, 28, 35-41.

that the toll road represented an efficient, profitable, and necessary response to traffic problems. Additionally, they helped give credence to the preferability of alternate solutions or routes.

Finally, although the importance of Panhe was initially disregarded within the main opposition movement, it eventually came to be promoted as a fifth major point of contention. The Coalition observed that path of the toll road would pass directly through the ancient Acjachemen village site, disturbing burial sites, damaging important archaeological resources, and impeding the observance of cultural traditions. The reshaped environment would also make the site easier to access, increasing the chance of vandalism and artifact theft. Increased recognition of Panhe was brought about through the efforts of folks like Rebecca Robles, an Acjachemen woman and co-director of an Indian-led organization called the United Coalition to Protect Panhe (UCPP).

Robles explained these efforts in a 2010 interview:

[The UCPP] worked with numerous other outlets at the time like Surfrider, Save Trestles, and the San Onofre Foundation, and really, all of our goals overlap... We all know how the toll road would impact Trestles and surfing in the community, but no one knew about the issues facing the Native American people of Panhe. We felt our issues were just as important and wanted to share our concerns with the public and make people more aware of the living history here in San Clemente.<sup>74</sup>

The imperiled village site acted as a fulcrum of assemblage that provided a range of benefits. Describing the potential harm to Panhe as “tremendous, permanent, and impossible to mitigate,” Coalition leadership was able to appeal to legal protections

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<sup>74</sup> Qtd. in David Zimmerle, “A Native History,” *San Clemente Times*, 15 April 2010, accessed 4 June 2011, [http://sanclementetimes.com/view/full\\_story/7084625/article-A-Native-History](http://sanclementetimes.com/view/full_story/7084625/article-A-Native-History).

regarding Indian religious freedom and historical preservation.<sup>75</sup> In turn, these appeals drew attention was drawn to Acjachemen struggles for recognition and self-determination.

As the struggle over San Onofre evolved, the Coalition's argument came to be intensely disputed in nearly every aspect by the TCA. The intensity was conveyed through a use of increasingly virulent rhetoric, especially as several major points against toll road were received favorably by governmental decision-making bodies. For example, over time both the California Coastal Commission (CCC) and the US Department of Commerce (USDOC) came to express significant concern over potential impacts. Responding to the latter body's 2008 decision—which effectively vetoed the main toll road proposal by noting its drawbacks and alternatives—the TCA stated:

The [USDOC] Secretary's inexplicable decision is unsupported by the facts and rewards the anti-road and anti-growth obstructionists who have engaged in an orchestrated campaign of misrepresentation and distortion against the road's completion.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Save San Onofre Coalition to Krueger and the California Coastal Commission, 34.

<sup>76</sup> See "TCA Statement: Commerce Decision on the 241 Toll Road," Transportation Corridor Agencies, 18 December 2008, accessed 3 June 2011, <https://www.thetollroads.com/home/images/Statement.pdf>. The TCA was joined in the use of vitriolic rhetoric by supporters like Peter Samuel, editor of the unabashedly pro-development online newsletter *Tollroads News*. For example, Samuel responded to TCA setbacks by increasingly identifying toll road opponents and unsupportive government officials with derisive labels like "environuts," "radical enviros," "radicals with an anti-car/anti-road/anti-wealth agenda." See "Environuts on California Coastal Commission Vote to Block Foothill South TR Completion," *Tollroads News*, 7 February 2008, accessed 2 June 2011, <http://www.tollroadsnews.com/node/3386>; and "US Commerce Sec Sides With Radical Enviros on 241 South – Vetoes Consensus Alignment," 19 December 2008, accessed 2 June 2011, <http://www.tollroadsnews.com/node/3894>.

But while charges of “misrepresentation and distortion” may be in the eye of the beholder, it is evident that both the TCA and the Coalition diligently sought to control how the space would be characterized in public discourse.

More than a simple race to discover convincing details and figures, the San Onofre struggle revolved around the power of symbolic representation. This power was harnessed primarily through explicit and implicit references to dominant cognitive images and behavioral themes. The ability to define the cultural meaning of the space offered the key to the conflict, for this meaning determined the uses to which it could properly and acceptably be put.

### *Deep Cultural Congruence*

At the surface level, the representations of San Onofre promoted by the TCA and the Coalition could not have seemed more divergent. While the former organization portrayed the space as an ideal receptacle for the strategic emplacement of tons of concrete, the latter group declared it to be absolutely off-limits to all manner of development.<sup>77</sup> Likewise, almost no common ground could be found among the various technical issues in question. Separately commissioned scientific studies offered contradictory evidence over the mitigation of wastes, the protection of ecology and habitat, and the impact to the surfing experience at Trestles. The viability of alternative

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<sup>77</sup> Or as Jonathan Volzke concisely summarized in the *San Clemente Times*, “The Transportation Corridor Agencies (TCA) has painted the \$875 million Foothill-South as a vital alternative to the traffic-choked San Diego Freeway, while opponents contend it will render much of the San Mateo Campground unusable, hurt water quality in pristine San Mateo Creek and threaten near-perfect waves at the world-renowned surf break Trestles.” “Setback for Toll Road?” *San Clemente Times*, 4 October 2007, accessed 4 June 2011, [http://sanclementetimes.com/view/full\\_story/6695964/article-Setback-for-Toll-Road](http://sanclementetimes.com/view/full_story/6695964/article-Setback-for-Toll-Road).



solutions was also disputed. While the Coalition floated the possibility of adding high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes to the existing I-5, the TCA scoffed and continued to press their proposal as both a critical brace for the regional economy and the “green” solution to traffic relief.<sup>78</sup> Such clashing ideological positions rendered constructive dialogue virtually unattainable, as emotional beliefs yielded entrenched attitudes. Further, they illustrated the gamut of competing interests that made this particular place so significant to diverse individuals and communities.

Over the course of the conflict both sides called on powerful outside authorities—established scientific research facilities, politico-economic elites, governmental agencies, and even famous movie stars—to help support to their seemingly polarized ideologies. Among the authorities cited by the TCA to promote the toll road proposal were the Army Corps of Engineers, Environmental Protection Agency, Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Transportation, and the Federal Highway Administration, and several local business community leaders. In response, the Coalition noted support not only from its own broad membership but also from the Office of the California Attorney General, CDPR, Smart Mobility Inc., rock star Eddie Vedder, California Lieutenant Governor John Garamendi, various Indian nations (in addition to the Acjachemen), and several other environmental and recreational interest groups. Both sides received significant backing from California state legislators and Congressional representatives,

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<sup>78</sup> See “Toll Agency Board Hears 100 Speakers about Proposed Foothill-South Project,” Transportation Corridor Agencies, 12 January 2005, accessed 4 June 2011, [https://www.thetollroads.com/home/news\\_press\\_jan\\_06.htm](https://www.thetollroads.com/home/news_press_jan_06.htm).

divided largely along political party lines. Finally the position statements of some authorities, such as the military leadership at Camp Pendleton, were alternately used to verify aspects of the arguments for *and* against the toll road.<sup>79</sup> Public recognition of these dueling endorsements reached a height in early 2008 when Clint Eastwood, a well-known actor and public opponent of the TCA proposal, was unceremoniously and not-so-quietly removed from his position on the California State Park and Recreation Commission. His removal came at the behest of Governor Schwarzenegger, a toll road supporter with his own Hollywood credentials.<sup>80</sup>

Considering such contestation and divergence, it might seem reasonable to frame the struggle for San Onofre as a straightforward contest between a fundamentally spatially disoriented but powerful organization (the TCA), and a relatively more aware but less privileged grouping of actors seeking authentic relations with the land (the Coalition). But whereas such an essentialist frame was proven too simplistic in the cases of *Newe Sogobia* and Crandon Mine, its application in this context can be judged as even more inappropriate and misleading. To return to the refrain raised throughout this exploration, by looking to deep culture we are enabled to see the San Onofre conflict in a different and far more robust light. More precisely, if we distinguish the cognitive images and behavioral themes that governed the conflict we discover a surprising finding.

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<sup>79</sup> For example, see respectively “TCA Statement”; and Save San Onofre Coalition to Kruer and the California Coastal Commission, 17, 48-50.

<sup>80</sup> See Mike Nizza, “Schwarzenegger to Eastwood: Hasta La Vista, Baby,” *The Lede* (blog), *New York Times*, 26 March 2008, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/03/26/schwarzenegger-to-eastwood-hasta-la-vista-baby>.

Despite the surface level divergence demonstrated between the two main participants—the TCA and the Coalition—the spatial symbols accepted and acted upon by each were remarkably similar. In terms of the deep cultural assumptions from which core leadership operated, little deviation from dominant patterns of spatial thought and behavior emerged on either side of the ideological divide. This deep cultural congruence helps to explain the intensity and outcome of the conflict, and the ability of both sides to garner significant politico-economic support, and the shared promotion of Exceptionalist principles.

Throughout the course of the conflict, the representation of the San Onofre as one of the last remaining untouched and unoccupied frontier wilderness areas in southern California was never seriously brought into question. For example, in comments submitted for the TCA’s Final Environmental Impact Statement released in December 2005, Coalition members made frequent and unambiguous allusions to the park and neighboring natural areas through phrases such as “undeveloped and pristine,” “pristine open space,” “undeveloped watershed,” “highly sensitive undeveloped land,” and “outstanding wilderness experience.”<sup>81</sup> Not once were such references contradicted by the TCA; on the contrary, the organization went to great lengths to describe how it would fulfill its legal obligations to maintain the space in this manner. In the same document, the TCA openly acknowledged the “regional and statewide significance” of the virtual

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<sup>81</sup> See Transportation Corridor Agencies, *Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report*, Section 3.0: Response to Comments.

frontier line drawn by the park's boundaries "amidst dense urban development along the coast."<sup>82</sup>

The uncontested representation of *terra nullius* and frontier wilderness obscured a long history of human occupancy, shifting control, and transformation. Intriguingly, this history was quite well known in spite of the emphasis upon the space's contemporary non-urbanized character. Further, with the state park receiving over two and a half million visitors per year, its classification as unmanaged and unoccupied was patently invalid.<sup>83</sup> Yet these images were consistently employed by both the TCA and Coalition in support of their arguments—the former to justify why its proposal portended the least disturbance to regional life, the latter to illustrate why the park required protection from development.<sup>84</sup>

At the same time, the struggle over San Onofre was thoroughly couched in anthropocentric logic from its beginning. A hierarchy of being dominated the concerns of toll road supporters while also fundamentally shaping the opposition perspective.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Transportation Corridor Agencies, *Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report*, Section 4.2: Affected Environment, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures Related to Land Use, 12.

<sup>83</sup> See "San Onofre State Beach Wins Protections Against Road Development," National Resources Defense Council, accessed 6 June 2011, <http://www.nrdc.org/land/parks/nroad.asp>.

<sup>84</sup> For example, an anonymous post on the website Save Trestles noted, "For 15 years Orange County's purveyor of toll road myth and misinformation—the TCA, have schemed to build a toll road to Trestles—an easy build—no people. But roads are supposed to serve people. A Trestles toll road serves no purpose. There are growing traffic needs elsewhere in the county, to the north. This website explores those possibilities. Someone has to, because by every measure of TCA's daily promise of less traffic—a better life—won't pollute—profitability—not one has come true." See "Saving Trestles is an Everyday Thing," Save Trestles, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://www.savetrestles.com/page.htm>.

Alluding to this underlying current from the perspective of Coalition leadership, Surfrider CEO Jim Moriarty stated:

This campaign, one that we've been at for over a decade, is important. It's a regional issue with state-wide ramifications. It's also a federal issue as it intersects with numerous federal agencies and military institutions. But in the end this issue is about the people... This is an issue that has captured many people. It has captured tens of thousands of people. In an era of disappearing open spaces and rampant over-commercialization... this is one of those times and one of those campaigns that has become an onramp for thousands of people to plug in. This isn't about some tiny group of surfers this is about entire communities crying foul, this is about people calling overzealous commercial projects out and pointing out their messages for what they are... lies.<sup>86</sup>

Certainly, ecological concerns played a major role in the progression of the conflict. But ultimately the question of how humans would be affected by the toll road proposal—along with the related matter of who could properly claim ownership of the space—molded the

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<sup>85</sup> Exemplifying the anthropocentric view, one TCA supporter and self-described “life-long conservative” blogged: “Thanks to various environwackos the 241 toll road in Eastern Orange County stops abruptly in Ladera Ranch right by Tesoro High School...many miles short of the planned connection to the I-5 below San Clemente. As someone who has frequently driving [sic] the I-5 back and forth to San Diego, it can be a complete parking lot out there, especially southbound on Friday nights and Saturday mornings, and northbound on Sunday nights. We need for the 241 to be completed and the agency in charge is trying to get it done...I guarantee you that whatever flora or fauna there is out there that might be inconvenienced by completion of the toll road, there are plenty more in Camp Pendleton or points further south into Mexico. It's well worth completing the road.” Rick Moore, “Finish the Road,” *Holy Coast* (blog), 4 May 2011, accessed 2 March 2012, <http://holycost.blogspot.com/2011/05/finish-toll-road.html>.

<sup>86</sup> Moriarty stated, “To many of us these lands are priceless. They are open spaces that have been set aside as public lands and secured as State Parks. This protected designation was done by Presidents Nixon and Reagan. They said State Parks are ours, they belong to the people of the state. With the recent announcement of 70 California state parks being closed the value of remaining parks is even higher. To a few, protected lands such as State Parks have a price. These people, real estate speculators, literally put a price tag on State Parks. The hubris to think of taking something so valuable away from the public is stunning. These people would financially benefit from State Parks ceasing to exist as a protected, California State Park. At the top of this list is the TCA. If that's not enough, the TCA builds fee-based private roads and they build these with public funds. Think of that for a second. What if I walked into your house, took a family heirloom which had been passed down for generations and sold it on eBay. Taking something belonging to others and then selling it for personal gain is usually considered robbery. But this scenario doesn't seem to be bold enough for the TCA. Their recent campaign is in a category I can only label ‘odd.’” “By the People,” *Jim's Blog* (blog), Surfrider Foundation, 14 July 2008, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://205.186.142.154/jims-blog/entry/by-the-people>.

contours of debate. The character and integrity of the space itself represented a non-issue on its own. Rather, the critical point of dispute involved what use of land would offer most benefit and least harm to the region's human inhabitants, taking into consideration their diversity of activities and interests.

Hence Moriarty could persuasively employ the theme of property to declare "State Parks are ours, they belong to the people of the state," while comparing the TCA proposal to the theft of a "family heirloom."<sup>87</sup> But while this declaration held rhetorical value, it did not accurately reflect the reality at San Onofre. From a legal standpoint, ownership of the land remained with the US military even after its management was turned over to the state parks department. This status was spelled out in the original lease agreement, which stipulated that Camp Pendleton could requisition the entire acreage of the park for training exercises (effectively closing public access) at any time.<sup>88</sup> In fact, the necessity of keeping the space undeveloped and available for military activities was one of the reasons the park arrangement was accepted in the first place. The proposed alignment of the toll road through San Onofre—the impetus for the entire conflict—was quietly shaped by underlying theme. Military leadership held final authority over the space, and dictated the limits of its use by refusing to allow any other violation of Camp

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<sup>87</sup> See Jim Moriarty, "The TCA, Stooping to New Levels of Desperation to Build a Road Through a State Park," *Jim's Blog* (blog), Surfrider Foundation, 16 May 2011, accessed 2 June 2011, <http://www.surfrider.org/jims-blog/entry/the-tca-stooping-to-new-levels-of-desperation-to-build-a-road-through-a-sta>.

<sup>88</sup> See Transportation Corridor Agencies, *Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report*, Section 4.21: Affected Environment, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures Related to Military Uses and Camp Pendleton, 18.

Pendleton's territorial integrity.<sup>89</sup> In essence, both the TCA and the Coalition were left to fight for the scraps of land left to them by the US government's military arm. This subtext to the conflict should not be overlooked, for it significantly circumscribed the possibilities of spatial imagination and relationship for all the major stakeholders.

Contextual details thus reveal various layers of privilege at work in the space. First, we see the elevation of human concerns over those of other beings and the land itself. This layer can be subdivided as we note biases in the dominant culture toward certain types of concerns—and certain types of humans. Second there is the prioritization of military might under the auspices of national security, in an area situated not coincidentally near the Mexican border and along the Pacific coast. Finally, a privileging of temporal progress can be discerned through the words and actions of stakeholders on both sides of the conflict.

While toll road supporters and opponents visualized progress in different terms, they commonly accepted the dominant cultural belief in advancement over time and sought to ensure its realization in their corner of the American city upon a hill. Controverting TCA chairman Jerry Amante's lament that Coalition members had been "able to throw a roadblock in the path of progress...and to mire our residents in a poor

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<sup>89</sup> As the Executive Summary of the TCA's *Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report* states, "In 1988, the Marine Corps agreed that only one potential alignment of the proposed extension of the Foothill South project could be evaluated on Camp Pendleton as long as it met certain criteria, the most important of which was that any on-Base portion of this proposed toll road must be as closely located to the northern Base boundary as possible and it must be routed in a manner that it does not impact the Marine Corps mission nor interfere with Camp Pendleton's operational flexibility. The Preferred Alternative...meets the Marine Corps criteria." Transportation Corridor Agencies, *Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report*, Executive Summary, 18.

quality of life for the sake of their interests,”<sup>90</sup> one such member (the Sierra Club)

clarified early in the conflict:

We agree that we must plan for future growth and development, especially along the I-5. However, Friends of the Foothills wants to ensure that our community and all of South Orange County remains a great place to live, work, and play... Our efforts to stop the toll road are not to fight progress, but to ensure that San Clemente is protected from urban sprawl and the ills that it will create—dirty air, dirty water, less open space, and additional traffic congestion.<sup>91</sup>

This sentiment was echoed by other Coalition members like the Surfrider Foundation, which held that it was not against the construction of a toll road in general but rather the TCA’s specifically chosen alignment.<sup>92</sup> Using scientific projections as markers, Surfrider contended that this alignment would actually impede civilizational advancement by being cost-ineffective, failing to reduce traffic congestion, and degrading ecological health and wave quality.

The ability to contextually tie belief in progress to markers of positivism proved decisive in the outcome of the case. Although the Coalition arguably demonstrated a greater appreciation for the complexity of the natural world than the TCA, it too was heavily invested in explaining and managing space through the application of scientific

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<sup>90</sup> Qtd. in Matt Coker, “Toll Road Foister Jerry Amante: We’re Doomed,” *Navel Gazing* (blog), *OC Weekly*, 19 December 2008, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://blogs.ocweekly.com/navelgazing/a-clockwork-orange/toll-road-foister-jerry-amante>.

<sup>91</sup> Friends of the Foothills, *Friend to Friend* (newsletter), summer 1999. Friends of the Foothills represented “a project of the Sierra Club.”

<sup>92</sup> See Josh Hunter, “Matt McClain from Surfrider Foundation Speaks Out About Save Trestles Victory,” *Transworld Business*, 18 December 2008, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://business.transworld.net/12321/features/matt-mcc-lain-fro-m-surfrider-foundation-speaks-out-about-save-trestles-victory>.



techniques. The individual facts and figures cited by toll road opponents supplemented an overall capacity for symbolically representing the space in a credible manner.

Conversely, their trust in and reliance on quantitative evidence enhanced their perceived authority in the eyes of the general public and decision making bodies. In other words, if Coalition members had been unable to counter the TCA at the level of positivism, they would likely have failed to gain the politico-economic leverage necessary to stop the toll road. Such conjecture is verified by the CCC and USDOC decisions, both of which cited the existence of sufficient scientific contradiction to find the TCA argument “not necessary,” “not consistent,” “unpersuasive,” and “insufficient.”<sup>93</sup>

### *Profane Tactics, “Sacred” Strategy*

Without straying from the bounds of dominant spatial disorientation, the Coalition was able to cast significant doubt on the TCA’s claim that the toll road proposal would offer the greatest benefit to the human population of the region and nation. This doubt prevented the space from being significantly transformed—at least not more than it already had been over the preceding several centuries—and undermined the collective will of a powerful grouping of politico-economic elites. In light of the shared deep cultural formation at play and the somewhat unusual nature of this outcome, a more intensive deconstruction of the “Save San Onofre” movement seems in order. Several effective

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<sup>93</sup> US Department of Commerce, “Decision and Findings by the US Secretary of Commerce in the Consistency Appeal of the Foothill/Eastern Transportation Corridor Agency and the Board of Directors of the Foothill/Eastern Transportation Corridor Agency from an Objection by the California Coastal Commission,” 18 December 2008, 2-3, 11-12, accessed 2 March 2012, <http://www.coastal.ca.gov/fedcd/soc/TCA.pdf>.

and, in some cases, unorthodox tactics were adopted by the movement to arouse interest and cooperation. Although these tactics were multifaceted, they all centered around one vital objective: education. By seeking to educate otherwise disinterested, ignorant, or even hostile persons about their representation of the space, the Coalition was able to cultivate a substantial support base and undercut the attractiveness of its rival. These efforts at education (or perhaps indoctrination) were particularly helpful in awakening the energy of regional youth—an energy which the TCA could not match.

*Early Entry:* The first tactic of note entailed becoming significantly involved in the toll road debate very early in its development. By the early 2000's, the Coalition had already put the issue onto the radar of many surfers, environmentalists, legislators, and other regional citizens. Awareness-raising was pursued through widespread and constant educational efforts, which included holding public meetings, disseminating newsletters, writing newspaper editorials, and engaging in guerilla marketing. Further, it was facilitated through the simplification of complex politico-economic issues and scientific findings into small, manageable talking points.<sup>94</sup> Although such simplification inevitably blurred detail, it proved essential in providing individuals without technical expertise the knowledge and confidence necessary to begin conceptualizing the space in the

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<sup>94</sup> A particularly representative use of simplification was embodied in the “Fact vs. Fiction” list disseminated by Surfrider. In this list, brief TCA talking points were characterized as “myths” and then immediately and concisely countered with “realities” supported by the findings of Coalition-commissioned studies. Substantiating the efficacy of this tactic through the ultimate form of flattery, the TCA later saw fit to imitate (and reverse) this tactic by responding with a similar list of its own. See respectively: “The Foothill-South Toll Road: Fact vs. Fiction,” Surfrider Foundation, accessed 2 June 2011, <http://ww2.surfrider.org/savetrestles/lies.asp>; and Transportation Corridor Agencies, *Foothill-South Update* (newsletter), February 2007, accessed 4 June 2011, [https://www.thetollroads.com/home/newsletter/foothill\\_south/foothill\\_jan07a.htm](https://www.thetollroads.com/home/newsletter/foothill_south/foothill_jan07a.htm).

Coalition's terms. As these educated voices approached a critical mass, they began to replicate the awareness-raising process in larger social networks. The autonomous growth freed up leadership to focus resources on the vital task of lobbying within the governmental bodies that would determine the space's fate. By beginning to negotiate the relevant legal processes before the toll road project gained too much bureaucratic inertia, the Coalition's chances of exercising influence were significantly increased.

*Creating a Sense of Crisis:* As some strands of conflict resolution theory suggest, a sense of crisis can often be a crucial factor in determining the course of seemingly intractable situations.<sup>95</sup> Deliberately or not, the Coalition went to great lengths to exacerbate feelings of impending tragedy by drawing attention to the predicted consequences of the TCA proposal. Portrayed as severe and irreparable, ecological harm in particular became a rallying point for diverse individuals who otherwise might have regarded the toll road as necessary, inevitable, or valuable—or simply might not have cared enough to get involved. I do not mean to suggest that the Coalition's predictions were disingenuous—though the extent of their accuracy remains an open question. On the contrary, all indications suggest that organizations such as Surfrider and the Sierra Club

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<sup>95</sup> For example, Saadia Touval and I. William Zartman note: "A crisis ...represents the realization that matters are swiftly becoming worse. It implies impending catastrophe, such as probably military defeat or economic collapse. It may be accompanied by a policy dilemma that involves engaging in a major escalation, the outcome of which is unpredictable, or seeking a desperate compromise that threatens one side as much as the other. It may also be that a catastrophe has already taken place or has been narrowly avoided. Whatever its tense (because parties are bound to disagree about the inevitability of an impending event), it marks a time limit to the judgment that 'things can't go on like this.'" "International Mediation in the Post-Cold War Era," in *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, eds. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall (Washington DC: US Institute of Peace, 2001) 434-435.

truly viewed a crisis on the horizon. These organizations were committed to preventing the perceived harm from coming to pass, and to ensuring that a wide range of people felt significantly and personally connected to the conflict. Rather than attempting to create a crisis out of thin air, their goal was to accentuate an approaching point of no return and make potential allies feel threatened enough to take action.

*Utilizing Information Technologies:* Echoing a tactic used in the Crandon mine case, the shrewd use of information technologies provided a powerful means of education and communication. During the height of the conflict, Surfrider and other Coalition members sent out frequent (e.g. weekly and even bi-weekly) email updates to keep the toll road issue in the forefront of their constituents' minds. Several websites, e-newsletters, and blogs also sprung up to provide news reports, disseminate propaganda, solicit donations, and promote involvement. Intentionally designed to be provocative and media-rich, these internet sources attempted to create an emotional and multisensory connection between their audience and the opposition movement's preferred symbolic representation of San Onofre. The incorporation of video, popular music, trendy graphic design, and online social networking features appealed especially to young adults. Further, it contrasted sharply with the TCA's more staid approach to information technologies.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> The importance of information technologies was recognized by the TCA over time, leading to significant changes in the organization's online presence. For example, in 2007 the TCA registered a new modern-looking website, <http://www.relievetraffic.org>, which promoted the alleged need for and benefits of toll road construction. This website effectively replaced the TCA's former online repository of toll road information, <http://www.ftcsouth.com>, which was rather decrepit and difficult to navigate.

*The “Cool” Factor:* Tied to the shrewd use of technology, the Coalition also successfully established what might be called a “cool” factor around the toll road issue. Especially among southern California youth and young adults, involvement with the “Save Trestles” campaign came to act as an indicator of membership in a fashionable group of socially aware and engaged persons. Bringing respect and recognition, this membership played on surfing’s traditional image as a counter-cultural activity while simultaneously redefining it.<sup>97</sup> The endorsements of prominent celebrities and professional athletes also helped heighten the trendy nature of activism. Spurred by grassroots organizing, official legislative hearings with the CCC and USDOC were surrounded by raucous, almost party-like atmospheres where hundreds of toll road opponents would gather not only to support the cause but also to see and be seen.<sup>98</sup> The coalescence of so much passionate energy forced government officials to weigh the

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<sup>97</sup> Although as Kristin Lawler persuasively argues, the counter-cultural image of surfing has long been complexly implicated in that most conventional and conservative of dominant institutions – capitalism: “The fact that while surfing has been repressed by the forces I’m calling Puritans and neo-Puritans, it’s been broadcast and amplified by commercial forces, is key to my argument that the most frequently recurring popular culture images endure precisely because they tap into our deepest, most ‘primitive’ desires for freedom and connection. Both sides understand the lure. Puritans know that cultural images that encourage liberation are compelling and contagious and spread undisciplined, spontaneous activity; which is why they work so hard to shut down channels that broadcast them. Furthermore, advertisers surely know that appealing to dreams, to desires, moves people as well. Knowing this is their business.” *The American Surfer: Radical Culture and Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 4.

<sup>98</sup> Describing the September 22, 2008 hearing held by the USDOC, writers for the San Diego Union-Tribune noted, “Despite repeated warnings to maintain decorum, supporters and opponents of the proposed state Route 241 toll-road extension both cheered and jeered dozens of speakers at a public hearing Monday. At time, some of those in the crowd of more than 1,000 drowned out the speakers. ‘Stop the lies,’ yelled a woman from the audience... The pro-tollway rally was small compared to a protest held outside by opponents of the toll road, many of whom held signs saying ‘save our state park.’” Terry Rodgers and Mike Lee, “Crowds Pack Hearing on San Onofre Toll Road Proposal,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 22 September 2008, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://legacy.signonsandiego.com/news/northcounty/20080922-1559-bn22road2.html>.

popular will (and its potential backlash) as part of their considerations. Filling both virtual and material spaces, this presence represented a tangible repudiation of TCA claims that “Every study that we’ve done shows that the vast majority of people want to see the Foothill South built.”<sup>99</sup>

*Engaging Authority:* While emphasizing grassroots-level organizing through education and entreaty, the Coalition also sought to work with politico-economic elites who could exercise influence from the top-down. The former efforts directly enabled the latter, as vocal popular opposition persuaded some elected officials to regard the toll road as a greater long-term risk to their careers than siding against the powerful southern California business community. The deliberate construction of a sense of ecological crisis forced accountability to campaign promises regarding the environment, while real-time monitoring through information technologies made political maneuverings more transparent. Coalition members also developed relationships with other types of authorities, including respected scientists who could offer expert testimony on the likely consequences of the toll road. As personifications of dominant cultural values and established power structures, these figures lent credibility to the argument that the TCA proposal was antithetical to the Exceptional nature of the region and nation.

*Forging Alliances:* The Coalition itself embodied a final tactic, and one which proved absolutely vital to its success. This tactic involved forging alliances among various stakeholders with a common interest in preventing the construction of the toll

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<sup>99</sup> Gillian Flaccus, “Surfers Rally to Protect Their ‘Yosemite,’” *MSNBC*, 4 November 2005, [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/9923213/ns/us\\_news-environment](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/9923213/ns/us_news-environment).

road. Some of these bonds arose organically, as between environmental groups with similar primary concerns like wilderness preservation, endangered species, water and air quality, etc. Other bonds, however, required more deliberate forging. Recent and ongoing conflicts among environmentalists, surfers, wildlife activists, American Indians, scientists and others in the region rendered a cohesive opposition movement anything but certain, even in spite of a shared threat. Yet the willingness of these groups to set aside historical antagonisms and ideological differences enabled them to garner a sufficient breadth of constituency and resources to take on the TCA and its daunting array of supporters. Of course, the glue that held together the tactical alliance was a collective appreciation for the space of San Onofre itself. Although Coalition members held this appreciation for different reasons, they shared an intensity of commitment that was expressed through powerfully emotional and often religiously structured language.

Far from anomalous or unintentional, the choice to represent San Onofre through such evocative language can be interpreted as the key weapon in the larger Coalition strategy. This weapon was aimed directly through a notable loophole in the dominant cognitive-behavioral approach. Namely, if a distinct space can be clearly and conclusively defined as “*sacred*” in relation to the master American narrative and its teleological tale of mandate and destiny, it can secure a particularly privileged sort of treatment. As Vine Deloria Jr. notes, “Every society needs...sacred places because they help to instill a sense of social cohesion in the people and remind them of the passage of

generations that have brought them to the present.”<sup>100</sup> Exemplifying Deloria’s contention, this case demonstrates that when a particular space is recognized as “sacred” in the dominant culture, it can at times become exempt—or at least more robustly set apart—from more typical understandings and uses of land.

Epitomized in national parks, monuments, and battlefields, the symbolic value of “sacred” spaces for the maintenance of cultural identity and politico-economic order is determined to outweigh the more tangible benefits that might be gained, for example, from heavy resource extraction or intensive industrial manipulation. Or as one anti-toll road blogger succinctly described during the course of the conflict, “Sometimes progress means doing nothing.”<sup>101</sup> In relation the (un)holy trinity of economic efficiency (i.e. profit), political expediency (i.e. power), and national esteem (i.e. prestige), spaces designated as “sacred” promote Exceptionalism more by maintaining their image as “wild,” “pristine,” or “untouched” than by being transformed into more emblematic demonstrations of urbanization and development. What is essential is not that the representation of these places actually conveys reality in an authentic sense, but rather

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<sup>100</sup> Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*, 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed. (Golden: Fulcrum, 2003), 276. Deloria goes on to identify four types of sacred spaces: 1) “places to which we attribute sanctity because the location is a site where, within our own history, something of great importance has taken place” and which “is made sacred by the actions of men”; 2) spaces “where we have perceived that something specifically other than ourselves is present, [where] something mysteriously religious in the proper meaning of those words has happened or been made manifest”; 3) “places of overwhelming holiness where the Higher Powers, on their own initiative, have revealed Themselves to human beings”; and 4) “new locations” where “people must always be ready to experience new revelations” (275-282). Especially in light of these four categories, I contend that the “sacredness” attributed to San Onofre carried markedly distinct meanings for the different stakeholders.

<sup>101</sup> Mike Marks, “Trestles Toll Road Vetoed,” *Cape Cod Beach Blog*, MoreBeach, 7 February 2008, accessed 1 May 2011, <http://www.morebeach.com/blog/beach-news/trestles-toll-road-vetoed.html>.



that it confirms what we already believe to be true about who we are. Thus in American culture “sacred spaces” remain intimately wedded to a sense of unnatural innocence and the myths upon which it is maintained. This dynamic is suggested in the San Onofre case in a number of ways.

First, explicit expressions of the special, “sacred” nature of the space abounded throughout the conflict. Surf rider again led the charge in this regard, consistently painting Trestles as an invaluable gem whose unique characteristics made it an irreplaceable part of the southern Californian physical and cultural landscape. This portrait was buttressed by designations such as the “Yosemite of Surfing”—a nickname with unknown origins which experienced an explosion in usage during the toll road struggle.<sup>102</sup> References to Yosemite were intentionally designed to associate Trestles with one of the most influential spaces in the birth of the national parks idea and a widely recognized American “sacred” place.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> For specific uses of this designation, see Christopher Reynolds, “A Swell Time,” *Los Angeles Times*, 29 May 2011, accessed 11 June 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/may/29/travel/la-tr-socalcloseups-20110529>; Flaccus, “Surfers Rally to Protect Their ‘Yosemite,’”; and “San Mateo,” Save Trestles, accessed 11 May 2011, <http://www.savetrestles.com/mateo.htm>

<sup>103</sup> William Deverell reflects on the cultural and religious import of Yosemite from the perspective of one of its greatest proponents, John Muir: “There is, too, a hint of Manifest Destiny in Muir’s writing about Yosemite’s glories—not a sanguinary gloating over fulfilled national promise so much as a supplicant gratitude for the sublime natural gifts granted by God to the westering young nation. Muir’s language is not, at core, a political rhetoric about national destiny, but is, rather, that of the truly devout. He believed that God’s work was powerfully inscribed at Yosemite, and his wanderings around the park were inextricably tied to his devotional life: in the Yosemite landscape, he saw a conduit to the divine and, increasingly, the divine itself. . . . As many have pointed out, looking was, to Muir, a version of reading; in looking at nature in Yosemite, he was reading God’s writings on the rocks, trees, and waterfalls. He saw religious power narrated all around him. Yosemite may indeed be a sacred site in the United States today—it is surely California’s most sacred site—but, ironically, that ‘sacredness’ has been leached of the religiosity its most important guardian saw in it; it is a place both sacred and secular. Muir could not have understood this irony, for it was his religious fervor about Yosemite that galvanized him. The sublimity he found in the

However, the references also inadvertently connoted another, more repressed similarity. This similarity involved the dispossession, discounting, and genocide of the Indian nations who called the respective spaces home. Like the Acjachemen, the Yosemite Indians (from whom the park took its name) received the ignominy of being declared extinct by the US government and therefore incapable of making official claims on their traditional land.<sup>104</sup> And also like the Acjachemen, the Yosemite have been fighting for recognition ever since. The existence of such clear and revealing parallels went entirely unacknowledged by the Coalition members—indicating how notions of the “sacred” worked simultaneously to protect the land and conceal its memory.

Likewise, one of the most prevalent marketing devices used by Surfrider involved a simple black and white image of a bust of Ronald Reagan located underneath the slogan, “Save Trestles.” Appearing on t-shirts, posters, and websites, Reagan became rather ubiquitous symbol of the opposition movement (for a copy of this image, see Appendix I). A seemingly strange juxtaposition at first glance, the image and slogan alluded to a speech offered by Reagan, then governor of the state of California, at a

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landscape had a profoundly religious import. Present-day visitors who find religious or deeply spiritual solace, inspiration, or meaning in Yosemite’s landscape are following in Muir’s tradition.” “‘Niagara Magnified’: Finding Emerson, Muir, and Adams in Yosemite,” in *Yosemite: Art of an American Icon*, ed. Amy Scott (Berkeley: University of California, 2006), 12.

<sup>104</sup> Of course, even the National Parks Service notes that the name “Yosemite” represents a “corrupted form” of a title given to the Ahwahneechee people, whose traditional lands encompassed much of what is today the park. “Yosemite: Places,” US National Parks Service, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://www.nps.gov/yose/historyculture/places.htm>. Also See David Mazel, *American Literary Environmentalism* (Athens: University of Georgia, 2000), 162-163; and Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University, 1999), 115-132.

dedication ceremony for San Onofre. The space had recently been set aside as park land by President Richard Nixon (working in conjunction with military leadership). Not coincidentally, Nixon had purchased his “Western White House” within view of the beach just two years prior.<sup>105</sup>

In any case, Reagan grounded his dedication speech in the same traditional rhetoric of Exceptionalism that would later help him gain the Oval Office:

This is a momentous and proud day for California—it is the culmination of many months of dedicated effort by many people to enhance and preserve California’s grandeur and beauty. I firmly believe one of the greatest legacies we can leave to future generations is the heritage of our land, but unless we can preserve and protect the unspoiled areas which God has given us, we will have nothing to leave them. This expanse of acreage, San Onofre Bluffs State Beach, now has its future guaranteed as an official state park. However, its preservation still remains with those who use the park. As stewards of this land, we must use it judiciously and with a great sense of responsibility.”<sup>106</sup>

Ignoring Reagan’s dubious legacy of actual environmental “stewardship,” Surfrider often highlighted this snippet presumably in an effort to confirm the credentials and intentions of the park’s founders. Further, the implicit endorsement of a conservative icon targeted the leanings of the TCA’s main support base. Allusions to Reagan integrated seamlessly

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<sup>105</sup> Richard Reeves describes how Nixon purchased the “fourteen-room, forty-five-year-old house overlooking the Pacific Ocean in April [1969]. La Casa Pacifica, ‘the House of Peace,’ Nixon called it though a more accurate translation would have been ‘the Peaceful House.’ It was about halfway between Los Angeles and San Diego, near the town of San Clemente, within the sound of the gunfire of Marines at Camp Pendleton being trained to go to Vietnam. . . The actual price, hidden in trust documents, was at least \$1.4 million.” *Nixon: Alone in the White House* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 114.

<sup>106</sup> Ronald Reagan, “Address” (address given at the dedication of San Onofre State Park, Oceanside, CA, 3 April 1971). For an example of Surfrider’s usage, see “The Ghost of Ronald Reagan Says . . .,” Surfrider Foundation, accessed 2 June 2011, <http://savetrestles.surfrider.org/2007/06/ghost-of-ronald-reagan-says.html>.

with dominant spatial images of promised land and frontier wilderness, connecting preservation of the space to larger beliefs in America's divine destiny.

They also complemented the systems of privilege that operated alongside this acceptance of the master narrative. Even while recognizing the importance of Acjachemen participation in the opposition movement—a complex topic to which I will turn shortly—it is vital to note that the San Onofre struggle was primarily a dispute between affluent White people. Overall, participants in the struggle did exhibit some manifestations of diversity, particularly in terms ideology, lifestyle, and age. Especially at the level of leadership, however, a fairly homogenous constellation of race, gender, and class emerged. Relatively few persons of color or women held positions of authority within the TCA, amidst the various Coalition members, or among the governmental bodies who considered the case.<sup>107</sup> Further, virtually all of the major players had the means to live comfortably even while expending significant time and effort on the conflict.<sup>108</sup> Though perhaps sadly unsurprising, these observations are particularly relevant because they provide supplementary data regarding why, how, and by whom the space was defined as “sacred.”

The absence of many types of marginalized voices ensured that overarching systemic injustices were largely omitted from the toll road debate. For example, the

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<sup>107</sup> A notable exception to this pattern was Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez, who publically identified as Hispanic.

<sup>108</sup> Data regarding social location was gleaned from an investigation of public financial records, biographical data, and self-disclosive statements. This investigation was supplemented when necessary with an image analysis of photographs. Though admittedly somewhat limited and unsophisticated, this method provided sufficient information to support the general observations noted here.

Coalition often returned to well-founded claims that the toll road would eliminate “increasingly rare low-cost accommodations for... coastal visitors” by crippling the San Mateo campsite. Yet in doing so, it failed to appreciate how the region’s cost of living and dearth of public transportation had already rendered the space much more accessible to the rich than the poor.<sup>109</sup> Opposition to the toll road was also often interpreted as opposition to additional jobs for construction workers, toll operators, and other blue-collar workers—a detail which the TCA trumpeted at every possible opportunity. The TCA’s self-designation as a friend of the poor came off as somewhat disingenuous, however, in light of the nature of its proposal, the profit it stood to gain, and its desire to enlist the support of unions and the unemployed. Indeed, the situation was portrayed in just this way by the Coalition, who contended that poor and working-class folks would benefit more from the creation of environmentally-friendly and sustainable avenues to employment. In the end such avenues were given little more than lip service, a fact not overlooked by the fairly large contingent of workers who rallied in favor of development.

The struggle for San Onofre illustrates how multiple meanings and intensities can be at work behind definition of a place as “sacred.”<sup>110</sup> Beyond the term’s tactical

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<sup>109</sup> Save San Onofre Coalition to Kruer and the California Coastal Commission, 19.

<sup>110</sup> Obviously, the notion and definition of “sacredness” is highly complex, contextual, and contested. This term may possess wildly different meanings in different cultural settings, to the point where it is rendered largely meaningless as a tool for dialogue. Further, it may often embody the colonization of language, thereby serving as a tool of oppression. I therefore analyze the term in this chapter in order to: a) acknowledge its explicit use by various participants; b) reveal its power as a cultural trope and tactical tool; and b) demonstrate the variability of its usage and meaning. On the problematic nature of “sacredness,” see George E. “Tink” Tinker, *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), especially 25-28.

employment as a politico-economic keyword, these meanings and intensities can converge, overlap, or compete depending on the context at hand. Let us consider the following representative examples of quotations which appeared in various media outlets over the course of the struggle:

- “Honorable Secretary, please uphold the California Coastal Commission's Feb. 6th 08 denial of a TCA Toll Road paving thru San Onofre State Beach Park. California's 5th most popular State Park. A sacred coastal place of irreplaceable natural splendor. It must never be sacrificed for private interest development. Ever. Thank You” (From a suggested form letter to the US Secretary of Commerce posted on [www.SaveTrestles.com](http://www.SaveTrestles.com)).<sup>111</sup>
- “Trestle Beach is one of those hidden away, sacred places. You have to go there to really understand. To the north, it is solid houses, freeways, factories, and shopping malls. To the east, there are the railroad tracks, the freeway, and the big Marine base. South of there is the nuclear power plant, and to the west—the Pacific Ocean. Adding to its private nature is the fact that you have to walk a mile to get there. For surfers, this is one of those special places” (Steven Fletcher, from *In the Glow of Understanding*).<sup>112</sup>
- “The Trestles Wetlands Preserve is the highest level of protection that State Parks have...a Preserve is a sacred spot for us and something we will pull out all the stops to protect” (CRPD official Rich Haydon, in an interview for *Surfer Magazine*).<sup>113</sup>
- “To Pierce Flynn, for whom surfing is nothing less than a form of prayer, the rise overlooking Trestles is sacred...In Flynn's world, the act of surfing is linked to the battle to preserve beach access, clean ocean water, and unspoiled coastlines. Waves, this mellow Southern California native will tell you, deserve the same protective status as gnatcatchers and condors (Jim Benning,

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<sup>111</sup> “Take Action!!!” Save Trestles, accessed 11 May 2011, [http://www.savetrestles.com/action\\_alerts.htm](http://www.savetrestles.com/action_alerts.htm).

<sup>112</sup> Steven Fletcher, *In the Glow of Understanding* (Big Oak Flat: Gentle Place, 2006), 74.

<sup>113</sup> *Surfer Magazine*, “About Trestles,” Nike6, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://www.nike6lowerspro.com/information/trestles>.

profiling former Surfrider Foundation Executive Director Pierce Flynn for the *Los Angeles Times*).<sup>114</sup>

- “A lot of people know of this area in regards to the Marine Corps and surfing, but this is actually a Native American sacred site...One of the main goals is to preserve the connection to this place...A toll road near the campground would totally disrupt the ceremonial site and the pristine nature of it. And it’s interesting to note that more than 90 percent of [Indian] archaeological sites have been destroyed through the building and development process.” (Rebecca Robles, in an interview for the *San Clemente Times*).<sup>115</sup>

In addition to the TCA’s more mundane definition of the space, at least three distinct understandings of “sacredness” can be observed in these examples taken from the opposition movement. First, we can distinguish an abstract appreciation of San Onofre as an important symbol of pristine, unspoiled wilderness. This view of “sacredness” had less to do with the unique character of the space itself and more to do with the general belief that particularly distinctive places require preservation for what they signify about national history and cultural identity. Second, a more direct feeling of connectedness instigated by individual experience and personal interaction can be identified. Attributable to surfers, environmentalists, and others who frequented the space, this perspective encompassed private spiritual awareness and a nondescript feeling of communion with the land (or ocean). Third, in the final quotation regarding the Acjachemen we can recognize another understanding characterized by a long-standing, collective relationship with the space. This perception of “sacredness” stood out as

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<sup>114</sup> Jim Benning, “The Steward of Stoke,” *Los Angeles Times*, 7 June 1998, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/1998/jun/07/magazine/tm-57314>.

<sup>115</sup> Zimmerle, “A Native History.”

qualitatively different from the others, for it drew upon a continuing cultural life involving powerful relationships among land, animals, ancestors, and the current human community.

The three categories were conflated in the strategy of the opposition movement—perhaps intentionally in order to mount a unified and concise argument, but more likely inadvertently as most participants simply did not recognize a distinction. Yet whether tactical or contingent, this conflation should not be mistaken for a deep-seated and abiding parity. The existence of deep cultural difference is suggested by the comments of participants like Rebecca Robles, who presented Acjachemen concerns as related to—but not the same as—those of other stakeholders. With such suggestions in mind, I close this chapter with a few concluding thoughts regarding the place of the Acjachemen within the San Onofre struggle and the larger regional context of history and power.

### *Acjachemen Land and American Power*

The demise of the toll road proposal was celebrated as a significant victory by many members of the Acjachemen community. Describing the aftermath of the USDOC decision, Karin Klein wrote for the *Los Angeles Times*:

On the chilly morning of the winter solstice last Sunday, the sun was just cresting the ridgeline of San Mateo Canyon as the Acjachemen talking circle started. Twenty or so people stood around a campfire. They passed a smoking bundle of dried white sage from hand to hand, then took turns speaking. But rather than the cycle of seasons, the topic on everyone's mind was that they had won, they who are not accustomed to winning. The ground on which they stood, site of an Acjachemen village that flourished for more than 8,000 years, would not be traversed by a turnpike. Not likely, anyway, after the federal government three days earlier rejected an appeal to build the Foothill South toll road through San Onofre State Beach. The debate about the proposed toll road centered on potential



damage to a favorite surfing spot and the fate of the endangered Pacific pocket mouse. Less mentioned was Panhe, the former village located within the state park just south of San Clemente, to which a number of Acjachemen—called Juaneño by the Spanish—can trace their lineage, thanks to the careful records kept by missionaries. “This is our Mecca,” Rebecca Robles, one of those descendants, had told me on an earlier visit. “This is our temple.”<sup>116</sup>

While the “Save San Onofre” movement focused primarily on issues related to surfing and the environment, the threat posed to Panhe also figured prominently. But as Robles’ metaphoric comparison to Mecca implies, this threat required purposeful translation in order to be made intelligible to authority figures, other toll road opponents, and the wider population.

In other words, the significance of Panhe to the Acjachemen had to be expressed in terms recognizable to the dominant culture. Extra effort was required to span the deep cultural gap which separated the traditional Acjachemen perspective from the dominant American one, in which the master narrative intertwining Christianity and Exceptionalism set the boundaries of discourse regarding the “sacred.” Typically, this discourse only allows “sacredness” to be attributed to places that either fit prevailing assumptions regarding religious practice (such as churches, synagogues, temples, and the like), or offer crucial support to cultural identity and politico-economic order (such as national parks, monuments, and battlefields).<sup>117</sup> Fitting neither criterion in an obvious

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<sup>116</sup> Karin Klein, “The Acjachemen’s Victory,” *Los Angeles Times*, 27 December 2008, accessed 2 March 2012, <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/editorials/la-ed-panhe27-2008dec27,0,5171692.story>.

<sup>117</sup> Considering the religious usage of space, Deloria further illustrates the deep cultural gap between traditional Christian and Indian perspectives: “[The] two approaches to religion are also distinguishable by their ideas about the importance of the location in which worship and other religious activities are to be held. Near Eastern religions have a propensity for building massive temples and tombs

manner, the significance of Panhe needed to be asserted as valid in its own right. And if this assertion could further the Acjachemen quest for recognition while helping protect the ancient village site, so much the better.

As a center of current day Acjachemen ceremony and gathering, Panhe raised ongoing issues related to the ignorance of Indian cultures. Although not attacked outright, this ignorance was quietly confronted by many Acjachemen activists in the hopes of spreading awareness about historical residency and contemporary struggles. For example, in a letter written by Rebecca Robles and others to the CCC, community member Robert García was quoted as stating:

Here's my personal take on all this: Please be sensitive to our issues because I've seen how the agencies say, "well, we don't see anything out there, it's just land," but this is equivalent to knocking down a cathedral because ancestors are buried there, geez, have some dignity because if someone came along and said "we need to knock down Crystal Cathedral for a toll road,["] tons of people would say something in opposition. Agencies rely on little opposition from local native groups because there aren't tons of them, especially when there's nothing large on the grounds like a huge pyramid...but nevertheless this is sacred land, have some respect but be careful because money knows NO respect. Sorry we might not have any movie stars to help us! But again...have some basic respect, again for us...[L]eave the Acjachemen alone!<sup>118</sup>

Captured in the same letter was Rhonda Robles' expression of the ongoing spatial relationship recognized by her, her family, and her community:

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and this tradition has been emulated by Christian tendencies to construct gigantic cathedrals. Temples, churches, and synagogues separate the faithful from the secular world and from the natural world as if religion needs to be isolated from the rest of human activities. The Indian religions, on the other hand, insist on holding their ceremonies and rituals in a natural surrounding and could not have conceived of establishing a separate building especially for religious activities. The sweat lodge and the kiva are designed to represent the larger cosmos and basically have nothing to do with the subservience that characterizes churches and temples." *God Is Red*, 153.

<sup>118</sup> Qtd. in Robles, García, and D'Arcy to Kruer and the California Coastal Commission, 9.

I can tell you from my first hand experiences that the toll road would have devastating consequences on my relationship to this sacred site and the Ancestors that are buried in the ground. This is the place that my mother took me to do special ceremonies with her. It is also the beginning of our Annual Ancestor Walk, which is in its 11<sup>th</sup> year. In her last breaths, before she crossed over to the spirit world, my mother rose from her sick bed and spoke publically for protection and preservation of this area. She had to be helped to walk up to the podium and back to her seat. TCA is in no position to state how I or any other Native Americans may or may not be affected by the proximity of the proposed toll road to this land and my spiritual practice. I can assure you that this road will seriously and irrevocably impair the ability of myself and others of the Acjachemen nation to practice our traditional cultural and religious ceremonies.<sup>119</sup>

Such testimonies highlighted the past, present, and future significance of Panhe while framing its potential destruction through the neglected story of the Acjachemen community. Further, they tied the toll road debate to legal questions related to the protection of Indian cultural life. The most notable of these questions pertained to implementation of the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) and the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). While AIRFA and NAGPRA generally proved incapable of expediting Indian claims over disputed spaces, they at least embodied official standards to which appeals for justice could point.<sup>120</sup> As Robles and her fellow writers commented to the CCC:

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<sup>119</sup> Qtd. in Robles, García, and D'Arcy to Kruer and the California Coastal Commission, 4. The authors provide yet another testimony by quoting the words of Robert Bracamontes: "It was not long ago, fifteen years or so, that Ronnie Bracamontes was buried as Panhe. My father Joseph Bracamontes was present as his cousin's burial. This is a place of the living history of the Acjachemen, Juaneño people... My father and I have traveled from Los Angeles to participate in gatherings where sage is burned and talks of protecting our loved ones go on for hours. Stories of bonfires and ghost dances that draw the sacred spirits to the group are shared. We walked down the trail and saw trees planted by many tribal members when they were young. The trees are tall filling the sky with histories of our youth and now aged through time with our elder's wisdom" (4-5).

<sup>120</sup> Although NAGPRA has enabled several Indian communities to facilitate the return of ancestral remains and funerary objects—admittedly an important success—neither NAGPRA nor AIRFA has

Juaneño traditions hold places of burial to be sacred, and their beliefs do not allow for the removal of human remains or any associated personal belongings from their original place of internment. They consider it inevitable that there are...burials on the site, increasing its sanctity.<sup>121</sup>

The unresolved issue of federal recognition complicated legal questions from an administrative and procedural standpoint; yet, growing awareness of Acjachemen cultural claims to the site added another hurdle for the TCA to surmount.

Panhe's characterization as the place of the first Christian baptism in California and one of the earliest regional points of contact between European invaders and Indian peoples also helped bolster its status relative to the master narrative.<sup>122</sup> In anthropological and archaeological terms, the ancient village was considered to hold important historical value that deserved scientific study. Although this invasive perspective was at odds with the Acjachemen view, the insistence on preservation worked in the indigenous community's favor. The colonization of California was physically memorialized in the

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significantly furthered the resolution of more fundamental issues like self-determination and land tenure. As a result, the adjective "toothless" is commonly used to describe the ultimate efficacy of both laws. For example, see Barbara A. Mann, *Native Americans, Archaeologists, the Mounds* (New York: Peter Lang, 2003), 239; Henrietta Mann, "Earth Mother and Prayerful Children: Sacred Sites and Religious Freedom," in *Native Voices: American Indian Identity and Resistance*, eds. Richard A. Grounds, George E. Tinker, and David E. Wilkins (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 2003), 198; and Klara Bonsack Kelley and Harris Francis, *Navajo Sacred Places* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1994), 176.

<sup>121</sup> Qtd. in Robles, García, and D'Arcy to Kruer and the California Coastal Commission, 3. The presence of burials at the Panhe site certainly added legal and cultural complications to the TCA proposal. However, one also wonders if at some level stereotypical White fears regarding the desecration of Indian burial grounds—fears memorialized in traditional campfire tales and popular media which may have much to do with seepage in cultural repression—may also have helped shape perceptions of toll road debate to some degree. Although such a statement is purely speculative, the power of such culturally persistent and perhaps not-so-irrational fears should not be underestimated.

<sup>122</sup> Importantly, Robles, García, and D'Arcy specify that "the contact event is memorialized *from the white perspective* as the occasion for the 'first baptism in California.'" Robles, García, and D'Arcy to Kruer and the California Coastal Commission, 3 (emphasis added).

twenty-one separate mission complexes spanning the coast from San Diego to San Francisco. Among these various installations, Panhe was considered to be particularly distinctive due to its role in the initial stages of contact and relatively intact disposition. It therefore held a certain appeal to individuals within the dominant culture who might not otherwise have given the space a second thought, including those interested in safeguarding the Christian remnants of American heritage.

The connection of Panhe to the master narrative was not lost among members of the Acjachemen community either. Robles referenced this connection in reflecting on the San Onofre struggle:

Places like this are important to us, because it's our history, our connection to who we are... But the other part that worried me is that I'm an American. I'm a Native American, but I'm an American. I love this country. I love this country. I believe in all the stuff about freedom and justice and our ideals. We lose our greatness as a country if we lose our ideals, if we let everything be destroyed. If what's important to native people is their religious freedom... a toll road through a sacred site would have destroyed something that was irreplaceable. Most of the people, I don't think, got it. Our allies eventually got it.<sup>123</sup>

This sentiment, voiced by one of the most prominent and outspoken defenders of Panhe, revealed the layers of complexity that defined Acjachemen participation in the conflict. For at least some members of the impoverished community, toll road construction could have provided precious local job opportunities. Different cultural pressures also highlighted tensions in identity formation, as the meaning of being both members of the Acjachemen nation and US citizens was weighed in thought and action.

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<sup>123</sup> Qtd. in Dana Parsons, "Surfers Weren't the Only Tollway Winners," *Los Angeles Times*, 9 February 2008, B1.

Another layer of complexity was bared through the position of the Acjachemen relative to other prominent stakeholders in the opposition movement. While it is clear that this movement represented a genuine confluence of interests among a diversity of groups, it did not necessary represent all interests equally. In the decades leading up to the San Onofre conflict, the continuing exploitation of American Indian communities in California (and elsewhere) took on a new face as environmentalists and other activists often sought out token Indian representation in order to gain recognition and credibility for anti-development causes. Linda Gonzalez, a member of the Tongva nation of the Los Angeles area (an immediately northern neighbor of the Acjachemen), describes the frustration and fatigue brought on by these manipulative conditions:

You have to pick your battles, because a lot of the times the environmentalists will use you. You get called two days ahead—"Day after tomorrow there's a meeting and we're trying to save this site. We know there was a village there, and we want to see if you can come down." How many times do we get that one? We have to see how much strength we have, and how much we're going to take off of work. They use you as a last resort rather than the respect of giving you the first resort.<sup>124</sup>

Insinuated in Robles' remark that "Our allies eventually got it," the relatively late recognition of Panhe by Coalition members indicates the presence of similar conditions at San Onofre.

Initially not even an issue of concern, the desecration of Panhe eventually became a major talking point for the Coalition. Yet even after Acjachemen activists brought

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<sup>124</sup> Qtd. in Claudia Jurmain and William McCawley, *O, My Ancestor: Recognition and Renewal for the Gabrielino-Tongva people of the Los Angeles Area* (Berkeley: Heyday, 2009), 139.

attention to Panhe's particular cultural significance, it was typically styled as a generically "sacred Native American site" in the communications of the opposition movement.<sup>125</sup> It also remained plainly subordinate to other concerns, as evidenced in the Coalition's January 2008 letter to the CCC. In this fifty-four page document, consideration of the potential consequences to Panhe received approximately one page of consideration, significantly less than the amount allocated to campgrounds, local surfing conditions, and even the Pacific Pocket Mouse.<sup>126</sup> Further, no Indian-led direct entity was included among the ten organizations listed in the letter's authorship, a common theme in Coalition publications and events. The main question here does not entail whether the outcome of the toll road conflict benefitted the Acjachemen—by most accounts, it clearly did. Rather, the pertinent question involves whether the process by which this outcome was reached replicated long-standing and oppressive deep cultural dynamics related to spatial disorientation.

On this question too, the record seems fairly clear. Indian participation (both individually and through organizations like the UCPP) was rarely given more than passing recognition by the official members of the Coalition, while the full significance

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<sup>125</sup> For example, see "Happy One-Year Anniversary of Keeping the Toll Road Out of San Onofre State Beach," Surfrider Foundation, 18 December 2009, accessed 2 June 2011, <http://savetrestles.surfrider.org>; Steve Bramucci, "Our Waterman Ponders the Coastal Commission's Recent Vote Against the Proposed 241 Toll Road Extension near South Orange County," *Coast Magazine*, 14 March 2008, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://www.coastmagazine.com/sports/hollywood-177-commission-road.html>; and "Surfrider Foundation Explains Issues Behind Save Trestles Campaign," *Transworld Business*, 9 September 2008, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://business.transworld.net/9457/news/surfrider-foundation-explains-issues-behind-save-trestles-campaign>.

<sup>126</sup> See Save San Onofre Coalition to Krueger and the California Coastal Commission, 7-35.

of Panhe was diluted within their preferred spatial representation. Of course, one could argue that since the missions of organizations like Surfrider and the Sierra Club did not specifically integrate “Indian” concerns, some fragmentation could be expected and even excused. But this argument would do more to prove dominant assumptions than dispel them. In the Coalition perspective affluent, environmentally-minded Whites had as much of a right to shape the fate of San Onofre as American Indians or any other essential grouping—and perhaps an even greater one, for only they could be trusted to adequately preserve and manage the space. As denoted in the 2008 letter to the CCC, this perspective held that the process of colonization transferred ownership of the land to the “people of California,” a generic entity who nonetheless “[could] not be required to sacrifice their coastal resources to address this problem [of traffic congestion].”<sup>127</sup> The Acjachemen were simply dissolved into this multicultural mélange by their allies and adversaries in the toll road conflict, along with their cultural particularity and spatial history.

It is no wonder, then, that the UCPP counted establishing control over “the interpretation of the people and the place” among their primary goals in the conflict.<sup>128</sup> Loss of Acjachemen life and land was long accompanied by outside assaults on self-determination, a pattern replicated by the more recent termination of federal recognition. Yet it must be noted that efforts to reestablish such recognition were complicated by the existence of lingering internal divisions within the Indian nation itself. Of course, these

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<sup>127</sup> Save San Onofre Coalition to Kruer and the California Coastal Commission, 3.

<sup>128</sup> See Zimmerle, “A Native History.”



divisions also represented a direct legacy of the region's ongoing colonial history. Stephen Thomas O'Neil illustrates how the establishment of the Spanish mission system split Acjachemen families and communities by upending cultural and politico-economic cohesion and destroying road systems, marriage networks, subsistence bases.<sup>129</sup> These splits were exacerbated in the face of American manifest destiny, first through official policies of removal and reform, and then through the specter of poverty, disease, exploitation, and intergenerational trauma. As a result, during the time of the toll road struggle the nation was split into three major factions, each of which held substantial support bases and prioritized slightly different interests.<sup>130</sup>

The existence of Acjachemen factionalism was known to non-Indian participants on both sides of the struggle, and often manipulated for self-interest. For example, the TCA sought to undercut Acjachemen opposition to the toll road by negotiating separate cash settlements with each of the three factions in exchange for support, or at least tolerance. One faction, led by David Beldares, agreed. Highlighting the complexities of the Acjachemen position, Beldares explained the \$350,000 settlement by stating:

It was a tough decision...But we felt the handwriting on the wall...[no matter where] you build that road, you're going to impact Native American sites. This doesn't mean I support development. But the agreement helps us get in the process and helps us gain access to land to continue our ceremonies and reburials.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> See O'Neil, "The Acjachemen in the Franciscan Mission System."

<sup>130</sup> For example, see Dave McKibben, "For Juaneño Indians, Unity Proves Elusive," *Los Angeles Times*, 10 October 2005, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2005/oct/10/local/me-juanenos10>; and Dave McKibben, "Tribe Wrangles Over Burial Site," *Los Angeles Times*, 18 November 2002, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2002/nov/18/local/me-juanenos18>.

Beldares' concession garnered substantial criticism from fellow members of the Acjachemen community, other local Indian peoples, and environmental activists.

Generally, Coalition leadership worked to prevent such rifts in order to maintain the appearance of undivided Indian opposition to the toll road. Yet only a few years earlier, when infighting sabotaged Acjachemen efforts to regain control of traditional land at Marine Corps Air Station El Toro, many of these same groups fell silent. While many in the Acjachemen community sought to transform the shuttered military base into a reservation, environmentalists and local residents supported another option: the construction of a large public green space which would come to be called the Orange County "Great Park."<sup>132</sup> The federal government's denial of recognition to the Acjachemen ultimately precluded their pursuit of the land at El Toro. Yet the silence of their future Coalition allies in this and other recent southern California land struggles virtually screams with contradiction. When Indian claims meshed with environmentalist interests, they were quickly assimilated into larger anti-development arguments in order

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<sup>131</sup> Qtd. in David Reyes, "Tribal Bloc Alters Stand on Toll Road," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 June 2008, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/jun/14/local/me-payoff14>.

<sup>132</sup> Writing about the "Great Park" in 2001, Larry Agran noted, "Environmentalists are equally enthusiastic. The nature preserve and wildlife corridor within the plan would connect our coastal parks—Crystal Cove State Park and Laguna Coast Wilderness Park—with the inland Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park and the Cleveland National Forest. This would establish the largest interconnected nature preserve in any metropolitan area in the United States. By creating the Great Park in Orange County, we will permanently protect open space and wildlife habitat—and people, too—from development and from...noise and pollution." "A Giant El Toro Park, the Will of the People," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 May 2001, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2001/may/06/local/me-60098>. Opposition to the Acjachemen bid was also fueled by unsubstantiated but inflammatory rumors that the nation would build a casino if granted control of the land. See Kimberley Brower, "Indian Group Denies Its Casino Intentions," *Los Angeles Times*, 6 August 1997, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/1997/aug/06/local/me-19928>.

to strengthen arguments regarding “sacred” space. When such claims did not mesh, however, they were typically ignored or denied in favor of what was considered best for “the people” of the state.

In this way, the San Onofre case illustrates how it is possible for systems of privilege and notions of Exceptionalism to be supported whether Indian claims are promoted or disregarded—and whether development happens or not.

### *Conclusion*

If the struggle for San Onofre has a lesson to teach, it is that there is no clear-cut or foolproof way to escape the influence of deep culture. The signature and consequences of dominant spatial disorientation permeated the case, although its eventual outcome suggested otherwise. Particularly skeptical observers could even argue that the demise of the TCA proposal ultimately had more to do with the politico-economic clout wielded by US military leadership than any other factor. To be sure, the ability of military leadership to deny access to Camp Pendleton effectively dictated the terms of the toll road debate and forced the TCA to assume a more vulnerable position than it would have preferred. Yet by embodying an indistinct mix of business and governmental interests, the advantages held by the TCA remained significant. Its resources arguably outstripped those of the Coalition by a healthy margin, while the already operative segment of the 241 toll road in northeast Orange County lent an air of inevitability to the completion proposal.

In the end, however, the Coalition's superior capacity for symbolically representing the space in a persuasive and evocative manner offered a greater advantage. Employing familiar cognitive images and behavioral themes, leading organizations like Surfrider and the Sierra Club were able to appeal to regional diversity and engage established authorities. In pressing this advantage, the Coalition found a critical ally in the local Acjachemen community. Efforts to convincingly define San Onofre as "sacred" space would likely have fallen short without this collaboration, especially in light of the awareness of Panhe it enabled. The historical and cultural significance of this ancient village site raised legal questions regarding preservation and supplemented other concerns regarding impacts to ecology, recreation, and surfing.

On the one hand, the approach of Coalition leadership to collaboration with Acjachemen organizations exuded a noticeable lack of cultural competence, contextual awareness, and partnership building. Although some appreciation for Indian claims was demonstrated, this appreciation coincided too directly with the self-interest of the environmentalist groups to be considered altruistic. Consequently, it partially replicated a deep-rooted American tradition of exploiting Indian communities in order to gain control over their land. On the other hand, while the San Onofre struggle underscored many of the more demanding pressures of Acjachemen life—including poverty, social fragmentation, and cultural assimilation—it revealed other complicated and competing forces as well. Foremost among these was a hunger for recognition and self-determination. This hunger was born out of a continuing colonial history, expressed

through traditional cultural beliefs and behaviors, and grounded firmly in the land at San Onofre.

The agency of the Acjachemen community was illustrated time and again throughout the conflict. Arguing against the toll road to the CCC, Robert Bracamontes proclaimed, “We are here! Can you see me? Can you hear me? I do want to be part of this sacred land; lay me to rest at Panhe next to all my cousins... Explain to the world: We are not inferior.”<sup>133</sup> Likewise, describing the annual Ajcachemen Ancestor Walk at its starting point of Panhe, Jimi Castillo announced, “People have the mistaken belief that the Indians are all gone... This is to show that we're still here. Our people have been here for 25,000 years.”<sup>134</sup> Finally, in an open letter to Governor Schwarzenegger, Sally Cruz-Wright eloquently expressed the sincere connection of people and place, stating:

Please accept this letter as a formal request to enter the fight to protect my homeland. The land of my ancestors is under attack, under attack by those who propose a toll road. A road which will place concrete over the bones of my ancestors. A road that will desecrate land that has long been thought sacred by my people. I am of a proud people who have long sought Federal Recognition, though this goal has eluded us, we have sought solace in our heritage, our communities and our lands. Many of us have been raised as Christians, due to the conversion of faith by our ancestors but still we hold on to our sacred rituals. We honor our ancestors, we honor our sacred burial grounds, and we honor those who endured the atrocities that they were made to face each day. We weep for those that must be disturbed and re-interred for the sake of progress. It is hard for me to speak of these things, because my heart aches for their pain, the indignities that they had to face each day, the humiliation they must have felt for being Indian... I weep when I stand on the ridge at Panhe. I can feel the wind wrap around me and know it is

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<sup>133</sup> Qtd in Robles, García, and D'Arcy to Kruer and the California Coastal Commission, 8.

<sup>134</sup> Qtd. in Matt Coker, “This Is Where We Pray,” *OC Weekly*, 1 November 2001, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://www.ocweekly.com/2001-11-08/features/this-is-where-we-pray>.

the spirits of those long gone. They offer me comfort, I weep because I cannot offer them peace.<sup>135</sup>

Perhaps the 2008 USDOC veto of the toll road proposal brought some measure of peace to members of the Acjachemen community, their ancestors, other regional inhabitants, or even the land itself. But if it did, this peace was not to endure for long. As the previous two cases of struggles over Indian lands have proven, dominant patterns spatial thought and behavior are nothing if not resilient. The San Onofre case represents no exception to this rule, and less than three years after its surprising demise the toll road issue experienced a predictable resurgence. Accessing what San Clemente Patch contributor Tom Barnes described as their “seemingly unlimited resources,”<sup>136</sup> the TCA came forward in early 2011 with a new proposal which they claimed addressed the concerns of the USDOC and was therefore eligible for reconsideration. The reborn proposal also introduced a new rationale designed to counter a basic weakness of its predecessor. Citing the recent Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant disaster in Japan, the TCA argued that the toll road’s proximity to the SONGS facility made it a national security

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<sup>135</sup> Sally Cruz-Wright to Arnold Schwarzenegger, The City Project: Save Panhe and San Onofre, accessed 4 June 2011, <http://www.cityprojectca.org/ourwork/SavePanheSaveSanOnofre.html>.

<sup>136</sup> Barnes describes this resurgence in a colorful yet perceptive manner: “In what was thought to be a dead issue, the 241 Toll Road extension, like the mythical phoenix, is attempting to rise from the ashes. When the California Coastal Commission voted the proposal down 8-2 because it is inconsistent with the Coastal Act, and when this decision was upheld by the U.S. Department of Commerce, it looked like the ‘fat lady’ had sung. The toll road lobby, however, with seemingly unlimited resources, launched another effort to sway public opinion with their outreach (code for propaganda) program. In the Transportation Corridor Agency’s (TCA) eyes this new 241 Toll Road extension is justified because when the U.S. Department of Commerce denied the TCA appeal, it indicated an alternative route could be pursued... The Toll Road is not dead. It is still in a coma on life support.” Tom Barnes, “It’s Back: 241 Toll Road Extension,” *A Barnes-Eye View* (blog), *San Clemente Patch*, 12 May 2011, accessed 12 June 2011, <http://sanclemente.patch.com/articles/its-back-241-toll-road-extension>.

priority on par with the operations of Camp Pendleton. Although military leadership again disputed this claim, the issue remained under review at the time of writing. As a spokesperson for the TCA maintained during the opening salvos of this second round of debate, “A lot of people think we have shelved it and that it’s dead... We are still working on solutions because the problem hasn’t gone away.”<sup>137</sup>

Interestingly, the same sentiment could be used to describe the Acjachemen quest for recognition and territory, along with the quests of myriad other indigenous nations. Amidst the complexities of difference and privilege, one thing seems clear. Whether occurring in southern California or elsewhere in the US, struggles over Indian lands will persist as long the repression of our fundamental disorientation to space continues to represent a hallmark of our cultural identity.

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<sup>137</sup> Qtd. in Mike Lee, “San Onofre Toll Road Plans Get New Life,” *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 5 May 2011, accessed 1 June 2011, <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/2011/may/05/new-life-breathed-san-onofre-toll-road-plans>.

8. Piercing the Veil of Unreality: On the Search for Meaning in America

In our present situation, we therefore face a most difficult question of meaning. Ecologists predict a world crisis of severe intensity within our lifetime, whereas religious mythologies project the end of our present existence and the eventual salvation of the chosen people and the creation of another world. It is becoming apparent that we shall not have the benefits of this world for much longer. The imminent and expected destruction of the life cycle of world ecology can be prevented by a radical shift in outlook from our present naïve conception of this world as a testing ground for abstract morality to a more mature view of the universe as a comprehensive matrix of life forms. Making this shift in viewpoint is essentially religious, not economic or political. The problem of contemporary people, whatever their ethnic or cultural background, lies in finding the means by which they can once again pierce the veil of unreality to grasp the essential meaning of their existence. For people from a Western European background or deeply imbued with Christian beliefs, the task is virtually impossible.<sup>1</sup>

– Vine Deloria, Jr.  
From *God is Red* (1973)

This exploration has focused on the intimate connection between land and power in America. I have not simply argued that those who physically control the land can access great power, although of course this is often true. Rather, I have suggested that power in this country has always circulated through our bewildered neglect of the problem of space. The ways in which we think about and act upon the land correlate strongly with the ways in which we think about and act upon a whole range of beings,

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<sup>1</sup> Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*, 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary ed. (Golden: Fulcrum, 2003), 287-288.



from rocks to animals to other humans. They also have much to say about who we actually are as a people, as opposed to who we claim to be.

As creatures fully reliant on the land for the endurance of our very being, our search for meaning must begin with our spatial conceptualizations and relations. However, since the arrival of the first European settlers we have consistently neglected the nature of our being in actual, tangible spaces by emphasizing the role that we play in a perceived historical trajectory. It is not that our perceptions of history are insignificant; on the contrary, they matter tremendously. But when these perceptions become divorced from holistic reflections on the land and its memory, they are bound to develop inconsistencies and distortions that lead our search for meaning astray. History occurs in places—not the other way around—and to reverse this ground of meaning is to be forced into a state of repression that inevitably compromises an awareness of interconnectivity and contaminates an ability to form relationships. Our repression has grave implications for the continuing exploitation of land and other beings, not to mention our own moral character as a nation.

The repression of our being in space and nature can therefore be most aptly characterized as a crisis of religious magnitude. Charles Long defines religion as “orientation in the ultimate sense, that is, how one comes to terms with the ultimate significance of one’s place in the world.”<sup>2</sup> In this definition, religion essentially integrates the particular methods peoples employ and the authoritative sources to which they turn in

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<sup>2</sup> Charles H. Long, *Significations: Signs, Symbols, and Images in the Interpretation of Religion*, originally published 1986 (Aurora: The Davies Group, 1999), 7.

order to seek a meaningful sense of identity and purpose. These methods and sources possess critical import; depending upon the ground in which they are rooted, they have the potential to reveal reliable and life-giving truths or yield misleading and life-destroying deceptions.

Difficult enough in itself, the search for meaning is complexified by the influence of culture. The cultural systems into which we are socialized deeply instill messages about who we are and where we belong. Whether empowering, disingenuous, or conflicting, these messages are often communicated in implicit and obscured ways, making their influence hard to distinguish and even harder to deconstruct. The difficulty is heightened in the American context where religious questions are customarily and legally reduced to matters of individual choice and consequence. Owing to the Christian foundations which bolster our thin veneer of secularism, the fate of the “I”—rather than the balance of the “We”—persists as our prime subject of reflective inquiry and locus of ultimate concern. This myopic angle on reality, which is somewhat anomalous among world cultures, leaves out consideration of a broad diversity of beings and experiences. The possibilities of how we come to terms with our collective existence in places are constricted accordingly.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Tinker explains, “The need for humans to be participants in maintaining balance and harmony then focuses all of life’s activity... If our theology—and hence our human communities—can begin to wrestle seriously with the necessity of balance and harmony in all of creation, then our self-image as a part of creation must also be deeply affected. As our self-perception and self-understanding begin to be self-consciously centered in respect for all creation, we will begin to participate actively not in the exploitation of the earth but in the establishment of balance and harmony. Our participation in the balance and harmony of all creation will then most naturally include other individuals and communities of beings. And justice

If religion represents an orientation toward the search for meaning, and land embodies the starting point and ground of any authentic search, then the general American approach to the problem of space can only be considered as one of fundamental disorientation. This disorientation to space equates to a condition of fragmentation, ambivalence, and separation with respect to the land that is deeply embedded in American culture. Further, it opens a void of meaning which the prioritization of time and history steps in to fill. Distinctive of Western culture generally, the prioritization of temporal concerns specifically manifests through individualized beliefs in the ultimate spiritual and politico-economic significance of the American experiment. These beliefs coalesce to form a widespread faith in Exceptionalism—a concept that evokes powerful perceptions regarding the special nature and unique destiny of the American people, who are called to their civilizational gifts of freedom, security, and prosperity throughout the world.

Exceptionalism embodies perhaps the most characteristic and influential discursive formation within the American master narrative, the deeply-entrenched social imaginary that orders assumptions of who we are and informs understandings of our character and history. The master narrative frames the American story primarily as the triumphant march of a chosen people along a temporal path of righteous advancement. This framing simultaneously validates and mystifies the theft of land and concomitant exploitations that have occurred through the process of European colonial invasion and

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and genuine peace will flow out of our concern for one another and all creation.” *American Indian Liberation: A Theology of Sovereignty* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), 55-56.

settlement. Further, it purposefully maintains and extends the longstanding systems of privilege that have accompanied this process. By helping shift the ground of the American search for meaning from space to time, the master narrative significantly influences how dynamics of power are played out in daily life.

The master narrative covers over the concrete spatial consequences of colonial expansion with abstract temporal rationalizations regarding the Exceptional nature and destiny of the American people. In so doing, it helps birth an enduring sense of unnatural innocence.<sup>4</sup> Despite a history saturated with the destruction and manipulation of entire peoples, species, and landscapes, notions of America as a beacon of hope to the world still somehow persevere. Writers of starkly different backgrounds and perspectives acclaim the country's promise as they have for centuries, while downplaying or omitting the fact that it, and they, subsist on the fruits of overt brutality and indifferent neglect. Unnatural innocence undergirds the basic American institutions of government, law, and economics. Estranged from the memory of ecocide and genocide held by the land and its range of indigenous inhabitants, these institutions ensure that the general bearing of the nation remains quite confused in an ultimate sense.

Consequently, faith in American Exceptionalism depends profoundly on the perpetuation of spatial disorientation for ideological validation and politico-economic

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<sup>4</sup> Rollo May help fully explains, "This type of innocence is a defense against having to confront the realities of power, including such external forms of power as the war machine or such inner forms of power as status and prestige. The fact that innocence is used for such extrainnocent purposes is what makes it suspect. Innocence as a shield from responsibility is also a shield from growth. It protects us from new awareness and from identifying with the sufferings of mankind as well as with the joys, both of which are shut off from the pseudo-innocent person. *Power and Innocence: A Search for the Sources of Violence*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 64.

actualization. Spatial disorientation functions as a contaminated but concealed keystone around which critical building blocks of cultural identity are assembled. This keystone pollutes an awareness of being in space and nature and promotes a compelling atmosphere of unreality. As a powerful and unseen force, spatial disorientation is sustained at the level of deep culture by resilient symbols that help reproduce the prevailing social order. It is vital that we precisely understand how these symbols guide thought and behavior related to land, especially considering their heavy consequences. Further, if we hope to conduct our search for meaning in a more just, healing, and connected manner, we must first appreciate why the repression of our disoriented approach to space is so crucial to our blind faith in Exceptionalism. The significance of these formidable tasks is made starkly apparent as we look and listen to the primary human “Other” that has been targeted over the course of colonial conquest and expansion: the diverse American Indian peoples indigenous to this place.

*Spatial Disorientation and Exceptionalism: A Deep Cognitive-Behavioral Bond*

As the unconscious and collective array of symbols that shapes how particular groups understand the world and their place in it, deep culture wields great influence in a rather anonymous way. Virtually all aspects of life are inevitably touched by this influence, though they may not be irremediably determined by it. While deep cultural symbols can be difficult to clearly identify and fully appreciate, efforts at discursive-semiotic analysis can allow us to deconstruct patterns of thought and action and see the common foundations beneath them. Such efforts take on special import in contexts of

history and power like that of the US, where conflicts between White settlers and American Indian peoples are rarely recognized for what they are at the most fundamental level: deep culture conflicts over the problem of space.

Analyses of past and present struggles over American Indian lands demonstrate three insights conclusively. First, the cognitive-behavioral approach to space that has predominantly shaped American cultural identity over the course of history is neither rationally objective nor universally accepted. It instead reflects particular Western cultural mores and Christian theological values—an etiology that can be clearly discerned when one cares to reflect on it. Second, since few Americans do care to pursue such reflection, governing assumptions about the character, memory, and purpose of the land remain largely unexamined. This lack of care stems in part from the fact that the governing assumptions are embedded so profoundly in the fabric of the nation so as to seem entirely natural and innocuous, and in part from the fact that honest reflection would threaten to upset repressed knowledge and established systems of privilege. Third, the prevailing approach to space has been intimately involved in the simultaneous perpetuation of ecocide and genocide from the colonial era into the present. These ongoing tragedies have not been conjured out of thin air; rather, they have emerged from longstanding patterns of thought and action that are established materially in the politico-economic system and rooted symbolically in deep culture.

The main symbols that represent space within American deep culture can be divided into two categories: cognitive images and behavioral themes. Deeply embedded in culture and implicitly endorsed by the master narrative, these images and themes are

both pervasive and powerful—yet they function largely automatically in everyday life. Further, while they purport to reflect the innate nature of the land and morally proper relations to it, they actually epitomize a temporal perspective in which the natural world is but a backdrop for the advancement of a particular human people. Such characteristics give the symbols a great resiliency in the face of challenge and change, ensuring their normalcy and ubiquity is taken for granted as fact. Unfortunately, the symbols are therefore also rendered as especially effective devices for concealing the dual domination of land and Other that disgraces our historical legacy and blemishes our national character.

In terms of the cognitive influence of deep culture, a set of four main spatial images can be witnessed guiding how Americans have typically conceptualized the land over history. Distinguished by the content they index, the images of promised land, *terra nullius*, frontier wilderness, and city upon a hill work together to sustain the illusion that the land was largely an empty and untamed morass prior to the arrival of European folks. They further suggest this arrival was both ordained by divine power and justified by rational inquiry, for it brought (and continues to bring) the gifts of enlightened civilization to primitive peoples and the promise of ordered development to the land itself. Though misrepresentative in its basic thrusts, this broad conceptualization of space embodies the basic ideological rationale behind the entire American legal and politico-economic systems. Its four constitutive images provide a cognitive bridge over the stream of exploitation that flows through memory of the land and its indigenous inhabitants,

allowing the historical awareness of Americans to travel mostly unhindered between distorted perceptions of an Exceptional past, present, and future.

Likewise, the behavioral influence of deep culture is transmitted through a set of four themes: privilege, property, positivism, and progress. Though not specific behaviors in themselves, these themes signify what sorts of relations with the land are considered proper and acceptable in the dominant culture. They do so by translating the behavioral expectations set up within the modern conception of moral order for the American societal context. Delineating the accepted boundaries of “civilization,” the modern moral order characteristically excludes nonanthropocentric, non-individualistic, and non-Western ways of relating to space. Of course, such exclusion has been historically used to justify the oppression of Indian folks and other peoples of color, and at times, to even cast doubt upon their status as full human persons. By positioning the land as a resource repository to be scientifically managed and individually owned in the name of security, prosperity, and advancement, the behavioral themes significantly constrain the sorts of spatial relations that can occur.

These cognitive images and behavioral themes disorient the search for meaning in America in significant and lasting ways. They do so by guiding thought and behavior away from tangible spatial concerns regarding the integrity and bounty of the natural world, and toward abstract temporal concerns regarding the competitive progression of an Exceptional chosen people. Their deep-seated influence remains present and potent even in the face of distinct surface responses to the natural world. In the American context, responses like dominion, stewardship, and deep ecology tend to obscure the fundamental



bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism by emphasizing competing environmental tropes. Although the three responses possess discrete lines of emergence and frame issues of anthropocentrism, exploitation, and development quite differently, they rest in a common deep cultural foundation and reiterate its basic symbols in vital ways. As a result, each also tends to promote a sense of unnatural innocence and protect politico-economic and social inequalities to varying degrees. The existence of conflicting and seemingly incompatible views on ecological justice and sustainability diverts attention from the basic underlying fact that practically all American land is stolen Indian land, and channels energy into eternally reproducing feedback loops of privilege.

How do we know all this to be so? Even while acknowledging that dominant values and norms are constantly being contested, a preponderance of persuasive evidence in support of the proposed theoretical synthesis is found in three main sources.

First, significant evidence is revealed through *discourse*. The deep cultural symbols deconstructed here appear frequently and prominently in references to the land made in speeches, writings, correspondence, films, and other cultural documents. They are often mentioned directly and by name, especially by individuals in positions of social, politico-economic, and religious leadership. When not overtly indicated, their influence is typically still made apparent through proxy phrases and implication. Importantly, the deeper meanings communicated about the land through dominant cultural discourse have remained strikingly consistent since the beginning of the colonial era, even as surface trends of grammar, style, and usage have changed drastically.

Second, discursive evidence is reinforced by historical patterns of *performance* and their consequences. General patterns in how and by whom the land has been used, managed, exploited, and transformed indicate the generally disoriented American approach to the problem of space. Such disorientation is made apparent in places where ecological and biological integrity has been overtly sacrificed in the name of politico-economic progress for a privileged few—but not only among these sorts of places. For example, lands set aside as “pristine” wilderness areas often provide further ideological and practical support to faith in Exceptionalism. The significance of this evidence is backed not only by markers of widespread environmental degradation and fragmentation, but also by accounts of considerable oppression and cruelty visited upon a range of supposedly inferior beings.

Third, the *context* in which discourse and performance occur provides a distinct type of substantiation. The contingent nature of the prevailing cognitive-behavioral approach to space is revealed through consideration of how its representative symbols function within particular settings of history, power, and geography. Additionally, such consideration brings the problematic meanings being accessed, communicated, and received through these symbols into sharper focus. A wide range of contextual evidence gathered from different settings in American history points to a consistent prioritization of time over space. It also exposes an enduring sense of unnatural innocence, even among Americans with diverse ideological and politico-economic traits. Purposeful considerations of context can be particularly instructive when the motivations and

positions of relatively privileged actors are compared to those of more marginalized folks.<sup>5</sup>

Discursive, performative, and contextual evidence indicating the bond between spatial disorientation and faith in Exceptionalism is presented throughout this exploration, most intensively through the case studies. Representing three distinctive struggles over Indian lands, the case studies reveal the profound influence of established cognitive images and behavioral themes, the enduring connection between land and power, and the wider bankruptcy of the American master narrative. Analyzed through the lens of deep culture difference, the case studies also illustrate how life in places is negotiated from both within and without the dominant culture.

In the case of *Newe Sogobia* and the Western Shoshone, we find starkly different approaches to the problem of space driving a conflict that yielded a clearly lopsided outcome. On the advantaged side were assembled dominant cultural actors who openly conceptualized the Nevada region as a *terra nullius* and frontier wilderness. To this assemblage of US government officials, White resource corporation executives, and top military brass, the land was deemed as suited for progress through Western-style

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<sup>5</sup> Collectively, the evidence provided by language, action, and context links structure and pragmatics within a single holistic model of how meaning is made and transmitted. Brigitte Nerlich and David D. Clarke explain: "Hence we...have to pay attention not only to the speaker, but also to the hearer, and not only to speech as such, but to the goal that the speaker wants to achieve by uttering certain words. And there is more. If we want to understand how communication works, we also have to take into account the situation in which words are uttered. The speakers can only achieve their goals and the hearers can only understand the speakers if both parties can draw inferences from a complex linguistic, cognitive, and extra-linguistic background. Focusing in the hermeneutical tradition on the process of comprehension instead of production, and focusing on living languages instead of dead ones, made the discovery of the importance of context almost inevitable. *Language, Action, Context: The Early History of Pragmatics in Europe and America, 1780-1930* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1996), 178.

ranching and mining efforts. Less desirable tracts were also made available for sacrifice (as government-owned property) through nuclear and conventional weapons testing and toxic waste storage. Although specific proposals such as the Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository met with sufficient resistance to be put on hold, generally control over the use, enjoyment, and transformation of space was placed squarely in the hands of individuals and institutions already privileged within the dominant culture. This extension of privilege actualized faith in Exceptionalism by confirming the claims of the master narrative and securing US politico-economic hegemony.

By contrast, the variety of inhabitants indigenous to this space nearly always ended up on the disadvantaged side of the conflict. For example, the government-mandated destruction of piñon pine simultaneously eradicated an ancient keystone species of the regional ecosystem and a vital element in the social, cultural, and politico-economic life of the Western Shoshone people. This and other ill-conceived policies demonstrated how contradictions and biases in the American rule of law were consistently obscured by spatial disorientation. Deliberate assaults upon the land through chaining, bombing, mining were pursued in accordance with established legal doctrines regarding property ownership and the proper and acceptable use of space. However, they also violated the basic (and avowedly binding) precedent of Indian tenure as established in the Treaty of Ruby Valley. Such inconsistencies became a target of Western Shoshone resistance, as exemplified in the commitment of folks like Mary and Carrie Dann to defend tangible communal relations with *Newe Sogobia* against the supremacy of abstract individualism and anthropocentrism.

Similar cultural dynamics defined the case of Crandon Mine and the Sokaogon Ojibwe, although its progression proved quite distinct. This conflict saw an alliance of Indian communities and White sportfishers and environmentalists arise to oppose the development of mine project by the Exxon Corporation at the headwaters of the Wolf River. Before becoming functional, however, this alliance first had to come to terms with significant historical rifts between Indian and White folks in the region fueled by issues of race and class. Ultimately the Sokaogon and their Indian partners were able to demonstrate how the threat posed by the mine to this allegedly “pristine” wilderness area necessitated unified action in spite of longstanding discord. They did so in part by choosing to de-emphasize the matter of existing deep culture difference, of which they were well aware, in favor of shared points of politico-economic marginalization. Aided by contextual idiosyncrasies including a record of legal expertise and an availability of casino revenues, this strategy allowed the small Sokaogon populace to generate sufficient opposition to overcome the powerful combined will of Exxon, its successors in the project, and its governmental supporters. In an unlikely turn of events, ownership of the mine site was sold to Indian communities in 2003.

The significance of this victory should not be underestimated. However, we must also understand how the achievement involved compromises that reaffirmed by bond between spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism in key ways. The opposition alliance rarely challenged the influence of dominant cognitive images and behavioral themes; for example, it tended to accept—or at least preferred not to dispute—Exxon’s conceptualization of the space as a sort of promised land demarcated by a frontier line

between civilization and wilderness. Further, neither side challenged the legitimacy of tropes like positivism and progress. The Sokaogon and their Indian partners instead generally sought to undermine Exxon's particular use of science and technology as unreliable and therefore as an impediment to beneficial development. By commissioning their own expert studies to contradict those of Exxon and developing alternative plans for financial growth in the region, the Indian communities provided reasonable doubt while staying within the established discourse.

Beating the transnational corporate giant at its own game, the opposition alliance was able to introduce a wider range of social and cultural concerns to the Crandon conflict. The victory also protected the performance of traditional Sokaogon relations with space and established a partial mining moratorium in the state of Wisconsin. However, these uncommon and notable feats did little to advance larger issues of Indian sovereignty or destabilize the wider American sense of unnatural innocence. On the contrary, the eventual transfer of property ownership was even interpreted by some observers as confirmation of the unique gifts and basic justness of the American politico-economic and legal systems. From this disoriented perspective the transfer recognized neither the distinctive character of the space nor its special relationship with the Sokaogon community; rather, it simply confirmed the space as American land that could be bought and sold as property by those with the necessary means and desire.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Of course the mere recognition of Indian folks as valid participants in the capitalistic process, especially in this context, might be considered a victory of sorts.

Alliance-building also functioned as a central theme in the case of San Onofre and the Acjachemen, further revealing the potential and challenge of cross-cultural cooperation. This conflict saw a diverse assemblage of surfers, environmental groups, and community organizations come together in the Save San Onofre Coalition to oppose the extension of the 241 toll road through a popular state beach and park area. Conceptualizing the space in question as the last remaining frontier wilderness untouched by humans in all of southern California—a conceptualization that obscured both the age-old presence of indigenous peoples and the more recent manipulation of White settlers—the Coalition actively sought to define the site as “sacred” and therefore off-limits to development. It did so in part by engaging the local Acjachemen Indian community, which was already fighting the toll road proposal due to the threat it posed to the ancient village of Panhe. Despite the existence of sharp differences in ideology, the main debate between Coalition members and toll road supporters (led by the Transportation Corridor Agencies, or TCA) remained thoroughly framed in Exceptionalist terms. Most participants on both sides of the debate expressly sought to promote the course of action they felt would best embody progress for the American city upon a hill, as manifested in this heavily populated, highly urbanized, and enormously wealthy region.

In keeping with the disposition of their traditional deep cultural formation, however, members of the Acjachemen community tended to frame the conflict differently. Not only did the land itself deserve protection due to its unique character and connection to a range of beings, it also represented an essential element of the physical, cultural, and social survival of the indigenous nation. This framing illustrated the virtual

untranslatability of notions like “sacredness” across divides of deep culture. It also highlighted the different prioritizations of time and space that were endorsed by the various stakeholders as they sought to define the meaning of the land and symbolically represent it in a compelling manner. Marginal though it was to the main discourse, Acjachemen participation underscored a widely disregarded characteristic of the conflict. While typically portrayed as embodying a wide multiculturalism and diversity, the struggle for San Onofre largely replicated a basic colonial subtext in which relatively privileged individuals of European ancestry competed to determine who would get to manage and enjoy stolen land.

The defeat of the toll road proposal prevented additional disturbances to the regional ecosystem and secured the continued existence of Panhe. Yet it did little to aid the Acjachemen quest to regain federal recognition as a nation, let alone control of its traditional land. An uneven outcome was practically ensured by the tactics of the Coalition and TCA, both of which sought the support of the Acjachemen community for self-interested reasons. The conflict’s trajectory was affected in a lesser way by fractures within the Indian community itself resulting from ongoing pressures of oppression and assimilation. Ultimately the decision to preserve the space as “wilderness” under government management, though favorable in many ways, also preserved a wider repression of the tainted knowledge related to regional history and identity.

Together, the three case studies reveal the power of spatial disorientation to protect faith in Exceptionalism and the systems of privilege it engenders. This revelation can be considered especially substantial in light of the fact that the cases were chosen



specifically for their ability to stress the proposed theoretical synthesis in varied and vigorous ways. Representing diverse contexts, participants, and outcomes, these struggles over Indian lands nevertheless offer several concise takeaway insights of note:

1. Dominant cultural actors engage land struggles in different ways—most often along the lines of the dominion, stewardship, and deep ecology responses to the natural world. However, these distinct surface engagements rarely reshape the deeper symbolic landscape or redirect status quo circulations of power.
2. It is sometimes possible to build cooperative and constructive alliances around environmental and social justice issues in spite of dissimilar approaches to the problem of space. These alliances may have to build a tolerance for miscommunication and compromise into their strategies in order to achieve their objectives. But unified, adaptive, and engaged action can generate results—especially if led by communities in positions of relative disempowerment.
3. Victories against entrenched systems of privilege related to Exceptionalism are rarely conclusive or permanent. Land issues of benefit to dominant groups that are considered dead are often quick to reemerge. This is illustrated by the continuing pressure surrounding the Yucca Mountain repository in the *Newe Sogobia* case, the Wisconsin mining moratorium in the Crandon Mine case, and the toll road extension in the San Onofre case.
4. Even where American Indian communities have been divided by politico-economic stresses, assimilative pressures, intergenerational trauma, and deliberate manipulation, deep culture difference remains a potent reality reflected in traditional knowledges and lifeways related to the land.
5. Disorientation to space silently touches nearly every aspect of American life, and to underestimate its influence and resiliency is to provide a de facto endorsement for notions and expressions of Exceptionalism.

Finally, the case studies also indicate how religion—that is, a particular orientation or disorientation toward the search for meaning—continues to play an integral role in organizing spatial thought and behavior. Despite the supposedly secular arrangement of

American society, Christian theological notions regarding the order of the cosmos and the place of human beings in it profoundly shape what individuals “know” about themselves and the natural world, and how they live out this knowledge. Though overt acknowledgment of Christian influence is less frequent and more contested than in days past, the basic meanings conveyed through dominant deep cultural symbols have simply been transferred to ostensibly de-religicized and “scientific” interpretations. This transference has refreshed the currency of the symbols, even among many self-professed non-Christian and non-religious folks.

The basic reiteration of dominant values and mores is made apparent in the efforts of many Indian communities (including those considered here) to overcome stereotypical portrayals of their cultures, knowledges, spiritualities, and lifeways. Whereas traditional beliefs and practices might previously have been condemned as demonic, sinful, or witchcraft, they are more often considered by dominant cultural actors today as superstitious, regressive, or impractical—that is, when they are considered at all. In either case, however, the implication is the same: ways of conceptualizing and relating to space that do not conform (explicitly or implicitly) to the prevailing cognitive-behavioral approach are effectively anti-American.

### *Moving from Repression to Relationship*

Accepting the soundness of these insights, how can we seek to break the bond between spatial disorientation and faith in Exceptionalism? As Deloria insists, the nature and influence of American deep culture have indeed made it “virtually impossible” for

settlers of a Western Christian background to cut through the layers of manufactured history and false consciousness which prevent authentic reflections on the meaning of existence in this place. Deep culture significantly shapes not only how this people—my people—thinks and acts, but also its willingness and ability to recognize alternative possibilities to current realities. The theoretical synthesis developed here uncovers the basic patterns of spatial cognition and behavior that keep systems of privilege functioning. However, awareness alone is only the first step in piercing the veil of unreality protected by the American master narrative. There simply is too much collective knowledge and emotion being repressed to be easily overcome.

Yet as a person whose social location rests in several dominant groups and whose deep cultural formation has been thoroughly permeated by spatial disorientation from birth, I have a vested interest in whatever potential for transformation might exist. Like many others, I have become convinced that my privilege makes me complicit in the continued domination of land and Other. Further, I believe the harm that colonial processes of genocide and ecocide have brought to the land and innumerable communities of beings has extended—in distinct and often less overt ways—to folks like me as well. Repressed though it may be in the cultural consciousness, this harm and the contradictions it generates can never be fully escaped. “What comes under the effect of repression returns,” Jacques Lacan reminds us, “for repression and the return of

repression are just two sides of the same coin. The repressed is always there, expressed in a perfectly articulate manner in symptoms and a host of other phenomena.”<sup>7</sup>

When psychological and historical inquiry are properly linked, it becomes evident that no phenomenon expresses our repression more palpably than our relationship with the land. While we too often choose to ignore the suffering of oppressed human groups and develop new technologies to make us feel safer and happier in the short term, our exploitative disregard for the natural world on which we so intimately rely portends a crisis that is both immanent and imminent. Like floodwater rushing against a dam, this deluge cannot be held back forever. Eventually repression will fail amidst increasing pressure, exposing the unsound foundations beneath our sense of unnatural innocence and unleashing the feelings of shame and hypocrisy we fear. The pertinent issue we must consider regards whether we can only wait for irreparable social and ecological destruction to belie the abstract rationalizations of the Exceptionalist myth, or whether we can somehow find a way to intentionally shift our ground of meaning toward something more tangible and reliable before it is too late.

If any hope for healing spatial disorientation and redefining cultural identity is to be sustained, it must start in honest and committed reflection on our collective historical existence in this land. Reflective efforts can loosen the cultural stranglehold of dominant patterns of spatial thought and action, and push the deceptions and inconsistencies they

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<sup>7</sup> Jacques Lacan, “The Meaning of Delusion,” in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Psychoses 1955-1956*, book 3, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 21.

harbor toward conscious awareness.<sup>8</sup> The possibility of hope calls us to question what we believe about ourselves as a “civilization” and “nation,” and to open ourselves to alternative ways of knowing and sources of authority. Moreover, it pleads that we allow ourselves to feel the depth of pain and bewilderment that must inevitably follow. In order to impel our search for meaning in truly different and liberative directions, we must embrace this powerful upswell of emotional energy—not as a source of distraction, self-punishment or masochistic fantasy, but rather as a palpable driving force beneath our desire for mutual transformation. The process of reflection will be ongoing and long-term in nature, and we will need fuel for the journey.

In light of the adaptive influence of deep culture, however, even our best reflective efforts will ultimately prove meaningless if they are not simultaneously complemented by and actuated through new forms of relationship. By new forms of relationship, I mean deliberate material reconfigurations of the feedback loop of privilege that sustains ecological, politico-economic, and social exploitation. Instead of trying to overcome deep culture directly by developing new symbolic affinities without real antecedents, let us first ask what practical steps we can take to bring greater coherence, balance, and fairness to our communal existence in spaces—and then see what patterns of

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<sup>8</sup> Susan M. Hingley asks, “But why does repression fail? It may be that the current trauma is so intense that repression is inadequate to deal with the associated emotions and inner conflicts. It may also be that the maturational environment has failed...Finally it may be that repression fails because there is a weakened boundary between the conscious and unconscious mind. A strong boundary is essential for repression to function.” “Finding Meaning within Psychosis: The Contribution of Psychodynamic Theory and Practice,” in *Evolving Psychosis: Different Stages, Different Treatments*, eds. Jan Olav Johannessen, Brian V. Martindale, and Johan Cullberg (New York: Routledge, 2006), 202. Although Hingley is speaking about the repression in the context of individual psychology, her insights regarding boundaries translate quite evocatively to the social, cultural, and politico-economic levels.

thinking and acting emerge from them. This move from the conceptual to the concrete, from the symbolic to the structural, can simultaneously move us from repression to relationship as we force ourselves to see the damage we cause and hear the memories we ignore. It can also help us reunite the real and imaginary aspects of cultural identity—who we are versus who we think we are—that have been forcibly and deceptively fragmented through narrative, tradition, and law.<sup>9</sup> No matter how well-intentioned our efforts to reflect on identity and history may be, their value will ultimately be confirmed through the relationships we live out on the ground.

This claim is unambiguously borne out by fact that faith in Exceptionalism—along with the circulations of politico-economic power it protects—remains fundamentally tied to the illegal theft of Indian lands and unjust treatment of Indian peoples. Accordingly, justice necessitates a return of that which was wrongfully taken and a reestablishment of genuine self-determination. Yet as the vicissitudes of history cannot and should not be ignored, we find ourselves engaged in a shared struggle that also requires innovative and cooperative responses. We need not envision progress in typical Western fashion as a zero-sum game which some types of beings must lose. Indian and White folks alike—along with all manner of other human and non-human beings—can benefit from a

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<sup>9</sup> This proposal is reminiscent of the exposure approach to cognitive-behavioral therapy, in which individuals are presented with opportunities to face their fears and in so doing, hopefully learn how not to be unconsciously driven by them. It also attends to the typical distortion of identity that is wrought by repression. As Mark Bracher relates, “The most complete transformation of an action from something into nothing occurs in repression, which involves disconnecting Real and Imaginary elements such as ego-threatening affects or fantasies from Symbolic-order articulation.” *The Writing Cure: Psychoanalysis, Composition, and the Aims of Education*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1999), 80.

restoration of proper balance to the land. The hard but crucial work of constructing a different future awaits those with the awareness and passion to pursue it.

Defying the pervasive stereotype of the “angry Indian” that emanates as a projection of White guilt and fear, Ward Churchill affirms the mutuality of this struggle for meaning and transformation:

Herein lies what may be the most important lesson to be learned by those attempting to forge a truly American radical vision, and what may ultimately translate that vision into concrete reality: Native Americans cannot hope to achieve restoration of the lands and liberty which are legitimately theirs without the support and assistance of non-Indians, while non-Indian activists cannot hope to effect any transformation of the existing social order which is not fundamentally imperialistic, and thus doomed to replicate some of the most negative aspects of the present system, unless they accept the necessity of liberating indigenous land and lives as a matter of first priority. Both sides of the equation are at this point bound together in all but symbiotic fashion by virtue of a shared continental habitat, a common oppressor, and an increasingly interactive history. There is thus no viable option but to go forward together, figuratively joining hands to ensure our collective well-being, and that of our children, and our children’s children.<sup>10</sup>

The potential—and the need—for building constructive cross-racial and cross-cultural alliances in defense of the land is demonstrated by the cases presented here along with myriad others. These struggles indicate that while clean and simple solutions to deep culture conflicts do not exist, dialogical relationship is central to their just mitigation. They also illustrate how the healing of spatial disorientation is bound up with the

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<sup>10</sup> Ward Churchill, *Struggle for the Land: Native North American Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide, and Colonization* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2002), 186.

restoration of Indian sovereignty, just as a sense of unnatural innocence relies on its delegitimation.<sup>11</sup>

Though such examples call attention to the significant challenges ahead of us, they also offer reasons to take heart. In places across the nation and globe, a diversity of peoples are increasingly resisting the Western neocolonial instruments of displacement, privatization, and development, and are fighting for spatially and culturally liberating lifeways. The communal wisdom and creative agency of these peoples has already brought a number of concrete proposals into existence; one of the most intriguing to coalesce over the last twenty years involves the establishment of a buffalo commons in the western US.<sup>12</sup>

While the articulation of a buffalo commons is often attributed to the work of two White demographers, Deborah E. and Frank J. Popper, the ambition to bring back buffalo

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<sup>11</sup> It is for this reason that many well-known proposals which endorse a return to land—such as the bioregional ideal endorsed by Kirkpatrick Sale and others, and the small farm ethic promoted by scholar-activists like Wendell Berry—tend to fall short of offering truly radical responses to spatial disorientation. Although these proposals rightfully emphasize a restoration of ecological balance, they tend to neglect the reality of social and politico-economic imbalance by failing to appreciate the influence of deep culture difference within specific contexts of history and power. Such astigmatism leads to a discounting of how the domination of land is connected to the domination of beings defined as Other—and therefore why the former cannot be fully liberated without attending to the latter. It may also help explain why the proposals have rarely secured substantial buy-in from Indian communities. See generally Kirkpatrick Sale, *Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1991); and Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977).

<sup>12</sup> For more general background on the buffalo commons proposal, see Sebastian F. Braun, “Ecological and Un-ecological Indians: The (Non)portrayal of Plains Indians in the Buffalo Commons Literature,” in *Native Americans and the Environment: Perspectives on the Ecological Indian*, eds. Michael E. Harkin and David Rich Lewis (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2007), 192-207; Churchill, *Struggle for the Land*, 367-404; Winona LaDuke, *All our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Cambridge: South End, 1999), 139-166; and Deborah E. Popper and Frank J. Popper, “The Buffalo Commons: Its Antecedents and Their Implications,” *Online Journal of Rural Research and Policy* 1, no. 6 (2006): 1-23. Accessed 2 March 2012. <http://ojrrp.org/journals/ojrrp/article/view/34/32>.



to the land has circulated in Plains Indian communities since the last of the great herds was destroyed at the hands of White settlers in the late 1800's.<sup>13</sup> In brief, the contemporary proposal calls for setting aside large portions of what are today recognized as the Great Plains states for the restoration of a buffalo-centered ecosystem.<sup>14</sup> This restoration would be designed to promote environmental balance by reestablishing the interplay of species and lifeways that existed prior the transformations of Western-style agriculture, mining, and urbanization. Further, it would aim to counter the repeating cycles of social, ecological, and politico-economic decay that have resulted from a failure to conceptualize and relate to the land in meaningful ways.

Referencing the excesses of “successive oversettlement, overuse, economic and ecological collapse, and eventual population decline” that have characterized the overall White presence in the region, the Poppers point to the underlying problem of spatial disorientation:

The Permanent Issue—that is, deep-seated settlement insecurity and a reluctance to face it—has clear practical and political effects. It means that across much of the Plains Euroamerican societies have never been able to reach a stable consensus about what to do with the place... Thus the settlement insecurity and its denial

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<sup>13</sup> Contradicting a 1990 *New York Times Magazine* article which stated that the buffalo commons was “Originally ...only an exercise in land-use theory,” the Poppers themselves admit that while they may have coined the phrase, the general idea was an active component of traditional Plains Indian life that has not been forgotten. See respectively Anne Matthews, “The Poppers and the Plains,” *The New York Times Magazine*, 24 June 1990, accessed 28 November 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/1990/06/24/magazine/the-poppers-and-the-plains.html>; and Popper and Popper, “The Buffalo Commons,” 1.

<sup>14</sup> The Poppers focus primarily on North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Montana, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, and Wyoming. Churchill argues that the scope of the proposal should be expanded to also include parts of Utah, Nevada, Arizona, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon—“roughly one-third of the continental United States.” *Struggle for the Land*, 386-387.

continue, the Issue remains Permanent and desettlement concepts like the Buffalo Commons keep appearing and meeting opposition.<sup>15</sup>

This permanent issue persists in spite of recent population growth in select urban areas in the region. The growth may well mark a fourth iteration of the “short-boom, long-bust” pattern that has historically been encouraged by US government policies.<sup>16</sup> Providing easily obtainable subsidies for settlement, farming, and ranching, the government has continually expended immense sums of money in a quest to establish a strong (and mainly White) population base and extract as much wealth from the land as possible. In light of the special role played by “the West” in the American master narrative, this quest for security and prosperity has taken on a particular fervor. It has also been consistently proven unsustainable, however, making the buffalo commons proposal an attractive alternative in ecological and financial terms.

Perhaps unsurprisingly the proposal has therefore garnered significant support in many environmentalist circles and Indian communities, while encountering strenuous resistance from White property owners and large agribusiness corporations. The Poppers’ basic premise has also been challenged by scholars and activists of varied backgrounds

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<sup>15</sup> Popper and Popper, “The Buffalo Commons,” 2.

<sup>16</sup> The Poppers explain, “Large-scale Euroamerican habitation, which began soon after the Civil War, shows a basic pattern: federally subsidized settlement and cultivation produce a boom, which then leads to overgrazing and overplowing, which then leads to a bust, which features heavy depopulation, especially in the region’s most rural sections. Plains settlement has repeatedly displayed what University of North Dakota historian Elwyn Robinson called the ‘Too-Much Mistake’—too many people, farms, ranches, towns, railroads, and roads for the land to take. Nature and economy inevitably rebelled.” Deborah E. Popper and Frank J. Popper, “The Great Plains and the Buffalo Commons” in *WorldMinds: Geographical Perspectives on 100 Problems*, eds. Donald G. Janelle, Barney Warf, and Kathy Hansen (Norwell: Kluwer Academic, 2004), 346.

for not going far enough. In particular, many have argued that the financial and ecological foci of the buffalo commons should be extended to integrate the politico-economic concerns of Indian peoples as well.<sup>17</sup>

For example, Churchill notes that since the bulk of the region constitutes Indian land never ceded to the US, leadership of the proposal should to be transferred directly to its indigenous human inhabitants. Under the independent auspices of what might be termed a “North American Union of Indigenous Nations,” the buffalo commons would provide a real means to pursue wider goals of self-determination and cultural sovereignty. While admitting that the founding of such a Union would face complex challenges regarding issues of government, citizenship, and diversity, he suggests it would also serve as a symbolic and material hub for justice efforts:

Such an entity would be in a position to assist other indigenous nations outside its borders but still within the remaining territorial corpus of the United States to resolve land claim issues arising from the fraudulent or coerced treaties of cession.<sup>18</sup>

By opening critical and committed dialogue among a diversity of folks, these efforts would present opportunities for new forms of relationship to be forged around more holistic approaches to the problem of space.

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<sup>17</sup> Responding to anti-Indian fear-mongering in a 1991 letter to the (now-defunct) *Rocky Mountain News*, Deloria noted that the Poppers “could care less whether it is Indians or Neil Bush who lives on this land” and that “if Ted Turner and the ex-lieutenant governor of South Dakota can raise buffalo, why is it such a disaster to allow Indian tribes to do so also?” “Buffalo Commons’ Misunderstood,” *Rocky Mountain News*, 4 May 1991.

<sup>18</sup> Churchill, *Struggle for the Land*, 387.

Cataloging the variety of short-sighted and self-interested policies that have contributed to the decay of the Great Plains, (“diversion projects, below-market-price grazing fees on public lands, salvage logging, and subsidies to industrialized agriculture”), Winona LaDuke summarizes the contextual need for holistic approaches thusly:

The ecological crisis of the region, however, is not the result of one decision, such as that to graze cattle. Many would argue that the ecological future of the Great Plains is intertwined with the psychological and spiritual relationship the prairies and the people of the prairies have with the buffalo, and with American culture and mythology.<sup>19</sup>

Conceived in this way, the buffalo commons proposal offers a chance for us as Americans to begin moving away from unnatural innocence and toward tangible justice. It may only represent a long overdue first step along this journey, but it is a practical and meaningful one. Anchored firmly in the memory of the land and its indigenous inhabitants, the proposal represents an exemplar of how ongoing trends of ecocide and genocide might be simultaneously subverted and prevailing circulations of power upset.

The buffalo commons represents just one alternative future to which we might aspire. It is complemented by literally thousands of other creative possibilities for justice being grounded in spaces large and small across the country. To participate steadfastly in

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<sup>19</sup> LaDuke, *All Our Relations*, 147. Speaking to a largely White audience in 1990, Deloria voiced a similar sentiment by contending that the Plains “were and are a covenant between human and bison. Our bones go back to the ground and become the dust that nourishes the grasses that feed the buffalo...Don’t romanticize us. Indians have an extensive and specific technical knowledge of Plains survival. If you have the nerve, I suggest you take both into account. After all, you people have been on the Great Plains for two hundred years. We’ve been there for forty thousand.” Qtd. in Anne Matthews, *Where the Buffalo Roam: Restoring America’s Great Plains*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2002), 159.

the cross-cultural alliances required to make these possibilities a reality, we must confront our deep-seated predisposition to control and compete. We must also resolutely forgo or deftly engage our privilege when necessary and prudent. Only then might we learn how to turn our attention from the pre-packed narrative of our own Exceptionalism, and really look and listen to the experience of being bewildered but cocksure intruders who have yet to become truly acquainted with this place.

### *Conclusion*

Considering the crises facing us in this time, we can no longer afford to compromise truth for ease or durability for expediency. In order to begin weaning ourselves off of the maddening pursuit of profit, prestige, and power to which the Exceptionalist faith calls us, we face the challenging tasks of reflection and relationship-building. These tasks compel us to find a more balanced and humble awareness of our place in the natural world than a sense of unnatural innocence can allow. As we repress knowledge and emotion related to our contradictory and fragmented cultural identity, we compensate by unconsciously gravitating to extreme positions that are often self-serving, mystifying, and destructive. This attraction to extremes of thought and action is manifested in the gulf between humans and the natural world and the subordination of space to time. It can be witnessed in the politico-economic tendency to split the world into friend and foe, center and periphery, with little room left in between. Drastic imbalance can also be observed in the cultural racializing and gendering of the land,

whereby it becomes conceptualized as a wild and virgin feminine presence to be managed and enjoyed by “rational” White men.

In related fashion, extremes have always been the norm in relations among Whites and American Indians. Alternately vilified and idolized in the dominant cultural imagination, Indian peoples become treated as caricatures whose continuing historical struggles for land and life are either ridiculed or dismissed. For healthy and constructive bonds of allyship to be built, a middle way between ostracization (with its assimilative and genocidal effects) and romanticization (with the theft of culture and identity which follows) must be discovered. Essential to this middle way will be a capacity for deeply seeing and hearing. We must endeavor to see and hear not only the traditional narratives and spatial understandings held within many Indian communities, but also the ways in which these narratives and understandings are still being processed and imparted in the face of modern life.

To ensure that any newfound awareness is not simply annihilated by the self-aggrandizing gravitational pull emitted by the cultural black hole that is Exceptionalism, our seeing and hearing must directly inspire reflective and relational doing. This doing must involve practical, crosscutting, and systemic action for ecological and politico-economic justice, as proposals like the buffalo commons exemplify. It must be reflected in how we respond to the more forthright questions of daily life: where and how to dwell, whether to take a stand or remain silent, what to consume or not consume, whose narratives to believe or reject. And it must also be chronicled in the telling of new stories,

or the retelling of old ones, about the places we inhabit.<sup>20</sup> Reality emerges in the spaces where our lives interface in dynamic balance with the lives of other beings and the forces of the cultural and natural landscapes.

As we seek the courage to explore these real and meaningful spaces—to genuinely discover them in the dialogical sense our invading European ancestors never sought let alone achieved—we have much to learn from and with our Indian brothers and sisters. By respecting the realities of deep culture difference, recognizing the diversity of indigenous communities, and seeking to build contextually-appropriate partnerships, we may learn how to throw off the tyranny of our unexamined assumptions and approach the problem of space in more authentic ways. Speaking to an indigenous audience, Tink Tinker maintains that:

the most important gift that we have to give to give back to our colonizer may be the foundational discursive modalities of the intellectual tradition of the oppressed. We have a different way of seeing the world and engaging in critical analysis of the world that is transformative and liberating.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Gary Paul Nabhan argues for the need to “re-story” places stripped of life-giving meaning by colonial administration and technical manipulation: “To restore any place, we must also begin to re-story it, to make it the lesson of our legends, festivals, and seasonal rites. Story is the way we encode deep-seated values within our culture. Ritual is the way we enact them. . . . By replenishing the land with our stories, we let the wild voices around us guide the restoration work we do. The stories will outlast us. When such voices are firmly rooted, the floods of modern technological change—of border-blasting radios and all-night pornography shows—won’t ever have a chance to dislodge them from this earth. *Cultures of Habitat: On Nature, Culture, and Story* (Washington DC: Counterpoint, 1998), 319.

<sup>21</sup> Tinker continues, “If this is true, then we need to focus our attention on the question of how we will do theology with increasing care and diligence, even in the face of a growing globalization that will insist that we speak in ways that conform to a more universal discourse in order to function more pragmatically within the present reality. The emergence of methodological discussions in Two-Thirds World discourses is anything but simplistic. It is as complex as it is powerful and liberating. But it must continue to be a methodology rooted in resistance to oppressive power and in the struggle for the freedom of each of our disparate and distinct peoples.” Tink Tinker, *American Indian Liberation*, 19.

This gift is not something that we who remain the colonizers of this land can afford to refuse. The dominant patterns of spatial cognition and behavior that we have inherited through our culture have clearly failed, as have attempts to simply appropriate the patterns of other cultures. And yet, we may still have a chance to reciprocate the gift offered by Indian peoples and other marginalized folks as we learn to see and hear the truth of our being in this place—and then allow this truth to change our relationships with the land and other beings.<sup>22</sup>

For far too long, we have resigned ourselves to the passive acceptance of a reality which, for all its promises and comforts, has never seemed quite right. Our experiences of ourselves, others, and the land offer consistent reminders that we are neither as innocent nor as Exceptional as we wish to believe. We try on different variations of the foundational guiding norms and assumptions we trust, only to find ourselves mired in the same inconsistencies that we have always feared. We look backward to the master narrative we know by heart, hoping to find new guidance on how to rebuild a city upon a hill that never really existed. We look forward to scientific breakthrough and technological innovation, confident that progress will lead us to a worry-free happiness that never actually appears. But rarely do we look down, to the solid ground beneath our feet and the trail of scorched earth and broken bodies that litter the path we have trod.

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<sup>22</sup> Complementing Tinker, Deloria describes how we might learn from indigenous peoples to base our critical analysis in the experience of actual, grounded relationships: “The transition from Western/Christian categories to tribal and non-Western categories is not then a matter of learning new facts about life, the world, human history, or adopting new symbols or garments. It is primarily a matter of participation in terms of the real factors of existence—living on the land, living within a specific community, and having religious people with special powers within that community. It is the non-philosophical quality of tribal religions that makes them important for this day and age. *God is Red*, 294-295.



And despite continuing to run in circles, we find ourselves too dazed and afraid to even acknowledge, let alone ask, our deepest question: Who are we, really?

This is the repressed legacy of our spatial disorientation. We remain too distracted to reflect on our relationships with the land and other beings, our own history and identity, and the possibilities of who we might become. Further, we continually discount the symbols influencing us, even as we believe ourselves to be a chosen people called to shed light over a promised land. The confused neglect of spatial history is basically a religious problem, a problem of meaning. Constructive responses to this problem require the discovery of new paths to meaning that, in the words of Deloria, “are at least not tied to any particular view of man, nature, or the relationship of man and nature that is clearly in conflict with what we know.”<sup>23</sup> They further compel a rebalancing of our understandings of time and space, so that our cultural identity might respond to the concrete perpetuation of genocide and ecocide in this place, rather than some abstract faith in an Exceptional destiny.

If there is any hope for transformation, it is in the potential to simultaneously remember and remake ourselves and the spaces we inhabit. Alluding to this potential, Keith Basso explains:

In modern landscapes everywhere, people persist in asking, “What happened here?” The answers they supply, though perhaps distinctly foreign, should not be taken lightly, for what people make of their places is closely connected to what they make of themselves as members of society and inhabitants of the earth, and while the two activities may be separable in principle, they are deeply joined in practice. If place-making is a way of constructing the past, a venerable means of

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<sup>23</sup> Deloria, *God is Red*, 94.

*doing* human history, it is also a way of constructing social traditions and, in the process, personal and social identities. We *are*, in a sense, the place-worlds we imagine.<sup>24</sup>

Likewise, David Harvey reminds us of the agency we have been systematically encouraged to doubt:

Our future places are for us to make. But we cannot make them without inscribing our struggles in space, place, and environment in multiple ways. That process is on-going and every single one of us has agency with respect to it. The places—material, representational, and symbolic—handed down to us by former generations were also built up through social struggles and strivings to create material, symbolic, and imaginary places to fit their own particular and contested aspirations. A better appreciation of such processes—of the social and political dialectics of space, place and environment—has much to teach us about how to construct alternative futures. A renewed capacity to reread the production of historical-geographical difference is a crucial preliminary step towards emancipating the possibilities for future place construction. And liberating places—materially, symbolically, and metaphorically—is an inevitable part of any progressive socio-ecological politics.<sup>25</sup>

But while hope and agency are good and necessary things, they must be tempered with a healthy recognition of our own limitations and interdependence. The land will remake us at least as much as we remake the land, if not moreso, as it always has. In order to remember our history, we must first develop the capacity to see and hear it remembered by others. Our liberation from the repression-inducing bond of spatial disorientation and Exceptionalism is bound up with the liberation of the spaces, beings, and communities whose continued oppression supports our privilege. This shared

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<sup>24</sup> Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1996), 7 (emphasis original).

<sup>25</sup> David Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (Malden: Blackwell, 1996), 326.

liberation cannot be imposed but must occur through genuine dialogue in which we, for once, seek to communicate rather than control and assent rather than acquire. In turn, such dialogue will demand the creation of new forms of relationship not based on hierarchy and fear, but upon recognition and respect. As we reflect on our privilege and participate in these new relationships, we may begin to understand what it means to take seriously the integrity of nature in concrete terms of thought and action. And though for the foreseeable future our deep culture will continue to pull us back to our old ways when we attempt to break away, we can dig our heels into the land beneath our feet and with the help of our friends and relatives on this earth, keep struggling toward a better way.

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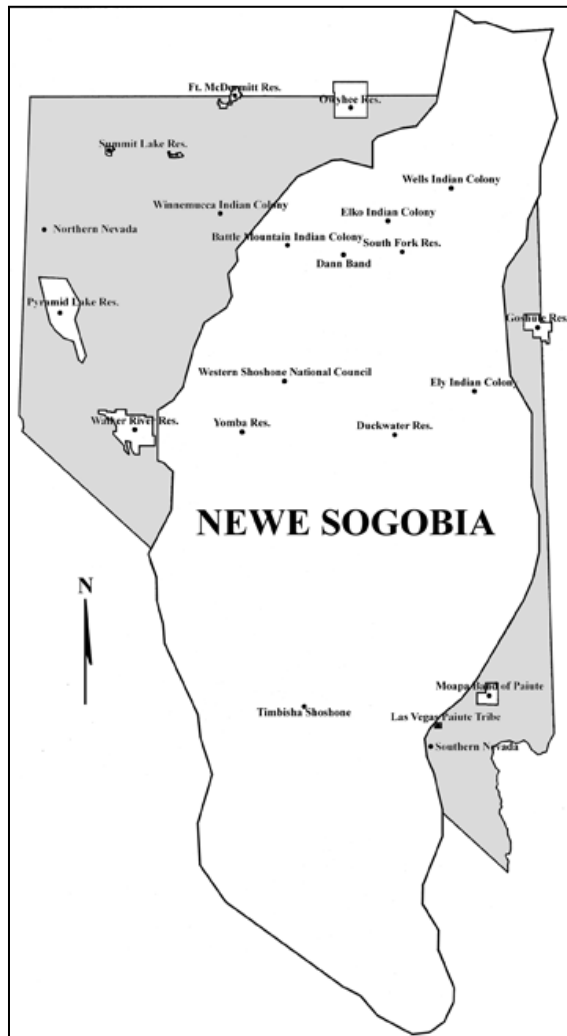
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## Appendices

### Appendix A: *Newe Sogobia* (“Land of the People”)<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Ian Zabarte, “Newe Sogobia” (map), UNLV University Libraries: Nevada Test Site Oral History Project, accessed 22 March 2012, <http://digital.library.unlv.edu/ntsohp/images/landscape/newsogobia.gif>.

Appendix B: Treaty of Ruby Valley<sup>2</sup>

UNITED STATES TREATY WITH THE WESTERN SHOSONI, 1863

October 1, 1863, 18 Statutes at Large 689

Treaty of Peace and Friendship made at Ruby Valley, in the Territory of Nevada, this first day of October, A.D. one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, between the United States of America, represented by the undersigned commissioners, and the Western Bands of the Shoshonee Nation of Indians, represented by their Chiefs and Principal Men and warriors, as follows:

ARTICLE 1

Peace and friendship shall be hereafter established and maintained between the Western Bands of the Shoshonee nation and the people and government of the United States; and the said bands stipulate and agree that hostilities and all depredations upon the emigrant trains, the mail and telegraph lines, and upon the citizens of the United States within their country, shall cease.

ARTICLE 2

The several routes of travel through the Shoshonee country, now or hereafter used by white men, shall be forever free, and unobstructed by the said bands, for the use of the government of the United States, and of all emigrants and travelers under its authority and protection, without molestation or injury from them. And if depredations are at any time committed by bad men of their nation, the offenders shall be immediately taken and delivered up to the proper officers of the United States, to be punished as their offences shall deserve; and the safety of all travelers passing peaceably over either of said routes is hereby guaranteed by said bands.

Military posts may be established by the President of the United states along said routes or elsewhere in their country; and station houses may be erected and occupied at such points as may be necessary for the comfort and convenience of travelers or for mail or telegraph companies.

ARTICLE 3

The telegraph and overland stage lines having been established and operated by companies under the authority of the United States through a part of the Shoshonee country, it is expressly agreed that the same may be continued without hindrance, molestation, or injury from the people of said bands, and that their property and the lives and property of passengers in the stages and of the employees of the respective

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<sup>2</sup> See Charles J. Kappler, ed., *Indian Treaties, 1778-1883* (New York: Interland, 1973), 851-853.

companies, shall be protected by them. And further, it being understood that provision has been made by the government of the United States for the construction of a railway from the plains west to the Pacific ocean, it is stipulated by the said bands that the said railway or its branches may be located, constructed, and operated, and without molestation from them, through any portion of country claimed or occupied by them.

#### ARTICLE 4

It is further agreed by the parties hereto, that the Shoshonee country may be explored and prospected for gold and silver, or other minerals; and when mines are discovered, they may be worked, and mining and agricultural settlements formed, and ranches established whenever they may be required. Mills may be erected and timber taken for their use, as also for building and other purposes in any part of the country claimed by said bands.

#### ARTICLE 5

It is understood that the boundaries of the country claimed and occupied by said bands are defined and described by them as follows:

On the north by Wong-goga-da Mountains and Shoshonee River Valley; on the west by Su-non-to-yah Mountains or Smith Creek Mountains; on the south by Wi-co-bah and the Colorado Desert; on the east by Po-ho-no-be Valley or Steptoe Valley and Great Salt Lake Valley.

#### ARTICLE 6

The said bands agree that whenever the President of the United states shall deem it expedient for them to abandon the roaming life, which, they now lead, and become herdsmen or agriculturalists, he is hereby authorized to make such reservations for their use as he may deem necessary within the country above described; and they do also hereby agree to remove their camps to such reservations as he may indicate, and to reside and remain therein.

#### ARTICLE 7

The United States, being aware of the inconvenience resulting to the Indians in consequence of the driving away and destruction of game along the routes travelled by white men, and by the formation of agricultural and mining settlements, are willing to fairly compensate them for the same; therefore, and in consideration of the preceding stipulations, and of their faithful observance by the said bands, the United States promise and agree to pay to the said bands of the Shoshonee nation parties hereto, annually for the term of twenty years, the sum of five thousand dollars in such articles, including cattle for herding or other purposes, as the President of the United States shall deem suitable for their wants and condition, either as hunters or herdsmen. And the said bands hereby acknowledge the reception of the said stipulated annuities as a full compensation and equivalent for the loss of game and the rights and privileges hereby conceded.

ARTICLE 8

The said bands hereby acknowledge that they have received from said commissioners provisions and clothing amounting to five thousand dollars as presents at the conclusion of this treaty.

Done at Ruby Valley the day and year above written.

James W. Nye

James Duane Doty

Te-moak, his x mark

Mo-ho-a

Kirk-weedgwa, his x mark

To-nag, his x mark

To-so-wee-so-op, his x mark

Sow-er-e-gah, his x mark

Po-on-go-sah, his x mark

Par-a-woat-ze, his x mark

Ga-ha-dier, his x mark

Ko-ro-kout-ze, his x mark

Pon-ge-mah, his x mark

Buck, his x mark

Witnesses:

J. B. Moore, lieutenant-colonel Third Infantry California Volunteers

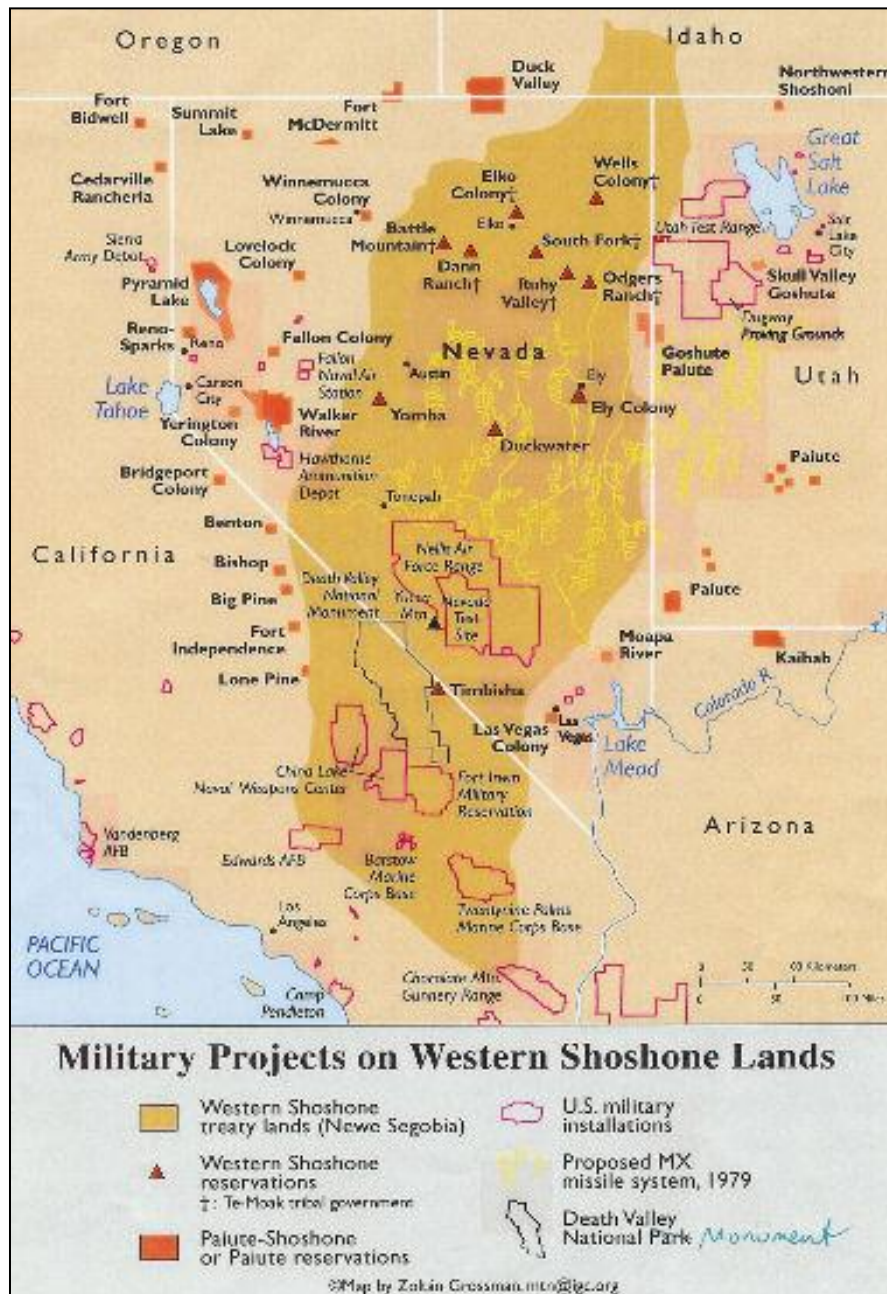
Jacob T. Lockhart, Indian agent Nevada Territory

Henry Butterfield, interpreter

Ratified June 26, 1866

Proclaimed Oct. 21, 1869

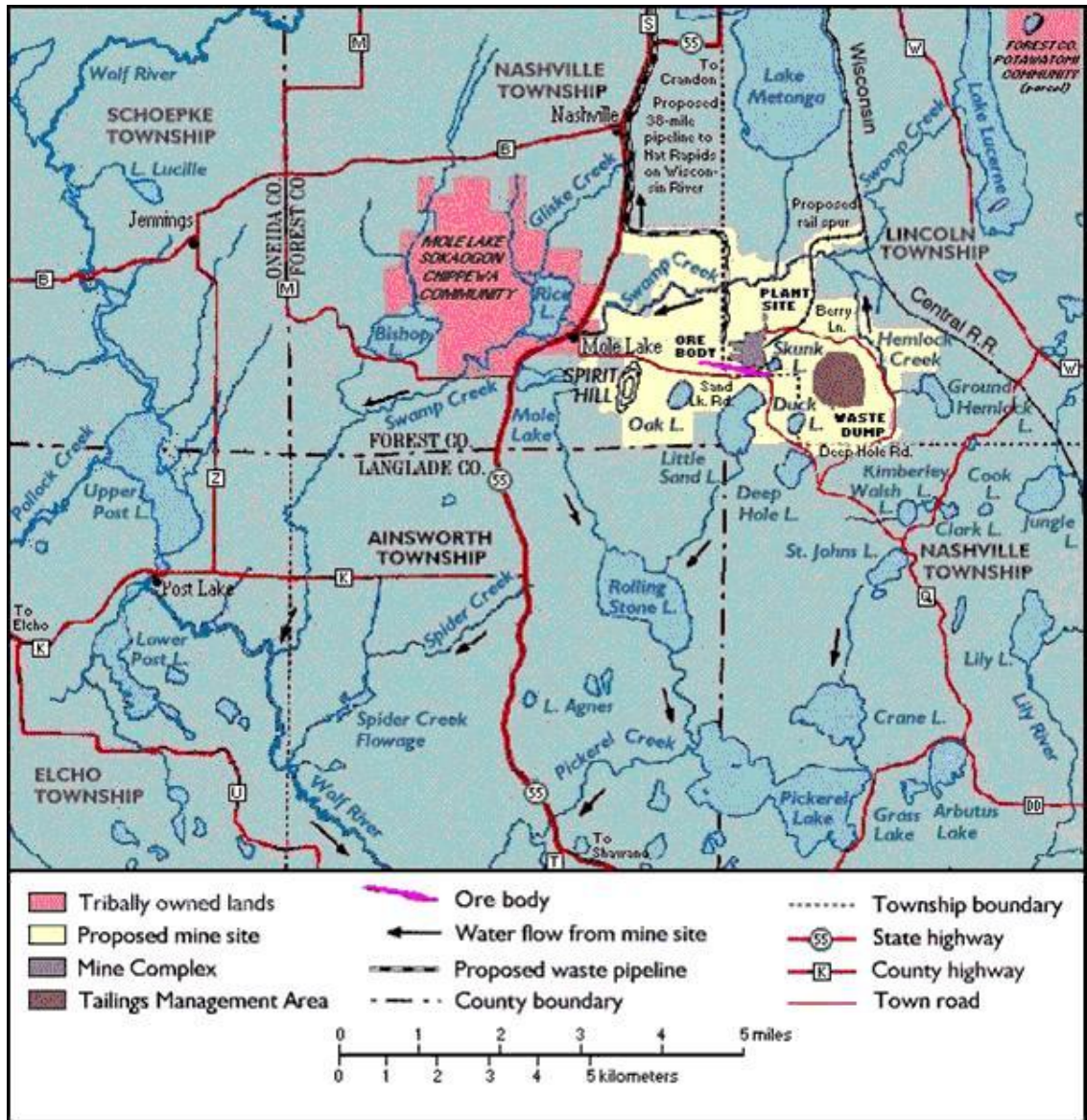
Appendix C: US Military and Nuclear Sites within *Neve Sogobia*<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Zoltan Grossman, "Military Projects on Western Shoshone Lands" (map), HOME: Healing Ourselves and Mother Earth, accessed 22 March 2012, <http://h-o-m-e.org/images/NeveMilitary.jpg>.

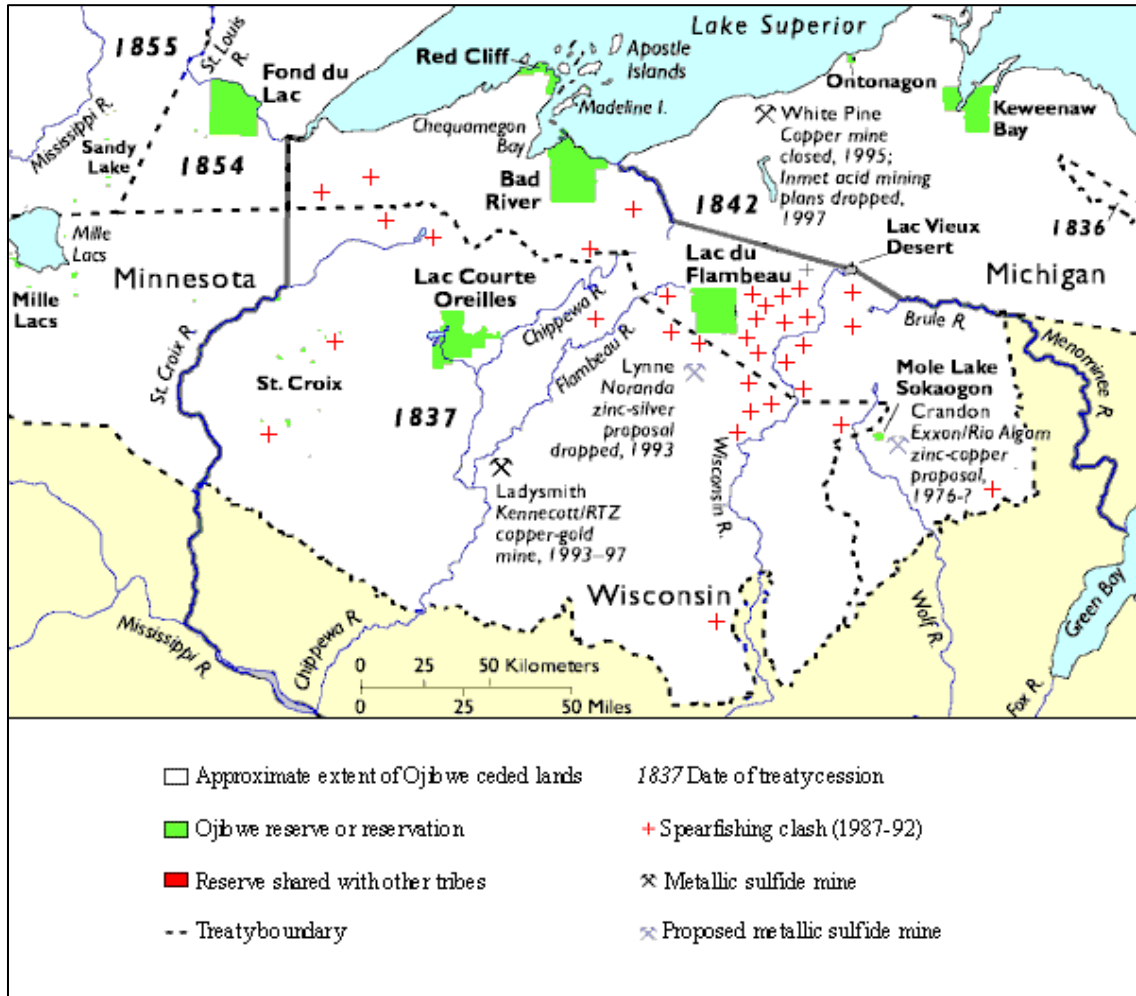


Appendix D: Proposed Crandon Mine Site<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> Zoltan Grossman, "Proposed Crandon Mine in WI" (map), originally published in *Mole Lake Environmental Newsletter* (1997), Michigan Tech University Social Sciences Department, accessed 22 March 2012, <http://www.social.mtu.edu/images/thesisimages/ProposedCrandonMine.jpg>.

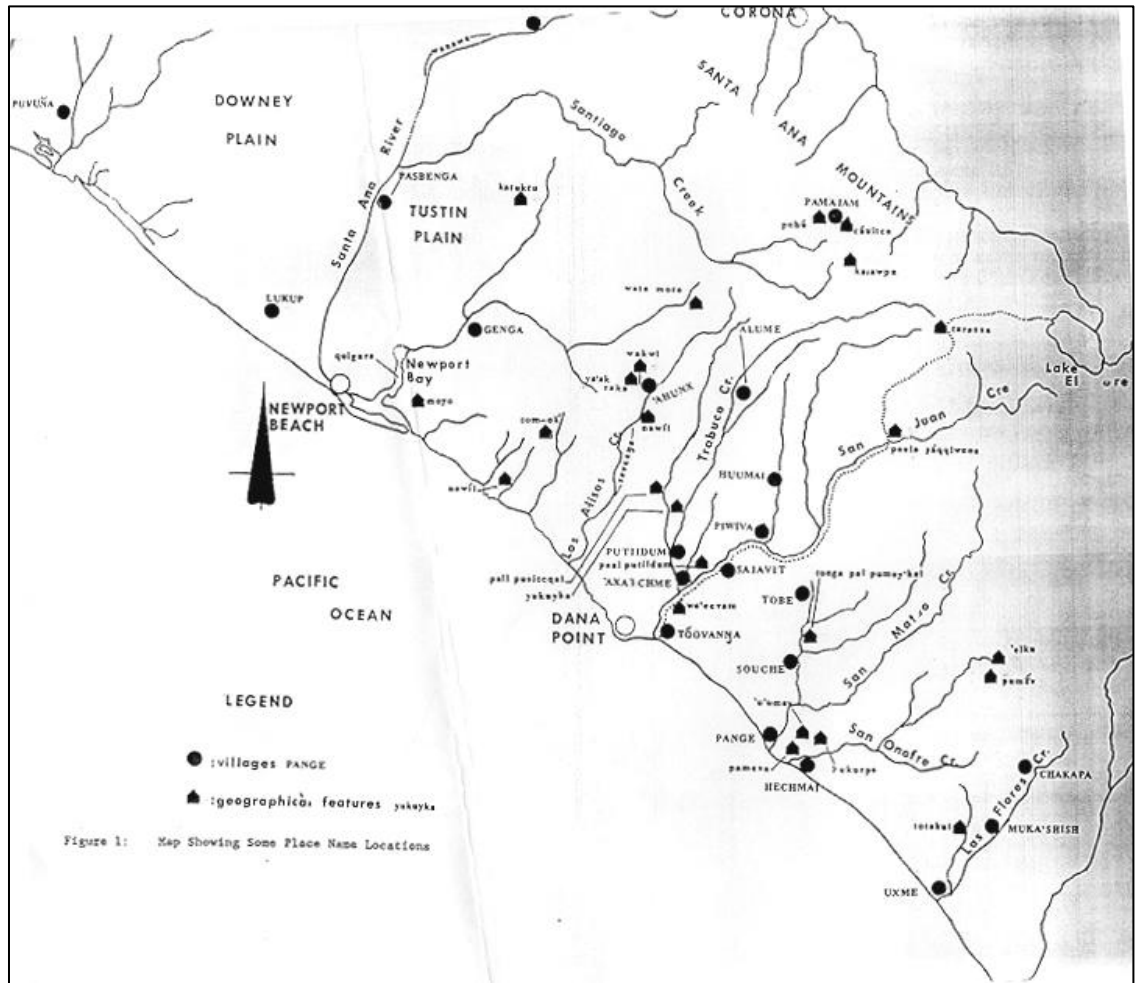
Appendix E: Other Mining Sites within Traditional Ojibwe Lands in Northern Wisconsin<sup>5</sup>



<sup>5</sup> Zoltan Grossman, "Ojibwe Anishinaabe Nation" (map), adapted from *Wisconsin's Past and Present: A Historical Atlas*, by the Wisconsin Cartographer's Guild (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1998), 10-11, The Midwest Treaty Network, accessed 22 March 2012, [http://treaty.indigenousnative.org/ojibwe\\_map.html](http://treaty.indigenousnative.org/ojibwe_map.html).



Appendix F: Traditional Acjachemen Village Sites<sup>6</sup>



<sup>6</sup> “Juaneño Village Sites” (map), Tanis Shorne Sociol 65 Lec A: American Indian-White Relations (Spring 2012), accessed 22 March 2012, <https://eee.uci.edu/clients/tcthorne/anthro/juanenovillages.jpg>.

Appendix G: Proposed 241 Toll Road Extension Route<sup>7</sup>



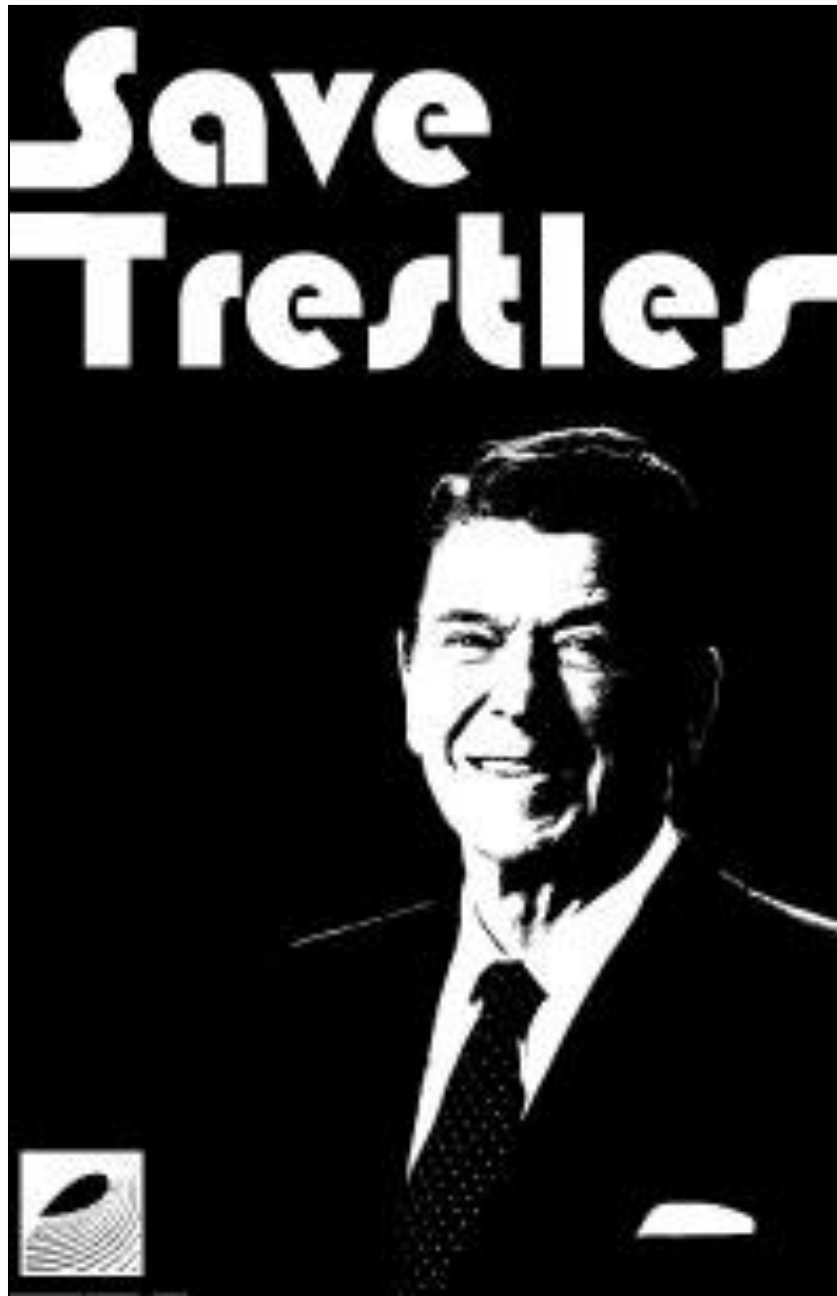
<sup>7</sup> Transportation Corridor Agencies, “Proposed Extension” (map), in Matt Coker, “241 Extension Builders Figure If You Can’t Beat ‘Em, Piecemeal ‘Em,” *Navel Gazing* (blog), *OC Weekly*, 7 October 2011, accessed 22 March 2012, [http://blogs.ocweekly.com/navelgazing/2011/10/241\\_toll\\_road\\_piecemeal\\_phases.php](http://blogs.ocweekly.com/navelgazing/2011/10/241_toll_road_piecemeal_phases.php).

Appendix H: Protected Wilderness Areas along Proposed 241 Toll Road Extension Route<sup>8</sup>



<sup>8</sup> “Proposed Toll Road in relation to San Onofre State Beach, Donna O’Neill Land Conservancy, and SONGS” (map), Surfrider Foundation, accessed 22 March 2012, [http://ww2.surfrider.org/savetrestles/images/big\\_map.jpg](http://ww2.surfrider.org/savetrestles/images/big_map.jpg).

Appendix I: Image of Ronald Reagan Circulated by Proposed 241 Toll Road Extension Opponents<sup>9</sup>



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<sup>9</sup> "Save Trestles" (image), Surfrider Foundation, accessed 2 June 2011, [http://ww2.surfrider.org/savetrestles/blog/uploaded\\_images/Reagan-Trestles-798867.jpg](http://ww2.surfrider.org/savetrestles/blog/uploaded_images/Reagan-Trestles-798867.jpg).